



Numbers

A Verse-By-Verse Study

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(Rev 2)

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NUMBERS 1:1-19 (A CENSUS IN THE WILDERNESS)

One of the reasons that scholars cite for the Lord directing Moses to take a census is to show that his promise to Abraham about multiplying his descendants was not forgotten, but was being fulfilled. Though it is true that the Lord made such a promise to Abraham, the census here isn't necessary to show this. Abraham's descendants branched out in several directions, through both Isaac and Ishmael.

Further, the promise to Abraham was also inclusive of those who are spiritually his sons by faith. To brush up on that, take time to read Galatians 3. As far as Abraham is concerned in this regard, it was Isaac who was the son of promise, not Ishmael. And therefore, the list of physical descendants isn't completely reflective of what is given in the census of Numbers Chapter 1.

The same is then true with Isaac. He was also given the promise of Abraham concerning many descendants, even as the stars of heaven. And again, like Abraham, there are physical descendants that are *not* of the line of promise, meaning those from his son Esau. So, some of them are sons of promise, and some of them are not. Therefore, the list of physical descendants from Isaac isn't completely reflective of the lists given here in Numbers Chapter 1.

However, Jacob was also given the promise of Abraham and Isaac. But unlike them, his sons would all become sons who would share in the promise. They would be a unique group of people, known by his name, Israel. The promises made to Israel include what is seen in the census of Numbers Chapter 1.

As you can see, we need to carefully look over the entire panorama of what the Bible says in order to form our conclusions about a matter. If not, then unfounded claims can be made about spiritual blessings and the like. This is exactly what Islam has done. They claim their ancestry through Ishmael, and thus claim the blessings of Abraham. But this is a giant theological error. Each step of Scripture is a logical progression, intended to lead us to sound theology, and a proper understanding of why things are detailed the way they are in the Bible.

Text Verse: *Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. ¹¹ Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. ¹² The land which I*

gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.” Genesis 35:9-12

So here we have the promise to Israel carefully, and meticulously recorded. We can know from Paul’s letters that we are sons of Abraham through faith, but just as the Muslims incorrectly make claims about their status, unfortunately people in the church do it all the time too. The promises to Abraham include a spiritual promise – that of faith, and also a physical line of people who are sons of promise, and who were to be given a land inheritance.

In the church, these set and clear lines are often obscured or even erased, and extremely poor theology is the result. There is never a time in the Bible that the Gentiles are called Israel. Though we may share in the commonwealth of Israel, we remain Gentiles, and no land promise is made to us. We have a heavenly inheritance awaiting us, not an earthly one.

It is the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who are called Israel collectively, who are now being gathered at the beginning of the book of Numbers for a census. It is this same group of people who will be detailed throughout the rest of the Old Testament, into the New Testament, and who have been in exile for the past two thousand years, but who have been returned to their land once again. Let us not make the error of placing ourselves into their story. We should be content to be included alongside of them in the great unfolding plan of God for the people of the world. A plan which Israel is being used for in order to reveal types and shadows as we continue on our journey, now in the book of Numbers. Great things are to be found here because it is an integral part of His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. An Introduction

The book of Numbers is the fourth book of the Law of Moses and of the Holy Bible. Its Hebrew name is derived from the fifth word of the book, *b’midbar*, which literally means “in the wilderness.” In Hebrew, the word consists of the letters *beit*, *mem*, *dalet*, *beit*, and *resh* which numerically equal 248. This is numerically the same as the Hebrew word for mercy, *rakham*, something that will be needed towards Israel during the book.

It is also the same numerical value as the phrases *b’tselem elohim*, or “In the image of God,” of Genesis 1:27; and *qol Yehovah elohim*, or “the Voice of the Lord God,” of Genesis 3:8. Both of these in Hebrew have a numerical value of 248. Israel is a nation of people created in the image of God, but will they heed the voice of the Lord their God? That is a major question to be asked concerning them in the book.

There is dispute as to when this, along with the other 4 books of Moses, was written; however, the conservative and traditional dating can be figured based on when Solomon's Temple was built. By tracing back from that day as stated in 1 Kings 6:1, which indicates 480 years from the Exodus, we can assert with relative confidence that it was penned approximately 1445 BC.

There was a 45-day journey to reach Mount Sinai, where the Israelites worked to construct the Tabernacle. In Exodus 40:2 it stated, "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting." This was the beginning of the second year, 345 days after the Exodus, and 300 days since their arrival at Sinai. It would also be the year 2515 AM.

As we will see, Numbers will begin its text thirty days later on the first day of the second month of this same year. The book of Leviticus was compiled during a very short period of time between the ending of Exodus and up to Numbers 10:11, a period of fifty days. Numbers, however, will last much longer. The trek from the time of setting out from Sinai until arriving at the border of Israel should have been an 11-day journey.

However, events will occur, which are recorded in Numbers, and which will extend this journey out until their fortieth year after the Exodus, or exactly 38 years, 9 months. This will be explained in verse 1. Thus, the name *b'midbar*, or "in the wilderness" is a most appropriate name for the book. They will be in the wilderness during the entire period.

The English name for the book is derived from the Greek name given to it, *Arithimoi*. This is translated into Latin as *Numeri*, and thus into English as Numbers. The reason for the name will become obvious because detailed numbering of the people will be made during times of census. And it will be a lot of numbers!

As far as a historical context, the book is given to describe the mercy of God upon the Israelites, despite their faithlessness to Him. It also presents examples of case law which had not yet been tested, such as a violation of the Sabbath in Chapter 15. Numbers also details the period of preparation of the people before they would enter the Land of Promise.

Concerning a redemptive context, Numbers is filled with pictures of Christ, including His cross. Several key themes which look forward to Him are Christ, the Cloud and the Fire – the Leader of His people; Christ, the Water in the desert – the eternal Fount of life; Christ, the Star and the Scepter of Israel – the King and Ruler of His people; and Christ, the Serpent on the Pole – the crucified Savior who became sin so that man could possess new life. Direct references to events in Numbers are found interspersed throughout the New Testament.

We can look back on the great prophetic fulfillments of these types in Numbers with absolute surety that Jesus Christ was and is the Messiah, and therefore is God come in human flesh. Reading and understanding Numbers also reminds us of the sincerity of God's promises and curses. When He speaks, His word will come to pass.

The first book of Moses, Genesis, looked to the work of God the Father through Christ in creation – directing that creation in the initial process of redemption. The second book of Moses, Exodus, then looked to the work of God the Son in Christ in the actual redemptive process, mirroring His own work countless times. The third book of Moses, Leviticus, highlighted the work of the Holy Spirit applying the purification and sanctification of Christ to the people of God. This fourth book of Moses, Numbers, will highlight the crucified Savior who rose to lead His people in the wilderness of their lives, ever faithful to bring them along the path of life, difficult as it may be, and despite our faithlessness along the way.

In all four books, it is Christ, the anticipated Son of God who is on prominent display. Nothing is more obvious, and in a thousand different ways this will again become evident. When the book of Numbers is complete, the Person and work of Jesus Christ will have been highlighted so many times that you will never look at this book in the same way again.

If we were to sum up the book of Numbers with a single thought which carries us from Leviticus and then into the continued life of Israel, it would be that “The Lord has prepared a path for His people, and despite our failure to walk upon it, the mercy of God found in Jesus Christ remains open for His redeemed people.”

*A new book to study, seeking out its veins of gold
A new adventure as we seek the Lord's face
Thirty-six chapters set before us, ready to unfold
Lessons for all people, in every generation and every place*

*What is in store for us as we begin our trek?
Numbers seems so vast and complicated at this time
Will we have a headache even down to our neck?
Or will the book come to seem glorious and sublime?*

*Open our eyes, O Lord, to what lies ahead
Direct the understanding of our eyes and our heart
This is what we petition; looking to be fed
This is what we ask for, today as we start*

*Show us the riches of Christ in this new book
Be with us as we open it, and for its treasures we look*

II. A Census of All the Congregation (verses 1-19)

¹Now the Lord spoke

v'daber Yehovah, “And spoke Yehovah.” Though the Hebrew name of the book is *b'midbar*, or “In the wilderness,” as in most Hebrew Bibles, some call the book *v'daber*, or “And spoke.” Despite this, beginning the book with the word “And” signifies that this is a continuation of what has already been presented. The book of Leviticus closed out, but it did not really end. The thought process is simply continued with the opening of the book of Numbers.

¹ (con't) to Moses

Despite liberal criticism of the Bible concerning the authorship and dating of Numbers, the book was undoubtedly written by Moses. Several times, Jesus mentions “Moses and the prophets” when speaking of those who authored the Old Testament books. That is a term speaking of the body of Scripture known at that time. Further, Numbers 21 details the account of the bronze serpent raised on a pole. Jesus equates that with Himself with these words in John 3 –

“No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, *that is*, the Son of Man who is in heaven. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:13-15

Referring to Moses in these ways means that either what Jesus says is correct, or the Bible is not the authoritative word of God.

¹ (con't) in the Wilderness

b'midbar, “in the wilderness.” It is the fifth word of the book in the Hebrew, and it is the basis for the common Hebrew name. The entire duration of the events of the book are in the wilderness.

¹ (con't) of Sinai,

The Wilderness of Sinai is where the Israelites have been. They arrived there after the Exodus, and it is where they received the Ten Commandments, and where Moses continued to meet with the Lord, receiving the law. During this time, the sanctuary was

constructed and set up, and the laws of Leviticus have been received. They have stayed in this same location during that entire time. It is in this area where the Lord speaks to Moses...

¹ (con't) in the tabernacle of meeting,

The translation is poor. The Hebrew says *b'ohel moed*, or "in the tent of meeting." It is Moses who meets with the Lord, and it is in the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle, but the location is given as "the tent of meeting." The terminology is used because it is in this spot where the Lord meets with Moses to give him instructions.

¹ (con't) on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

The Israelites arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai on the first day of the third month of the first year (Exodus 19:1). Therefore, It is now exactly 11 months since their arrival. It is also exactly one month after the Sanctuary was raised up, as was seen in Exodus 40:17. This is the book's starting date. For the exact length of time that the book of Numbers details, two key verses must be compared. The first is this verse. The second is Deuteronomy 1:3, which says –

"Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month, *that* Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them,"

Deducting one date from the other gives us a period of exactly 38 years, 9 months in which the events of Numbers occur. In the books of Moses, no name of the second month is given. However, we find its Hebrew name, Ziv, in 1 Kings 6:1. The name signifies "brightness," and thus it is figuratively, "the month of flowers." The name was changed to Iyar after the Babylonian exile. The second month corresponds to April/May in our calendar.

² "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel,

There are several reasons why a census should be taken, especially now that the trek to Canaan was to commence. The people were to depart shortly, and they should have arrived at their destination soon after that. The fact that it would actually be a total of forty years in the wilderness is irrelevant at this point. When the tribes came into the land promised to them, there would need to be an exact genealogical record for the

purposes of land and inheritance rights, something specified during the book of Leviticus. Also, the known strength of each tribe would be needed for the granting of land appropriate to the numbers, and for the mustering of the people for wars as well. However, doing the census now, instead of at the borders of the Land of Promise, was also necessary so that the people could be properly arranged according to family around the tabernacle as they traveled, thus maintaining order.

² (con't) **by their families, by their fathers' houses,**

Two distinctions are made here. First “by their families,” and then “by their father’s households. The terms are somewhat changeable though. In general, it would be by clans and then by closer relationships. At this point, some scholars include in their comments that this excluded any of the mixed multitude who came out with Israel during the Exodus.

However, Exodus 12 explicitly states that “when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it” (v. 48). Any of the mixed multitude were to be counted as natives if they met this requirement in either the original Passover, or the one just observed. Understanding this can help alleviate difficulties in the numbers recorded in this book.

² (con't) **according to the number of names,**

The words here probably concern the previous numbering of the people which was recorded in Exodus 30:12. Thus, the term “according to the number of names” is used.

² (con't) **every male individually,**

kal zakar l'gulgelotam – “all males to the skulls.” In other words, the skull represents the man, and so it is a head by head count.

³ **from twenty years old and above—all who *are able to go to war* in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.**

The census is solely for the males, and only those who are twenty and older. It is then explained by, “all who *are able to go to war.*” In this, there appears to be an allowance for the aged or infirm, but no specific age is given. At David’s time, the men fought until

they could no longer fight, without regards to age, and it appears that this was the case here. This is seen, for example, in 2 Samuel –

“When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint. ¹⁶ Then Ishbi-Benob, who *was* one of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose bronze spear *was* three hundred *shekels*, who was bearing a new *sword*, thought he could kill David. ¹⁷ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, ‘You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel.’”

-2 Samuel 21:15-17

^{3 (con’t)} **You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.**

Moses and Aaron are called by name to conduct the census, and they would be in charge of anyone selected for the counting of each clan and family. This would be a major undertaking considering the number given in verse 46. In 2011, the US Census Bureau showed Sarasota, Florida totaled 382,448 people. The number of men above 20 alone is *more* than a third more than that.

⁴ **And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father’s house.**

There will be twelve tribes counted, and yet the tribe of Levi will not be counted. The way this comes about is that Joseph is divided into two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. This is in accord with Joseph’s words recorded in Genesis 48:5. From each of these tribes, one man would be selected as the head of that tribe, ensuring that the census would be conducted in accord with the oversight of Moses and Aaron. These men are selected by the Lord, and they are generally listed in order of birth mother, Leah first, Rachel next, and then of the handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah.

⁵ **“These are the names of the men who shall stand with you: from Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur;**

The first tribe is Reuben, the first son of Israel. Elizur means God of the Rock. Shedeur means Spreader of Light.

⁶ **from Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai;**

Simeon is the second son of Israel. Shelumiel means Peace of God. Zurishaddai means Rock of the Almighty.

⁷ from Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab;

Judah is the fourth son of Israel. Nahshon means Enchanter, or Serpent-person. Amminadab means My Kinsman Is Noble or People of the Prince. Nahshon, and Amminadab, are included in the genealogy of King David in Ruth 4 and then they, along with Judah are listed in that of Christ Jesus in Matthew 1.

⁸ from Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar;

Issachar is the ninth son of Israel, but the fifth son of Leah. It is interesting that his name is derived from what was said by Leah when her son Issachar was born, *natan elohim sekhari*, or “God has given me my wages.” The leader of the tribe fits the naming of the tribe. Nethanel means Given of God. Zuar means Little One.

⁹ from Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon;

Zebulun is the tenth son of Israel, but the sixth son of Leah. Eliab means My God is Father. Helon means Very Strong.

¹⁰ from the sons of Joseph: from Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud;

Now instead of selecting a man from Joseph, the eleventh son of Israel and the first son of Rachel, the line of Joseph is divided. First from Joseph is Ephraim the younger son of Joseph, but whom Jacob placed first in his blessing. Elishama means God has Heard. Ammihud means My Kinsman is Glorious.

^{10 (con't)} from Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur;

Manasseh is the first son of Joseph. Gamaliel means Reward of God. Pedahzur means The Rock has Ransomed.

¹¹ from Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni;

Benjamin is the twelfth son of Israel, and the second son of Rachel. Abidan means Father of Judgment. Gideoni means Feller (as in one who cuts down).

¹² from Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai;

Dan is the fifth son of Israel, and the first son born to Bilhah. Ahiezer means Brother of Help. Ammishaddai means My Kinsman is the Almighty.

¹³ from Asher, Pagiel the son of Ocran;

Asher is the eighth son of Israel and the second son of Zilpah. He is listed out of the ordinary birth order according to birth mother. It doesn't seem to make sense, but this is because of how the tribes will ultimately be placed around the sanctuary in their midst. He is mentioned before his older brother born to Zilpah for this reason. Pagiel means Occurrence of God. Ocran means Troubled.

¹⁴ from Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel;

Gad is the seventh son of Israel and the first born to Zilpah. Eliasaph means God has Added. Deuel means Known of God. As a side note to consider, this same person is listed as Reuel in Numbers 2:14. The letters Dalet and Resh are extremely similar in appearance and so they are often interchanged.

¹⁵ from Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan.”

The list ends with Naphtali, the sixth son of Israel, and the second born to Zilpah. Ahira means Brother of Purpose. Enan means Having Eyes. It is hard to be dogmatic about Hebrew names, and the meaning may vary with the translators choice of root words, but the twelve men selected by name by the Lord have names which closely reflect the Person of Jesus – God of the Rock / Peace of God / Serpent-person / Given of God / My God is Father / God has Heard / Reward of God / Father of Judgment / Brother of Help / Occurrence of God / God has Added / Brother of Purpose. And more curiously, the names of the leader's fathers closely reflect the people of Israel in relation to Christ Jesus – Spreader of Light, Rock of the Almighty, My Kinsman Is Noble or People of the Prince, Little One, Very Strong, My Kinsman is Glorious, The Rock has Ransomed, Feller (as in one who cuts down), My Kinsman is the Almighty, Troubled, Known of God, Having Eyes.

¹⁶ These were chosen from the congregation,

Apart from the names, this verse has the first new word in the Bible found in the book of Numbers, *qari*, or chosen. It is an adjective, not a verb, and so it would better be

translated as “the named” or “the called.” They were leaders, well known from their congregation, and called by God as such, and so they are...

16 (con’t) leaders of their fathers’ tribes, heads of the divisions in Israel.

In their capacity as the called, they are considered as the leaders of their father’s tribes of the twelve sons of Israel. As a secondary designation, they are *rashe alphe Yisrael*, or literally, “heads of the thousands of Israel.” However, “thousands” simply describes the highest number specified, and so we say “divisions.”

17 Then Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned by name,

As instructed in verse 3, both Moses and Aaron went forth and identified those called by God specifically. It is these fourteen men who went forth...

18 and they assembled all the congregation together on the first *day* of the second month;

On the same day as he was instructed to accomplish the task (as seen in verse 1), Moses went forth, got Aaron, rounded up the twelve called men, and together they called forth the entire congregation to conduct what the Lord had determined.

18 (con’t) and they recited their ancestry by families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, each one individually.

The census is taken of the males, twenty and above, each according to his skull (meaning a head-count), and they recited their ancestry. This would have been by the tribe, then by the family within the tribe, and then finally by the father’s house within the tribe. It is these records which would be maintained carefully from this point on. It is certain that each family had kept a genealogical record up to this point which could be referred to. In the gathering of this information, the genealogy of all of Israel’s great people would have been known. But the listing is especially important in tracing out the most important genealogy of all; that of Christ Jesus. From this point on, the records would be carefully maintained as is evidenced by the books of Chronicles, and even the genealogical records of Christ which are found in Matthew and Luke.

19 As the Lord commanded Moses,

This is an important closing verse for today in a couple of ways. The words reflect the general sentiment of the conduct of Moses' affairs. Words such as this are noted about Moses' obedience from time to time, showing his faithfulness to the Lord. This includes his faithfulness to carrying out the census directed here.

The words, "As the Lord commanded Moses," mean that Moses had not undertaken the census on his own. Despite being chosen as leader, he had not thought to magnify himself in such a manner. He simply led the people without caring about the size of those he was leading. It is, therefore, a statement of the humility of Moses. It is for reasons such as this that he will be called "very humble, more than all men who on the face of the earth," in Numbers 12.

On the contrary, the words are then to be contrasted to those concerning David. In 2 Samuel 24, and a parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 21, David took a census without being directed by the Lord, and without seeking the Lord's approval. It was an act of pride which ended in a great loss of life. As the King of Israel, David was instructed to read the words of the law every day of his life. That is recorded in Deuteronomy 17:18-20 –

"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."

David either didn't read his Bible, or he failed to pay attention while he was reading it. Either way, the lesson of Moses didn't transfer to him, he left the word behind, and it ended as a sad part of his story. But the failings of David in this situation led to other important developments in redemptive history, and at his death, the affair of the illegal census was not counted against him. The only failing that is noted as a permanent stain is found in 1 Kings 15 –

"...because David did *what was* right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." 1 Kings 15:5

In speaking of Moses, however, a stain upon his record is recorded for us as well. What he did is found here in the book of Numbers, and it was something that kept him from ever entering the Land of Promise. The Bible doesn't hide the faults of its heroes. Instead, it carefully records them to lead us to directing our eyes to the true Hero who has no faults at all.

^{19 (fin)} **so he numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai.**

Again, the Wilderness of Sinai is mentioned explicitly here as it was in verse 1. This is then given to contrast it from another census which is recorded in Numbers 26, and which is said to have been conducted in the plains of Moab by the Jordan. By that time, very few of the people who are counted in this census will be left alive; literally a mere handful. And of them, only two will actually enter into the Land of Promise. It would be for a new generation, not counted in those twenty and above here, to enter the land and carry on the mission which should have been just a month or so away for the people at this point in the story.

So you know, the word "number" is found about 265 times in the Bible, of those about 108 are found in this book. There is a lot of counting, a lot of detail, and a jillion names to sort through. If it seems like a daunting task, remember that when we started Leviticus, that did too. And yet that turned out to be a pile of gold sitting in a golden bowl. Surely Numbers will be that way too.

For now, let us be happy to have entered into this book which is logically placed here by our loving Creator to show us hints and shadows of the glory which lies ahead in Christ Jesus. As we wind through its pages, we already have the assurance that He is to be found here. Wonderful references to Him are openly and explicitly cited in the New Testament, right out of Numbers. And so we can be sure that the few examples they have provided will be complemented by many that aren't.

Indeed all of Scripture is given to lead us to an understanding of who Jesus is and what He came to do. And so as we close today, let me take just a minute to explain to you what Christ means to each person, and why it is so important that you understand who He is and how what He has done will affect your eternal destiny.

Closing Verse: *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." John 5:39*

Next Week: Numbers 1:20-54 *Surely it will all eventually become clear and make sense...* (Men of War, Offense and Defense) (2nd Numbers sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Census in the Wilderness

Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai
In the tabernacle of meeting, these things he was relaying
On the first day of the second month, in the second year after they
Had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

“Take a census of all the congregation
Of the children of Israel; take it carefully
By their families, by their fathers’ houses
According to the number of names, every male individually

From twenty years old and above
All who are able to go to war in Israel
You and Aaron shall number them by their armies
So shall you do as to you I tell

And with you there shall be a man from every tribe
Each one the head of his father’s house as I describe
“These are the names of the men who shall stand with you
From Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur

From Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai
From Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab for sure
From Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar
From Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon, him for sure

From the sons of Joseph: from Ephraim
———Elishama the son of Ammihud
From Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur
From Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni

From Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai
From Asher, Pagiel the son of Ocran
From Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel
From Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan

These are chosen as to you I tell
These were chosen from the congregation; as the word did compel
Leaders of their fathers' tribes, heads of the divisions in Israel
Then Moses and Aaron took these men

Who had been mentioned by name
And they assembled all the congregation together
On the first day of the second month, together they came
And they recited their ancestry by families

By their fathers' houses, as instructed accordingly
According to the number of names
From twenty years old and above, each one individually
As the Lord commanded Moses, by and by

So he numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai
Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess

And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true
We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand

And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown

Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days
Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 1:20–54 (MEN OF WAR; OFFENSE AND DEFENSE)

Our sermon verses display to us a rather vast army. To think of over six hundred thousand men rising up and engaging an enemy is almost hard to imagine. That is actually about half the size of the active US military today. In the Bible, there are engagements which record both larger and smaller armies. And not every soldier went out to every battle in Israel, and so we can just think of this giant number as a single force to be reckoned with at all times.

The number simply records those who are of proper age, and who are considered as capable of being a part of any engagement. However, with such a large number, one would think that the bravery-factor would be hugely increased for the individual. It is such an attitude though that will assuredly lead to trouble because with a trust in numbers, there will inevitably be a diminishing of a trust in the Lord. The men of Israel could have deduced this simply by thinking through what the Lord has done by leaving Levi out of the census as we just read.

If a portion of the men who are able-bodied are taken out of the total who are selected for war, and then that portion is told that they were to defend their charge even against their own people, it should tell them that their relationship with the Lord was still based on how they interacted with Him. If they could not approach the Lord under the pain of death, it obviously meant that they could not expect Him to be with them in battle if they had an attitude towards Him which was not appropriate, even if the entire army went out against a foe. It would also mean that a small number of those who did trust the Lord would have Him on their side. The rest of the Bible will bear this out. For Israel, great numbers will be defeated by small numbers, and at times small numbers will defeat vast armies. The measure of the army is based on the arm of the Lord. That is it.

Text Verse: *“No king is saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.*

¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for safety;

Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.” Psalm 33:16, 17

The key to understanding everything that is being told to us now comes down to understanding what God has done in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This won't be fully evident today. Numbers has a logical progression of thought which will lead to great

discoveries for us. What seems slow, maybe a bit tedious, and definitely hard to follow, is given to reveal great things.

If you ask, “Why do I need to know all these numbers of men, and how big each tribe is, and how they are laid out around the tabernacle?” My answer to you would be, “How willing are you to be patient and fit it all together?” Just like elsewhere, the Lord takes a lot of little information, and He ties it all together into a bigger picture. Today’s long list will find its perfect spot in your minds in the days ahead. For now, just enjoy the detail without getting bogged down in it. That was my job. You can just listen and process. How’s that? The detail is leading to a better understanding of Christ and His work. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Men of War (verses 20-46)

²⁰ Now the children of Reuben,

We now come to the actual record of counting those of each tribe, head by head. The formula will be rather consistent for most of the tribes, but there will be a few variations in the wording at times. This counting was mandated by the Lord, it was to be through Moses and Aaron, and it was to be coordinated and led in each tribe by those mentioned in verses 5-16. As it said in verse 4, “And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father’s house.” After that, verses 17 & 18 indicated that “Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned by name and they assembled all the congregation together...and they recited their ancestry by families, by fathers’ houses, according to the number of names.” This record was only for those twenty and above. That census was conducted, and Reuben is the first tribe to be detailed as to the totals which were so recorded. He was...

^{20 (con’t)} Israel’s oldest son,

Despite his low standing among the tribes, Reuben was the firstborn, and so he is reckoned first for the census. The reason for his diminished recognition was because of what he did in sleeping with his father’s concubine. In having done that, he brought a permanent stain on the tribe. That is recorded in Israel’s final words to this son in Genesis 49 –

“Reuben, you are my firstborn,
My might and the beginning of my strength,
The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.
4 Unstable as water, you shall not excel,
Because you went up to your father’s bed;
Then you defiled *it*—
He went up to my couch.”Genesis 49:3, 4

20 (con’t) **their genealogies**

The word is *toledoth*. It signifies generations, coming from the word *yalad*, a verb meaning “to bear,” “bring forth,” or “beget.” In Numbers, the word will be used twelve times in this chapter, and then once in verse 3:1 concerning the generations of Aaron and Moses, meaning the counting of the Levites in a different census. These recordings are done separately, and yet they will combine to give a full record of those who are considered the hosts of Israel. Together, they will form a surprising and beautiful pattern.

20 (con’t) **by their families, by their fathers’ house,**

As noted in the last sermon, two distinctions are made here. First “by their families,” and then “by their father’s households. The terms are somewhat changeable, but in general, it would be by clans and then by closer relationships.

20 (con’t) **according to the number of names,**

The names from the individual clans and houses were taken and recorded for this counting. It included...

20 (con’t) **every male individually,**

Literally, skull by skull, or head by head. No individual was neglected from the counting of those...

20 (con’t) **from twenty years old and above,**

This is the age selected by the Lord as appropriate for...

20 (con’t) **all who were able to go to war:**

These words, repeated from verse 3, explain the reason for the census. It is one of readiness for service in the Lord's army. Israel had encountered enemies already in the war with Amalek in Exodus 17. They were to march towards the Land of Promise and enter via routes which took them along the borders of other countries who may be hostile. They were to face enemies in Canaan who were to be destroyed. And, they were to be a united people, prepared to defend the land granted to them. Thus, a counting of the men of war was made to have them ready for any of these events as they came about.

²¹ those who were numbered of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred.

Reuben's numbers are given, rounded to the nearest hundred. He is the seventh largest tribe by number.

²² From the children of Simeon, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, of those who were numbered, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

The words here are identical to that of Reuben, except with the addition of a single word, *paqad*, translated as "of those who were numbered."

²³ those who were numbered of the tribe of Simeon were fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

Simeon grew more than his older brother Reuben. He is the third largest tribe by number.

²⁴ From the children of Gad, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

What? Gad? Why is Gad listed here in third position when he was eleventh earlier in verse 14? The reason is because of the arrangement of the tribes around the sanctuary which will be detailed in Chapter 2. Reuben will be the lead tribe of those to the south. With him will be Simeon and Gad. The arrangement is not faulty, but beautifully organized. The words of this verse drop out the word *paqad* from the previous verse, and they also now drop out the words, every male individually. The pattern of counting skull by skull has been set, and so it will no longer be repeated.

²⁵ those who were numbered of the tribe of Gad were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.

Gad is the only tribe that divides to a tenth rather than a hundred. An interesting parallel is that in the second census of Numbers 26, the tribe of Reuben will be the only tribe to do this. Both Reuben and Gad will be placed together on the south side of the tabernacle. Likewise, Reuben and Gad are the two tribes whose total land inheritance remained solely on the east side of the Jordan. Gad is the eighth largest tribe by number.

²⁶ From the children of Judah, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

Other than the name, the verse is stated exactly as verse 24.

²⁷ those who were numbered of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred.

Judah is the largest tribe, and it will be the head tribe of those placed east of the tabernacle, along with the next two tribes, Issachar and Zebulun. The large size of Judah is in accord with the blessing assigned by Jacob in Genesis 49, granting him the preeminence. The growth of Judah is in accord with that blessing.

²⁸ From the children of Issachar, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

Again, the wording is identical to verse 24.

²⁹ those who were numbered of the tribe of Issachar were fifty-four thousand four hundred.

Issachar is the fifth largest among the tribes.

³⁰ From the children of Zebulun, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

And again, the wording is identical to verse 24.

³¹ those who were numbered of the tribe of Zebulun were fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

Zebulun is the fourth largest among the tribes.

³² From the sons of Joseph, the children of Ephraim, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

Now a change in wording takes place as the tribe of Joseph is divided among his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Other than that, the words are identical to verse 24. The younger, Ephraim is mentioned first, having received the greater blessing from Jacob. Ephraim will be the lead tribe on the west side of the tabernacle. He will be joined with Manasseh and Benjamin. All are descendants of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife.

³³ those who were numbered of the tribe of Ephraim were forty thousand five hundred.

And indeed, his numbers are greater than those of his brother Manasseh. Ephraim is tenth in size among the tribes of Israel.

³⁴ From the children of Manasseh, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

The wording is identical to verse 24 once again.

³⁵ those who were numbered of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred.

Manasseh is the smallest of the twelve tribes.

³⁶ From the children of Benjamin, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

The pattern of verse 24 continues, word for word, here.

³⁷ those who were numbered of the tribe of Benjamin were thirty-five thousand four hundred.

Benjamin is the eleventh in size among the tribes. Thus, the three smallest tribes, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin are all located together on the west side of the tabernacle. Why would this be?

³⁸ From the children of Dan, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

Again, the words are identical to verse 24. Dan will be the lead tribe on the north side of the tabernacle. He will be joined with Asher and Naphtali.

³⁹ those who were numbered of the tribe of Dan were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

Dan is the second largest of the tribes. As a curious side note between Benjamin and Dan. Benjamin had more natural sons than any other son of Israel, ten. And yet he is here listed as the second smallest tribe. Dan had the smallest number of natural sons, one. And yet he is listed here as the second largest tribe.

⁴⁰ From the children of Asher, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

And again, the pattern of words from verse 24 is maintained.

⁴¹ those who were numbered of the tribe of Asher were forty-one thousand five hundred.

Asher ranks number nine in size among the listed tribes.

⁴² From the children of Naphtali, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:

This is the last record, and it continues the words of verse 24.

⁴³ those who were numbered of the tribe of Naphtali were fifty-three thousand four hundred.

This last named tribe of Naphtali is sixth in size among the tribes.

⁴⁴ These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each one representing his father's house.

This verse, though seemingly unnecessary, is similar to what is recorded after the building of the tabernacle. Detailed instructions were first given for its construction. Next came lengthy details of its construction, showing exacting adherence to the instructions given. This showed that what was instructed was then accurately followed through with. After that, a statement acknowledging the accomplished act was given. The same is true here. Thus, we could term this “an obedience verse.” In order to see this, we can put the command given in verses 3 & 4, and then the follow-through given in this verse, side by side –

“You and Aaron shall number them by their armies. ⁴ And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house.”

“These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each one representing his father's house.”

Everything associated with the tabernacle is given minute instruction. It is then followed up with an account of the work done. It is then finished up with a statement showing exact obedience to the original command.

⁴⁵ So all who were numbered of the children of Israel, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war in Israel—

The thought here is that a totaling of the numbers acquired by each of the leaders was then presented to Moses and Aaron who took those numbers and added them up. In this...

⁴⁶ all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

The number is exactly the same as the number which was given in Exodus 38:26, when a half shekel tax was imposed on each man who was twenty and above. This silver was used for the sockets of the sanctuary, the bases of the veil, the hooks for the pillars, the

overlay of the capitals, and the bands for them. What seems obvious, is that the numbers were rounded up or down to the nearest hundred, except for Gad who rounded to the nearest ten. Likewise, in both Exodus 12 and Numbers 11, the total number of men is simply rounded to 600,000. The rounding to tens is something noted in Exodus 18:21.

*A great and vast array is set for war
The armies are arranged for when the time comes
But even with a handful, we could defeat countless more
Our Defender is with us at the sound of battle drums*

*We are the Lord's army; we are battle-ready
If we all go as one, or if only a portion engages the foe
We shall prevail; our ranks are sound and steady
The Lord is with us, whenever to battle we go*

*He is our Leader, we shall never quake in fear
No army can defeat us when we trust the Lord
His name is great; famous both far and near
We stand at the ready, as He draws forth His sword*

II. Charge of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (verses 47-54)

⁴⁷ But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe;

What appears to be the case from these words, is that the counting which was noted in Exodus 38 is the same census that is being referred to here. This would seem likely from the previous verse because both recorded the same number, but this verse adds more weight to that. The Levites are not counted in this census. If all men were counted in the previous census, but now no Levites were counted, there would be a great disparity between the two numbers. This is because the first census said nothing about not counting the Levites. What this means, is that the silver collected in the census is applied retroactively to the construction of the implements used in the tabernacle. Though those things were already made, and the tabernacle was already standing, the silver for them is reckoned based on the census which has now come sometime later.

⁴⁸ for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying:

With very few exceptions, translations read this in the past tense. And yet it is the exact same words, *v'dabber Yehovah el Moshe lemor*, that are elsewhere always translated as, "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying." Putting this in the past tense is simply wrong. Nothing has yet been said in the Bible about what will next be said. If yours has it in the past tense, make a note that it is likely present tense. The formal appointment of the Levites for their special service is now to be made. The Lord first directed the counting of the twelve tribes, as noted by name. He now will show why He did not name anyone from Levi. That begins with...

⁴⁹ "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel;

The Lord specifically commanded, by name, the leaders of the other tribes, and the census which was required. Now he specifically commands that Levi is not to be numbered. The census was one for war-capability. Levi is to be exempt from this requirement. They will be employed in another type of war and they, as a tribe, will serve an entirely different purpose...

⁵⁰ but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony,

The Levites' job was not to go out to war, but to care for the tabernacle of the Testimony. This would include its defense. Thus they are the last defense in a war, but they were also the permanent protectors of it even when there was no war. Here the edifice is called *miskan ha'edut*, or the "tabernacle of the Testimony" for only the second time in Scripture. It signifies the dwelling place of the Testimony, meaning the two tablets contained within the ark. Levi means "attached." They are now *attached* to the sanctuary in a unique and particular way. Their care of it will extend...

^{50 (con't)} over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it;

Everything associated with the sanctuary, from tent peg to the ark itself, was to be cared for by the tribe of Levi. This would include being responsible for it as it was taken down, moved, and set up...

^{50 (con't)} they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings;

Some things could be carried on wagons, some things were so holy that they had to be carried by men with the use of poles on their shoulders. But all items of the tabernacle had to be carried solely by the Levites. When it was not being transported...

⁵⁰ (con't) **they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle.**

The Levites were to be an honor guard around the tabernacle, and they were to ensure that it was always in perfect condition. Anything that needed care or repair was to be tended to. Anything which required regular service was their responsibility alone.

⁵¹ **And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up.**

The taking down and setting up of the tabernacle would be a large task. The materials were exceedingly heavy, they were specially designed to fit together in a particular order, and they were not to be carelessly rolled up and then unrolled and slapped together. They were to be handled with the greatest care. If one has ever watched the work of putting together a circus tent, you know the labor is intense, laborious, and precise. In the case of the tabernacle, it is the same, but a special dignity was to be given to the process. This special job now belonged to Levi and only Levi...

⁵¹ (con't) **The outsider who comes near shall be put to death.**

The *zur*, or outsider, signifies "another." Thus, this is referring to anyone other than Levi. Those of other tribes could only approach in accord with the regulations already provided. Any infraction outside of what is granted for the conduct of the sacrificial system was to be handled via execution. Levi had already proven himself faithful to handle a sword. He and his brother Simeon used the sword to kill an entire town of men who had defiled their sister. And then, in Exodus 32 the Levites strapped swords to their sides and went throughout the camp of Israel, slaying each his brother, his companion, and his neighbor during the offense of the golden calf. They would now be expected to demonstrate that same loyalty at all times henceforth. To fail in this calling would be worse than the failure of the armies of Israel in battle because it would show contempt for the very sanctuary of the Lord.

⁵² **The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies;**

From this, it is obvious that there was to be a specific arrangement of the tribes, not just a haphazard encampment, but a purposeful layout. There would be tents formed into camps. These would be according to a standard which was to be on display, and these would then signify their armies as already defined by the census.

In this is a new word, *degel*, or “standard.” It will be seen 13 times in Numbers and once in the Song of Solomon, in a particularly beautiful verse. It comes from the verb *dagal* which signifies raising a flag, and thus to be conspicuous. Chapter 2 will leave us with the impression that there are but four main standards, one for each of the four main tribes, Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan. Nothing explicit is given to describe these flags, but logical conclusions about what each division signified can be made from Scripture. That will be presented for your itchy ears eventually.

53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony,

The Levites’ encampment is now explicitly stated. They are to encamp immediately around the tabernacle of the Testimony. It is not yet stated how they will be laid out, just that they are to be the inner protection of the entire encampment and for the tabernacle. Again, as was done in verse 50, the stress is on the Testimony, the tablets of the law. And there is a reason for this...

53 (con’t) that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel;

A new noun, *qetseph*, signifying the state of indignation or wrath, is introduced. The Levites were to guard the tabernacle for a specific reason. If there was a breakthrough, wrath would come upon the congregation. The word *negeph*, or plague, is used in Numbers 8:19 in the same manner as *qetseph* is used here. Understanding this, we will now look at a rather complicated matter which takes us back to the ransom money mentioned in Exodus 13:12, and how we can know that the census mentioned there is the same census mentioned here –

“When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when *you* number them.”

The plague, which is a result of the wrath, was to be stayed by the payment of a ransom. In the taking of this census, each man counted was to give a ransom for himself. This seems odd because the people had already been redeemed by the Lord –

“You in Your mercy have led forth
The people whom You have redeemed;
You have guided *them* in Your strength
To Your holy habitation.” Exodus 15:13

The noun *kopher*, or ransom, comes from the verb *kaphar* which means “to appease.” It is then “a covering,” and thus figuratively, “a redemption price.” The required ransom payment is tied in with the numbering of the people. Its intent was to impress upon the minds of the people that they were actually unworthy to be a part of the holy congregation. Because of this, they would need to pay a covering for that unworthiness. The Lord had redeemed them in a state of unworthiness and now, before they set out, they were to pay a ransom as a personal acknowledgment of that redemption.

When the ransom is paid, in the eyes of the Lord it would be as if their unworthiness no longer existed and thus they would be kept safe from the justly deserved punishment of the righteous Judge of mankind. With this covering, they could then come serve the Lord without any fear of danger. But this service did not include that which was reserved for the Levites. How the Levites will be set apart for their duties is yet ahead in Numbers. But that they will be is alluded to now. They alone had the charge of the tabernacle. For those in the census though, the paying of the ransom is directly tied into the idea of being saved from a plague. The word *negeph*, or “plague,” which can be expected for disobedience was first seen in Exodus 12 –

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the Lord. ¹³ Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the **plague** shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.”

There is a direct connection between the shedding of the blood of the lamb and the ransom payment of silver for the men in the census. One logically follows along with the other, redemption and ransom. The terms, though similar in meaning, do differ. Redemption is wider in its application than ransom. This noun, *negeph*, or plague, is used seven times in the Bible and all are in relation to the people of Israel. The final time is in Isaiah 8 where it is ascribed directly to the Lord in relation to them –

“He will be as a sanctuary,
But a stone of **stumbling** and a rock of offense
To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Isaiah 8:14

This verse from Isaiah is then used by Paul when speaking of Christ in Romans 9, and by Peter – also speaking of Christ, in 1 Peter 2. In essence, Christ *became* the very plague upon Israel that the blood of the lamb and the ransom money was to protect them from.

In their rejection of Him, they rejected what these types and shadows only pictured. The wrath and the plague are united together in one account concerning rebellion in Numbers 16. Coming soon to a sermon near you.

⁵³ (con't) and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.”

The word *mishmereth*, or charge, was also used in Leviticus 8:35 during the ordination of Aaron and his sons. It indicates to keep watch, or to guard. Thus, it is the watch of the Lord. If they failed to keep the watch of the Lord during their ordination, they would have died. The Levites are to be given the watch of the Lord, which if violated, would also result in death. There is the sense of holiness which is not to be violated. It is a somber warning which will require proof of the Lord's word when a challenge is made. The outcome is obvious; bad news for the offenders.

^{*54} Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so they did.

As I said earlier, like the giving of the instructions for the making of the sanctuary, and then the details of its construction, things are stated to show a logical process – command, execution, and then acknowledgment of what has been done. This is now how chapter 1 of Numbers closes out. To show how consistent this is, we can refer to the final statement concerning the work of the tabernacle –

“According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. ⁴³ Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.” Exodus 39:42, 43

As we think on the things we've learned so far in Numbers, just imagine... these were real people who really counted up their numbers for preparing the army of the Lord. They really encamped around His tabernacle, and the events that have happened, and that will come to pass, actually occurred. They were being used as living units of a spiritual picture of God working in human history. We saw a taste of that today. After all the counting and numbering, we saw how a segment of it actually pointed to Christ Jesus. This will continue all the way through the book as God reveals His love for His creatures in types, shadows, and pictures of the coming of His Son. In the end, this seemingly disjointed book falls into perfect alignment when we realize this. As God has put so much attention – literally thousands of years of detail – into the compilation of this treasure, it should indicate to us that we had better get the obvious parts correct. As

everything points to Jesus, we need to respond to Jesus. Before we close today, I would like to tell you how you can...

Closing Verse: *“Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number one-fourth of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!”Numbers 23:10*

Next Week: Numbers 2:1-34 *In getting their position around the tabernacle, there was no paying of bribes... (The Layout of the Tribes) (3rd Numbers Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Men of War; Offense and Defense

Now the children of Reuben, Israel’s oldest son
Their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house too
According to the number of names
Every male individually, in this list of who’s who

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Reuben
———so the record said

Were forty-six thousand five hundred
From the children of Simeon
Their genealogies by their families, by their fathers’ house too
Of those who were numbered, according to the number of names

Every male individually, in this list of who’s who
From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Simeon
———so the record said

Are fifty-nine thousand three hundred
From the children of Gad
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house

According to the number of names
— — —-as the record does state
From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Gad
— — —-a result which rhymes with "thrifty"

Were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty
From the children of Judah
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
— — —-as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Judah
— — —-so the record said

Were seventy-four thousand six hundred
From the children of Issachar
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
— — —-as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Issachar
— — —-so the record said

Were fifty-four thousand four hundred
From the children of Zebulun
Their genealogies by their families, small and great

By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
— — —-as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Zebulun
— — —-so the record said

Were fifty-seven thousand four hundred
From the sons of Joseph, the children of Ephraim
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
— — —-as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Ephraim
— — —-so the record said

Were forty thousand five hundred
From the children of Manasseh
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
— — —-as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Manasseh
— — —-so the record said

Were thirty-two thousand two hundred
From the children of Benjamin
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
— — —-as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Benjamin
———so the record said

Were thirty-five thousand four hundred
From the children of Dan
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
———as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Dan
———so the record said

Were sixty-two thousand seven hundred
From the children of Asher
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
———as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof
Those who were numbered of the tribe of Asher
———so the record said

Were forty-one thousand five hundred
From the children of Naphtali
Their genealogies by their families, small and great
By their fathers' house
According to the number of names
———as the record does state

From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war thereof

Those who were numbered of the tribe of Naphtali
———so the record said

Were fifty-three thousand four hundred
These are the ones who were numbered
Whom Moses and Aaron numbered there and then
With the leaders of Israel

Each one representing his father's house, twelve men
So all who were numbered of the children of Israel
By their fathers' houses, so the account does tell
From twenty years old and above
All who were able to go to war in Israel

All who were numbered came to a total rhyming with "thrifty"
They were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty
But the Levites were not numbered among them
———by their fathers' tribe

For the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying; so He did tell
"Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number
Nor take a census of them among the children of Israel
But you shall appoint the Levites
Over the tabernacle of the Testimony
Over all its furnishings
And over all things that belong to it, so shall it be
They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings
———so this task they shall tackle

They shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle
And when the tabernacle is to go forward
The Levites shall take it down, so they shall do
And when the tabernacle is to be set up
The Levites shall set it up, as I have instructed you
The outsider who comes near

Shall be put to death; so that all others shall fear
The children of Israel shall pitch their tents
Everyone by his own camp

Everyone by his own standard
According to their armies; their designation stamp
But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony
That there may be no wrath on the congregation
———of the children of Israel

And the Levites shall keep charge
Of the tabernacle of the Testimony, as to you I tell
Thus the children of Israel did, as stated
According to all that the Lord commanded Moses
———so they did as he related

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true
We long for the water in this barren land

May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone

We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown

Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days
Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 2:1-34 (THE LAYOUT OF THE TRIBES)

In the verses of this chapter, we see the tribe of Judah is said to be “on the east side, toward the rising of the sun.” There is a debate what that means. Some scholars put Judah to the far east, and then the other tribes collocated with him to his west, closer to the sanctuary. Others will put him in the middle of the three with one on each side of him. And others will put him on the east side of the sanctuary, directly next to it, with the other tribes yet further east. It actually makes a difference which is correct, at least in a theological sense. But before I explain that I’d like to read a portion of the words from the Pulpit Commentary concerning the camp layout as we have just read.

“The Targum of Palestine (which embodies the traditional learning of the Palestinian Jews of the 17th century) says that the camp covered a space of twelve square miles. Modern writers, starting from some measurements of the Roman camps given by Polybius, compute the necessary space at three or three and a half miles square. This would require the strictest discipline and economy of space, and makes no provision for cattle; but supposing that the women and children were closely packed, it might suffice. It is, however, evident that there would be very few places in the wilderness, if any, where more than three square miles of fairly level ground could be found. In the plains of Moab the desired room might perhaps have been found, but scarcely anywhere in the wilderness of Paran. We must conclude, therefore, that this order of encampment was an ideal order, beautiful indeed by reason of its faultless regularity and equality, but only to be attained in practice as circumstances should permit, more or less. ... Here is one of those cases in which the spiritual significance of an order is of such importance that it matters comparatively little whether it could be literally carried out or not.”

What they are saying is that for most of their time in the wilderness, and because of the immense size of the congregation, there simply wasn’t normally enough open space for the camps to be laid out as is specified here. Thus, the presentation is one of intent, but not actuality at all times. Understanding this, we can take a brief journey to Washington DC, where the Washington monument is located. As a monument, it is the tallest of all federal monuments in the district. Capping the monument is an aluminum pyramid 22.6 cm high and 13.9 cm at its base. It weighs 2.85 pounds. At the time of its completion, the monument was the tallest man-made structure in the world. Even today, at 555’, it is the tallest free-standing masonry structure in the world. It has a corresponding base of 55’ as well. On each side of this cap, inscriptions are made. On the north, south, and

east, there are names, dates, and information related to the monument. The east side of the cap contains these two words, LAUS DEO.

What this means is that as the sun rises over the district each day, the first thing that it alights upon which belongs to the people of the nation, are the words Praise God. Somebody had been reading his Bible, and somebody also felt that honoring God, as He directs to Israel in His word, was a fitting way to cap this marvelous monument belonging to the people. The approving committee obviously agreed.

Text Verse: *“How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!
Your dwellings, O Israel!
⁶Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens by the riverside,
Like aloes planted by the Lord,
Like cedars beside the waters.” Numbers 24:5, 6*

Israel, under ideal circumstances, was to be a praise and a glory to God. They were to encamp around Him as a holy people. The word used in Numbers 2:3 to state where Judah was to be situated is *qedemah*, or eastward. It is variously translated as “to the east,” “eastward,” “on the east side,” etc. Based on the naming of Judah, meaning Praise, it seems unlikely that they would be anything but wholly eastward as the lead tribe, both when camping and departing for subsequent locations. This seems to be the intent of what is meant when Judah is mentioned eastward, towards the rising of the sun. The Lord was giving a theological lesson in what He expected of His people. That lesson is one of many treasures which is to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Chapter 2 of the Book of Numbers

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

This is the first of nine times that the Lord is said to speak to both Moses *and* Aaron in Numbers. With the numbers now settled from the census, the divisions of those who have been numbered will be directed where to camp in relation to the tabernacle. As is typical in Scripture, there is a logical progression of thought as each step proceeds onto the next. When something seems out of order, it is usually because it is given to provide an unusual sense of clarity about a matter which otherwise might have been overlooked. The Lord has built his house, He has given instructions concerning it, and

how He is to be approached and how his people are to act. He then counted the number of His subjects. He will now order them according to a set plan for their march towards Canaan.

² “Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard,

The words of this verse are similar to verse 1:52, with some variation. As noted in that verse, the *degel*, or standard, is specified for the layout of the divisions. The account will focus on four main standards. Under these four standards is another division...

^{2 (con't)} beside the emblems of his father's house;

There are twelve named tribes. Leaving out Levi, and dividing Joseph into Ephraim and Manasseh makes twelve. These words indicate twelve emblems. The word here translated as “emblem” is *oth*. It signifies a sign. It is something distinguishing. It can be a sign such as the heavenly bodies which are used for signs and for seasons. It can be a sign such as the sign of circumcision. It can be a miracle which then proves the power of the Lord, thus being a sign to the people. In this case, it is a sign or emblem, which distinguished the father's house. Jewish commentaries deal with what the twelve household banners were; the Bible does not. Only four main standards can be inferred as to what they actually were.

^{2 (con't)} they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.

No specific distance is given, but it is likely that they were 2000 cubits distant from the tent of meeting. That is over half a mile. This can be inferred from what is stated in Joshua 3:4 –

“Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed *this* way before.”

This is speculation, but it is a set distance which is explicitly given as a marker of separation. It would then be a suitable distance to allow for the Levites who will camp between the twelve tribes and the tent of meeting. Such a distance was to imprint upon the people the holiness of God, and their inability to approach Him directly unless they came with the proper sacrifices, and through an acceptable mediator. The separation then is thus a picture of our separation from God, and our need for Christ as our Sacrifice, and Christ as our High Priest and Mediator.

It is likely, if the coming of the Lord is soon (as it surely is), that this is a picture of the separation between Christ's first advent, and our ability to come near to God. Two thousand cubits then would be reflective of the two thousand years that the church needs to traverse before they can come near to God in reality.

³ On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies;

The wording here is specific. It first identifies *qedemah*, or eastward, and then *mizrakha*, or towards where the sun rises. *Qedem*, or east, needs to be understood. First, Judah is before the other tribes, but the word *qedem* is figuratively used to signify the past, or former times. The garden which was in Eden was eastward, and when man was cast out of the garden, the cherubim were placed at the east end of the garden to guard the way to the tree of life. Likewise, the cherubim woven into the veil before the ark faced east. It is in the east now, in this advanced location, that the forces of Judah are instructed to be camped under their *degel*, or standard. The standard of Judah is that of a lion. How we can determine the four standards will be explained later.

The name Judah means "Praise." As the advanced guard of the armies of Israel, it would then indicate the thought, "Praise first before the Lord." Judah is first in praise, and Judah is already known to be the tribe from which Messiah would come. Judah is east, or from before, just as Messiah would have his origins from of old, even from everlasting, as prophesied by Micah. And yet He would be the Dayspring from on high as prophesied by Zechariah, father of John the Baptist. Everything about the tribe and its placement points to Messiah.

^{3 (con't)} and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be the leader of the children of Judah."

As seen in Chapter 1, Nahshon means Enchanter, or Serpent-person. Amminadav means My Kinsman Is Noble or People of the Prince.

⁴ And his army was numbered at seventy-four thousand six hundred.

This is the total recorded in verse 1:27.

⁵ "Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar, and Nethanel the son of Zuar shall be the leader of the children of Issachar."

Issachar is next named, and would be camped next to, but (probably) west of, Judah. As I said, Judah is said to be “eastward,” and it is actually unclear if he was furthest east, or simply eastward of the sanctuary with the other tribes yet further east. I would say furthest east. Issachar is under Judah’s *degel*, or standard. Issachar means “He is Wages.” Nethanel is named as their leader. Nethanel means, “Given of God.” He is the son of Zuar, or Little One. Issachar is the littlest of the three tribes to the east.

⁶ And his army was numbered at fifty-four thousand four hundred.

This is the total recorded in verse 1:29.

⁷ “Then comes the tribe of Zebulun, and Eliab the son of Helon shall be the leader of the children of Zebulun.”

Zebulun would be next to, but west of, Issachar, but still under the *degel*, or standard, of Judah. Zebulun means, “Glorious Dwelling Place;” a fitting name for being closest to the sanctuary on the east side. Eliab means My God is Father. Helon means Very Strong.

⁸ And his army was numbered at fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

This is the total recorded in verse 1:31.

⁹ “All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Judah, one hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred—these shall break camp first.

The combined strength of the three tribes, all under one standard, that of Judah, is listed. Then it is specifically noted that these three together shall break camp first. Judah means Praise, and thus – like their camping – it forms a picture for us to understand, “Praise is to go first before the Lord.” It is of note that these first three tribes have been placed next to one another as nearest of kin. Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun are the three youngest sons born to Leah. As Judah was the oldest of the three, the two younger tribes would not begrudge their older brother being chief of their companies.

¹⁰ “On the south side shall be the standard of the forces with Reuben according to their armies,

The next *degel*, or standard, is that of Reuben. The standard of Reuben is that of a man. Reuben is the furthest *teman*, or south of the sanctuary. The word *teman* is the same as *yamin*, or right, because the south is the right side of a person when facing east.

Reuben means, "See, as Son." As Jesus is the Son of God, He is also at the Right hand of God.

¹⁰ (con't) **and the leader of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur."**

Elizur means God of the Rock. Isaiah 51:1 combines righteousness in with the rock. Shedeur means Spreader of Light. As the south side receives the greater illumination of the sun in the northern hemisphere, it seems both names are well-suited to the right side.

¹¹ **And his army was numbered at forty-six thousand five hundred.**

This is the total recorded in verse 1:21.

¹² **"Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon, and the leader of the children of Simeon shall be Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai."**

Simeon falls under the *degel*, or standard of Reuben. He would (probably) camp next to, but north of, Reuben. Simeon means "He Who Hears." Shelumiel means Peace of God. Psalm 85:10 combines righteousness in with peace. Zurishaddai means Rock of the Almighty. Again the idea of the rock and righteousness are seen on the right side. The names do fit their location.

¹³ **And his army was numbered at fifty-nine thousand three hundred.**

This is the total recorded in verse 1:23.

¹⁴ **"Then comes the tribe of Gad, and the leader of the children of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel."**

Gad falls under the *degel*, or standard, of Reuben. He would camp next to, but north of Simeon. Gad means both Troop and Fortune. Eliasaph means God has Added. The name Reuel is an interchange recorded in some manuscripts. In Chapter 1 the name is Deuel. Deuel means Known of God. Reuel means Friend of God. The letters Dalet and Resh are extremely similar in appearance and so they are often interchanged. By accident or on purpose is debated.

¹⁵ **And his army was numbered at forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.**

This is the total recorded in verse 1:25.

¹⁶ “All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Reuben, one hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty—they shall be the second to break camp.

The combined strength of the three tribes, all under one standard, that of Reuben, is listed. Reuben was the firstborn, but he lost his right to this and so His standard is second behind Judah. Simeon was born after Reuben, and so he is rightly placed under Reuben. And then Gad was the son of their mother Leah’s handmaid. Thus, his is rightly placed under both of them.

¹⁷ “And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards.

At first, one might assume there is a contradiction in the Bible between here and Chapter 10. In 10:17, it says that “the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set out, carrying the tabernacle.” If the translations followed the original, there would be no contradiction. The words here are *ohel moed*, tent of meeting. In 10:17, it says *mishkan*, tabernacle. The tabernacle is contained within the tent of meeting, and thus it is divided up and moved at different times, between various tribes. This is confirmed in Numbers 10:21 where the holy things from the tabernacle were transported after Reuben’s group. This might seem uninteresting until someone tries to trip up your faith by showing you supposed contradictions which stem from incorrect translations like the Geneva Bible, the KJV, the NKJV and others. This doesn’t say that the tent of meeting would follow Reuben. It simply says it will move out in the middle of the camps. No error exists.

¹⁸ “On the west side *shall be* the standard of the forces with Ephraim according to their armies,

The next *degel*, or standard, is that of Ephraim. The standard of Ephraim is that of an ox. Ephraim is the furthest *yam*, or west of the sanctuary. The word *yam* means “sea.” When facing east in Israel, the sea is to the west. But more, when facing the throne, symbolically in the west, in Revelation 4:6, just before the throne is a sea like glass. Ephraim means, “Double Fruitful.”

¹⁸ (con't) **and the leader of the children of Ephraim *shall be* Elishama the son of Ammihud."**

Elishama means God has Heard. Ammihud means My Kinsman is Glorious.

¹⁹ **And his army was numbered at forty thousand five hundred.**

This is the total recorded in verse 1:33.

²⁰ **"Next to him *comes* the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the children of Manasseh *shall be* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur."**

Manasseh falls under the *degel*, or standard, of Ephraim. He would (probably) camp next to, but east of, Ephraim. Manasseh means "To forget," but it also means "From a debt." Gamaliel means Reward of God. Pedahzur means The Rock has Ransomed.

²¹ **And his army was numbered at thirty-two thousand two hundred.**

This is the total recorded in verse 1:35.

²² **"Then *comes* the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the children of Benjamin *shall be* Abidan the son of Gideoni."**

Benjamin falls under the *degel*, or standard, of Ephraim. He would camp next to, but east of, Manasseh. Benjamin means "Son of my right hand." Abidan means Father of Judgment. Gideoni means Feller (as in one who cuts down). These names, along with the tribes they belong to, all fit well with their placement to the west.

²³ **And his army was numbered at thirty-five thousand four hundred.**

This is the total recorded in verse 1:37.

²⁴ **"All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Ephraim, one hundred and eight thousand one hundred—they shall be the third to break camp.**

The combined strength of the three tribes, all under one standard, that of Ephraim, is listed. All three of these are of the lineage of Rachel. Benjamin was born to her. Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Rachel's son Joseph. It is logical to have them here because

it is a close family grouping. It also forms a beautiful picture of the Lord's workings in redemption as we will eventually see.

²⁵ "The standard of the forces with Dan *shall be* on the north side according to their armies,

The final *degel*, or standard, is that of Dan. The standard of Dan is an eagle. Dan is the furthest *tsaphon*, or north of the sanctuary. The word *tsaphon* means hidden, and thus dark. It has the sense of gloomy or unknown because the north receives the least sunlight in the northern hemisphere. Dan means "Judge."

^{25 (con't)} and the leader of the children of Dan *shall be* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai."

Ahiezer means Brother of Help. Ammishaddai means My Kinsman is the Almighty.

²⁶ And his army was numbered at sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

This is the total recorded in verse 1:39.

²⁷ "Those who camp next to him *shall be* the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the children of Asher *shall be* Pagiel the son of Ocran."

Asher falls under the *degel*, or standard, of Dan. He would camp next to, but (probably) south of, Dan. Asher means "Happy." Pagiel means Occurrence of God. Ocran means Troubled.

²⁸ And his army was numbered at forty-one thousand five hundred.

This is the total recorded in verse 1:41.

²⁹ "Then *comes* the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the children of Naphtali *shall be* Ahira the son of Enan."

Naphtali falls under the *degel*, or standard, of Dan. He would camp next to, but south of, Asher. Naphtali means My Wrestling, or My Twisting. Ahira means Brother of Purpose. Enan means Having Fountains, or Having Eyes.

³⁰ And his army was numbered at fifty-three thousand four hundred.

This is the total recorded in verse 1:43.

³¹ “All who were numbered of the forces with Dan, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred—

The combined strength of the three tribes, all under one standard, that of Dan, is listed. Dan was the oldest son of the handmaid Bilhah. To him is added the two younger sons born to the handmaids. Thus there would be a closeness in this grouping because of this. As you can see, under these four groupings, there is an immense wisdom in how they are organized. The families were most closely united in these four groupings. Also, the grouping with Dan is the second largest grouping, and it is also the last to set out. Thus, the front guard is the largest, and the rear guard is the second largest. There is wisdom in the military groupings as well.

^{31 (con't)} they shall break camp last, with their standards.”

Here the word “last” is *akharon*. It is essentially the opposite of *qedem* which was used for Judah. Whereas *qedem* is east, *akharon* signifies west when facing east. Whereas *qedem* means before, *akharon* signifies behind. But, when speaking of time, *qedem* speaks of the past, (the first) or former times, but *akharon* speaks of the future, (the last) or latter times. All of this is in relation to facing east, or looking forward.

³² These *are* the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers’ houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

This verse is derived from the totals relayed to us in 1:45, 46.

³³ But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

This is in accord with the Lord’s words to Moses in verses 1:47-53.

³⁴ Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers’ houses.

The words here are taken in a future manner, and apply to the entire duration of the wilderness wanderings. The people are still at Sinai, and they have not yet departed. But

when they did, the record here shows that the manner laid out by Moses was followed according to the word of the Lord. This was a systematic camping which, in ideal conditions, was so beautiful, and so perfectly laid out, that it caused Balaam to cry out the words which were our text verse of the day – “How lovely are your tents, O Jacob! Your dwellings, O Israel!”

With this chapter now finished, we still need to have explained how we can deduce what the *degel*, or standard for each of the four groupings was. Tradition says what they are – which is often more than useless, and which normally leads to something meaning whatever one wishes – but the Bible also alludes to each. First is the standard of Judah, the Lion. Only one time in the Bible is the Lion specifically connected to Jesus. That is in Revelation 5:5 –

“Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” Revelation 5:5

The obvious connotation then is that the Lion is specifically connected to Judah. This confirms what was stated in Genesis –

“Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise;
Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies;
Your father’s children shall bow down before you.
⁹ Judah *is* a lion’s whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?” Genesis 49:8, 9

If we can determine one other standard, then we can form a pattern. And it can be done. Ephraim is represented by an ox several times in Scripture. The first time is in Deuteronomy 33. In the blessing of Joseph, of which Ephraim was the preeminent son, he is equated to a wild ox in verse 17. In Hosea 10:11, Ephraim is called a “trained heifer,” meaning an ox. He is again called a bull in Jeremiah 31:18. These are sufficient to give us two standards based on a vision of four living creatures seen in Ezekiel 1 –

“As for the likeness of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. ¹¹ Thus *were* their faces.” Ezekiel 1:10, 11

Ezekiel beheld a vision of four living creatures each with four faces. The faces are described first as a man. Thus it is the one Ezekiel is seeing first. To the right is a lion. The right from Ezekiel's position then corresponds to the east as the tribes are laid out. Thus, the man would be to the south, facing him, where Reuben would be. On the left, meaning the west, was an ox. That matches where Ephraim, the ox, is according to the camp layout. And that leaves the eagle facing north, where Dan is. Thus, we can, with all certainty, see the four standards of the tribes – Judah is a Lion; Reuben is a Man; Ephraim is an Ox; and Dan is an eagle. From there, we can see the intended order of these in a numerical sequence from the book of Revelation –

“The first living creature *was* like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle.” Revelation 4:7

The order of the faces is described by John in the same order as the layout of the four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew describes Jesus as the great Son of David, and thus King. The symbol of a king is a lion. The king is equated to a lion in Proverbs 19:12 –

“The king's wrath *is* like the roaring of a lion,
But his favor *is* like dew on the grass.”

Kings are again equated with lions in Jeremiah 50:17 –

“Israel *is* like scattered sheep;
The lions have driven *him* away.
First the king of Assyria devoured him;
Now at last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones.”

The symbolism is found in Ezekiel 32:2 also. Next Mark focuses on Jesus the Servant. The ox is considered a servant animal. In the third Gospel, Luke focuses on Jesus' humanity, calling Christ the Son of Man. He uses the term 26 times in this way. And finally, John focuses on Christ's deity, calling Him the Son of God, specifically 10 times, but alluding to the Father/Son relationship continually. The eagle is thus a symbol of John's Gospel, reflecting the Divine nature of Christ.

The camps are laid out by four standards in Numbers; the standards are revealed to us in Ezekiel; and their order is given to us in Revelation – an order that matches that of the four gospels. Thus, the four sets of tribes, consisting of twelve individual tribes,

branching out from the tabernacle to the east, west, south, and north are reflective of the four gospels. They are the witness of the Lord who came and tabernacled among us. What is recorded there reveals what was anticipated throughout the entire Old Testament, and that is then explained in the rest of Scripture, as to His Person, His work, and how it pertains to us.

As the sanctuary itself was, in every detail, a picture of Christ, so the gospels are a revelation of Christ. The people of Israel were to be the heralds of Christ to the world; a light to the nations. Their physical encampment around the sanctuary was a picture of the spiritual truth that the gospel would, in fact, go out to all four corners of the earth – north, south, east, and west.

In the end, it is all about Jesus Christ. He is the Praise of God; He is the One who is before all things; and He is the King; He is the Servant of God and the Son of man. He is the Son of God and the Sanctuary for our souls. He is, indeed, all of these and so much more. In the end, the pictures continue to develop into One grand theme – JESUS. It is all about JESUS. More lies ahead when we continue on in the book of Numbers. Stay tuned.

Closing Verse: “They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.” Luke 13:29

Next Week: Numbers 3:1-13 *Of all of the grapes on the vine...* (The Levites Shall be Mine) (4th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Layout of the Tribes

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying
These words to them He was relaying
“Everyone of the children of Israel
Shall camp by his own standard, such shall be their seating

Beside the emblems of his father’s house
They shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting

On the east side, toward the rising of the sun
Those of the standard of the forces with Judah, tribes three
Shall camp according to their armies
And Nahshon the son of Amminadab the leader
———of the children of Judah shall be

And his army was numbered; those so bred
At seventy-four thousand six hundred
Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar
And shall be the leader of the children of Issachar
———Nethanel the son of Zuar

And his army was numbered; those so bred
At fifty-four thousand four hundred
Then comes the tribe of Zebulun
And shall be the leader of the children of Zebulun
———Eliab the son of Helon

And his army was numbered; those so bred
At fifty-seven thousand four hundred
All who were numbered according to their armies
Of the forces with Judah, all together and not dispersed
One hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred

These shall break camp first
On the south side shall be the standard
Of the forces with Reuben according to their armies, for sure
|And the leader of the children of Reuben

Shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur
And his army was numbered; those so bred
At forty-six thousand five hundred
Those who camp next to him shall be

The tribe of Simeon, by and by
And the leader of the children of Simeon shall be
Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai
And his army was numbered; those so bred
At fifty-nine thousand three hundred

Then comes the tribe of Gad, as the record does tell
And the leader of the children of Gad shall be
———Eliasaph the son of Reuel

And his army was numbered; a number unique and nifty
At forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty
All who were numbered according to their armies
Of the forces with Reuben, a lot certainly

One hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty
They shall to break camp the second be
And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out
With the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; you see
As they camp, so they shall move out

Everyone in his place, by their standards; so shall it be
On the west side shall be the standard of the forces with Ephraim
According to their armies, so it shall be understood
And the leader of the children of Ephraim

Shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud
And his army was numbered, those so bred
At forty thousand five hundred
Next to him comes the tribe of Manasseh, for sure
And the leader of the children of Manasseh shall be
———Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur

And his army was numbered, those so bred
At thirty-two thousand two hundred
Then comes the tribe of Benjamin with all certainty
And the leader of the children of Benjamin shall be
Abidan the son of Gideoni

And his army was numbered; those so bred
At thirty-five thousand four hundred
All who were numbered according to their armies
Of the forces with Ephraim, so says the word
One hundred and eight thousand one hundred
They shall be to break camp the third

The standard of the forces with Dan
Shall be on the north side according to their armies, by and by
And the leader of the children of Dan shall be
Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai
And his army was numbered; those so bred
At sixty-two thousand seven hundred
Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher
— — —-these are words to act upon

And the leader of the children of Asher
Shall be Pagiel the son of Ocran
And his army was numbered; those so bred
At forty-one thousand five hundred
Then comes the tribe of Naphtali; his name is now drawn
And the leader of the children of Naphtali shall be
— — —-Ahira the son of Enan

And his army was numbered; those so bred
At fifty-three thousand four hundred
All who were numbered of the forces with Dan
All those men so amassed

One hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred
They shall break camp with their standards last
These are the ones who were numbered
Of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses
— — —-a numbering large and nifty

All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces
Were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty
But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel
Just as the Lord commanded Moses; as the Lord to Moses did tell
Thus the children of Israel did

According to all that the Lord to Moses commanded
So they camped by their standards and so they broke camp
Each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses
— — —-as the situation so demanded

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 3:1-13 (THE LEVITES SHALL BE MINE)

In this world, things need to be done. And there is always something to do. Having spent 20+ years in wastewater treatment, I can assure you that there is no time, ever, that we can let our attention to treating that particular stream fall for even a moment. All around the world, people are watching dials, tending to pumps, cleaning screens, taking samples, changing chemical doses, and on and on. Somebody needs to do it.

Houses need to be built, cars need to be fixed, food needs to be prepared, wood needs to be chopped. As I said, there is always something to do. There wouldn't be hospitals if everyone was healthy, but people get sick, people get hurt, people go nuts. Such is life. If there is a hospital for such folks, then there needs to be doctors and nurses, and also pay collectors for those bills after you're fixed up.

Think of what it takes to make a single pencil. The amount of human effort to bring one pencil to a store is literally mind-numbing. Wood has to be chopped down. Someone had to make the saw to do it. Someone had to get the metal out of the ground for the saw. Some had to... You could go on, literally, for hours thinking about what is involved in the process of making and distributing a pencil. And in doing so, I guarantee that you would miss a thousand parts of the program. One can't run a chainsaw without gas. Gas alone requires a thousand sheet plan just for starters.

Ok, so now you know that something seemingly simple, like buying a pencil, or something out of mind, like the water going down your drain, takes a lot of careful effort to ensure things work out as they should. Why do we think that it is any less complicated when studying theology? There needs to be a plan, there needs to be a framework for executing that plan, and there needs to be people to ensure that plan is worked out properly.

Text Verse: *“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” Ephesians 4:11-13*

Paul says that Christ Jesus “gave” some for various purposes within a greater plan. The word “to give” in Hebrew is *natan*. Paul was a Hebrew-speaking Jew, and – although the

NT was written in Greek – he would have had Hebrew on his mind as he thought out his words. It could be that he had been reading the books of Moses that day and was thinking about how God *gave* the Levites to the priests in order to accomplish their tasks. In this, he then might have thought how the Lord gave out His gifts to various people in order to meet the needs of the church.

In the end, it is an immensely complicated thing, but it has worked amazingly well for 2000+ years. The same is true with how He developed the stewards of the Law of Moses. He took for Himself, and He gave according to His wisdom that which was His. Understanding this, and because you know how precious a pencil actually is after having thought it through, imagine how precious is the word of God which details not earthly, perishable things, but rather heavenly, spiritual things which endure forever.

Even if the Law of Moses and the Levitical system were temporary, the truths which stem from them are eternal. They point to Christ, they reveal Him in unique ways, and they lead us to a much better understanding of why we need Him in our lives. And so as we continue on in another chapter which will have more *seemingly* irrelevant information that nobody in today’s world would ever care about, remember that this is completely incorrect. One can’t have a pencil without all that it takes to make a pencil, including the erasure and even the little words on the side that nobody ever reads. And one cannot have an appreciation for the Person and work of Christ without going into all of the intricate detail that it took to get us to Him.

Some people couldn’t care at all about the details, but imagine what would happen if the ball were to drop today. When the stores ran out of pencils, that would be the end of them – permanently. When the system breaks down, only those who know how the system works will benefit from it. The Old Testament is the foundation of the system, and the details of Numbers 3 are another marvelous part of that wonderful system, so let’s enjoy what is before us, learning as we go. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Holiness Before the Lord (verses 1-4)

¹Now these *are* the records

The words here, *v’elleh toledoth*, or “and these are the generations,” are a technical formula which occurs numerous times in the book of Genesis. They look down, not up as history unfolds. Some translations say, “genealogies,” some say,

“records,” and so on. But when they are given, they introduce a new direction in the narrative, especially concerning genealogies of a man or men. In this case, it is the *toledoth*, or records...

1 (con't) of Aaron and Moses

Chapter 3 is immediately introduced with a particular order, Aaron and Moses, rather than Moses and Aaron. Aaron is the older of the two, but this may not be the reason for citing Aaron first. Rather, it is likely because his generations are the priestly class, whereas the other sons of Levi will be named as simply Levites. It appears that Aaron and Moses are considered the heads of the entire tribe of Levi, but Moses' office is a temporary one compared to Aaron whose generations will continue throughout the duration of the law in a priestly capacity.

Chapter 3 is going to detail and count all of the tribe of Levi, but the statement here speaks only of the *toledot*, or generations of Aaron and Moses. The reason for this is that it then indicates the relationship of the Levites to the priests. It is the priests which receive the focus of the narrative. But this still doesn't explain why Moses is considered in the *toledot*, or generations of the priests. The reason may be that because Moses is the lawgiver, even of the priests, that he is considered as a father in the faith to them. It is as if he begat them because the law, which they administer as priests, came through Moses. This would then be in line with 1 Corinthians 4:14, 15 –

“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. ¹⁵ For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”

Paul was as a father who begat his children in Christ, and this same concept may be why Moses is included as a part of the generations of the priests here.

1 (con't) when the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Hebrew reads, “in the day when the Lord spoke with Moses.” This may refer to Numbers 1:1. The same day as the other instructions were given, the instructions for what will now follow have also been given. Or, more likely, it is a general term signifying the time when Aaron and Moses were raised to being the spiritual heads of their tribe. Either way, the statement is especially important because of what is next recorded for us...

² And these *are* the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

The listing of the sons of Aaron includes Nadab and Abihu, and yet, both of them are dead at this point. Thus, this genealogical record is looking down from Aaron's time as a whole, not from the moment that the account is recorded. Everything from that point is the *toledot*, or generations of Aaron.

The deaths of Nadab and Abihu are recorded in Leviticus 10. During their time of ordination to the priesthood, they offered profane fire before the Lord. Because of their irreverence, fire from the Lord came out and devoured them. That ended their lines as neither had sons at that time. Along with them, Aaron's two other sons are Eleazar and Ithamar.

³ These *are* the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister as priests.

These words tend to confirm that the term, "in the day the Lord spoke with Moses," is referring to a general time-frame of the reception of the law and the institution of the priesthood. The names of all four of the sons of Aaron are spoken of in the same context. They were all considered anointed priests, and all were consecrated to minister as priests. Regardless of the fact that two are now dead, they were alive and serving as priests in the day – meaning any of the entire time – that the Lord spoke to Moses. The consecration here in the Hebrew is *asher mille yadam la'kahan*, or "whose hands he filled to serve." The meaning of that goes back to the filling of the hands with the ram of the consecration in Leviticus 8. And so we see that the term "day" is speaking of a whole, just as "the Day of the Lord" is not a set day, but a period of time. This is more confirmed by...

⁴ Nadab and Abihu had died before the Lord when they offered profane fire before the Lord in the Wilderness of Sinai;

The time spoken of is past, and yet it is recorded now. Their deaths were "in the Wilderness of Sinai" where Aaron and Moses continue to live at this point. If it seems like an odd way to establish the *toledot*, or generations, of the priests, it actually isn't. It is, in fact, a sober reminder to them that there would be consequences for not treating the priesthood as a sacred and holy obligation. The same term *liphne Yehovah*, or "before the Lord," is used both for offering profane fire and for dying before the Lord. Thus, there is a stress on the term, signifying holiness.

As the Levites will be recorded as a part of the generations of Aaron, affixing them to the priesthood, it then means that they will be expected to discharge their duties in exactly the same reverent and holy manner.

This statement concerning Nadab and Abihu is their reminder. The Lord is holy, He has called His priests to holiness, and he has called the Levites who minister to the priests to holiness. What may seem unimportant now will, when properly considered, seem immensely important. This is especially true as we arrive at Numbers 16. There, Korah's rebellion is recorded. Korah is a Levite through Kohath, the son of Levi, but he will challenge the priesthood. When he does, what happened to Nadab and Abihu will seem like a peaceful departure from this existence. They died, but they died quickly and alone, as is next stated...

4 (con't) and they had no children.

It is a statement which bears several thoughts in one. First, it is an indication that their line ended. That is sad on the surface. They have no descendants to carry on their name. However, it is a statement of mercy in that they had no descendants to mourn them; no children were left as orphans. And it is a greater statement of mercy because when Korah rebels, the account says that the households of those who rebelled were destroyed with the offenders. For Nadab and Abihu, the only loss was their own lives.

4 (con't) So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father.

The result of not ministering in holiness was death to Aaron's two eldest. As a result, these words indicate that it became the honor, but equally so the responsibility, to carefully minister as priests before Aaron their father.

*A priesthood before the Lord our God
The way of mediation has been defined
It is accessible any place we are and anywhere we trod
With our Mediator, none are left out, and none are left behind*

*All who come through Him have access
And any who so desire may freely come
Does God hear? We don't even need to guess
He hears all because of Jesus, and not only some*

*All He requires is that we come by faith in Christ
We come to Him through the precious blood that was shed
It was for our sins that He was sacrificed
And for restored access, is why our Savior bled*

II. Bring the Tribe of Levi Near (verses 5-10)

⁵ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

With the establishment of the new direction of the narrative, that of the *toledot*, or generations, of Aaron and Moses, a new subsection of that major thought is now introduced with these words. They revert to the standard format which is so common to this particular time while encamped at Mount Sinai – *v'daber Yehovah el Moshe l'mor*, or “And spoke Yehovah unto Moses, saying...” Aaron’s specific role as the head of the priestly class is identified; the listing of the generations of that class has been named, and so instruction from the Lord on a new, but related, matter is now spoken by the Lord to Moses. That instruction continues with...

⁶ “Bring the tribe of Levi near,

In this, the term “bring near” is considered with a view to a sacrificial or devoted sense. Just as animals were brought near as an offering to the Lord, that is what is now being conveyed concerning the tribe of Levi. When this is completed, they will no longer be considered as rightly joining in any common employment or profession.

From this time on, they would be a special class, subordinate to the priests, but separated from Israel, and belonging to the Lord as His own. The tribe of Levi, meaning Levi’s descendants, has already been singled out in Chapter 1 during the time of the census of the other tribes. To remind you, those verses said –

“But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers’ tribe; ⁴⁸ for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying: ⁴⁹ “Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel; ⁵⁰ but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle. ⁵¹ And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death. ⁵² The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by

his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies;⁵³ but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.” Numbers 1:47-53

That special calling, which was detailed there, is to be developed further. The Lord instructs Moses *haqrev eth matteh levi*, or “Bring near the staff (meaning the tribe) of Levi.” They were not counted among the tribes for general purposes, but they are to be counted nonetheless, for a special purpose. This separation stems from two key moments in the life of Levi. The first was in Genesis 34, at the time when his sister Dinah was violated. At that time, both Simeon and Levi killed all the males of Shechem –

“Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.²⁶ And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem’s house, and went out.” Genesis 34:25, 26

Many years later, as Jacob was on his deathbed, he blessed his sons according to their futures. When he came to Simeon and Levi, he said the following –

“Simeon and Levi *are* brothers;
Instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place.
⁶ Let not my soul enter their council;
Let not my honor be united to their assembly;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.
⁷ Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.” Genesis 49:5-7

The prophecy for these sons is literally fulfilled. Simeon will be divided and dispersed in the inheritance of Judah; Levi will be divided and dispersed throughout Israel. As the Levites, they will minister for the priests and to the people. What is detailed here, like the details of Chapter 1, continue the first half of that equation.

⁶(con’t) **and present them before Aaron the priest,**

v'ha-amadta otow liphne Aharon ha'kohen – “and have stand them before Aaron the priest.” With these words, one gets the sense of a servant standing before his master awaiting instructions. The priesthood has already been selected, presented, ordained, and set into daily practice. The Levites are now being presented as a gift of service to the priests through Aaron, the high priest.

Again, think of what happened with Aaron in Leviticus. He and his sons were designated by the Lord and by name. They were then presented before the Lord. They then went through rites of ordination, and then they were acceptable as priests before the Lord. This is the same process which is being directed towards the Levites. They are first selected, then they will be presented, they will be ordained, and then they will minister. In what capacity they will minister is seen in the next words...

⁶ (con't) **that they may serve him.**

Their duties were named in chapter 1, but they will be expanded on here. What is evident with these words is that it is a service to the priests. They are not appointed to a mediatorial role before the Lord. Rather, they serve the mediator of the covenant, meaning Aaron. As Aaron is representative of his line, then they are to serve the priests who issue from Aaron. This is a permanent arrangement.

⁷ **And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting,**

As is seen here, the role of Levi is a double-pronged one. They are to first attend to his (meaning the priests') needs, and they are to also tend to the needs of the whole congregation. However, the verse more accurately reads, “And they shall keep his watch, and watch all the congregation before the tent of meeting.” To keep watch in this sense is a sacred calling and obligation. It is the watch of the Lord which they are actually tending to.

There is a vast, detailed, and complicated set of ceremonial rites which are laid out, especially in the book of Leviticus. There is no way the priests could accomplish all of what was required in this watch before the Lord. The priests are insufficient in number, and the congregation is unschooled in the details of what was required. Because death is the resulting penalty for improper conduct of the Levitical law, there needed to be qualified, capable, and trained men to accomplish what needed to be done. It is the same thought that Paul relays to the people of Corinth when he said –

“For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.” 2 Corinthians 4:5

Somebody stands between the Lord and the unskilled to ensure the two meet in harmony and without confusion. Certain men, during each dispensation, have been given specific duties to ensure the people are properly tended to concerning the things of God. In the time before the law, the oldest son of the house was normally the one who would take over the priestly functions of the house. Now, in the time of the law, the Levites are selected in place of the firstborn. That will be seen in just a few verses.

7 (con’t) to do the work of the tabernacle.

It is words like these that show the importance of consistent translation, and with acceptable diversity of words. This clause says, *la’avod eth avodat ha’mishkan* – “for serving the service of the tabernacle.” The word translated as “tabernacle” here, *mishkan*, is completely different than the previous clause which said, *ohel moed*, or “tent of meeting.” By translating both as “tabernacle,” one is given a false reading of what is being said. The two terms are not synonymous. The *mishkan* is the tabernacle which is inside of the tent of meeting.

Levi is given the job of doing the work of the tabernacle. This would involve erecting it, taking it down, transporting it, keeping things fit, repaired, polished, etc. It would also include assisting the priests in the functions related to the tabernacle, but the Levites themselves would not enter the tabernacle, either in the Holy Place or the Most Holy Place. Though they were helpers to the priests, they were not to perform priestly functions themselves.

8 Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting,

The specifics of these words are given later in this chapter, and the specifics of the things that only the priests were to do are given in the next chapter. Certain vessels were not to be touched, or even seen, by the Levites. Other things were to be cared for and tended to by them. The majority of the heavy, labor-intensive, tasks would devolve to the Levites. However, this is a service that is of the highest honor nonetheless. They act as servants to the priests, but the service should have been considered one of great honor.

8 (con’t) and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle.

Again, the “children of Israel,” meaning the entire congregation, was to benefit from the service of the Levites. As the house in ancient times was to be served by the father, and then the firstborn son after him, in all things concerning their religious needs, so was Levi now granted this honor.

⁹ And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons;

The verse here bears a forceful emphasis. First, it says, *v'natatah eth ha'levim l'aharon u-l'banav* – “And give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons.” They are as a possession being handed over for total ownership. There would be no pay from the priests for this. Rather, pay would come through the tithes of the people, and a tenth of that would be taken, in turn, for the priests. The stress then continues with the next words...

^{9 (con't)} they are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel.

netumin netunim hemah – “given, given to him.” Repetition in this way in the Hebrew is a statement of emphasis. We say, “wholly given,” or “given entirely,” and so on, but the Hebrew repeats to obtain this same effect. In this, there is both an entirety to the giving, and the certainty of the matter. No Levite is left out, and they are given without the thought of release or exception. Further, the verse says that they are given “from among the children of Israel.”

Those in other tribes were not given in this capacity, and to allow others to be so given would be a violation of what the Lord had determined. He selected Levi from Israel, and so no non-Israelite and no non-Levite would be considered acceptable to perform their duties. This unlawful and thus unholy practice, however, is seen later after the people divide into two kingdoms. That is recorded in 2 Chronicles 13:9, 10.

As a sort of parallel to this verse, but with a different meaning entirely, there is a class of people mentioned later in the Bible who are known as the Nethinim. These would be called “The Given.” They are a class of people who were not Levites, but who also served the people. It is a class of people who served at the temple, but who were of a lower class than that of the Levites. *Nethinim* comes from *natan*, to give, and thus they may be people given over to the temple service, whether those of foreign birth as slaves, or those of Israel who are consecrated by vow.

¹⁰ So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood;

The Lord now steps back from the call of the Levites, and again speaks of the priesthood of Aaron and his sons. The words, “they shall attend to their priesthood” mean that because the Levites have been given to them for the non-priestly, and yet many, laborious, and time-consuming tasks, they would be able to tend to their own duties without interruption or over-working. They would be able to burn the daily offerings and incense, pour out the drink offerings, perform the blood sacrifices, bless the people, and so on. The Levites were given the blessing of assistance for non-priestly duties, and so they were to attend to it without fail, but only the priests were to do what priests were appointed to do...

¹⁰ (con’t) **but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”**

This is a warning that is tied into the previous clause. Because the priests were freed from the non-priestly duties of the temple service, they alone were to do the priestly duties. Thus, nobody else had a right to come near, and no priest could shirk his duties by asking any other to come near, even a Levite. Any non-priest who approached to conduct priestly duties was to be put to death. An exception to this is found in 2 Chronicles 29:34.

*They shall be Mine; I have set them apart
They shall serve Me and be unique unto Me
They bear My sign, and are written on My heart
I have sealed them with an eternal guarantee*

*And so some as apostles I have given
And some are pastors to lead My people along
Some are preachers, preaching to the livin’
And some are teachers, teaching the hungry throng*

*Till all come to unity of the faith, as is My design
And to the knowledge of the Son of God, the Lord
Each that has been sealed, each who now is Mine
Each in whom is the heavenly deposit stored*

III. They Shall Be Mine (verses 11-13)

¹¹ **Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:**

Again we return to the standard form of introducing a new sub-thought. The priestly line has been identified. The Levitical service has been delineated, and now the reason for, and logic behind, the choosing of the Levites will be stated.

¹² “Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel

This explains firstly why Moses could “give” the Levites to Aaron. The Lord has taken them for Himself. In fact, the Hebrew reads it in an emphatic way – *v’ani hinneh laqahti eth ha’levim* – “And I, behold, I have taken the Levites.” As He has taken them, then He can give them. But when and how did He take them? The answer goes back to the Exodus...

^{12 (con’t)} instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel.

The law of the firstborn was given in Exodus 13, and it is worth repeating to understand what the Lord has now determined concerning the Levites –

“And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹² that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the Lord’s. ¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What *is* this?’ that you shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ ¹⁶ It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.” Exodus 13:11-16

The nation of Israel was adopted as the Lord’s firstborn son. Because of this, the sign of the firstborn was then mandated. But in accepting the Levites in place of the firstborn among the people, the firstborn was released from this obligation. Therefore, the Levites would be devoted with no division of interest which would have otherwise been the case. Even the firstborn of the animals would now be substituted with the animals of Levi. That will be seen later in this chapter.

12 (con't) Therefore the Levites shall be Mine,

Countless reasons have been suggested as to why Levi was chosen for this distinction. It has been suggested because they were the smallest tribe, and that number was sufficient for the job. Others ascribe this to the Levite's zeal for the Lord in the incident of the golden calf. Both of those may add weight to the reason, but what makes the most sense is that because Aaron is already the high priest, there is no need to go beyond Levi to secure an individual set of people.

In the law of the firstborn, there would arise a great deal of confusion in the land and among the people if they were to leave their homes and minister at the temple. Further, if there was no other child, it would upset inheritances to take the firstborn, and so on. The list is long concerning why having a single tribe be called is the best option.

They have no land inheritance, and so there is nothing to cause entanglements there. They are related to the priests, and so there is a sense of fraternal bonding there. The very name of Levi, meaning Attached, gives a sense of why they should be attached to the Lord in this way. The prophecy of the father that they would be scattered in Israel means that the prophecy is fulfilled in this arrangement. On and on, the reasons for selecting Levi are sound and they are numerous.

13 because all the firstborn are Mine.

This was mandated based on the redemption of Israel. The Lord had struck the firstborn of Egypt, and He had spared the firstborn of His firstborn son, meaning Israel. Therefore, they were His. It was His sovereign act to spare them amidst the destruction which brought Israel out, and so He established the law based on that.

13 (con't) On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast.

Again, the firstborn of both man and beast were declared the property of the Lord. The firstborn of both were destroyed in Egypt, but the firstborn of both man and beast of Israel were spared. In this, He sanctified all firstborn as His own. It was the sign of His act, and an acknowledgment by the people of His authority. However, He had, for His sole and wise reasons, now selected Levi in place of the firstborn. Indeed, to have a single tribe to care for the priesthood and its associated duties, and to tend to the people in return, there was the surety of a successful continuance of His service which would be lacking if the original firstborn system had been kept as it was.

¹³ (fin) **They shall be Mine: I *am* the Lord."**

"I am sovereign over Israel, I held the right of the firstborn, and now I transfer that right to a single tribe. I am Yehovah, and therefore the decision is made and it will be complied with. To challenge this is to challenge Me; obedience is anticipated and expected."

Here we are seeing the development of a grand picture of the tribe of Levi. Moses is of Levi, and he was called as the deliverer and lawgiver, as well as the leader. Aaron and his descendants serve in the priestly capacity. They are the keepers of the sanctuary and those who mediate the covenant between the Lord and the people. The other Levites as a tribe are now chosen in place of the firstborn of the people to accomplish any other duties of the sanctuary and in service of the people.

If one steps back and looks at each of these, from Moses to Aaron and his sons, to the greater tribe of Levi, every single aspect of their lives and functions is accomplished in the church by One individual; Christ Jesus. He is our Deliverer, Lawgiver, and Leader. He is the Keeper of the sanctuary, and the Mediator of the covenant as well. And he also is the Firstborn who ministers for the sake of the people before the Father. Levi, as a whole, makes its own unique snapshot of the workings of God, in Christ, for His people. And this is the very intent of calling Levi from the tribes. In them, there would be a unity of purpose despite being scattered in Levitical cities throughout the land. There would be one group of people, unified in their work life, their family life, and their religious life. Jesus is that bond for us. He performs all of the functions of the men of this called-out tribe, and so our devotion to Him is to be unified as well.

Yes, churches fight over the smallest, most petty issues, but we are united in a unique way at the same time. There is one God, one Mediator, one holy dwelling place, one word of authority in how we approach the Lord, and so on. The difference, however, is that despite Levi being united as a tribe, it was a tribe united as flawed individuals. In Christ, we are united to the One who is perfect in all ways. Where Levi strayed and failed among both priest and people, our perfect Lord has never erred, nor will He ever.

An effective, long-lasting, but temporary and fallible priesthood came through the Law of Moses. A superior, eternal, and infallible priesthood is found in Christ Jesus. Types and pictures of Him are intended to lead to Him. Here in Numbers, as in the rest of Scripture, we are being led along a wonderful path that directs us back to God, and that path goes straight through, and only through, Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *“Bless the Lord, O house of Israel!
Bless the Lord, O house of Aaron!
²⁰ Bless the Lord, O house of Levi!
You who fear the Lord, bless the Lord!
²¹ Blessed be the Lord out of Zion,
Who dwells in Jerusalem!
Praise the Lord!” Psalm 135:19-21*

Next Week: Numbers 3:14-39 *What is it? Can you guess?* (A Sign in the Wilderness)
(5th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Levites Shall Be Mine

Now these are the records of Aaron and Moses, by and by
When the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai
And these are the names of the sons of Aaron:
Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar too
These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests
Whom he consecrated to minister as priests, so he did do
Nadab and Abihu had died before the Lord
When they offered profane fire before the Lord
— — —-these two young men

In the Wilderness of Sinai
And they had no children
So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests instead
In the presence of Aaron their father; by them they were led
And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
“Bring the tribe of Levi near

And present them before Aaron the priest
That they may serve him; to his directions they shall adhere

And they shall attend to his needs
And the needs of the whole congregation
— — —-these duties they shall tackle

Before the tabernacle of meeting
To do the work of the tabernacle
Also they shall attend to all the furnishings
Of the tabernacle of meeting, so I say
And to the needs of the children of Israel
To do the work of the tabernacle, day by day
And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons
— — —-as to you I tell

They are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel
So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons
And they shall attend to their priesthood
But the outsider who comes near shall be put to death
Make sure this is understood

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words to them he was then relaying
“Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites
From among the children of Israel

Instead of every firstborn who opens the womb
Among the children of Israel, so to you I tell
Therefore the Levites shall be Mine
Because all the firstborn are Mine, as you already know
On the day that I struck all the firstborn

In the land of Egypt, to their deaths they did go
I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, so is My word
Both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the Lord
Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You

Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 3:14-39 (A SIGN IN THE WILDERNESS)

There are a whole heap of verses today, but they will go quickly. It's the poem at the end that may take us a while to get through. But even that won't take too long, believe me... my words are true.

I know the verses from the past two chapters, and so far in this one, are not easy to sit and read. How much more then do we make them interesting enough to be the focal point of our Sunday morning. Right? Well, you've stuck it out this far, and the verses here are not nearly as repetitive as what is coming in Chapter 7. So don't feel too overwhelmed by them. And now that I think of it, maybe I should never have mentioned what is coming in that chapter! I can see it now – an empty church on that Sunday as everyone finds something else to do other than listen to that.

Don't worry, that too will go quickly. One bite at a time, and the meal gets finished. One shovel at a time, and the hole gets dug (or filled in), and one step at a time, and you're on top of the mountain. What we need to do is look for the joy we can have in the process. If we're eating, we can slowly enjoy each flavor we taste. If we're digging a hole, we can think about the pretty plant (or whatever the hole is used for) that we will be putting in it. If we are climbing a mountain, we can stop and find 10,000 little flowers, each one unique as it pokes its head out of some seemingly impossible-to-support-life crag or crevice.

The joy is not just being at the end of things, but it can be found in the doing of things. That's why God gave us tasks like going through long details about the numbering of people in a congregation that He had led out of bondage. Eventually, they would be counted, arranged, and then set out for their journey to the land of promise. While traveling, they would become the object of attention to those who noticed their coming...

Text Verse: *"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!
Your dwellings, O Israel!
⁶Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens by the riverside,
Like aloes planted by the Lord,
Like cedars beside the waters." Numbers 24:5, 6*

The Lord recorded Balaam's reaction to the beauty of the layout of Israel's encampment in the wilderness. He made an oracle about it, and the Lord put that oracle in His word for us to read and see how much the prophet appreciated what He saw. It is similar to another description of a war encampment in our history. That is found in the Battle Hymn of the Republic written by Julia Ward Howe –

*I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
His day is marching on.*

Her words are truly beautiful concerning the layout of men prepared for battle, and maybe we should look at what God has put in His word in that way. If we can simply appreciate what He has recorded as a sign of life in the wilderness concerning the whole host of Israel, maybe we can then appreciate a mental picture of them in the way that Balaam did. Let's try that as we go on. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Census of the Levites (verses 14-39)

¹⁴ Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying:

The words of this verse still fall under the main category presented in verse 3:1 concerning the *toledot*, or generations, of Aaron and Moses, meaning the tribe of Levi as is presented by and through them. After stating that this was the intent of the passage, the names of Aaron's sons were given, including two that had already died.

Next, Moses was told to have Levi brought near in order to serve the Lord concerning everything connected to the tent of meeting. They were to be set apart, given entirely to Aaron in place of the firstborn of the children of Israel. The Lord had claimed the firstborn at the Exodus, but now He has exchanged them for the Levites. With this understanding, the words of this verse are given. What the Lord speaks to Moses will be in accord with that thought.

¹⁵ “Number the children of Levi by their fathers' houses, by their families;

The Levites are now to be numbered. Previously, the Lord said to Moses that they were not to be numbered “among their fathers’ tribe,” meaning along with the other tribes. That was seen in Numbers 1:47-49 –

“But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers’ tribe; ⁴⁸ for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying: ⁴⁹ “Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel;”

This didn’t mean they weren’t to be numbered at all, but that the numbering now being conducted is separate from the other tribes, and for an entirely different purpose and principle – that of service to the Lord. Thus, their counting is to be done in a completely different manner than that of the other tribes, as is seen in the words...

¹⁵ (con’t) **you shall number every male from a month old and above.”**

Every male of the Levites is reckoned as the Lord’s possession. Their counting was to begin when they were one month of age, and it was inclusive of all males after that. This is completely different than the counting of the other tribes. In Numbers 1:2, 3, it said –

“Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, ³ from twenty years old and above—all who *are able to go to war* in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.”

The other tribes were counted from twenty years old and above because they were to be reckoned as men of war. The Levites were to be taken in place of the firstborn of the other tribes, but there would be firstborn of all ages, and so as their substitutes before the Lord, all ages of Levites are counted, regardless of their ability to serve. In Chapter 4, they were counted from thirty and above for service. In Chapter 8, they will be seen to enter into service at twenty-five, and they are to retire from service at the age of fifty.

¹⁶ **So Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded.**

The words here actually precede the counting of them in the record, but they are given now to show that what follows was in accord with the word of the Lord. Thus the counting which follows is already accomplished at the writing of the words of this verse. The term “according to the word of the Lord” is *al pi Yehovah*, or literally “according to the mouth of Yehovah.” It is common terminology, but the explanation for it is useful

from time to time. The word *peh*, or mouth eventually finds its source in a root which means “to puff.” Thus, Moses has performed his duties according to the word breathed out to him by Yehovah. The Lord commanded, and Moses in turn performed.

¹⁷ These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

The father’s houses and then their families, as cited in verse 15, are now beginning to be named. What follows is to be a breakdown for the census according to the listing given in Exodus 6 –

“These *are* the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. And the years of the life of Levi *were* one hundred and thirty-seven. ¹⁷ The sons of Gershon *were* Libni and Shimi according to their families. ¹⁸ And the sons of Kohath *were* Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath *were* one hundred and thirty-three. ¹⁹ The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi. These *are* the families of Levi according to their generations.” Exodus 6:16-19

The houses of Levi are according to the sons of Levi – Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Levi means “Attached.” Gershon means “Exiled One.” Kohath means either “Obedience” or “Congregation.” It comes from a root signifying to ally oneself. Merari means “Bitter” or “My Bitterness.”

¹⁸ And these *are* the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei.

The houses are broken down into families. The families of the house of Gershon are Libni and Shimei. Libni means “White.” Shimei means “Renown” or “Famous.”

¹⁹ And the sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel.

Next are the families of Kohath. Amram means “A People Exalted.” Izhar has a few possible meanings that signify something related to “Zenith,” “Shining,” “Anointed,” etc. Hebron means “Confederation” or “Alliance.” Uzziel means “God is My Strength” or “Strength of God.”

²⁰ And the sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi.

Mahli means “Infirmity” or “Weak.” Mushi may mean “Drawn out” or “Proved of the Lord.” These are debatable.

²⁰ (con't) **These *are* the families of the Levites by their fathers' houses.**

Again, the record is being specific. There is the house of the fathers, meaning the three sons of Levi, and then there are families within those houses according to the sons within the house. In all, there are eight families recorded from their fathers' houses. This will then be re-explained, once again, in a new way as follows...

²¹ **From Gershon *came* the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites;**

Gershon is a son of Levi, thus a house within the tribe. The names of his sons are then considered families within the house. Thus, these names – the Libnites and the Shimites – correspond to Libni and Shimei. Although this may be obvious, the records are detailed, just as birth and genealogical records are today. What we read here may have little value to us because it would be like reading the genealogy of the Shimabuku family in Japan or the Garrett family in England, but to the family who bears the name, it holds great meaning. In maintaining these records, the Levites would always be aware of their position and responsibilities within the tribe.

²¹ (con't) **these *were* the families of the Gershonites.**

The record of the Gershonite families, the oldest son of Levi, is complete. From that, a tally of their number can then be made...

²² **Those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above—of those who were numbered *there were* seven thousand five hundred.**

Again, remember that this is a total counting of all males from a month old and upward, not merely of adult males ready for war. The number of the two families within Gershon is set at 7500. Thus, they are less than the total of Kohath, and more than the total of Merari. Their positioning within the camp is next to be given...

²³ **The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle westward.**

The name Gershon, or “Exiled One,” is suited to their location. They are furthest *yammah*, or west. *Yammah* signifies “sea” and thus the direction is given in relation to the land of Israel where the great sea, the Mediterranean, is to the west. Being in the west, the Gershonites are furthest from the entrance to the sanctuary.

Whether this is simply happenstance or not, it is fitting to the name “Exiled One” nonetheless. Their position then placed them between the sanctuary and the tribes with the smallest number of forces, those of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. When combined, in total numbers they will still be the smallest group of people in size.

²⁴ And the leader of the father’s house of the Gershonites was Eliasaph the son of Lael.

Eliasaph means “God has added.” Lael means “By God” or “Belonging to God.” He is named as the leader of the entire house of Gershon, and thus was over the families within the clan. Surprisingly, his family – be it Libni or Shimei – is not indicated.

²⁵ The duties of the children of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting *included* the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting,

Gershon does the tent work, much of which is described in Exodus 26. This would actually be several layers of tent which were draped over the tabernacle, and which consisted of various materials. They would handle all of this along with the screen for the opening into the tent of meeting. To see what all of these things detail, go back and watch the Exodus sermons. Magnificent pictures of Christ are seen in every detail.

²⁶ the screen for the door of the court, the hangings of the court which *are* around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords, according to all the work relating to them.

Much of the detail of these things is found in Exodus 27. Merari is given charge of all of these things. The materials, when fully packed up for transport, would be a very heavy load, despite being mostly fabrics. There was a great amount in total. Again, every single detail was reviewed and explained in how each points to the Person and work of Christ. Be sure to brush up on those sermons.

²⁷ From Kohath *came* the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites;

Kohath is a son of Levi, thus a house within the tribe. The names of his sons are then considered families within the house. Thus, these names – the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites – correspond to Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. The four sons of Kohath are equal in number to both of the other two sons of Levi. Moses and Aaron and his sons are from Amram. They are reckoned as such, but they are

not considered in the placement of Amram when they encamp. That will be seen in a few verses.

²⁷ (con't) **these were the families of the Kohathites.**

The record of the Kohathite families, the middle son of Levi, is complete. From that, a tally of their number can then be made...

²⁸ **According to the number of all the males, from a month old and above, there were eight thousand six hundred keeping charge of the sanctuary.**

The total counting of all males from a month old and upward, in the four families within Kohath is set at 8600. Thus, they are the largest clan within the tribe of Levi. They are noted here as keeping charge of *ha'qodesh*, or "the holy." This is the first time the term is used in the book of Numbers. It is stated to indicate the holy things within the sanctuary which the members of this tribe will be responsible for. Their positioning within the camp is next given...

²⁹ **The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle.**

These families are to be on the south, meaning the right, side. The right is not considered from the perspective of those entering the sanctuary, but from the position of the ark within the tabernacle. Thus, the south is the right side. It is the honorable side. Despite being the largest family of Levites, the position of Kohath places them between the sanctuary and the tribes with the second smallest number of forces, those of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. Doesn't that seem like an odd grouping then?

³⁰ **And the leader of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.**

Elizaphan means "God Hides" or "God has Protected." He is named as the leader of the entire house of Kohath, and thus was over the families within the clan. Everything about this house has an air of distinction. The meaning of the name of Kohath, and those of his sons as well, all fit well with the placement on this right, honorable side.

³¹ **Their duty included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them.**

These are the precious and holy objects within the tabernacle itself. These were to be carried by men, not placed on carts. Thus, even if there was more labor involved in the taking down and putting up of the other objects, there was more labor in the transportation of these. The responsibility of this tribe is of the highest measure.

³² And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *was to be* chief over the leaders of the Levites, *with oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary.*

Here the words *u-nsi nesii* or “and leader leader,” is applied to Eleazar the son of Aaron. Thus, he is designated as the chief leader. In 2 Kings 25:18, the same position is called the “second priest.” He is the eldest surviving son of Aaron, and he would perform the work of Aaron if Aaron was sick or otherwise unable to perform his duties.

He is thus in the superior position above all other priests or Levites. He is the son of Aaron. Aaron, though high priest, is a son of Amram who is a son of Kohath. This is the reason for mentioning this position now, while dealing with the tribe of Kohath. A new word, *pequddah*, a noun indicating custody or care, is introduced here to describe this status. Thus, he is the superior authority of all of the servants of *ha’qodesh*, or the holy things of the Lord.

³³ From Merari *came* the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites;

Merari is a son of Levi, thus a house within the tribe. The names of his sons are considered families within the house. These names – the Mahlites and the Mushites – correspond to Mahli and Mushi.

³³ (con’t) *these were* the families of Merari.

The record of the families of Merari, the youngest son of Levi, is complete. From that, a tally of their number can then be made...

³⁴ And those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above, *were* six thousand two hundred.

The total counting of all males from a month old and upward, in the two families within Merari is set at 6200. Thus, they are the smallest clan within the tribe of Levi. For the previous two tribes, Gershon and Kohath, the order of given information was 1) recorded number, 2) placement in relation to the tabernacle, and then 3) the name of

the leader. That pattern is now deviated from. Instead of first giving the placement, the leader's name is given...

³⁵ The leader of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail.

The name Zuriel means something like My Rock is God, or Rock of God. The name Abihail, as you perfectly remember from the Book of Esther, is "Father of Might." Zuriel is named as the leader of the entire house of Gershon, and thus was over the families within the clan. His family – be it Mahli or Mushi – is not named. Their positioning within the camp is next to be given...

³⁵ (con't) These were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle.

These families are to be on the north, meaning the left, side. Again, the direction is not considered from the perspective of entering the sanctuary, but from the position of the ark within the tabernacle. Thus, the north is the left side. It is the weaker, less noble side. The meaning of the names of Merari and his sons leans heavily towards the placement of them on the north. For example, Mahli means "Infirmity" or "Weak." It is fitting then to the left side placement.

Despite being the smallest family of Levites, the position of Merari places them between the sanctuary and the tribes with the second largest number of forces, those of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. Doesn't that again seem like an odd grouping?

³⁶ And the appointed duty of the children of Merari included the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, its utensils, all the work relating to them,

We waited until this chapter to see the first use of *pequddah*, or oversight. And then, in just four verses, we are given its second use. The tribe of Merari is given oversight of this list of objects which are the basis of the tabernacle itself. These heaviest and most burdensome objects are given to the smallest, and last born family within the tribe. Go ahead, let the last in the family really have it. With two older brothers, I – like Merari – am used to it. But their heavy labors are not yet done. The immense weight of the objects just named will have more added onto their load...

³⁷ and the pillars of the court all around, with their sockets, their pegs, and their cords.

These are described in Exodus 27. It is a lot of solid brass sockets, with accompanying pillars. That's OK, the young guys can handle it. Now with the three houses of Levi properly placed, the Lord has one more placement to make...

³⁸ Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east,

It has already been seen that the standard of Judah would be *qedemah* or on the east of the sanctuary. Along with them would be Issachar and Zebulun. They are by far the largest number in regards to total people camped on any side of the sanctuary. However, there will be a small contingent between them and the tabernacle itself...

³⁸ (con't) before the tabernacle of meeting,

liphne ohel moed mizrakha – before the tent of meeting, eastward. It is almost tragic when translators will translate two different words, with two different meanings, in one sentence with the same word in English. The first clause mentioned the *mishkan*, or tabernacle. This clause now mentions *ohel moed*, the tent of meeting. There is a reason for this precision, and it is rather sloppy to ignore it. The tabernacle is inside of the tent of meeting. Although one is enclosed in another, they are different things.

And even more, the previous clause said *qedemah*, or “toward the east.” This clause says *mizrakha*, or “eastward.” The NKJV didn't even bother to translate the word. But it is there for a reason. The entire layout is pointing eastward, toward the sunrise, as the word *mizrakha* implies. The beauty of the symbolism being portrayed is completely lost without properly tending to the Hebrew. Understanding this, we see that between tribes under the standard of Judah, and before the tent of meeting, there at its entrance...

³⁸ (con't) were Moses, Aaron, and his sons,

The lawgiver, and the high priest and his sons – meaning the priesthood in total – is located at this particular spot. It is a splendid picture of access to God being only through His word and His High Priest. In other words, as they picture Christ, one can only come to God through Christ – the Word of God, and God's High Priest. As a side note: Liberal theologians are gross. Cambridge says of this clause, “The mention of his name in a command given to him is strange. It would be still stranger if he were the writer of the passage.” They imply that it wasn't the Lord who said for Moses to be so positioned in relation to the sanctuary, and they say it is even less likely that Moses is the author. Personally, I don't envy them in whatever they have coming.

38 (con't) keeping charge of the sanctuary,

This is the first time that the *miqdash*, or sanctuary is mentioned in Numbers. This is speaking of the entire compound including the court and everything within it. Moses, and Aaron and his sons, were there to keep charge of the entire sanctuary. The responsibility ultimately rested upon them and their constant watch of it.

38 (con't) to meet the needs of the children of Israel;

The same word just used and translated as “charge” in the previous clause is used again in this clause. It says, “for the charge of the sons of Israel.” The question is whether this means “instead of the children of Israel, or “for the safety of the children of Israel.” The latter appears to be the case because...

38 (con't) but the outsider who came near was to be put to death.

The word “outsider” means anyone not authorized. The only time someone could approach the sanctuary was as outlined in the book of Leviticus when one came to make an offering or sacrifice, etc. If anyone dared to approach that was not authorized, there was only one penalty... death.

39 All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the Lord, by their families, all the males from a month old and above, were twenty-two thousand.

If you are astute, you noticed that in verse 16, only Moses was mentioned as having numbered them. However, here Aaron is included as having participated. The Hebrew text has a point over the word *v'aharon*, or “and Aaron.” Some attempt to say that it is a spurious insertion that is noted by the point. It is more likely that it is showing that verse 39 is simply acknowledging what verse 16 had instructed, and that Moses did according to the word of the Lord with Aaron assisting in the numbering. It doesn't change anything in regards to the obedience of Moses in fulfilling the command of the Lord. If you are double astute, then you have noticed that the numbers do not match up. Adding 7500+8600+6200, you will arrive at 22300. There is a difference of 300 in the total. It is a problem that is not left without possible solutions. The first is that the 8600 should read 8300. The words *ses*h and *shalosh* being one letter different. However, that would demonstrate complete incompetence because of such an obvious error.

What will make this more difficult to reconcile is that the total number of firstborn of the other tribes will have an impossible number of firstborn in relation to the number of people counted. No sufficient explanation has been given for either number. But what I would suggest is that the reason for the differences is because the number of firstborn is speaking of native Israelites and not those who later joined, known as the mixed-multitude who came out of Egypt and who later were inculcated into the ranks of the various tribes. In this, the 300-person disparity omits the firstborn of the native-born Levites who cannot be counted against the whole because the firstborn already belong to the Lord.

This would be in complete accord with the law of the stranger joining the congregation of Israel as is described in Exodus 12, and it would follow with what will occur in the future in Israel, as is recorded in Ezekiel 47 –

“It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.” Ezekiel 47:22

Only the firstborn of Israel is counted, despite the total counting of all who had joined Israel. This would also explain the large numbers which are recorded after a sojourn in Egypt of 215 years.

*The people of God, brought together as one
When they come to Him in faith as He requires
It is through faith alone; faith in His Son
That we are granted eternal life; life that never expires*

*From Jew and from Gentile, all are welcome
From rich and from poor, none are excluded
By faith in Christ, He accepts all, not just some
Yes, through faith in Christ, all who come are included*

*Thank You, O God that we have access again
People from every tribe and every tongue are to You reconciled
Whether young or old, whether women or men
Because of Christ Jesus, You have again on us smiled*

II. A Sign in the Wilderness

We have now gone through three long, very involved, and if you don't like numbers and minutiae, very tiring chapters. However, I have constantly informed you that everything points to Christ in this wonderful book. Sometimes, it just takes more time to make the picture than at other times. This one took us almost three full chapters, with a few interspersed pictures coming out in the process.

While reading Numbers, many years ago, I got to Chapter 3 and said, "Well isn't that curious." I mentioned what I thought was curious as we went along. The Lord commanded that a larger number of Levites would be placed with a smaller number in their corresponding three tribes on the south side, and that a smaller number of Levites would be placed with a larger number in their corresponding three tribes on the north side.

As soon as I made that connection, it became clear what was happening, and why He would do this. It must be remembered that at very few times, maybe even only one or two in the entire forty years they were in the wilderness, they would actually be able to encamp as directed by the Lord. There simply wasn't enough space to do so in most places of Sinai that they traveled. But when they could be properly laid out as He directed, it would become a sign of His love for the people of the world. I decided to graph out the tribes according to their numbers, and by the time I started putting them on a graph, I already had a picture in my mind of what was coming. It came out exactly as I supposed it would. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 –

"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness."

Paul shows that as the Israelites traveled through the desert they actually interacted with things that were living pictures of life in Christ. He didn't just do this with things though, He did it with them as a people as well. The mandated census of the twelve tribes, and of Levi, the arrangement of the tribes and then the Levites, the directions they were to face, etc., were all specified by Him. Nothing was left up to the people. As presented, the layout of the tribes was Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun east of the tabernacle at 186,400 men (as well as families). On the south, there was Reuben, Simeon, and Gad encamped with 151,450 men (along with families). On the west were Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin with 108,100 men (along with families). On the north

are the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali with 157,600 men (and, of course, their families.)

Then came the Levites. The Gershonites equaled 7500 and were to camp on the west. The Kohathites numbered 8600 and camped on the south. And the Merarites equaled 6200 and camped on the north. The last to be positioned were Moses, Aaron, and his sons who camped east, toward the sunrise.

East 186,400 plus Moses, Aaron, and his sons

West 108,100 plus 7500 = 115,600

North 157,600 plus 6200 = 163,800

South 151,450 plus 8600 = 160,050

By putting the larger numbers of Levites to the south and the smaller to the north things pretty much even out. In fact, it stands at 97.71 percent equal. Now, think about the layout in real human terms... not like a study Bible shows you. A study Bible will draw a little box indicating a tabernacle and then a bunch of names tossed around it in the order the names are listed, or they will make neat little boxes representing each tribe and put their names in them, all in little rows so that you can easily see the layout. Such depictions are incorrect. Imagine a big demonstration at the Washington Mall – say, 200,000-500,000 people. You are talking about acres and acres and acres of people. Now imagine 603,550 men, plus 22,000 Levites and then toss in their families – say 2-3 million people, along with tents, sheep, donkeys, wagons, etc. This would take up square miles of land.

All the tribes designated east of the tabernacle would have to be east of it. All those designated south would have to be south, etc. Now put the numbers to life and what would you actually see from an airplane? Or better yet, what would Baalam who spoke out our text verse today see? He would see a massive cross.

The numbers, when properly graphed, show a cross. With the north and south sides almost imperceptibly different in size, the east side considerably longer, and the west considerably shorter, exactly as a cross is depicted for the hanging of human who is suspended off the ground with his arms outspread. The Israelites, under ideal conditions as they traveled for 40 years, were a picture of life in Christ, forming a miles-square cross in the desert. One thing to consider is that the tabernacle would have been at the center of the cross and the Ark of the Covenant would be where Christ's heart would have been on the cross of Calvary.

It may have taken a bit of time and a large number of verses to get to where we have arrived, but once again God is showing us what was coming in the giving of His Son. The entire Old Testament points to Christ. It is, in fact, all about Him. In understanding this marvelous picture as it has been presented, we can go back and see the significance of why the tribe of Judah, or Praise, is the lead tribe, and the first to set out.

They were to the east of the tabernacle and would be the base of the cross. The picture: Let praise of the Lord go first, and let it be the foundation of our love and devotion to God in Christ. Also, the name of Yehovah, the Lord, is spelled yod-he-vav-he. Judah, however, is spelled yod-he-vav-dalet-he. A *dalet* is added to the Divine name. The letter *dalet* signifies a door. Jesus came from Judah, and He is the Door as stated in John 10:7. Thus, Jesus is the Door to restored access to the Lord, Yehovah. To approach the tabernacle, where the Lord is, one must come through Judah at the east. But, it is where the blood of Christ would have flowed to on a cross. One must come through the shed blood of Christ, the Door.

As far as the cross, the top of it would be the three tribes which descend from Rachel – Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. If you remember from the Genesis sermons, the two wives of Jacob, Leah and Rachel formed their own pictures – the Law and Grace, Rachel being Grace. The symbolism is marvelous, one must come through the fulfilled law which is the shed blood of Christ, but it is Grace which then adorns the top of the cross. It is the pinnacle of what God has done in Christ and what adorns His work.

God chose the names of these tribes and people to be arranged in such a way that they would provide us with snapshots of what He had planned in Christ's coming, and in what that means to us. You've seen just a few of them today to show you that all of the detail has been given as a picture of God's love for the people of the world as displayed in the giving of His Son. Let us reflect on such things, and endeavor to put Christ first in our lives. God has put Him on prominent display in His word. So should we as we live in His presence. As we opened with Julia Ward Howe's words, let's consider one more refrain from her poem in light of what we have learned today –

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.*

Closing Verse: *"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Galatians 6:14*

Next Week: Numbers 3:40-51 *In being redeemed, everything is sunny...* (The Redemption Money) (6th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Sign in the Wilderness

Then the Lord spoke to Moses; so He was relaying
In the Wilderness of Sinai, saying:
“Number the children of Levi
By their fathers’ houses; so you shall do

By their families; you shall number every male
From a month old and above, as I am instructing you
So Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord
As he was commanded, no detail was ignored

These were the sons of Levi by their names, so we see
Gershon, Kohath, and Merari; yes these three
And these are the names of the sons of Gershon
By their families: Libni and Shimei, so they are known

And the sons of Kohath by their families, as the record does tell
Amram, Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel
And the sons of Merari by their families, two we see
Mahli and Mushi
These are the families of the Levites
———just the men, not including their spouses

By their fathers’ houses
From Gershon came the family of the Libnites
And the family of the Shimites, as well
These were the families of the Gershonites
As the records do tell

Those who were numbered
According to the number of all the males
— — —-from a month old and above, great and small

Of those who were numbered
There were seven thousand five hundred in all
The families of the Gershonites
Were to camp behind the tabernacle westward, as the Lord did tell
And the leader of the father's house of the Gershonites
Was Eliasaph the son of Lael
The duties of the children of Gershon
In the tabernacle of meeting, as the Lord did say
Included the tabernacle, the tent with its covering
The screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting
— — —-and yet more was coming their way...

The screen for the door of the court
The hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle
And the altar, and their cords
According to all the work relating to them; so they were to tackle

From Kohath came the family of the Amramites
The family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites too
And the family of the Uzzielites
These were the families of the Kohathites, through and through
According to the number of all the males
From a month old and above, as we see
There were eight thousand six hundred
Keeping charge of the sanctuary

The families of the children of Kohath, the Lord did decide
Were to camp on the tabernacles' south side
And the leader of the fathers' house of the families
— — —-so the record does tell

Of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel
Their duty included the ark, the table
The lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary

With which they ministered
The screen, and all the work relating to them, as we now see
And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest
Was to be chief over the leaders of the Levites
With oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary
Watching every detail, not just the highlights

From Merari came the family of the Mahlites
And the family of the Mushites also
These were the families of Merari
As we now know

And those who were numbered
According to the number of all the males, as the record said
From a month old and above
Were six thousand two hundred

The leader of the fathers' house of the families
Of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail
These were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle
As to them the Lord did tell
And the appointed duty of the children of Merari
Included the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars
— — —-its sockets, its utensils, according to these words

All the work relating to them
And the pillars of the court all around
— — —-with their sockets, their pegs, and their cords

Moreover, those who were to camp before the tabernacle
On the east, before the tabernacle of meeting, so we see
Were Moses, Aaron, and his sons
Keeping charge of the sanctuary
To meet the needs of the children of Israel
But the outsider who came near was to be put to death
— — —-as the Lord did tell

All who were numbered of the Levites
Whom Moses and Aaron numbered
———-at the commandment of the Lord

By their families, all the males from a month old and above
Were twenty-two thousand; so the tally does record
Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 3:40-51 (THE REDEMPTION MONEY)

There are some gigantic difficulties with some of the numbers found in the Bible. Some people simply ignore them, some people have shunned the reliability of Scripture because of them, some have argued against biblical inspiration because of them. Many are complicated, and most will never even be considered by a general reader of the Bible. In some regards, the phrase, "Ignorance is bliss," fits in wonderfully with such things. Once you know they are there, they can cause you to question your faith. But even if they don't do that, they can cause you to question your ability to understand what is going on.

When I first met the Lord, I read the Bible a lot. Eventually, I started reading it with a calculator next to me. I would figure out how many years it was from the creation until whatever day was mentioned. I would figure out how many days old a person was at a certain point in his life, if the number of his years were given. I would figure out how many days, weeks, months, or years it was between certain events. I would also try to figure out why the numbers recorded in Numbers were given, and what they meant. Today's passage became a giant headache for me because it contains numbers which are literally impossible to reconcile simply by the numbers given.

Others have noticed this and have given their reasons for what they think is going on. Like all of the number-related problems in Scripture, none are without some type of explanation as to how to come to a reconciliation over what is said. As far as this passage and its problems, there are quite a few rather innovative explanations, but most still leave the numbers at impossible-to-reconcile amounts. I have my own explanation, and I believe it is as good as any other to be found, well... even better. It doesn't just resolve one numerical problem, but many of them which have been seen – such as in Exodus, and others which we have seen so far in Numbers, and which will certainly arise again as we go on. My explanation could be completely wrong, but one thing I do know is that the Lord's word is without error. This is especially so with something so obvious as that which we will review today. The very fact that these numbers are here, and that they cannot be what the surface text alone shows is correct, the more certain it is that this is exactly what the Lord intended for us to read.

That may sound wholly illogical, but with the absolute perfection of what we have seen so far in His word, why would we assume anything less? The Lord didn't take a nap during Moses' numbering of people in this chapter. In fact, as we will see, He was

minutely concerned with every detail of the record. Our misunderstanding of God's word, or our inability to figure out what He is saying in His word, in no way negates the reliability of that same word. Let us have complete confidence in this.

Text Verse: *“Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—
8 For the redemption of their souls is costly,
And it shall cease forever” — Psalm 49:6-8*

The psalmist said that the redemption of one's soul is costly. Today we will look at how the Lord set up things up concerning those who would tend to the religious affairs of Israel. He has already called a high priest, and established his line through his sons. He has said that He was calling the Levites to serve that priestly class. However, He has already set aside the firstborn of Israel for Himself. In order to simplify this for all of Israel, He has taken the Levites in place of the firstborn. However, there needs to be a balancing out of the two in order to demonstrate His absolute integrity in the process. That will be realized in today's verses through a process of redemption money. The verses are short, will go by quickly, and they may seem unnecessary, but they are not. They are an integral part of establishing a highly organized structure for the maintenance of Israel's religious life.

Think of it this way – If you needed a plumber because your sewer line was backed up inside your house, how would you feel if you went to call someone from a pool of workers, and they sent the first person available, regardless if he knew anything about plumbing or not? If there was no special class who were properly licensed and trained that we call “plumbers,” you might get Moronis-Maximus who had never worked on a single plumbing call in his life. And worse, you also need an appendectomy, and he is scheduled to do that as soon as he unplugs the sewer line. The whole concept is ridiculous. As this is so, how much more important are the matters which relate to the conduct of Israel's spiritual life, and thus its very existence!

Do you wonder why the church is in such bad shape today? It's because there are people unschooled in the word, uneducated in sound theology, and unprepared to dissect that which is of *the highest value* of all, and who then wrongly explain it to those who desperately need it in order to be sure of their eternal destiny.

What God has placed here in Numbers is no longer tedious when you stop and say, “This is the word of my Creator, revealing His plans and purposes for me.” No matter how difficult some passages are, they are there as individual sections which form one grand whole. And cumulatively, they reveal an entire plan, formed before the creation and carried out slowly and methodically for us to grasp His great and tender care of us now, and even into eternity itself. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Numbering the Firstborn (verses 40-43)

⁴⁰ Then the Lord said to Moses:

The words, “Then the Lord said to Moses,” are correct. So far it has said that the Lord “spoke” to Moses in verses 1, 5, 11, and 14. It will say that again in verse 44. However, a different word, translated as “said,” is used here. And in fact, the word now translated as “said” is used for the first time in Numbers.

The difference was explained in Leviticus, but it is worth repeating. The Hebrew words for “spoke” and “said” carry essentially the same thought of conveying a message, but spoke is more concise. One commentary says, “You choose DABER if you only need to tell people what to do, but AMAR if the task is so complex that it requires a partnership and people working together.”

There is the need for Moses to actually participate in the events of verses 40-43 to ensure that everything comes out as the Lord now says. The difference in wording is slight, but it is still important to pay attention to these little details if one wants to properly follow the course of events in a logical fashion.

If you remember, everything of the previous verses came together to form a beautiful picture for us. The Lord spoke out the instructions to ensure that this would come out exactly as He intended. The Lord now *says*, instead of *speaks*, for Moses to get involved more intimately in what He directs.

In verses 1-4, the generations of Aaron and Moses were detailed. After that, verses 5-13 gave the duties and responsibilities of the Levites in regards to the tent of meeting, and that the Levites were taken from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn. This was followed by verses 14-39 which detailed the counting of the Levites from their various houses and families.

The total of that counting equaled 22,300, but which surprisingly was recorded as 22,000 in verse 39 as we closed out those verses. The explanation for that was given, and what I proposed was that the entire counting was that some of the people in the countings of the people included the mixed multitude who had come out with Israel, minus the three hundred of the native-born Levites who could not be counted against the whole because the firstborn already belonged to the Lord.

The idea that the mixed multitude is included in these various census takings is not one that I know of as being suggested by other scholars, but it seems it must be so because of the impossible numbers which lie ahead when today's verses are considered. There may be another explanation which is totally overlooked concerning this, but as far as I know, nothing else which is available can sufficiently rectify the situation concerning the numbers.

40 (con't) "Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above,

The Lord now changes the counting of the children of Israel. In the first census of verse 1:3, the total number to be counted, apart from the tribe of Levi, was "from twenty years old and above." After that, in verse 3:15, all of the Levites, from a month old and above were to be counted. A new counting from the non-Levitical tribes is now to be taken which mirrors that of the counting of the Levites in that it is all from a month old and above. However, it is only a counting of the firstborn males. The reason for this goes back to what was said in verses 3:12, 13 –

"Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, ¹³ because all the firstborn *are* Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I *am* the Lord."

There must be a comparison between the number of Levites counted to the number of firstborn among the other Israelites. The reason for this is forthcoming, but it is both logical and necessary.

40 (con't) and take the number of their names.

Reading the English, you get an odd sense of what is being said in this verse. We read, "Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above,

and take the number of their names.” Actually, two different words are used which are translated as “number.” The NIV makes a good distinction between the two with, “Count all the firstborn Israelite males who are a month old or more and make a list of their names.” This clears up what is otherwise a confusing translation.

⁴¹ And you shall take the Levites for Me—I *am* the Lord—instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel,

There is an emphasis here which was seen in verse 13, and which will again be seen in verse 45. In each instance, the Lord has spoken of the firstborn, and He then indicates that the Levites are taken in place of those firstborn. In each instance, He proclaims, *ani Yehovah*, “I am Yehovah.” He redeemed Israel out of Egypt, He claimed the firstborn as His own at that time, and now in place of the firstborn He claims the Levites as His own. Each time, they are reminded that He is the Lord who redeemed them. It was solely at His will, and if He had not done so, they would have remained in bondage. They were His, and He held the right to determine what He would do among them – apart from their will or choice.

^{41 (con’t)} and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel.”

The law of the firstborn was precisely detailed in Exodus 13 –

“And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, ¹² that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the Lord’s. ¹³ But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. ¹⁴ So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What *is* this?’ that you shall say to him, ‘By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.’ ¹⁶ It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.”

In those verses, the firstborn of the animals were considered holy to the Lord, and certain things were to be done to them based on the type of animal. With that in mind, this verse now seems contradictory to what will later be said later in Numbers –

“But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem; they *are* holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat *as* an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord.”

-Numbers 18:17

Here, it seems as if the firstborn of the livestock of Israel was not to be taken for sacrifice because the livestock of the Levites was taken in place of it. However, in Chapter 18, the firstborn of the livestock are said to be sacrificed as the Lord’s. There is no contradiction though. This verse now is simply speaking of all of the animals which are alive at the time of the census. The Lord is taking them instead of the firstborn of the animals which belong to Israel. However, all later firstborn, at the time of Chapter 18 and on, will still belong to the Lord.

The Lord is, at this time, granting flocks to the Levites as their own possession. As the Levites belong to the Lord, then what they possessed also belonged to the Lord, and thus would not need to be sacrificed. This is a one-time claim upon the flocks of the Levites in place of the firstborn of the flocks of the tribes of Israel.

Where some scholars look to find error or contradiction here, we actually find a precept which, if not mentioned, would have left a giant void in our understanding of the system set up for the Levites as the Lord’s ministers, and who received their livelihood from their work for the Lord.

⁴² So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the children of Israel,

This is the number of firstborn who are from one month old and above from among the children of Israel. Nothing is said beyond this such as, “since they left Egypt,” or anything such as that. It is a tally of the children of Israel’s firstborn. What number should Moses arrive at? We know that he obeyed the command, and we know that he did it as stated because of the next words...

⁴² (con’t) as the Lord commanded him.

The Lord directed, and Moses did as the Lord directed. What is the result then...?

⁴³ And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

The impossibility of this number stems from the number of those counted in Chapter 1 in the census of the tribes. The total arrived at was 603,550 men, twenty and above, who were prepared for war. If there were 22,273 firstborn in Israel, and only those in the census were counted, the ratio would be 27.09 children for every firstborn.

That would be a bunch of really productive women, and a lot of mouths to feed in every house. But that is *only* a ratio based on those males 20 and above. If the total number were figured, say only three times that because of those 19 and younger, and all the women who were not counted, the total number of people might be 1,810,650 people. Dividing that by 22,273 would be an average family size of 81.29 per firstborn. That would be some hugely productive ladies. And that is still figuring a low number. The congregation would probably be closer to three million. If correct, the women would be born pregnant, and have a baby every year of their 100-year old lives. Oh! Washing diapers takes on a whole new meaning.

Because of this obvious problem, some have tried to say that the number of firstborn must only be those who were born since the time of the exodus. But that is wrong for two reasons. First, nothing is said about that. And secondly, that would then not correspond to the number of Levites, *all* of whom were counted, not just those born since the exodus. It is for this reason that the logical conclusion is that this census of the firstborn is only speaking of those who were firstborn of native Israelites, not of the mixed multitude who came out with Egypt, and who were counted in the mustering of the 12 tribes for war in Chapter 1.

In taking this into consideration, it would reduce the number of actual Israelites down to a reasonable number for their 215-year stay in Egypt – from the original 70 recorded. They would have been a sizable group, but the majority of those who left with them were not, in fact, native Israelites. They, however, were then incorporated into the people as natives from this point on.

Why is it important to have such an explanation? Because only an idiot would compile such a record with such obvious impossibilities without there being a reasonable explanation for them. Moses was no idiot, nor were those who faithfully retained the writings of Moses, for thousands of years, while maybe not understanding why these

numbers didn't make sense. Whether this is the correct reason or not, it does explain much concerning what are otherwise very complicated listings in Exodus and Numbers.

*This Lamb has taken my place
His life was given instead of mine
But because of this, I can look upon God's face
In a heavenly land, ever so sublime*

*What a cost, what a high price indeed
That God would pay with the Lamb's shed blood
O God, from the foundation of the earth it was decreed
That I would be a part of that cleansing flood*

*Redeemed! Saved and on the heavenly highway
Where that Lamb I shall finally see
Through His death, my pardon He did pay
And through the resurrection, there is joy eternally*

II. The Redemption Money (Verses 44-51)

⁴⁴ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

A new section is now introduced with these words. The more common word "spoke" is once again used. Moses is given commands that are to simply be carried out, without the complications of the previous short section we just went through.

⁴⁵ "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock.

This is in accord with verse 41, and it will be according to the number of those counted and recorded in verse 43. It is noticeable that the number of firstborn of the livestock are not given. Rather than trying to determine that which only the Lord Himself could actually determine, He simply equates the firstborn of the livestock of Israel to the total number of livestock of the Levites. Each verse carefully and methodically builds upon the next. One step at a time has been taken to accomplish a task which is obviously extremely important to the Lord. Precision is necessary, because...

⁴⁵ (con't) The Levites shall be Mine: I *am* the Lord.

Again, the Lord makes His proclamation. He had redeemed Israel and claimed their firstborn at that time, whereas He had killed the firstborn of Egypt. In that act, He had made a distinction between Israel and Egypt. From that time on, the firstborn was to be set apart to reflect that distinction. Now, in order to provide a cohesion between the people of Israel, based on a single religion, ministered by a single group of people from within the body, He claimed the Levites as His own. Levi means “attached,” and that gives the sense of adhesion. It is they who will provide adhesion between the various parts, and adhesion between the Lord and them. He has determined, and – as He says, *ani Yehovah*; “I am Yehovah.”

⁴⁶ And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites,

A new word in Scripture is seen here, *paduii*. It is a noun which speaks of a ransom for those who are redeemed. It will be seen four times before the end of this chapter, and never again. Here in this verse, we have the disparity between the counting of the firstborn, and the census of the Levites. There were actually 22300 Levites counted, but there are 22000 who are considered in the numbering, as explained in the previous sermon. In our verses today, there were 22,273 firstborn counted. That leaves a difference of 273 which must be accounted for before the Lord. The Lord will now explain how the difference is to be handled...

⁴⁷ you shall take five shekels for each one individually;

Nothing is said of who this was required from, or how it was to be acquired. Albert Barnes surmises that it would be exacted from the parents of the youngest children; they being the last born, and so they would be the extra, over and above, the Levites that existed. Jewish tradition says that names of the 22,000 Levites were written on slips of paper along with 273 receipts which said “five shekels.” From there all who drew the “five shekels” slip had to pay a fine. As Adam Clarke correctly says of that, it is a “stupid and silly tale, for such a mode of settlement never could have been resorted to by an intelligent people.” However the difference was collected, it would have totaled 1365 shekels of silver. That silver was to be evaluated against a known standard...

⁴⁷ (con’t) you shall take *them* in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary,

There was a set standard by which all others would be compared. This was to ensure that nobody would cheat another, or be cheated by another. *b’shekel ha’qodesh*, or “the

shekel of the sanctuary,” or even more literally, “the shekel, the holy,” was that standard, and it was based on an even more precise standard...

⁴⁷ (con't) **the shekel of twenty gerahs.**

The shekel is defined as twenty *gerahs*. *Gerah* comes from *garar* which means “to drag away.” The *gerah* literally means “a bean” or “a kernel” which is round, as if scraped. Thus, it is a portion of a shekel which has been taken away. This is the same idea as our use of “grain” when speaking of money, gunpowder, etc. The reason for including this statement is to ensure that the sanctuary shekel, which was the standard, was to be used, and the silver was to be according to that 20-*gerah* standard. The number 20 in Scripture signifies “expectancy.” There was to always to be the expectancy that the shekel used was appropriate to the standard.

⁴⁸ **And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons.”**

Everything here follows logically. The priesthood had been given to Aaron and his sons. The Levites had been given to them to assist in the service of the sanctuary in place of the firstborn. As there was a deficiency between the Levites in relation to the firstborn of Israel, there must be a fair redemption value paid for them from Israel to make up that deficiency. That is to be paid not to the Levites, but to Aaron and his sons to whom the Levites were given.

Just reading these verses for one’s daily Bible reading may be dry or even mind-numbing. However, when they are considered as they should be, they are astonishingly precise and carefully laid out. Not a single *gerah*, one-twentieth of a shekel, is missing from the redemption process because the redemption money is compared to the exacting holy standard.

What we are reading here is a carefully detailed account of redemption which shows exacting precision. If this much care and detail has been provided for what we are reading here, even to the smallest grain of silver, how much more comforted should we be then in the fact that God has put *the same exacting care and precision into our own redemption!* The chances of one redeemed by the Lord being lost are greater than the chances of God ending the existence of the universe itself. It is unimaginable that He would err in what He determined before He spoke a single atom into existence. John Lange says of this redemption money –

“Money cannot measure the value of spiritual things, but it can express that they have value. It cannot pay the debt we owe to God, but it can express that we do owe Him much. Five shekels, paid under the conditions here specified, could express that the payer owed himself to God’s service, and that the payee accepted the position of substitute.” John Lange

As the number five in the Bible signifies “grace,” and as twenty signifies “expectancy,” then there is the expectancy of grace pictured in each act of redemption. We do owe a debt to God, and it is a great debt, but Christ paid that debt in our stead. That is explicitly stated by Peter in the most moving way –

“And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” 1 Peter 1:17-19

Whereas those in Israel were redeemed with silver, we have been redeemed in a far more precious way, a way which the silver only pictured. The blood of Christ is what brought us to where we are in Christ, and it is what will ensure we remain in Him for all eternity.

⁴⁹ So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those who were redeemed by the Levites.

Again, as said earlier, it isn’t known how Moses obtained this, or from who it was obtained. All we have is the statement that it was accomplished. As Moses is specifically named here, rather than simply saying, “he,” it is certain that we are being shown, as at times before, that Moses is the Lord’s instrument in redemption. Moses, or He Who Draws Out, is specifically the one to draw out those over and above the Levites, in order to obtain the money of their redemption. 22,000 had been redeemed by a Levite, meaning they had been freed from the redemption price by a Levite, but 273 had not. It is they who are noted here now in order to ensure full redemption is realized.

In this verse, we have a word used for the last time in the Bible, *adaph*, meaning “excess.” It is that which is over and above. The first time it was seen was in Exodus 16 when it was found that those who gathered the manna had nothing left over, even though some gathered much, and some gathered little. Now, after nine uses, it is retired.

Any further uses of it would be “over and above” what the Lord determine for His perfect word.

⁵⁰ From the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five *shekels*, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

These words show that the money is definitely applied to the firstborn. The word used can be translated as “of,” “from,” or even “for.” Whether it was obtained from the youngest, from a lottery, or from a general fund, Moses obtained it, he obtained the full amount, and he obtained it according to the set standard.

⁵¹ And Moses gave their redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the Lord,

The redemption money, drawn out by Moses from the excess of the firstborn of Israel, is now passed on to Aaron and his sons as was spoken out by the Lord. Not a single grain was left unattended to, and the full redemption of the firstborn was realized. From this time forward, the Levites would stand in place of the firstborn in Israel for the particular purposes which the Lord had called them. For those who are the Lord’s, every detail is perfectly met, and nothing is overlooked concerning their redemption. We don’t just have a hope in Christ, we have a sure and blessed hope in Christ. In the words of this verse is the last use of the term *paduii*, or the ransom for those who are redeemed. It was introduced in verse 46, and it goes out along with the chapter, never to be used again.

^{51 (fin)} as the Lord commanded Moses.

As has been seen at other times with matters of the utmost importance, these words conclude the chapter. It shows faithful and full commitment to the word of the Lord. He directed, and Moses did as commanded. Not a word of the Lord was allowed to fall throughout the entire process of numbering the tribes, arranging them according to their armies, setting aside the Levites, counting the Levites, and taking the Levites in place of the firstborn of Israel. Everything necessary to establish them, and bring them near through His set guidelines has been faithfully tended to.

It was good news for Israel, and there is good news for us based on what we have read today. The Levites were selected to minister before the Lord concerning the Law of Moses. It was a law which was good – so we know – but sin, though the law, produced death. This isn’t just a possibility; it is a universal fact. By law is the knowledge of sin, and

the wages of sin is death. However, the law didn't just bring death to the sinful, it brought death to all, including the sinless One, Jesus. Not because He sinned, but because only through His sinless death, in fulfillment of the law, could we be forgiven of our sins.

Therefore, law has truly and honestly brought death to all. However, through law also has come life. Because Christ died in fulfillment of the law, not sinning under it, the law is annulled through Him. And because He died without sin, He rose again. With the law annulled through Him, He can no longer die. For those who accept this premise, and who by faith receive this work of the Lord, we are imputed the righteousness of Christ. In God's eyes, it is as if we have perfectly lived out this same law that once brought death.

As you can see, though the Levites ministered under a law which brought death to us because of sin's power, they also ministered under a law which, when properly understood, and rightly lived out, would destroy that exact same power of sin leading to death.

The selection of the Levites to minister before the Lord is that important. Their ministrations kept the gears functioning properly until Christ would come and accomplish His marvelous work. Let us remember this as we read the Bible. Everything written is so penned to lead us to Him, our glorious Jesus.

Closing Verse: *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.” Ephesians 1:7-10*

Next Week: Numbers 4:1-20 *What we should always direct our eyes toward...* (The Holiness of the Lord) (7th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Levites Shall Be Mine

Then the Lord said to Moses:

“Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel
From a month old and above
And take the number of their names; so to you I tell

And you shall take the Levites for Me—I am the Lord—
Instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel
And the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn
Among the livestock of the children of Israel as well
So Moses numbered all the firstborn
Among the children of Israel
As the Lord commanded him
As the Lord to him did tell
And all the firstborn males
According to the number of names from a month old and above
———so we see

Of those who were numbered of them
Were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three
Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These are the words He was then relaying
“Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn
Among the children of Israel
And the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock
The Levites shall be Mine: I am the Lord; so to you I do tell

And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three
Of the firstborn of the children of Israel
Who are more than the number of the Levites
You shall do as I now tell

You shall take five shekels for each one individually
You shall take them in the currency
Of the shekel of the sanctuary
The shekel of twenty gerahs, as directed by Me
And you shall give the money

With which the excess number of them is redeemed
To Aaron and his sons
This is appropriate as I have so deemed
So Moses took the redemption money
From those who were over and above

Those who were redeemed by the Levites
So he took it from those thereof
From the firstborn of the children of Israel
He took the money, you see
One thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels
According to the shekel of the sanctuary

And Moses gave their redemption money
To Aaron and his sons, as the Lord did say
According to the word of the Lord
As the Lord commanded Moses that day

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 4:1-20 (THE HOLINESS OF THE LORD)

The verses today cover a list of items that took us dozens of sermons to get through back in the book of Exodus. There, each of these things that will be carried by the Kohathites, was described in the minutest detail. So much so, in fact, that I had a hard time remembering even a small portion of what they pictured in Christ. And so today's verses were a marvelous chance to go back and get a cursory review of some of what was described there. As I went through the verses, I kept thinking how grateful I am that the Lord put them here. It was like a trip back to an old childhood home where you can look around and revel in the things that had almost left your memory completely.

I would get excited as single words that we had gone through would suddenly come back up looking for an explanation of why they are there. I would anxiously go back to the particular sermon where that one word was used and then say, "Oh yes! I remember that." I kept thinking, "If I had the time, I'd go back and re-read, or re-watch the entire sermon again." But sermon typing day does not allow for such luxuries. And so I would disappointedly close that sermon, and go on to the next verse here in Numbers, looking for another chance to go back and review something else. Each time another would enter the text, I'd look it up and then, yet again, I would say, "Oh yes! I remember that too." And each time, I would be no less surprised that it was a word that pointed to Christ Jesus. Again and again, each word points to Him.

Text Verse: *"One thing I have desired of the Lord,
That will I seek:
That I may dwell in the house of the Lord
All the days of my life,
To behold the beauty of the Lord,
And to inquire in His temple." Psalm 27:4*

Along with the excited feeling of rediscovering Christ in simple, obscure words, I also kept getting the same feeling about what was revealed in the rest of the passage. Time and time again, the things which are mentioned are covered up, kept out of sight from any eyes but those designated by the Lord. The only thing that would be seen by anyone except the priests were the various colored cloths which were over those things. And even some of these were covered up by other cloths. All of the beauty that was hidden below those cloths was kept from the eyes of the people, and yet all of that beauty looks to Christ. He is there, but He is hidden away.

No wonder David said what he did in the 27th Psalm. There is beauty all around us. There is a magnificent display of it in the sunrise, in the rushing of a stream through a tree-filled land, in a careful study of a single flower in the cracks of a rock, or in the face of one's beloved. And yet, all of those things stem from the Lord Himself. Every beautiful thing in the world, and in ten thousand times ten thousand other worlds, is an expression of His mind. If this is so, then all of the beauty that has been, that is, or that ever will be – all of it combined – cannot equal the beauty of the Lord from whom these things are derived.

And here in Numbers, those things that picture the Lord are covered over and concealed from the eyes of Israel. Fallen eyes are too impure to gaze upon such glory. And that is why when He came, He veiled that glory in a garment of flesh. There was enough of His true glory to reveal who He was, but the fallen eyes who saw Him only looked at the flesh; most missed the true glory behind it. This is what Israel was given in type and shadow, and this is what they still fail to see in reality. But He is there, revealing His true glory to those who are willing to open their eyes and see it. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. They Shall Not Touch Any Holy Thing (verses 1-15)

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

The usual address of the Lord speaking only to Moses is departed from here by including Aaron. This occurs from time to time when there is a need for Aaron to be involved in whatever is occurring. Such is the case now. In Chapter 3, the Levites were taken in place of the firstborn in Israel, they were counted in a census, and they were then dedicated in place of the firstborn. Now, a second numbering of them will occur in order to draw out from their total those who were acceptable for actual service. Aaron is called with Moses in this first section of the chapter because it deals with the priestly class of Levites, as is seen next...

²“Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house,

Here the order of the census is not according to birth order. The sons of Levi are first Gershon, then Kohath, and then Merari. However, Kohath is most associated with the priestly line of Aaron, and so to them belong the most sacred duties.

In the case of this census especially, the details concern the service of the sanctuary. As Kohath is to tend to the most holy implements, they are named first. These holy implements would need to be prepared for moving first, and would need to be ready for service once again upon arrival at a new location. Thus we have Kohath named first. The census now to be taken is unlike the previous one. That one was from one month old and upward in order to determine the total count of Levites for the purposes of redemption in place of the firstborn. This one is of a different age bracket, and for a different reason. This is now seen in those...

³ from thirty years old and above,

This census is specifically to be taken beginning with those who are thirty years old. The number thirty in Scripture “denotes in a higher degree, the perfection of Divine order, as marking the right moment” (Bullinger). It is the age that Joseph was when he stood before Pharaoh. It is the age that Christ was (about) when He began His ministry. It is also “the right moment” for the Levites to begin their own particular ministry.

^{3 (con't)} even to fifty years old,

The census of these Levites ends at the age of fifty. Thus, they are being counted according to the prime years of their life for the physical service to the Lord. The number fifty is “the number of jubilee or deliverance. It ... points to deliverance and rest following on as the result of the perfect consummation of time.” It is at this age that the Levites are given the deliverance, or release, from their duties and enter into their deserved time of rest.

The entire duration of their active service then is twenty years. Twenty signifies “expectancy.” There is a time of burden and labor in the lives of these men, and the expectancy of their rest is after a period of twenty years. It is as if the meaning of the biblical numbers was decided upon based on the life of these Levites, but rather it is the life of these Levites being fitted to the meaning of biblical numbers. And that, in a most perfect way.

^{3 (con't)} all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.

It is specifically those from thirty to fifty who are herein designated as acceptable and responsible for service in doing work for the tent of meeting. Later, two separate ages will be given. One is in Numbers 8:24, where the age for performing service in the work of the tent of meeting is set at twenty-five. Later, in 1 Chronicles 23:24, the age is set at

twenty. These varying ages are given for their own reasons which are explained in the needs of the service itself. It is a service of tending to the tabernacle, especially its movement. Thus, the age of thirty is given. The word translated as “the service” here is *tsava*. It was used to signify those prepared for war in the census of Chapter 1. Thus, these men are specifically to be considered the hosts of the Lord. They are his sacred military force. This is certain because of what is next stated...

⁴“This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, relating to the most holy things:

The word translated as “the service” is not the same Hebrew word. It is *avodat*, labor. They are the Lord’s hosts, and the description of their labors is forthcoming, but from this verse, we see that those duties are in relation to the tent of meeting, and specifically in regards to *qodesh ha’qodashim*, or “the most holy things.” These are the items found in the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place of the tabernacle, and which will be described in the coming verses.

⁵When the camp prepares to journey,

Their first duties are specifically noted as when it was time to break down camp for continuing the journey towards Canaan. In all expectation, this would be just a few short stops along the way, and they would be there in no time. All of the preparations of the preceding year were intended for them to be ready to journey on a quick path to their new land. The fact that it would be after almost every one of them was dead is irrelevant to what they now expect. As the camp is anticipated to break down and depart, the order of that will now be noted. This task will be performed in the same exact way that any tent would be moved, beginning with the contents on the inside and working outwards.

^{5 (con’t)} Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil

This is an exception to the rule of the Most Holy Place. Leviticus 16 defines the allowances for entry into this area. It was to be entered only by the high priest, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement. However, during the time of movement, or at a particular time authorized by the Lord, such as when the ark was carried around Jericho, exceptions to the law of entry were made. The idea here is that the Presence of the Lord would move in the cloud indicating that the camp was to depart. This was seen in Exodus 40:36-38 with these words –

“Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the Lord *was* above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.”

With the Presence no longer in the Most Holy Place, it would be safe for the priests to enter without fear of death. With the allowance for moving noted, the first thing these chosen priests were to do was to remove the *paroket*, or veil, which hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy place. In short, the veil symbolized the body of Christ, but for a detailed understanding of it, one can go to the sermon from [Exodus 26:31-37](#).

⁵ (con't) **and cover the ark of the Testimony with it.**

This veil, used to cover the entrance to the Most Holy Place where the ark rested, was now to cover the ark itself. And the ark is known here by its full name, the ark of the Testimony. The ark's purpose was to be a container for the Testimony itself. In short, it is a picture of Christ embodying the Law. But the detail is so involved, so specific, and so beautiful, the sermon on Exodus 25:10-22 should be referred to. The symbolism of the veil covering the ark is magnificent. The veil is the body of Christ according to Hebrews. His body covers the testimony, the ark, and the mercy seat. In essence, His humanity veils those things which picture His deity, from human eyes. On that veil are the cherubim which guard access to the spot where paradise is restored. In Christ's death, the veil, meaning His body, was torn, removing the guards and granting access once again. For now in Numbers, the veil remains.

⁶ **Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins,**

As seen in the Exodus sermons, the translation “badger skins” is incorrect. The word is *takhash*. It signifies a sea animal, most likely a sea-cow or a porpoise. Thus it would be a light gray to sky-blue covering. It is always used in connection with the coverings associated with the tabernacle, with but one exception. In Ezekiel 16, it is used to describe figurative sandals worn by Jerusalem.

This skin has toughness and waterproofing properties. As the sea is representative of the world of chaos, confusion, and rebellion, this then makes a picture of Christ's covering from that. On the outside is the appearance of a regular man, but under that are all the riches of Christ. The word used to describe this, *kasuy*, is a noun seen only here and in

verse 14. It signifies “a covering.” This was to be placed over the veil, and then from there...

6 (con’t) and spread over *that* a cloth entirely of blue;

Over everything, there was to be placed a cloth which was completely blue. The color in Hebrew is *tekelet*. It is believed to come from the word *shekheleth*, the cerulean mussel, meaning the color from it that is used for dyeing. Blue in the Bible is associated with the law, especially the keeping of the law. This would be the only thing that was visible of the ark with the exception of...

6 (con’t) and they shall insert its poles.

These words are debated. According to Exodus 25:15, the poles were never to be removed from the ark. And so 1) As an exception, it was necessary for them to be removed for the covering process, and then once again inserted; 2) Holes may have been made in the covering which was slipped over the poles; 3) the poles themselves were covered; or 4) the ark was lifted onto shoulders, fitting them for being carried. As the exact same words are used in the next verses to indicate placing the poles in other pieces of furniture, it is probable they were removed as an exception, just as it was an exception that the priests would be conducting these duties at all.

The poles, if you remember, picture the two testaments of the Bible. The four rings picture the four gospels which tie the two testaments together into one picture of Christ. What the people would see actually pictured what we are studying right now, what we carry with us in our cars, what we often ignore, and what is covered with layers of dust in most houses of the world today. What the people saw was that thing in Israel which was of the highest value of all, the Holy Bible which reveals the Person and work of Jesus Christ the Lord. Within it, like within the Bible, are all those things which picture Him, and which reveal Him.

7 “On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth,

The next item to be secured was the *shulkhan ha’pannim*, or “table the faces,” meaning the table of the Presence, or the table of showbread. Again, amazing pictures of Christ are revealed in this piece of furniture. They are detailed in the sermon from Exodus 25:23-30. This table is to likewise be covered with a blue cloth, signifying the law.

7 (con’t) and put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring;

These items were kept on the table at all times, but during transport, they were to be placed on the blue covering which was over the table. Each of these items was described in minute detail during the Exodus sermon.

7 (con't) and the showbread shall be on it.

The bread, known as the bread of the faces, the bread of the Presence, or the showbread, is here called *lekhem ha'tamid*, or "bread the continual." The term is unique to this verse, and it is used to indicate that even during transport, the bread was to be placed back on the table. It was to always be present. After that...

8 They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth,

They were next to be covered with a cloth of *tolaat shani*, or "worms crimson." Thus, it is the dye obtained from the crimson grub worm. That is in itself a picture of Christ's atoning death on the cross, as has been seen in several previous sermons.

8 (con't) and cover the same with a covering of badger skins;

On top of all of it was to be a covering of sea-animal skin. It is a weatherproof covering. However, it also looks to Christ in a world of chaos, but with treasures of Him hidden inside.

8 (con't) and they shall insert its poles.

These are the exact same words as for inserting the poles into the ark from verse 6. The poles again point to the two testaments being inserted into four rings which picture the four gospels.

9 And they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light,

The next article to be covered, in turn, is the menorah. Only here and in Exodus 35:14 is it called *menorat ha'maor*, or "menorah the light." The symbolism of this article is so amazing and beautiful that it is hard to imagine. It is described in Exodus 35:21-30.

9 (con't) with its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they service it.

All of these items were carefully detailed in previous sermons, and all minutely detail Christ and His work.

¹⁰ Then they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of badger skins,

Again, like the other implements, it is covered with hides of sea animals, not badger skins. For the menorah, like the table of showbread, it is the absolute outside covering.

^{10 (con't)} and put it on a carrying beam.

Here is a new noun in the Bible, *mot*, or a pole. It comes from the verb *mot* which indicates “to totter,” or “shake,” and thus figuratively “to fall.” When David uses this verb in the 30th Psalm saying, “I shall never be moved,” it means he will stand fast and not fall. The *mot* then is a beam that shakes as it carries something, as a yoke does. It is used here, and then in a similar manner in Numbers 13 when the spies will carry a cluster of grapes on a single *mot*, or pole, after they have searched out the land of Canaan. This beam would surely have been made to accommodate the menorah. One might think of something like a palanquin or a sedan chair specifically made for it. This single united beam, however it was constructed, looks to the work of the Spirit. In both testaments, there is one Spirit working, and thus the menorah, which is the light of Christ, is transported in this manner.

¹¹ “Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth,

This is the altar of incense, also known as the golden altar. It is described in Exodus 30:1-10, and it is amazing in its pictures of Christ. This is also covered in blue, symbolizing the law...

^{11 (con't)} and cover it with a covering of badger skins;

The outermost covering is, once again, that of the hides of sea-animals. Again, one should simply think of the symbolism of Christ in each and every step of this process. Once it was ready...

^{11 (con't)} and they shall insert its poles.

Unlike the other items with rings, this altar had only two, not four. Rather than picturing the four gospels, these two rings picture the witness of Christ. In the Old Testament, that was the word of prophets. In the New, it is the word of the apostles. Both of these

combine to give us a basis for the word. The two poles then are the compilation of these two witnesses; the Old and New Testaments.

12 Then they shall take all the utensils of service with which they minister in the sanctuary,

Here is a new noun, *shareth*. It signifies the ministry. It will be seen only here and in 2 Chronicles 24:14. It comes from the verb *sharath*, meaning “to minister.” Although it is uncertain, these are probably all of the things associated with the priestly service, such as garments, the ephod, the breastplate, and so on. They were only worn during service. When it was time to move, they would be kept together and...

12 (con’t) put *them* in a blue cloth,

Signifying the law, and...

12 (con’t) cover them with a covering of badger skins,

Sea animal hides signifying the world of chaos outside, and...

12 (con’t) and put *them* on a carrying beam.

One beam, like the menorah, is used. The work of the Spirit is one, and it is a work of grace through faith.

13 Also they shall take away the ashes from the altar,

This is the brazen altar which is being spoken of here. The verb *dashen* means “to grow fat” or “be fat.” Thus, these ashes are specifically the ashes of the fat of sacrificial animals. This fat residue was to be removed and disposed of as required. From there...

13 (con’t) and spread a purple cloth over it.

Instead of a *tekelet*, or blue, covering, only this one item receives an *argaman*, or purple, meaning a blue/red, covering. This is the only time this color is mentioned in Numbers. The color is one of royalty or that which pertains to or belongs to a king. As it is a mixture of blue and red, in meaning it thus is a combination of what those two colors mean – the law for blue; and war, blood, and/or judgment for red. Here, it signifies the satisfaction of the law through judgment on sin. In other words, the color looks to the

fulfillment of the law through the sacrifice of Christ, pictured in this altar of sacrifice, which is in accord with the law. Next...

14 They shall put on it all its implements with which they minister there—the firepans, the forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar—

All of these items were designated for use in conjunction with the brazen altar. They are to be laid upon the purple cloth...

14 (con't) and they shall spread on it a covering of badger skins, and insert its poles.

Like most of the other items, this one too is covered with hides of sea-animals. The symbolism remains the same, as does the symbolism for the poles. One item not mentioned here is what is said concerning the fire in this altar. That is recorded in Leviticus 6:9, which said, “A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.” The reason for this is that the fire was originally started by the Lord when He sent holy fire down to consume the first offering made on it. It is speculated that the coals were collected and kept burning while moving, but this goes unstated.

15 And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them*;

Only the priests were allowed to do this most sacred work which involved actually seeing the most holy objects. No other person was allowed to do so. Even the objects which could be seen, like the brazen altar, were not to be touched by any but the priests. After everything was prepared, only then could the sons of Kohath come to have these burdens lifted to their shoulders for carrying.

15 (con't) but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.

Only the staves themselves could be touched, but nothing else. The penalty for touching a holy object by a non-priest was death. And this death would be a speedy one as is seen in 2 Samuel 6 –

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. ⁷ Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for *his error*; and he died there by the ark of God.” 2 Samuel 6:6, 7

Poor Uzzah forgot to read the instruction manual, and it cost him his life.

¹⁵ (con't) **“These *are* the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.**

Everything thus far mentioned was to be the sole responsibility of the sons of Kohath to carry. They were to be carried on their shoulders. The responsibility would have been great. In all, there are six things which were mandated for Kohath to carry: the ark, the table of showbread, the menorah, the golden altar, the instruments of ministry, and the brazen altar. Six is the number of man, and thus they present Christ the Man.

Before going on, it should be noted that one item that was minutely described in Exodus, and which was a standard piece of furniture to be used by the priests is never mentioned here, the bronze laver. Its preparation and transport are noticeably missing. The order in which it was moved, or how it was actually conveyed is not stated. One must wonder why. The reason is because of what it pictured, perpetual cleansing from the Lord.

The Lord, through His word, is fully sufficient to cleanse and to keep on cleansing. He is sufficient to sanctify and to keep on sanctifying. He is sufficient to purify and to keep on purifying. From Him, the water never ceases. Every need is met, and every desire is fulfilled in Him.

This omission was purposeful in order to show us a truth concerning Christ. He is ever available for our cleansing. No matter where we move, and no matter what deplorable place we go to, there is always available to us the pure cleansing of the word. It will never depart from us. As long as we come to the tap, the water will flow. In this life, we will never search out all of the mysteries of His word, and in eternity, the water will never run dry. This is the promise of Revelation 22 –

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Revelation 22:1

This seventh item, not mentioned, would bring the total items carried to the idea of spiritual perfection.

*Holy furnishings kept from man's sight
Carefully covered, and hidden from fallen eyes*

*Marvelous things, colored and bright
Cherished by Israel as the most sacred prize*

*Each is hidden so that none can see
And those who carry them dare not touch or even look
The priests have prepared them ever so carefully
Minute precautions the priests covering them took*

*But the people finally saw what these looked forward to
Jesus came, the embodiment of each sacred thing
All that they pictured, He fulfilled through and through
From shadow to substance, all of it He did bring*

*If only we will open these, our fallen eyes
We will find our holy Lord; our most sacred Prize*

II. That They May Live and Not Die (verses 16-20)

¹⁶ “The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest *is* the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil,

Eleazar is the oldest surviving son of Aaron, and he was given specific charge over all of these special items, ensuring that they were carefully readied for moving. These may have actually been carried by him, or it may be that he personally tended to them before giving them to the sons of Kohath to be carried. Either way, they are all a part of the holy items, and he is given authority over them. Each of these things mentioned here looked forward to Christ in amazing, and even marvelous, detail.

^{16 (con't)} the oversight of all the tabernacle, of all that *is* in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings.”

In addition, he was given the final oversight of all of the *mishkan*, or “tabernacle.” That is the actual edifice which is then covered by the tent and which is, as a whole, rightly then called, the tent of meeting. Everything which is connected to the holy places was to be under his supervision and authority. In other words, everything which has been described up to this point.

¹⁷ Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying:

Here we now have the introduction of another subsection of the chapter. It is one connected to what has already been said, but it is an important offset, and it is thus introduced with these words. Again, they are directed to both Moses and Aaron.

¹⁸ “Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites;

This is a solemn and emphatic warning concerning what lies ahead for the Kohathites. Here, the word *shevet*, or tribe, is used in an unusual way. It normally speaks of a tribe of Israel. But here it is speaking of a subdivision of the tribe of Levi. Levi is a microcosm of Israel, representing their firstborn. And so the Kohathites are here considered as their own tribe of this group.

As they have been given this great responsibility within Levi, they could be cut off, just as the greater tribe of Levi could be cut off from Israel. If the priests failed in their duties of supervision, if they got lax or negligent, or if they simply shirked their responsibilities, the penalty of death would result... and it would be the Kohathites who suffered that penalty because of it. This was not a warning they would take lightly either. Aaron had already lost two sons for failing to heed. There would be no reason to expect that the Lord would refrain from destroying others in the execution of their duties as well.

¹⁹ but do this in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things:

The words here refer to all of the instructions given from verses 5-15, but they also – and more especially – refer to that given in verse 20. The Kohathites were given charge of the most holy things, but that charge went so far and no further. When they approached them, they were never to touch them. They were only to do exactly as they were instructed which was when...

¹⁹ (con't) Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task.

Aaron and his sons were to accomplish their tasks first, and only after that were the Kohathites to be given their responsibilities. When given, the instructions were to be exact, and they were to carefully warn of consequences for failure to heed. As Aaron had lost sons, and Eleazar and Ithamar had lost brothers, they would be able to fully convince the Kohathites of the severity of failing to pay heed to their warnings. No excuse for failure to pay heed in this process would be acceptable. If Aaron and his sons

failed to warn, they would be to blame. If the Kohathites failed to heed, they would bear their guilt.

20 But they shall not go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, lest they die.”

The Hebrew literally reads, “And no shall they go in to see ‘for a gulp’ the holy things, lest they die.” It is an idiom meaning, “for an instant.” It is explained in Job 7:19 – “Why won’t you leave me alone, at least long enough for me to swallow!” Job 7:19 (NLT) As quickly as a person can swallow, so quickly will death come upon one of the Kohathites who gazes upon the holy things. In fact, a gulp might be the last thing they do as their throat contracted through the shock of death. This is the severity of looking upon those things which prefigured the perfect Christ. The holiness of the Lord is seen in Him, and only by the outer covering of a man like Adam could anyone behold His glory without being instantly killed. Only the mediators of the covenant, and only by special dispensation from God, could they even go in to cover these items, preparing them for those who would transport them.

The lesson was not transmitted to the people of Israel as a memorial, and so exactly what is stated here is what would later occur. At the time of the Judges, the ark was captured by the Philistines. Eventually, it was sent back to Israel, arriving in Beth Shemesh. However, the people of Beth Shemesh, like Uzzah, failed to check with the instruction manual –

“Then He struck the men of Beth Shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord. He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people, and the people lamented because the Lord had struck the people with a great slaughter.”

-1 Samuel 6:19

This would likewise be the penalty for the Kohathites if any of them failed to heed. The holiness of the Lord is not something that is often talked about in churches, but it is something that is constantly referred to in Scripture. We often talk about Jesus in the most friendly terms, and that is rightly so. He is as close to us as any friend we could have. And yet, He is also the Lord God. He is to be treated with the highest reverence and respect in our words, in our lives, and in our churches.

The name of Jesus means “Salvation,” and it is He who has saved us. But that means we needed saving, and thus we were fallen. Because He saved us, it means that He is not fallen. He is pure, holy, and undefiled. We should ever remember this and use His name

in the context of His holiness. It is He who prevailed over this world, and to Him, therefore, belongs eternal glory, honor, and praise. This is the God we serve, and who has been seen in the many implements described for us in lesser detail today, but which was carefully and meticulously recorded for us in Exodus. Let us be so very thankful to God that we have seen, at least in regards to understanding those things, what was hidden from the eyes of Israel. We have Jesus, the glory of God revealed – even to fallen eyes. And because we have Jesus, we have the absolutely sure hope that we shall see Jesus with purified eyes as well. Someday, and may it be soon, our faith will become sight as we stand before the Lord God Almighty; Jesus our Lord.

Closing Verse: *“Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw...” Revelation 1:12*

Next Week: Numbers 4:21-49 *Be on time, for the best seating...* (Service of the Tent of Meeting) (8th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Holiness of the Lord

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying
These are the words He was to them then relaying:
“Take a census of the sons of Kohath
— — —-from among the children of Levi

By their families, by their fathers’ house
— — ——these instructions you shall be repeating
From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old
All who enter the service to do the work
— — —-in the tabernacle of meeting

“This is the service of the sons of Kohath
This is what their duty brings
In the tabernacle of meeting
Relating to the most holy things

When the camp prepares to journey
Aaron and his sons shall come, as to you I submit
And they shall take down the covering veil
And cover the ark of the Testimony with it

Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins
And spread over that a cloth entirely of blue
And they shall insert its poles
Yes, they shall do this too
“On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth
To this task they shall commit
And put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls
———-and the pitchers for pouring

And the showbread shall be on it
They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth
And cover the same with a badger-skins covering
And they shall insert its poles
So shall they do this thing
And they shall take a blue cloth and cover
The lampstand of the light
With its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels
With which they service it both day and night
Then they shall put it with all its utensils
In a covering of badger skins, so they shall do
And put it on a carrying beam
As I am now instructing you
“Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth
And cover it with a badger-skins covering
And they shall insert its poles
So they shall accomplish this thing
Then they shall take all the utensils of service
With which they minister in the sanctuary
Put them in a blue cloth, cover them
———-with a covering of badger skins

And put them on a carrying beam, and so it they shall carry
Also they shall take away the ashes from the altar
———-as to you I submit

And spread a purple cloth over it
They shall put on it all its implements, doing so with care
With which they minister there
The firepans, the forks, the shovels, the basins
———-and all the utensils of the altar; so they shall do
And they shall spread on it a covering of badger skins
———-and insert its poles too

And when Aaron and his sons have finished
Covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary
When the camp is set to go
Then the sons of Kohath shall come them to carry
But they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die
They shall be attentive to these things, even very
These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting
Which the sons of Kohath are to carry
“The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest
Is the oil for the light, the sweet incense
———-the daily grain offering as well

The anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle
———-of all that is in it

With the sanctuary and its furnishings; so to you I now tell
Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying
A new set of words he was then relaying
“Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites
From among the Levites; but do this in regard to them
———-as My word rings

That they may live and not die
When they approach the most holy things
Aaron and his sons shall go in
And appoint each of them to his service and his task, by and by
But they shall not go in to watch
While the holy things are being covered, lest they die

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You

Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 4:21-49 (SERVICE OF THE TENT OF MEETING)

While reading commentaries on our verses today, I had to laugh at one which was such a contrast to what we see recorded here in Scripture. Moses is given methodical instructions about how to break down the Tent of Meeting, which he then passes on to the people. In verse 32, for some particularly heavy tasks which are being described, we are told that each man was to be assigned the items of his burden.

There are several reasons for the specificity, as we will see when we get there, but EH Palmer, in The Desert of Exodus, says the following about the Arabs who dwelt in tents while he was visiting the land –

“The task of apportioning the loads is always a difficult one. The Arabs scream and struggle as though about to engage in a sanguinary fight; and each one, as he gets the opportunity, will seize upon the lightest things which he can find, and, if not immediately repressed, will hasten off to his camel with about a quarter of his proper load, leaving his comrades to fight over the heavier burdens.”

That sounds about right for a majority of the people of the world. Maybe the Arabs were more so in this regard. I’m not sure, but I’ll check with my Arab friend Rhoda the next time I see her. If I come back with a black eye, you’ll know that she didn’t find my question worth answering. But then, that might just validate the person’s observations anyway about Arabs engaging in sanguinary fights.

Text Verse: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷ And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Colossians 3:16, 17*

Paul says to “let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” The only way we can do this is to read and study the word of God. When he wrote that, all there was of Scripture was the Old Testament. But it is that same body of Scripture that he says to have dwelling in us richly in all wisdom.

He said that because he knew and understood that those same Scriptures talk about one over-arching subject, Jesus Christ. His letters were written to explain that. He probably

had no idea that what he was writing would become a part of that same marvelous body known as the Holy Bible.

Because this is so, everything that we are seeing is either directly pointing to Christ and His redemptive work, or it is typical of it. Such is the case with today's seemingly unimportant passage. I won't deny that reading it is difficult, and it is often overwhelming. But it reveals both the nature and the ways of God. Who would have thought that the stories of Jacob and Joseph and others would have so perfectly fit the redemptive workings of God, but they do. Even mentioning Leah's weak eyes had a reason.

So it is with today's continuation of Chapter 4. It all fits into patterns of other things. The meticulous care of every detail of the tent of meeting points directly to the meticulous care of God's promises concerning our salvation and future glorification. Not a single detail is overlooked in one, because not a single detail is overlooked in the other.

On the other hand, John Lange says, "...in tracing this typical import, one must avoid attaching special significance to each minor detail." He notes that a variety of details is at times necessary to express one simple truth. I will grant that, but I will still state that each minor detail is necessary, and not without significance. If it isn't, then it would not be included in the word of God.

And so we need to be careful about spiritualizing things in Scripture. Context needs to be maintained, and if we do spiritualize a passage, we need to do it in a way which reveals what God is doing or has done, not what we want the word to say. It is a fine line, because by spiritualizing things, we are making the assumption that we have figured out what God intends for us to see. If we are wrong, that isn't the happiest place to be. And so when we follow this path, we need to make sure we give the caveat that we really aren't sure, unless we feel we really are sure.

For now, we'll get into the verses, and then we will try to figure out what they may be telling us. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Duties of Gershon and Merari (verses 21-33)

²¹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Unlike verse 4:1, the Lord only speaks to Moses now instead of Moses and Aaron. This is a continuation of what was introduced in 4:1, but it deals with the sons of Gershon, rather than the sons of Kohath. This section will continue on through the details concerning the sons of Merari as well. Verses 22-28 first deal with Gershon...

²² “Also take a census of the sons of Gershon, by their fathers’ house, by their families.

Gershon is the oldest son of Levi, but he is listed second in this census because the Kohathites are more closely associated with the priestly line of Aaron, and to them belonged the most sacred duties, especially the details concerning the service of the sanctuary, meaning the most holy implements. Gershon’s responsibilities will be for more exterior parts of the sanctuary. However, the same formula for the census is used again now...

²³ From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, all who enter to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.

It is the same designation for Gershon as was for Kohath. A twenty-year period of service is designated for work in the tent of meeting. And again, the words translated as “perform service” are *litsvo tsava*. It in essence says, all who “wage the war” for working the work. Thus, like Kohath, they are considered the hosts of the Lord, performing the warfare of God as His sacred military force.

²⁴ This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and carrying:

A more literal translation of this would be, “The *is the* labor of *the* families of the Gershonites for working and for burden.” There is a call to physical labors, and that call includes working and the bearing of burden...

²⁵ They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting *with its* covering,

This is not a well translated verse. First, unlike the most holy objects, these items now mentioned will not be carried. They will be placed on carts for transport. Secondly, two separate words and ideas are both sadly translated as “tabernacle” here. It should read, “And they shall lift up *the* curtains of the tabernacle and *the* tent of meeting.” Three things are specified. First the “curtains of the tabernacle” are the actual tabernacle as is noted in Exodus 26:6, and the boards of support which will be taken down later are subsidiary to the curtains. The curtains of the tent of meeting are of goat’s hair as is

seen in Exodus 26:7. And “its covering” consists of the ram skins which go over that. After that comes...

25 (con’t) the covering of badger skins that is on it,

This is the outermost covering which is the hide of sea animals, not badger skins. Along with that, they are to take up...

25 (con’t) the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting

This is the outer screen for entrance into the tent of meeting described in Exodus 26:36. It, like all other things mentioned, forms a beautiful picture of Christ. Specifically, it looks to Jesus in John 10:7 when He says, “I am the door.”

26 the screen for the door of the gate of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and altar,

For some bizarre reason, the NKJV changes the order of the words. It should read, “And *the hangings of the court, and the screen for the door of the gate of the court.*” The hangings are the white curtain which encompasses the entire sanctuary. The screen is the actual entrance into the courtyard of the sanctuary detailed in Exodus 27:16. The screen looks to Christ in John 14:6 when He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

26 (con’t) and their cords, all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things: so shall they serve.

This is everything used in association with the things just mentioned except for those things which will be designated for Merari to carry. All of these related items are the responsibility of Gershon.

27 “Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service. And you shall appoint to them all their tasks as their duty.

The Hebrew reads, “At *the* mouth of Aaron and his sons.” They are the overseers of what work is to be performed, and from the direction of their mouths the Gershonites are to receive the instruction and perform their tasks. Aaron and his sons have been

given the watch, or charge, of the Lord. They in turn pass on the charge for the conduct of that watch.

²⁸ This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting. And their duties shall be under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

Ithamar is the youngest son of Aaron. The charge of the Gershonites is *b'yad*, or "in the hand" of him. The hand thus signifies authority. It is Ithamar who was given the task of superintending the original inventory of the tabernacle in Exodus 28:31. There it was also noted as *b'yad*, or "in the hand" of him.

²⁹ "As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families and by their fathers' house.

The attention is now directed to Merari, the youngest son of Levi. However, this is still under the same main section which began in verse 21.

³⁰ From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, everyone who enters the service to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting.

The formula is repeated from verse 23 with a few minor differences in the Hebrew. But again, the word "service" is literally "for warfare." Like his two other brothers Merari is given to performing the warfare of the Lord as a sacred military force.

³¹ And this is what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets,

Again, there is confusion in the translation. They are given assignments for all their service for the tent of meeting, not the tabernacle of meeting. It then says, "*the boards of the tabernacle.*" Two different things are being described here. The boards are the support structure of the curtain of the tabernacle. It's hard to figure how people can rightly picture what is being described when translators don't convey what is being said in the Hebrew.

The boards, bars, pillars, and sockets were all described in Exodus 26 & 36. Cumulatively, theirs are the heaviest of the items, and thus the greatest burden. However, like those items mentioned for Gershon, these will be transported on wagons, not on the shoulders of men. And further, Merari is the largest family of Levi.

³² and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign to *each man* by name the items he must carry.

The items given to Merari are assigned by name. The reason is that there is a large number of items, many were small, and there was a great variety of them. Because of this, they were inventoried, and a careful designation was made of who would have responsibility for them. It shows us that the Lord is meticulous in His attention to even the smallest matters, and to the care of even the most trivial of things. Further, it shows that the Lord is directing that the workload be handled fairly. A sluggard could potentially go pick up a few tent pegs and say he did his portion.

As this is so, we can rightly deduce that we are 1) expected to be similarly attentive to those things we are responsible for, and 2) we are to carry a load sufficient for the proper running of the church, not expecting everyone else to bear the heavy burden while we file our fingernails, and 3) nothing we do for the Lord will be overlooked or ignored.

³³ This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.”

This is similar to the words of verse 28, showing that all stated for Merari has been appointed to them, and they are under the authority of Ithamar, Aaron’s youngest son.

*Work to be done in the service of our Lord
We will respond when He makes the call
We shall be obedient to His every word
And not a word that He speaks shall be allowed to fall*

*We are His servants, and to our duties we shall attend
And so we will respond when He makes the call
We shall work throughout our years, until we come to the end
And not a word that He speaks shall be allowed to fall*

*And we shall be faithful to do our fair share
Yes, we shall carefully tend to our duties when He makes the call
Tending to our tasks with faithfulness and care
And, No! Not a word that He speaks shall be allowed to fall*

II. Everyone Who Entered the Service for Work (verses 34-49)

³⁴ And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' house,

There has been an orderly movement of concepts since Chapter 1. There was the record of the genealogies of each tribe as a census of the men able to go to war. Then there was the arranging of those tribes by standards around the sanctuary. After that came the genealogies of Aaron, starting with him and his sons. Then came the calling of the Levites and their presentation to Aaron and his sons, taking them in the place of the firstborn of Israel. Then a census of the Levites by family was taken. After this came the dedication of the Levites in place of the firstborn sons of Israel. Then came the duties of each individual family. Now, there will be another counting of Levites who are capable of the actual warfare and labor of the Lord.

The chapters have been long, detailed, and repetitive, causing many to lose focus on how orderly things actually are in them. Everything so far has been perfectly arranged for that which is necessary to meet every need which exists. In this special census, Moses, Aaron, and the congregational leaders were there to number the men, starting with the Kohathites who were...

³⁵ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting;

It is a census of those already expected to serve from Kohath as specified in verse 3. The words of this verse and verse 3 are exceedingly similar.

³⁶ and those who were numbered by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty.

Kohath was the largest family overall with 8600 males. However, it is the second largest in available workers at 2750. Proportionally, they have the least available of all though at 32%.

³⁷ These were the ones who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

The duties laid out in verses 4:4 – 4:15 are designated to be accomplished by these 2750 men.

³⁸ And those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families and by their fathers' house,

The numbering of Gershon was mandated in verse 21. That census is now conducted of those...

³⁹ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting—

To the last letter, the words are identical to verse 35.

⁴⁰ those who were numbered by their families, by their fathers' house, were two thousand six hundred and thirty.

Gershon was the second largest family overall with 7500 males. However, it is the third largest in available workers at 2630 at 35%.

⁴¹ These *are* the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord.

The duties laid out in verses 4:24-26 are designated to be accomplished by these 2630 men.

⁴² Those of the families of the sons of Merari who were numbered, by their families, by their fathers' house,

The numbering of Merari was mandated in verse 29. That census is now conducted of those...

⁴³ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting—

To the last letter, the words are again identical to verse 35.

⁴⁴ those who were numbered by their families were three thousand two hundred.

Merari was the smallest family overall with 6200 males. However, it is the largest in available workers at 3200. Proportionally, they have the greatest number available of all. More than one half of their number are acceptable for service. Though they have the greatest burdens in overall weight, their jobs will be more evenly spread out through their great number of available men, and the loads will be borne in wagons. Thus, there is an interesting equaling of the overall burden between the three families.

⁴⁵ These *are* the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

The duties laid out in verses 4:31, 32 are designated to be accomplished by these 3200 men. This means that Merari stands at 52% of males who were readily available for service.

⁴⁶ All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered, by their families and by their fathers' houses,

The verse sets the stage for the next verse to come, a counting of the Levites has been made by Moses, Aaron, and the twelve leaders of the other tribes. It has been conducted, like the previous census of Levites, by their families and by their father's houses. But with the important difference is that those numbered are...

⁴⁷ from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old,

It is of those who are of the proper age to serve the Lord. A twenty-year span of their lives is so dedicated to this holy service. It comprises...

⁴⁷ (con't) everyone who came to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens in the tabernacle of meeting—

The words of this clause refrain from including the term *tsava*, or warfare. Instead, the focus is heavily upon the labors of service. It reads *kal haba la'avod avodat avodah, v'avodat masa b'ohel moed* – “all that came for the laboring of *the* labor of labor and *the* labor of burden in *the* tent of meeting.” The repetition is a stress all its own of the magnitude of what must be accomplished. But it is a task which will be readily handled because of the suitable number of qualified men to attend to it, which consists of...

⁴⁸ those who were numbered were eight thousand five hundred and eighty.

Out of 22,273 Levites from a month old and up, 8580 are qualified to serve based on their age. This reflects 38.5% of the total males, and it is a number wholly sufficient to have the tasks they are responsible for tended to quickly and without undue burden on any.

⁴⁹ According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered by the hand of Moses, each according to his service and according to his task; thus were they numbered by him,

The words here are words of obedience. The Hebrew says, "According to *the* mouth of Yehovah." The Lord spoke out the word, and under Moses' authority, the census was taken, the duties were explained, and the people were numbered for those duties accordingly. As has been seen time and again, Moses faithfully performs the duties required of him, both personally, and through those under his authority, just...

⁴⁹ (fin) **as the Lord commanded Moses.**

The Lord gave the *tsavah*, or command, and His words were carried out exactly as the command was given.

*There is a time to serve, and a time for that to end
During our time of service, we shall faithfully heed the call
We shall not be slack, nor the rules shall we bend
Not a single duty shall be allowed to fall*

*Our faithfulness is being judged; so the Lord does see
And so in our time of service, we shall faithfully heed the call
All things we will do well, tending to them carefully
Not a single duty shall be allowed to fall*

*For great is our God, and to Him we put forth our work
So that in our time of service, we shall faithfully heed the call
No duty that is required shall we set aside or shirk
No! Not a single duty shall be allowed to fall*

III. Carrying Away the Sanctuary

The tent of meeting was a temporary edifice where the Lord dwelt. It was a structure with various parts. As we have seen, all of them point to the Person of Christ. It was

assembled for His dwelling, it was broken down and carried to a new location, and it was then reassembled for Him to dwell in. That looked forward to Christ's coming and dwelling in a human body. We saw this so clearly in the Exodus sermons.

For Israel, the tent of meeting itself looked forward to a permanent temple once they arrived in the Land of Promise. Just as Christ put on temporary garments of flesh, so He has put on His eternal body, never to die again after having paid the sin-debt for His people. But the temple in Jerusalem only looks forward further to the true and final temple where the saints will dwell, and which they will be a part of, for all eternity – there in the New Jerusalem. It will be a true and eternal temple, an edifice made by God for man to dwell. It is where, as Revelation says, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

As you can see, there is the overlapping of things, one thing leading to the next, and in each, Jesus is the central focus of what is occurring. But the Bible speaks of other, similar tents... those of His people. Peter spoke of his coming death and what that meant in 2 Peter –

“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*, ¹⁴knowing that shortly I *must* put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”

-2 Peter 1:12-14

Likewise, Paul speaks of all believers in this same way –

“For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴For we who are in *this* tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

As Christ had a tent similar to ours, we can then equate our tent with His. Though He never saw corruption, the pattern of taking down the Sanctuary by the Levites mirrors

what will happen to us. It is an emblem of what Peter endured, and of what we may also endure if the Lord tarries.

First Aaron and his sons went in and covered all of the most holy things. Once they were covered, they were then carried away by those who served under them from Kohath. It is representative of the soul of man, his very existence, being taken by the Lord, covered over as a sacred treasure invested to Him alone. Man is sealed with the Holy Spirit when he calls on Christ. That is, according to Ephesians 1, “the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” So the believer dies, safely covered over and protected by His Lord.

Next, the coverings of the sanctuary are removed by Gershon. It is no different than what happens to man when he dies. His own covering – first his skin, and then his flesh – is removed as his body begins to deteriorate.

After the coverings are removed, the next stage is for Merari to come and take down the boards, remove the poles and cords, and complete the job of removing all that is left. When they are done, only the earth remains in its place. Likewise, after our skin and flesh is removed, the bones and sinews come apart. Eventually, unless fossilization occurs, nothing but earth is left once again. Job speaks of the formation of man in this temporary tent we possess –

‘Your hands have made me and fashioned me,
An intricate unity;
Yet You would destroy me.
⁹ Remember, I pray, that You have made me like clay.
And will You turn me into dust again?
¹⁰ Did You not pour me out like milk,
And curdle me like cheese,
¹¹ Clothe me with skin and flesh,
And knit me together with bones and sinews?
¹² You have granted me life and favor,
And Your care has preserved my spirit.” Job 10:8-12

This is the state of man in Christ when the Lord calls him out of his earthly tent. But the tent of meeting wasn’t taken down and then never built again. Rather, the very purpose of taking it down so carefully and meticulously was to raise it up again. The holy contents are the guarantee of that. The edifice was constructed and erected to contain

them, and so our precious holy contents, found in this temporary tent, are intended to have a dwelling and to be in that dwelling.

And so Christ has promised in His word that we too shall be built again, not with hands in a temporary body, but as Paul says, “we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

The labors of Levi were exacting, they were meticulously handled, and they were set anytime the Lord called on them to be accomplished. They didn't know if they would be in one place for a day or a year, and they didn't know if they would march for 100 paces or for 20 miles. But once they were done marching, they would immediately return to set up the edifice.

We don't know the span of our lives. God may leave us here for another day, or for 120 long years. But when the Lord calls, we depart this tent. And our contents will be safely conducted through the intervening days or ages until it is time for us to be called again to live in His presence. His servants are attentive to His call, and His people shall be brought back at His word. Be assured of this, and be confident that the guarantee with which you are sealed is just that, a guarantee.

And finally, in a similar way to the reconstruction of the sanctuary, so Israel will also be revitalized in the days to come. The process of their renewal is found in Ezekiel 37, in the Valley of Dry Bones. The Lord told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones in order for them to come together. And they did, first the bones, then the sinews, and then the flesh, and then the skin. So Israel has been rebuilt. But to this day, there is no breath of God in them. The Bible says that first they will come together, and only then does the Lord say, “I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:14).

The promises of God will never fail, and He uses symbolism of various sorts to show us spiritual truths. And these symbols can and do overlap in how they are expressed because God is consistent in how He deals with man, which is faithfully. He made sure promises to Israel, and Israel will revitalize as a Spirit-filled group of people someday. And He has made sure promises to us as well. Because of His faithfulness to Israel, and indeed – simply because of His faithfulness – we can be assured that His promises to us will likewise be realized. Let us not falter in our faith in His sure promises.

Closing Verse: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-22*

Next Week: Numbers 5:1-10 Better than being Rolex’d or Mercedes Benz’d... (A Conscience Cleansed) (9th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Service of the Tent of Meeting

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, making this to him known
“Also take a census of the sons of Gershon
By their fathers’ house, by their families
From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old
You shall number them, all who enter to perform the service
To do the work in the tabernacle of meeting, as you are told
This is the service of the families of the Gershonites
In serving and carrying; these are their rites

They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle
And the tabernacle of meeting with its covering too
The covering of badger skins that is on it
The screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting
———so they shall do

The screen for the door of the gate of the court
The hangings of the court which are around
———the tabernacle and altar

And their cords, all the furnishings for their service
And all that is made for these things:
———so shall they serve and not falter

“Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service
Of the sons of the Gershonites, so he shall do
All their tasks and all their service
And you shall appoint to them all their tasks as their duty too
This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon

In the tabernacle of meeting, these duties to them are released
And their duties shall be under the authority
Of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest
“As for the sons of Merari
This is how things are to be
You shall number them by their families
And by their fathers’ house too
From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old
———-you shall number them

Everyone who enters the service to do the work
———-of the tabernacle of meeting, so you shall do

And this is what they must carry
As all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, you see
The boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets
So shall it be

And the pillars around the court
With their sockets, pegs, and cords, this is the game plan
With all their furnishings and all their service
And you shall assign by name the items he must carry to each man
This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari
As all their service for the tabernacle of meeting
Under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest
To them these directions you shall be repeating
And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation

Numbered the sons of the Kohathites as they were told
By their families and by their fathers’ house
From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old
Everyone who entered the service for work
In the tabernacle of meeting; a number quite nifty

And those who were numbered by their families
Were two thousand seven hundred and fifty
These were the ones who were numbered
— — —-of the families of the Kohathites

All who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting
— — —-as we now understand

Whom Moses and Aaron numbered
According to the commandment of the Lord by Moses' hand
And those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon
By their families and by their fathers' house; so we are told
From thirty years old and above
Even to fifty years old
Everyone who entered the service for work
— — —-in the tabernacle of meeting

Those who were numbered by their families, in the call
By their fathers' house
Were two thousand six hundred and thirty in all
These are the ones who were numbered
Of the families of the sons of Gershon, according to the word
Of all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting
Whom Moses and Aaron numbered
— — —-according to the commandment of the Lord

Those of the families of the sons of Merari who were numbered
By their families, by their fathers' house, and by their seating
From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old
Everyone who entered the service for work
— — —-in the tabernacle of meeting

Those who were numbered by their families roles
Were three thousand two hundred souls
These are the ones who were numbered
Of the families of the sons of Merari, as we now understand
Whom Moses and Aaron numbered
According to the word of the Lord by Moses' hand

All who were numbered of the Levites
Whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered
———so we are told

By their families and by their fathers' houses
From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old
Everyone who came to do the work of service
And the work of bearing burdens in the tabernacle of meeting
———a number quite weighty

Those who were numbered
Were eight thousand five hundred and eighty
According to the commandment of the Lord
They were numbered by Moses' hand
Each according to his service and according to his task
Thus were they numbered by him, as the Lord commanded Moses
———so we are now made to understand

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true
We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 5:1-10 (A CONSCIENCE CLEANSED)

There are two short sections in today's verses. The first deals with physical defilement which necessitates the removal of an individual from the camp of Israel. The second deals with committed sin which defiles the conscience, and which must be dealt with in order to remove guilt.

An age-old question for believers in Christ is, "Do I have to confess my sins to the Lord if I am already forgiven of what I have done wrong?" The question is asked, and then it is asked again, and it is then asked again. Quite often, the same person asks it several times as he tries to find an answer which resolves the matter suitably for him.

The fact that this is the case tells us that we worry about wrongdoing because we know that we have done wrong. My thought on this is that if we know we've done wrong, and we worry if we need to acknowledge that wrongdoing or not, it should tell us that we already know the answer to the question.

One logical answer should be based on the question, "If I don't confess my sins, can I lose my salvation?" The answer is a resounding, "NO!" We will not lose our salvation over this, or over any other matter. Logic alone tells us that both thoughts are true. "No we do not need to confess our sins after being saved or we will lose our salvation." And "No, we cannot lose our salvation."

Having said that, the logical answer does not resolve the obvious problem. "I have done wrong before the Lord, and I feel guilty about it." If you have done wrong, and you don't feel guilty about it, you have a completely different, and much worse problem – a heart problem.

Text Verse: *"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach):⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

-Romans 10:9, 10

Does Jesus read the hearts and minds of His people? Well, yes – yes he does. So we can confess the Lord Jesus, and yet not believe in our hearts, and we will still not be saved. On the flip side, we can assume that Jesus reads our hearts and we can then figure we are saved without confessing with our mouths the Lord Jesus. What's the point if He has

already read our heart? But Paul ties the two together as one act. Indeed, who out there without working vocal cords would believe in the Lord Jesus and NOT confess with his mouth?

If I steal something from my mother, and she sees me doing it, and I know that she saw me, and yet she says nothing about it, am I free from guilt? Not at all. Maybe she just doesn't want to argue, but I have done wrong. In order to truly make restitution for what I've done, I need to own up to my wrongdoing. She already knows, but that is insufficient to resolve the issue of her offense, and now also my guilty conscience. Why... why would we treat the Lord any differently?

It actually bothers me when people argue that we don't need to confess our sins before the Lord. Do we think that just because He knows we've done wrong, we don't need to admit it? That is as arrogant as a democrat spending your tax dollars, even more so. Every time that we say, "I don't need to talk to the Lord about my sin," two things happen. First, our hearts get a bit more callous to our sin, and secondly, we put up that much more of a wall between ourselves and the Lord. That wall will be broken down someday, and our deeds will be passed through the fire. In the end, what is left will be our lot.

I talk to the Lord about how happy I am it rained. I talk to the Lord about how nice the flowers are. I talk to the Lord about how wonderful His word is. I talk to the Lord about how angry I am at the wicked. I talk to Him about this, and I talk to Him about that. But I won't talk to Him about my wrongdoing? How stupid. The arrogance of this mindset is poison. Who cares what the logical outcome of a matter is if it harms us in the process? Let us take all of what is in our heart and gladly share it with Him. So what if He already knows it. He knows You love Him, but He'd sure like to hear You confess that with your lips. Get right thinking *along* sound doctrine. The two go hand in hand. The place to get right doctrine is from the Bible. The place to get right wisdom in your thinking is there too. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Separation from Defilement (verses 1-4)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

This is the normal address of the Lord to Moses, and it indicates a new section is being introduced. The words of Chapter 5 are actually divided into three sections. This first one

is just four verses long, and it will deal with purity within the camp. The second section, which goes from verse 5 until verse 10, will deal with restitution for wrongdoing. The third section goes from verse 11 until the end of the chapter and concerns the law of jealousy in a husband concerning a wife that may have been unfaithful to him.

The overall idea of these verses then is the sanctity and purity of the camp, but the thought won't stop here, it will carry on through Chapter 5. Anything impure or undefiled is to be removed from the camp. If we think about it from a logical perspective, this is the perfect place for these rules to be stated. There has been a meticulous and orderly arrangement of the camp over the past chapters. In the middle of the camp is the sanctuary where the Lord dwells. The camp – now laid out as directed by Him – is to be pure, holy, and undefiled. And so before setting out towards Canaan, the laws of exclusion from the camp, and other laws which conform to that idea, are expressed now. Such a law of purity will actually be given concerning the whole land of Canaan in Numbers 35. When the people arrive, they will be told –

“So you shall not pollute the land where you *are*; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. ³⁴ Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.” Numbers 35:33, 34

As the Lord dwells in the midst of the camp now, He will dwell in the midst of the land, and among His people, once they arrive in Canaan. And these Old Testament lessons are given as mere types and shadows of the greater picture of purity which is anticipated in the new heavens and earth which is described in Revelation 21 –

“But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.” Revelation 21:27

There, the Lord will dwell in the temple, in the midst of the people, and the pure, undefiled, and holy state which was anticipated in the people of Israel will be realized in its fullness in the people of God.

²“Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper,

The first note of instruction concerning purity is to exclude those who are defiled from remaining within the camp. Beginning with lepers, the Lord directs Moses to command the people to put them outside the camp where He dwells.

One point that is interesting to contemplate is that these directions are only coming about now, after the layout of the camp has been given. The directions for all of these exclusions came about in Leviticus. For example, the laws concerning leprosy are found in great detail in Leviticus 13 & 14. Chapter 13 identified what it meant to be leprous in body, and Chapter 14 explained what it meant to be cleansed in the body from that leprosy.

The words here show that there are, in fact, lepers and other defiled people within the camp. However, only now – after the camp has been laid out by the Lord, and the duties of the Levites have been explained – are the laws of leprosy being enacted among the people. In this, we can see that there is the material aspect of the camp, and there is the form of the camp. The two are not the same.

A human is made of materials, but unless the body is animated by the soul, it is simply a compilation of materials. Only when the form comes into existence is the man considered human. The same is true here. The materials of the camp existed, but only when the form of the camp came into existence is the direction for meeting the previously laid out commands concerning purity actually applied.

What this means in its pictorial sense, is concerning what the form of the camp is. We saw that the layout forms a cross. Regardless as to whether the camp actually was able to form this cross at all times or not, based on the surrounding landscape, the intended form is given. As the cross is the true fount of cleansing of all things spiritual, those defilements within the camp, such as leprosy, must be removed. If you remember, each defilement named in Leviticus pointed to a spiritual defilement in the New Testament. Thus, the cross is the defining standard for purity for the people of God. What we are instructed in the New Testament epistles is given to maintain that purity. If we are unclean according to those letters, we are to be separated from the camp. This is noted in several ways by Paul such as these examples –

“It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife! ² And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. ... For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are

inside? ¹³ But those who are outside God judges. Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person.’” 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2 & 12, 13

“But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good. ¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.” 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

There is a formative power in biblical ideas which needs to be considered when we look at Scripture. When we come at the doctrines of the Bible in a willy-nilly way, we will inevitably, and always, have unsound doctrine. And yet, this has been, and continues to be, the standard for most people in the faith. It isn’t just a modern thing which has come about in recent years. Rather, it has been this way since the beginning. Paul says as much in Ephesians –

And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:11-16

Paul notes the materials and the form. Without the form, we are simply being blown about by every wind of doctrine – be it sound or unsound. The camp of Israel is now a form, and that form is to be respected, kept pure, and sanctified in its service to the Lord. The church of God is a form, and likewise, that form is to be respected, kept pure, and sanctified in its service to the Lord.

When we depart from what is given in Scripture, or when we willy-nilly pull apart the form, we end up with every possible bad doctrine that can be made up. It fills our pulpits, and this in turn expands out to fill the entire congregation. If that congregation includes a TV or internet ministry, it goes out even further. There must be a respect for the word, carefully transmitted through the leader of the congregation to the people of God, or there will be only breakdown, disorder, and impurity.

The direction to remove these impure people from the camp at this time isn't just an arbitrary decision that the Lord got to when He felt like it. It is a precisely determined decision based on the cross of Jesus Christ which is now on display for the people of the world to see, even if nobody sees it. The form exists, and it is to be honored for what it signifies. With that in mind, the lepers were to be removed from the camp.

The types of leprosy were named and carefully evaluated. To fully understand how they point to spiritual truths, you should go back and brush up on those Leviticus sermons, but as a few examples to remind you, in just one verse, Leviticus 13:2, several types of leprosy disorders were named – the *seeth*, or swelling, which is spiritually equated to the pride of life; the *sapakhath*, or “scab,” was equated to that which is vile – the lust of the flesh; the *baheret*, or bright spot, indicated that which draws attention to itself – the lust of the eyes. Each and every leprosy pointed to a spiritual defect in man that needs to be kept away from or corrected to ensure purity within the camp.

^{2 (con't)} **everyone who has a discharge,**

Discharges of all sorts, whether flowing or stopped up, were considered unclean and mandated exclusion from the camp. These were detailed in Leviticus 15. As we saw, there were many types of them, but for a quick synopsis, they pictured both active and passive sins of the flesh. A person engaged in making pornography would be considered as an active discharge. On the other hand, the stopped up discharge would be a person who looks at pornography. One is outwardly evident, the other is inwardly so. This same concept can be seen in multiple types of sins of the flesh. In such, the person is defiled and unclean.

For Israel, the physical discharges meant that they were to be excluded from defiling the camp of Lord. For the church, such sins of the flesh mandate excommunication from fellowship within the church. The physical looks forward to the spiritual, but in both, the sanctity and purity of the camp of God's people are what is expected. What this means is that almost all of those in liberal churches across the world are, by their very nature and because of their tolerance of sexual sins, impure. They stand outside of the Lord's favor, and we are to have no fellowship with them.

^{2 (con't)} **and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse.**

The wording here says, “defiled because of a soul,” however, all translators and scholars attribute this to either a dead person in general, or more specifically, a corpse. This category is defined, and procedures for cleansing from it, will be found in Numbers 19.

However, it has already been mentioned for priests in Leviticus. People die because of sin; it is the ultimate and final testament that a person had received what they deserved for the sin in their lives. Simply put, by being a descendant of Adam, we inherited his sin, and we are destined to die. Touching a corpse then brings about defilement in Israel, just as touching sin – in any shape or form – brings about defilement in us. Peter gives the church an example for us to follow concerning Christ's death, and what it means to all who are now in Him –

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.” 1 Peter 4:2

³You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp,

Although it was surely already understood because of the previous regulations of Leviticus, these words are given to ensure that there would be no misunderstanding. Males were not exempt. It didn't matter if they were young or old, or commoner, soldier, or priest. They were to be put out. Likewise, women were not exempt because they were not soldiers or priests. Any who were defiled were to be put outside of the camp. In Numbers 12, even Miriam, Moses's sister, will be sent out of the camp when the plague of leprosy comes upon her. No exceptions were allowed to the rule of purity and sanctity within the camp. This was so...

³ (con't) that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell.”

There is the old saying that “Cleanliness is next to godliness.” However, what these words state is that “Cleanliness is a part of godliness.” This was to be the state of the people. Those unclean were to be taken from His presence. He had graciously agreed to dwell in their midst, and there was a high and expected-to-be-met standard for this honor. We can frown up each of these physical pollutions and say that it was right and proper that they were to be sent outside the camp, but do we feel the same about the even more polluting spiritual defilements which they picture? Or will we overlook the faults which are openly seen and allow them to tarnish the purity of the camp of God's people?

This is not meant that we are to become legalistic, arrogant, snobbish sorts who look down on the occasional faults or misspoken words of those around us. There must be gracious allowances for situations which arise from stresses, trials, and the like. But,

there are to be standards which are held in high regard for those who flagrantly allow their uncleanness to go uncorrected. The Lord expected nothing less from Israel, and He expects nothing less from us.

Before going on, we should consider that some of the things which defiled a person required exclusion for a set period of time, such as seven days. Others made a person unclean for an undefined amount of time. They simply remained unclean until their affliction was cured. Further, only the things which have been identified by name here require exclusion from the camp. Some things defiled for a single day. The term, “unclean until evening,” was used 27 times in Leviticus. This type of uncleanness did not require expulsion from the camp.

Likewise, a woman was considered unclean for a set period of time after giving birth to a child, but she was only kept from the holy things. She was not separated from the camp. Because of this, John Calvin rightly said, “God was not acting as a physician and merely consulting the health of the people, but exercised them in purity. For by joining with the lepers those who had an issue, etc., he instructs the people simply to keep away from all uncleanness.”

Finally, in this verse, a rare term is used. It says, “in their camps.” The plural is suspected to mean one of two things. The first would be the various camps as they are arranged around the sanctuary, such as the divisions to the east, which included Moses and Aaron and the tribes of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Or, it may mean the three divisions of camps – the sanctuary itself, the Levites which surround that, and then the rest of Israel which branches out. Either way, the plural signifies an all-inclusive counting of the entire congregation. All camps are to remain free from all defilement.

⁴And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp;

There is no way of knowing the number of people who were so affected, but it would have been no small number. The term “leprosy” signifies more than what we think of it today, which is Hansen’s Disease. Discharges come at any time, for a wide range of reasons, and they can linger for quite a while, depending on what type of discharge it is. The woman in the gospels who has a discharge of blood was in that state for 12 years. And then, in a congregation of 2-3 million people, the number of deaths on any given day would not be small. The number of those defiled by a corpse would not be insignificant.

Were the body of people not cohesive, the separation mandated here could actually cause riots or worse. But because of what had been jointly experienced by all, and because of the obvious presence of the Lord, the separation of the people would be an act of faith, but it would have been faithfully acted upon, as is now noted. The Lord has spoken, and the people have complied.

It is noted that this is the earliest record of such a separation of those who are defiled. Beyond this, we can only speculate as to how or where they were kept separate. But the fact that they were kept separate teaches us something. They were kept. People who were a part of the congregation, and who were defiled in a way which excluded them from fellowship with the congregation, were still a part of it. They were not told to depart and just keep walking. Instead, they were set out in a particular place, and they were provided for from the camp itself. When manna fell, they would still receive angel's food.

This takes us back to the words of 2 Thessalonians 3 which instructed us concerning a wayward brother. We are not to keep to company with him, that he may be ashamed, but we are not to count him as enemy.

In the camp is fellowship. In the camp is acceptance. In the camp is also safety. Wayward brothers forsake those things, but they are still brothers. Some of the most harmful people of all are in the church. When a fellow Christian walks out of proper bounds, there is always to be found one or two ultra-pious and extra-holy church members who eviscerate them, and tell them to walk and keep walking. They are uncompassionate, self-righteous, and yet probably filled with more internal wickedness than a truckload of unsaved sinners. The finger-pointers cause much damage and have little true value to the church as a whole. Watch out for them.

^{4 (con't)} **as the Lord spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did.**

As always, there is a verse of compliance to show that what was expected was followed through with. The Lord spoke, Moses relayed what was expected, and the congregation as a whole complied. Just imagine if the same attitude was seen in the church as a whole today! God gave us His word, the Holy Bible. From there, church pastors then relay that word, in context and as expected, on to the congregation. And then from there, the congregation does as they have heard. "Wake up Charlie... you seem to have been dreaming for a moment." Well, someday a new order of things will come about. In that day, things will be as they should. Won't that be marvelous!

*What is it that makes a soul unclean?
What is it that makes us defiled before our God?
Is it something that is visibly seen?
Or is it rather something about our earthly tread?*

*Certainly it is something from within us
It is that which springs forth from deep within the heart
And there is no cure for it apart from Jesus
Only through Him can we make a brand new start*

*Our lives are not our own, and only one master can we serve
It is either the devil, and our working a life of sin
Or it is Jesus Christ who can our soul preserve
Without Him in our lives, we are certainly done in*

*Lead us to the Fount from where all cleansing does flow
Show us the way, and to there we shall go
Thank God for what He has done through Christ Jesus
Thank God for what He has done for each one of us*

II. Confess and Be Restored (verses 5-10)

⁵ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The exact same words as verse 1 are once again repeated. A new thought will be presented, first to Moses, and then for Moses to act upon. And so the Lord says...

⁶ “Speak to the children of Israel:

In verse 2, the Lord said to Moses, “Command the children of Israel.” The Lord expected that His words would be acted upon, and without exception. Here, the Lord is giving further instruction to something already presented, and so rather than command at this time, Moses is instructed to speak the words out as they are conveyed to him. As the first section dealt with purity, this one deals with integrity. It would make no sense, however, to have the two reversed. An impure person could not make the restitution that is now to be conveyed due to their unclean state. Again, as always, there is a sound logic behind the progression of thoughts as they are presented.

⁶ (con't) **When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the Lord,**

Two separate, but completely connected, things are brought into focus here. The first is that a man or a woman sins against another person, meaning a son of Adam. The Hebrew reads, "any sins of the man." The Holman Bible does well by saying, "When a man or a woman commits any sin against another."

The thought here is one of case in the language. We have in Matthew 12:31 what is referred to as "blasphemy *of* the Spirit." However, in Matthew 3 and Luke 12, the same thing is called "blasphemy *against* the Holy Spirit." This is what is now being conveyed for us in Numbers. The "of" means "against."

The second thing is that such an act is considered as a trespass against the Lord. As the Hebrew reads, "trespassing as a trespass *against* Yehovah." And so what we have here is one person causing harm to another is considered as breaking faith with the Lord, even if they did not know that they had so broken the faith. Even if this is the case, it is still considered as a trespass against His righteousness. When discovered, it thus needed to be corrected.

⁶ (con't) **and that person is guilty,**

The person has trespassed against the Lord. Some people harm others, and they couldn't care. To them, there is no need to make restitution for their wrongdoing. This is not a case where someone has done wrong, others know about it, and he is brought before the judges. There are already provisions for such things. Therefore, the word "guilty" here is one of conscience.

The guilt is real before the Lord, but it is the conscience which causes that guilt to be realized in the individual. This is why the ESV says of these words, "and that person realizes his guilt." Very few translations give this proper sense of what is being relayed. The person has done something, and now he realizes his guilt before the Lord, and he (man or woman) now wants to make it right before the Lord...

⁷ **then he shall confess the sin which he has committed.**

They say, "Confession is good for the soul." This is the idea behind these words. Confession may also be expensive, depending on the matter, but the sleep of a person who has done what is right will be sweet and well-deserved. In the case of this matter,

without confession, guilt remains; without confession, mercy is not granted; without confession, the conscience remains defiled.

^{7 (con't)} **He shall make restitution for his trespass in full,**

The Hebrew reads, “He shall restore his guilt.” The abstract is given for the concrete. He has guilt and it requires restoration in order to be nullified. But, in order to make it acceptable, a fine is imposed upon him as well...

^{7 (con't)} **plus one-fifth of it, and give *it* to the one he has wronged.**

In such a case as is seen here, there is 1) confession – taking the shame upon himself and not denying what had occurred; 2) restoring the principle – it must be the same thing, or that of equal value and/or comparable nature; and 3) a one-fifth addition – a compensation for having done the thing in the first place, for having inconvenienced another in the process, and to discourage this in himself and others in the future.

This one-fifth addition is seen in Leviticus also in regards to the unintentional eating of a holy offering, and also in the redemption of an unclean animal and in the redemption of tithes. However, when reading the Bible, there may seem to be a contradiction in the penalty. In Exodus 22:1, it says, “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.” There is no contradiction here. One is a brazen act of theft, the other is a trespass which is realized, acknowledged, and of which restitution is made.

⁸ **But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong,**

The word here for “relative” is *goel*. It signifies a kinsman redeemer. Almost without exception, scholars say that this supposes that the person who was offended was either dead or had moved away, thus restitution could not be made to him. John Lange, however, seems to be right in saying that this is speaking of either the offended man, or someone who could act in his stead. The reason for this is that the *goel*, or receiver of the restitution, is the one who actually frees the guilty person of the guilt of his conscience. Thus it is the one originally offended, or someone who acts in his place. They accept the restitution, and they acknowledge acceptance of the man’s guilt, freeing him from his conscience against them. In this, his conscience against the Lord is also cleared. If no such *goel* is available...

^{8 (con't)} **the restitution for the wrong *must go* to the Lord for the priest,**

The priest is the mediator between the people of Israel and the Lord. Thus, he acts in the place of the *goel* to whom restitution could not be made. It is the priest who thus is provided to clear the conscience of the offender.

What is stated in these verses is supplementary to the law recorded in Leviticus 6:1-7, and it is necessary. If a person had no one to pay restitution to, then he would actually profit off of his offense. Therefore, the restitution, if not to a *goel*, is recompensed to the Lord, who is actually a joint-plaintiff, through the priest. Therefore the priest receives the restitution, the one-fifth addition, along with one more thing...

⁸ (con't) in addition to the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him.

The ram offering here is mandated first in Leviticus 6:6, but the offering itself – how it is presented and the like – is detailed in Leviticus 7. Every portion of that instruction, to the finest detail, pictured the Person and work of Christ. If you missed that sermon, or if you can't quote it word for word as it was presented to you, you should go home and brush up on it this evening. It really was a remarkable picture of the work of Jesus.

It is this ram which is said to be “the covering which covers.” In other words, the offense is covered, and the Lord no longer views it as an offense against Him. Instead, He only sees the offering. Such is the nature of Christ's work. He is our offering of atonement. When we come to God through Him, the Lord no longer sees our sins, but rather He sees the perfection of Christ. What a bargain that is for the weary soul, once weighed down with guilt.

⁹ Every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his.

The Hebrew here is specific – *terumah*, or heave offering. It is that which is lifted up to the Lord as a whole, or as a part of a larger mass which is lifted up. It is speaking not of sacrifices which were burnt up to the Lord. Instead, it is referring to dedicated offerings, firstfruits, tithes, and the like. Any such offering which was brought from the people belonged to the priest...

¹⁰ And every man's holy things shall be his; whatever any man gives the priest shall be his.”

There are obviously three categories of things which would come before the Lord. Those things which would be burnt up to the Lord – either wholly or in part. Those things

which were shared between the Lord and the people, such as in fellowship offerings. And then there were those things which were not burnt up, and which did not go back to the offeror. In this third case, all such things became the property of the priests.

Firstfruit offerings were made to the Lord, but they were not burnt up on the altar. Such is also the case with the tithes, and with other things. These things had to have a place of possession, and because they were offered to the Lord, that place of possession remained with the priests who served the Lord on behalf of the people.

In Israel, everything found a place, and the law would work well if it was properly handled by priest and by people. Unfortunately, the ideals set here were abused by both. The priests misused their position, such as the sons of Eli. The people misused theirs, by offering defiled gifts. And then the priests would accept those defiled gifts and pass them on to the Lord. The thing the Law of Moses could never solve is the problem of the heart of man. As the Lord said through Jeremiah –

“The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?
¹⁰ I, the Lord, search the heart,
/ test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings.” Jeremiah 17:9, 10

Despite the magnificent structure and precision of the Law of Moses, it was ineffectual in resolving the problem of the heart. However, what Christ did does solve that matter. This is because what He did is not for a particular group of people who already claim that they are the Lord’s. Instead, it is designed for any who desire to be the Lord’s. And it is therefore based on the understanding that he needs to be the Lord’s. The heart problem is dealt with right at the beginning of the equation.

This doesn’t mean that the heart won’t get jaded, return to dishonesty, or get swayed by temptations. What it does mean is that those things will be handled by the Lord as a Father would to His wayward son, not as an illegitimate son. What we are seeing in the words of the law are anticipatory markers of what Christ would come to do for us in a much more perfect way.

Let us be assured of His good and kind favor upon us if we have called on Jesus. That is IF we have called on Jesus. There is no need to wonder if we are God’s children. All we

need to do is settle the matter, once and for all. When we do, we are His. From there, let us remember that we are, and then honor our heavenly Father in a way which will bring Him glory, and which will keep us from the need of once again clearing our guilty conscience.

Closing Verse: *“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Hebrews 9:13, 14*

Next Week: Numbers 5:11-31 *To decide concerning the husband’s wrath...* (The Holy Polygraph) (10th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Conscience Cleansed

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words to him He was then relaying
“Command the children of Israel
That they put out of the camp every leper; so you shall do
Everyone who has a discharge
And whoever becomes defiled by a corpse too

You shall put out both male and female
You shall put them outside the camp, as to you I now tell
That they may not defile their camps
In the midst of which I dwell
And the children of Israel did so
And put them outside the camp, as He did tell

As the Lord spoke to Moses
So did the children of Israel
Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These words to him He was next relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel:

When a man or woman commits any sin which may be
That men commit in unfaithfulness against the Lord
And that person is guilty
Then he shall confess the sin which he has committed
He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, yes completely
Plus one-fifth of it

And give it to the one he has wronged; so shall it be
But if the man has no relative
To whom for the wrong may be made restitution
The restitution for the wrong must go to the Lord for the priest
In addition to the ram of the atonement with which
———atonement is made for him; so will be the solution

Every offering of all the holy things
Of the children of Israel
Which they bring to the priest, shall be his
So to you I do now tell
And every man’s holy things shall be his, you see
Whatever any man gives the priest shall his be

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true
We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand

And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 5:11–31 (THE HOLY POLYGRAPH)

I have a friend, Tom, who is a police officer out in Point Roberts, Washington. He has been itching for me to get to today's passage. Being a cop, he is obviously aware of folks who will lie, even when it's pretty obvious that the truth is already evident. He is also surely aware of those who can convincingly lie with a such a straight face that nobody could ever tell they were lying. And then, he's surely seen lots of people who have been accused of wrongdoing, but who are actually innocent.

One of the tools we use for this type of thing, although not legally admissible in court, is the polygraph test. He's the one who was reading this passage and equated its contents to a "holy polygraph," and he has been wanting to know what it is picturing, if anything. When he emailed me, he used the term "holy polygraph," and so he saved me the trial of trying to think up a name for the sermon.

There are times where, whether you believe it or not, choosing a name for the sermon is as hard as anything else involved in its preparation. Really, it's true. If you don't believe me then I'll take a lie-detector... never mind. But it is true. As far as what this passage is picturing, I'd never given it much thought. But like everything, the words used begin to shed light on the matter. Why an earthen vessel? Why holy water? Why uncovering the head? It is things like this that begin to develop a picture for us.

Text Verse: *"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Hebrews 2:13*

The passage today concerns feelings of jealousy in a husband towards his possibly unfaithful wife. That seems to be the main idea of the account, but the penalty for the wife is what bears attention. In Israel, the penalty for adultery was stoning. However, here, the penalty speaks of things which seem rather odd. Why would her thigh rot, and her belly swell? Although not nearly a literal translation, the intent is well stated in the CSB. They translated it, "her belly will swell, and her womb will shrivel."

We'll explain why the difference when we get there, but for now, it's good to understand that it is the womb which is drawing the attention in the penalty phase of the rite. That really becomes evident when one gets to verse 28. The faithful wife is said to be free from the curse and able to bear children. What is that meaning to show us?

For now, I'll leave you with a warning to pass on to others. Be careful when you read books on theology, and be careful who you believe in whatever church you decide to visit or attend. The scholars at Cambridge did their absolute best on this account to degrade the Bible into a bunch of myths and superstitions. To them, reading a passage like this is no different than reading a book on spells and incantations written by Aldetha Teach.

The whole thing to them is an exercise in debating what verse was inserted into the Bible by which ancient Hebrew author. They reject that the Lord directed Moses to write these words, they reject that they actually bear the ability to bring a curse upon the adulterous wife, and it seems that, apart from trying to look intelligent by making the Bible look stupid, their only objective in writing a commentary is to weaken your faith in the truth of the word. Maybe they are somehow pictured in the verses of this passage. Maybe so...

One thing is for sure, this is God's word, and it points to real truths concerning Jesus Christ. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Spirit of Jealousy (verses 11-15)

¹¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The words now introduce the third main section of Chapter 5. The first (v.1-4) spoke of maintaining purity in the camp by putting out lepers and others who were defiled. The second (v.5-10) referred to the need for confession and restitution for unfaithfulness against the Lord. Now, a third section is brought in which will continue to the end of the chapter, beginning with the words...

¹² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:

The first section said to "command the children of Israel." Something needed to be done, and it was commanded to be so. The second section said to "speak to the children of Israel." It was a conditional thing. If something came about, then the Lord gave directions concerning what to do about it. This section again says to "speak to them." It again concerns a conditional thing. "If what I now submit comes about, then here is what you are to do about it." And that is...

¹² (con't) **'If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him,**

The passage, like the first two, deals with a type of defilement. In this case, it is suspected defilement of a woman who has been unfaithful to her husband. In this, a new word is introduced, *satah*. It will be found four times in this chapter, and twice in the Proverbs. It signifies, turning away, and it is always used in regards to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of an individual.

¹³ **and a man lies with her carnally,**

Two similar words are used here, *shakav*, meaning to lie down, and *shekavah*, meaning an emission of *zera*, or seed. The intent of the words leaves no doubt. The wife lays with a man in a carnal manner. However, though speaking as if it actually occurred, for the husband it is only an occurrence in the mind at this point, through suspicion...

¹³ (con't) **and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband,**

The husband at this point is suspicious of her unfaithfulness, but there is no actual witness to the matter. The truth of the matter is veiled from his eyes, as the Hebrew word signifies.

¹³ (con't) **and it is concealed that she has defiled herself,**

The woman has done the thing she is suspected of having done, and has thus defiled herself. It is the same word used in verse 3 concerning those who needed to be put out of the camp, lest they defile it. She has committed the act but there is no proof to the fact. Despite continuing to speak of it as a surety, the woman is still only suspected of the act.

¹³ (con't) **and *there was* no witness against her, nor was she caught—**

Again and in a different way, it is considered as if the thing has happened, but there is no way of substantiating that it occurred. The wording has been presented in several ways to ensure that there is no doubt that there remains complete doubt. If there was actually no doubt, then the punishment would be stoning. That is seen in Leviticus 20 –

“The man who commits adultery with *another* man's wife, *he* who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” Leviticus 20:10

However, in this case, the husband suspects that the woman has done exactly what is presented. Then...

¹⁴ if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself;

The *ruakh qinah*, or “spirit of jealousy,” has come upon the husband. This noun, *qinah*, is introduced here. It refers to jealousy, or being zealous concerning a matter. It can be applied to man or to God. It will be seen in this chapter seven times. The next time it will be used after this chapter will be when the Lord says –

“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the sons of Israel in that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I did not destroy the sons of Israel in My jealousy.”

-Numbers 25:11 (NASB).

The Lord was jealous for the sake of His holy name, and Phinehas defended the Lord’s honor with the same zealous attitude. Here, the man has a burning jealousy and it is well-founded. However, jealousy can also be unfounded...

^{14 (con’t)} or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself—

The *ruakh qinah*, or “spirit of jealousy” is an inward feeling which can either be true or false. It is something that wells up in a person, rightly or wrongly, and it can become a huge problem if not resolved. There is a question as to why this only pertains to a woman and not a man. Several reasons become obvious when the matter is thought through, one of which is as much a protection for the woman as it is for the man.

The first and most obvious reason is that the idea of Israel is one of purity. The Lord speaking to the men about divorcing their wives in Malachi gives His reason for retaining the marriage –

“But did He not make them one,
Having a remnant of the Spirit?
And why one?
He seeks godly offspring.
Therefore take heed to your spirit,
And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.” Malachi 2:15

The sacredness of marriage is a given, even from the creation of man, but the sacredness of offspring becomes the focus of attention from that point on as well. The two lines mentioned in Genesis 6 speak of this – the sons of God, and the sons of men. The Lord expected the purity of Israel in particular as they led to the coming Messiah. The name and family of the male, including the transfer of his land and property, is an honor to be bestowed upon a legitimate son. It would disgrace that, and dishonor the man, for a woman to bear another man's child.

Another reason this applied to women and not to men, is because it is the man who could severely mistreat the woman if he suspected her of infidelity. He could physically harm her, or treat her no longer as a wife to be respected, but as a slave to his animal desires. This is something a woman could not do to a man. And so despite the law being directed at the woman, it was still a safeguard and protection for her. If no harm came to her from this rite, then she would be vindicated. If harm did come, she would be proven a faithless wife. Either way, it is an appropriate measure as given by the Lord. And so, if a *ruakh qinah* arises in him...

¹⁵ then the man shall bring his wife to the priest.

The woman is herein as protected as she is under suspicion. The priest is the judge, and it is his obligation to judge rightly according to the law.

^{15 (con't)} He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal;

There are several reasons why an offering is required to be brought forth. First, the Israelites were told to not come before the Lord *reqam*, or empty-handed. At the Exodus, the people were brought out by the Lord, and when this occurred their hands were filled with the plunder of Egypt. And so He instructed them in essence that, "Just as I brought you out of Egypt with hands that were not empty, so you shall come before Me with hands that are not empty. To do so would be a vain (or empty) thing."

And so each appearance before the Lord required an offering. The type of offering for this instance is specifically stated as one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal, meaning one omer. The omer comes from the word *amar*, signifying a sheaf. However, it is used figuratively to mean "to chastise," as if piling on blows. The omer is of *seorah*, or barley. Barley is specified for a couple of reasons as well. First, it is the food of poor people, being worth about half as much as wheat. Because of its low quality, it is used as feed for animals. Thus, it signifies the poor state of the relationship between the husband and

the wife, as well as the low state – either deserved or undeserved – of the wife because of the expected guilt.

Secondly, barley is known as the crop of hairy ears because of its hairy appearance. The root of it is *se-ar* or hair. Hair in the Bible indicates an awareness of things. The goat, for example, is used in Leviticus for the sin offering and it is known as *sa-ir*. We have an awareness of sin in the hairy goat sin offering. These and other examples show that the offering signifies an awareness exists, rightly or wrongly, concerning the matter. The barley then is a petition to bring this awareness out fully by disclosing the truth of the matter.

15 (con't) he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it,

As we saw in Leviticus, and without reexplaining all of it here, the flour pictures Christ, oil symbolizes the presence of the Spirit, and frankincense pictures works. Each of these was offered in a normal grain offering, but only the flour is offered here. This is an offering of jealousy. In this, it reveals that God finds sin offensive and detestable. When sin is present, or even suspected as is the case with the husband's jealousy, the Spirit is quenched and our works are unacceptable. Therefore no oil or frankincense is added...

15 (con't) because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance.

The presence of Christ, signified by the meal offering, indicates that He will be the judge of the matter which is to be brought forth.

16 'And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord.

The words are masculine, and so this is probably referring only to the offering, and not to the woman. However, it could be that the feminine is put for the masculine. If it is only the offering, it should read, "The priest therefore shall offer it, and set it before the Lord."

Who is unfaithful and going astray?

Who has turned away her heart?

Who has been unfaithful day unto day?

But who is committed to make a new start?

*The Lord reads the minds and tests the heart
He looks for those who will turn to Him again
And so, who is willing to make a new start?
Are there any faithful among the sons of men?*

*Lord, we have been unfaithful, it is true
We have not been faithful in our heart
But we are now turning back to You
We are willing to turn and make a new start*

II. Bitter Water That Brings A Curse (verses 17-22)

¹⁷ The priest shall take holy water

The holy water, a term used nowhere else, was surely taken from the bronze laver and was intended for sacred uses. The symbolism of the laver, which was made from the mirrors of the women, is found in Exodus 30. It must be repeated to understand its significance. The laver pictures Christ. He is the Word of God and from Him issues the word of God. Both are discerners of hidden things. Christ actively discerns what is hidden in man, whereas the Bible is what passively allows man to see what is hidden in himself. The composition of the laver being mirrors points to Christ's ability to discern and judge the very thoughts and intents of the hidden heart of man. As He is the Word of God, and the water of the word proceeds from Him, then it is a picture of the word itself; the Bible.

^{17 (con't)} in an earthen vessel,

The *kheres*, or earthen vessel, is used to symbolize people while the Lord is the Potter. In this case, it signifies the humanity of Christ. The lesson is that the holy is not to be mixed with the profane and we, as earthen jars, are to be filled with that which is holy. After that, we are to keep ourselves from being mixed with that which is profane. The rite here is to see if what the woman is accused of is true. Has she kept herself pure?

^{17 (con't)} and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put *it* into the water.

Here is a new word in the Bible, *qarqa*, or "floor." The priest is to go into the tabernacle and take some of the *aphar*, or dust, from the floor and put it into the water. Dust signifies that which is poor and lowly and deserving of a curse. Man was formed from

the dust being brought forth to honor, but because of sin his curse was that to the dust he is destined to return. The serpent was cursed with the notion that he would eat the dust all the days of his life. It is a fitting description then of the accusation against her, that of being seduced by the serpent once again.

Coming from the floor of the *mishkan*, or tabernacle, it would be considered holy. Just as Moses was told to take off his shoes in the presence of the Lord, so was this ground hallowed by the presence of the Lord. You can mentally picture it. The holy curse is being put into the word of God which is contained in the earthen vessel which is Christ's humanity. The water itself is the means of bringing about the divine curse, or the divine blessing of exoneration.

18 Then the priest shall stand the woman before the Lord,

It is now that the woman is brought to stand before the Lord. This means that she was to be brought within the confines of the sanctuary and caused to stand at the brazen altar in the courtyard of the sanctuary and facing the tabernacle where the ark resided.

18 (con't) uncover the woman's head,

The Hebrew word, *para*, gives the sense of loosening or unrestraining, and thus to expose. If her head was covered, the hair was to be uncovered. If her hair was tied up, it was to be loosened and fall naturally. As said earlier, hair signifies awareness. The wife's hair as a covering is a sign of respect for her husband. This is alluded to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. The hair itself is a symbol of authority of the man over the woman. This symbol is now unrestrained, just as she is believed to have been unrestrained. To determine if she allowed her hair to be loosed in the bed of another man, her hair, the symbol of her awareness, is now to be loosed before the Lord.

18 (con't) and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy.

The grain offering that has been brought before the Lord is now placed in her hands. It is an offering of jealousy of the husband, and she is now holding it out as an offering of her innocence, if she is truly innocent.

18 (con't) And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse.

While the woman holds the grain offering of jealousy, the priest holds the bitter water, making his pronouncement over both...

¹⁹ And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, “If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness *while* under your husband’s *authority*, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse.

Here stated is the obvious claim of the woman. To this point, she has been accused by her husband, and she has denied her unfaithfulness. The priest is, therefore, giving her the benefit of the doubt by stating that if innocent, she will be free from the harm that the bitter water would otherwise cause. The words are in an imperative form as a seal of assurance that if innocent, no harm will come upon her. However...

²⁰ But if you have gone astray *while* under your husband’s authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you”—

The same thought is expressed in three different, but synonymous ways – “if you have gone astray,” “if you have defiled yourself,” and if “some man other than your husband has lain with you.” There can be no evading what is said, and there can be no later excuse that she had misunderstood the intent of the priest’s words. In this verse is the last use of the noun *shekobeth*, or intercourse, in the Bible. The intent is as clear as the priest could make it.

²¹ then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman—

This clause is parenthetical. It is inserted in order to show that the curse he speaks is a result of the offending action she has committed. The curse itself is...

²¹ (con’t) “the Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people,

The words here indicate the horrific nature of what will result. To be made a curse means that when people wanted to say the worst possible thing to another, they would use her as an example – “I hope that what happened to Adulterous Annie is what happens to you.” To make someone an oath is to say that people would swear your name as a means of seeking exoneration – “I swear I didn’t do it. If I’m lying, may I become like Adulterous Annie.” This is because the thing that happened to Annie was of the Lord, and it was terrible...

²¹ (con't) **when the Lord makes your thigh rot and your belly swell;**

In essence, to use Adulterous Annie's name would imply swearing before the Lord, because it was the Lord who brought about her judgment. It was He who made her *yarek*, or thigh, to *naphal*, or drop. To fall here signifies to go to ruin. The *yarek*, though literally meaning "thigh," is euphemistically speaking of her private parts; her womb. It is used this way from time to time, such as in Genesis 24:2 and Genesis 46:26. The very part of her that she used in unfaithfulness in order to bear would be that which was affected by that same act of infidelity.

The second effect would be that her *beten*, or womb would *tsavah* or swell. It is a new word which is only seen in this chapter. The idea here is that the act she committed, which when done rightly with her husband would result in a baby in her life-giving womb, causing it to swell as intended. However and instead, the curse would cause a similar appearance in a swollen dead womb.

The act of unfaithfulness would lead to her physical deformity, and that physical affliction would lead to her becoming the curse and the oath among her people. With the name of the Lord so invoked, the priest now pronounces the curse again to settle the matter...

²² **and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make *your* belly swell and *your* thigh rot."**

These words end the oath and the curse which began in verse 19. It is to be noted that no variation of the penalty is authorized. In other words, the priest can't make up a different penalty like, "May your eye fall out of its socket." The bitter water's effect was targeted, and thus the oath which precedes the effect is also specific.

²² (con't) **'Then the woman shall say, "Amen, so be it."**

v'amerah ha'ishah amen amen – "And shall say the woman 'Amen, amen.'" It is the first use of the word in the Bible, and due to its repetition, it comes as an emphasis. When names or words are repeated in the Bible, this is what it means. The word alone signifies, "truly," or "so be it." In repeating it, the thought is, "May it certainly be so."

*Like an unfaithful wife, so we have been to You
Our thoughts have been on that which is not right*

*But You have remained faithful and true
You have been steadfast through day and through night*

*Return us to the Fount of Life once again, may it be so
Let us drink of the pure Water of Life
And we will follow You wherever You go
We will be as a faithful bride and a loving wife*

*Lord, may the churches that are called by Your name
Be faithful to the call which at first went out
Take away our guilt, and hide away our shame
And we will be faithful, leaving no future reason to doubt*

III. Establishing Guilt or Innocence (verses 23-31)

²³ ‘Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape *them* off into the bitter water.

The term “book” here, as we think of a book today, is a stretch of the intent. The meaning is that the words were written out – be it on a scroll or a piece of wood, or a piece of parchment, and then they were completely wiped out from the face of the document and transferred to the bitter water.

²⁴ And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her *to become bitter*.

This is actually looking forward to verse 26. In this, if she were innocent, the very words which had been wiped out would come to produce a similar nothingness in her. But if she was guilty, the substance and formula of the words, which were formed by the ink, would bear witness against her and produce the effect that they proclaimed when they were in written form. However, before she actually drinks the water, the offering must be made...

²⁵ Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman’s hand, shall wave the offering before the Lord, and bring it to the altar;

In this, the priest receives the grain offering from the woman and waves it before the Lord. The word is *nuph*, and it signifies to move back and forth. By making a waving motion, the offering would thus be “before” or “in the face of” the Lord. It was an

acknowledgment of His omnipresence. The offering itself comes after the oath, but before the drinking of the bitter water. If she is innocent, then her offering would be accepted and the water would have no effect on her. If she were guilty, her offering would be as a profane person offering to God, and it would become evident in the effects of the bitter water.

²⁶ and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn *it* on the altar,

The memorial portion of meal offerings was defined in Leviticus. In this case, it is a memorial for either good or for evil, depending on the truth of the matter. This handful is burned up to the Lord for His acceptance or rejection.

²⁶ (con't) and afterward make the woman drink the water.

One thing is to be remembered here. To this point, the woman has had numerous chances to admit her guilt and ask for mercy. It has been put forward to her again and again. Now, there is only the prospect of being proven true and faithful, or false and faithless...

²⁷ When he has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her *and become* bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people.

Although the rite is now completed for a person standing there, the words here are as much of a warning to the unfaithful woman of Israel as the words leading up to the drinking of the bitter water itself. The surety of the words show that the rite will have its intended effect, and that guilt could not be hidden. Therefore, anyone who heard these words in advance of the rite would have to consider them. The outcome of the rite for guilt is stated absolutely. If she is guilty, what has been said thus far is certain to come about. In this verse is the last use of *tsavah*, or swell, in the Bible. It arrived in verse 21, and now it is biblical history.

²⁸ But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children.

The words here confirm that the punishment of the guilty woman was upon her reproductive parts. Though it says, "thigh," it is a euphemistic expression referring to her

private parts. The bitter water would cause her reproductive innards to rot and swell. However, if she were not guilty, her ability to bear children would remain unaffected by the mixture. The ability to bear children is biblically a sign of divine favor. Thus, the Lord Himself will have vindicated her.

²⁹ ‘This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, *while* under her husband’s *authority*, goes astray and defiles herself,

These words go back and assume that there is no proof of adultery on the part of the woman, but that she has, in fact, been unfaithful. It is the determination of the Lord that there would be a remedy for such unfaithfulness, and that He would be the one to punish that which the law was unable to bring about. Both the adulterer and the adulteress were to be stoned for their act. That is what the law demanded. But the people under the law can only punish what is a known violation. Therefore, the Lord Himself would make the unknown evident.

³⁰ or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man, and he becomes jealous of his wife; then he shall stand the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall execute all this law upon her.

The words here do not assume guilt like the previous verse. Instead, they acknowledge assumed guilt and then lead to the means by which that assumed guilt becomes actual guilt, or exoneration from that guilt. The husband is not to act upon his jealousy, but rather he is to allow the Lord to judge through His mediator, the priest. In all such cases, it is the Lord who is ultimately the one who determines the punishment for guilt. In handling it this way, we see the final result of the passage...

³¹ Then the man shall be free from iniquity, but that woman shall bear her guilt.’”

If the man personally took action against his wife because of a feeling of jealousy, he would bear guilt for harming her. Or, if he ignored the feeling of jealousy and allowed the iniquity to continue, he would be guilty of tolerating her sin. However, by deferring to the Lord to make the determination, and bringing about the consequences of the woman’s guilt, he would be free from iniquity and only she would bear guilt.

IV. The Holy Polygraph, An Explanation

In the end, what we are seeing here is a picture of what happens when the church is unfaithful to Lord. He is the Head of the church, the people are as is His betrothed

spouse. If we have gone out and been unfaithful to Him, we are reckoned as adulterers. An unfaithful wife is a wife which arouses jealousy, and the Lord is a jealous God, just as He said of Himself in Exodus 34:14 – “...the Lord, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God.”

The elements of the rite all point to Christ – the husband; the omer of barley meal – signifying the poor state in which He came and His awareness of our state before God; the holy water – His word; the earthen vessel – His humanity; the dust of the floor – meaning the curse He took upon Himself; the words of law – meaning the judgment upon sin; the priest – signifying Him as Mediator; the altar – which is His sacrifice; and so on. All of these stand as a witness either of our guilt or our innocence.

There is one true church, but there are churches and then there are churches. The Lord is jealous for His church, and therefore there must be judgment upon it if there is unfaithfulness to Him. All of the symbolism here points to judgment upon the church which is unfaithful to Him. Just as He is said to remove His lampstand from an unfaithful church in Revelation 2:5 so that it is no longer a true church, so He also removes the ability of that church to bear children. It is, as we can say, a woman with a dead womb.

One continuous theme of the Bible is the begetting of legitimate sons and daughters. For a church to commit adultery with the world, or even through an abuse of Scripture, it means that illegitimate children are the result. And so, in a spiritual sense, the woman who drinks the bitter water, and whose thigh rots and her belly swells, pictures that church. She cannot bear legitimate children. Nor even could Israel while still under the law. The only way that a legitimate child can be born is through a legitimate union. When that occurs in Christ, then spiritually legitimate children come about.

This is why the woman’s grain offering was waived and presented *before* she drank the bitter water. She has claimed that she has been faithful, and that her offering is acceptable. However, only the Lord can determine that. Once that was accomplished, only then did she drink the bitter water.

If you’re not getting what is being relayed, as a real example to consider, we can look at the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They are supposedly a faithful wife to the Lord. But there is the suspicion of jealousy. And so she is presented as an unfaithful wife who continues to claim having been faithful. Ask any Jehovah’s Witness if this is the case, and they will claim they are the epitome of faithfulness. And yet, they have played the harlot and been completely unfaithful in their doctrine. They will be given the bitter water, but before they do, they will present their offering. Is their offering Christ? No, and so when

they are given the bitter water, they be shown as an unfaithful wife. They will be unable to conceive children. And, in fact, they have borne none. The same test will be given to all.

The standard is Christ. The barley, the water, the earthen vessel, the words of law – all of it points to the Man, Jesus who is either the Bringer of our curse, or our exoneration from the curse. There is one standard. The priest could not make up another punishment as he chose. The punishment for being a faithless wife is bearing no children because the place where children issue from has been used for unfaithful purposes. Christ is the head of man, just as the head of woman is man. The hair of the wife will be loosed before the Lord and there will be an intimate awareness of the wife at that time. That hair may be shorter or longer; curly or straight; brown, black, red, or gray; but it will be revealed. If the doctrine isn't great, but the wife has been faithful to Christ, that will be revealed. If the doctrine is pure, that will be revealed. But if there has been an unfaithfulness to Christ, that will be revealed as well. No children will come from that source. The bitter water's effect will be profound when none come forth as legitimate children.

The obvious question is, "From where do you receive your instruction?" The Lord has established His church, and He expects it to bear legitimate sons and daughters. But this cannot be when we participate in what is unclean. Will the wife remain faithful and bear sons and daughters for the Lord? Or will she be unfaithful and be unable to conceive? A man of Israel could have more than one wife. There are many churches and even entire denominations which refuse to admit their adultery. They will be tested, and they will be proven false. Unfortunately, those who have dwelt within the womb of such adulterous women will never be conceived as children of God. The earthly wife of Israel had expectations levied upon her which translate into spiritual expectations within the church. We must take heed to ourselves and our doctrine, and ensure that what we accept is founded in the truth of Jesus Christ, and in that alone. In the end, it is all about what God has done, and is doing, through Him. And so we need to be sure that the gospel we accept is the gospel founded on Christ. A different gospel is no gospel at all. And what is that saving message which so many unfaithful women refuse to acknowledge, instead going after another? Well, let me explain it to you.

Closing Verse: *"Come out from among them*

And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you."

¹⁸ *"I will be a Father to you,*

*And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.” 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18*

Next Week: Numbers 6:1-21 *What is the Nazirite to do? There is no need for guessing...* (Separation and Blessing) (11th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Holy Polygraph

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“Speak to the children of Israel
And say to them:
These words to them you shall tell
‘If any man’s wife goes astray
And behaves unfaithfully toward him
And a man lies with her carnally
And it is hidden from the eyes of her husband
———a situation quite grim

And it is concealed that she has defiled herself
And there was no witness against her, nor was she caught—
If the spirit of jealousy comes upon him
And he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself
———as she ought not

Or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him
And he becomes jealous of his wife
Although she has not defiled herself—
But has remained faithful in her married life

Then the man shall bring his wife to the priest
He shall bring the offering required for her, so to you I submit
One-tenth of an ephah of barley meal
He shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it

Because it is a grain offering of jealousy
An offering for remembering
For bringing iniquity to remembrance
Is what is to be done with this thing
'And the priest shall bring her near according to this word
And set her before the Lord

The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel
And take some of the dust
That is on the floor of the tabernacle
And put it into the water, this part is a must
Then the priest shall stand the woman before the Lord
Uncover the woman's head; so shall it be
And put the offering for remembering in her hands
Which is the grain offering of jealousy
And the priest shall have in his hand
The bitter water that brings a curse
———so we are to understand

And the priest shall put her under oath
And say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you
———something so perverse

And if you have not gone astray to uncleanness
———while under your husband's authority

Be free from this bitter water that brings a curse
But if you have gone astray
While under your husband's authority
And if you have defiled yourself
And some man other than your husband has lain with you
———such as should not be—

Then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse
And he shall say to the woman; so to her he shall tell—
"The Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people
When the Lord makes your thigh rot and your belly swell
And may this water that causes the curse
Go into your stomach, as to you I now submit

And make your belly swell and your thigh rot
'Then the woman shall say, "Amen, so be it
'Then the priest shall these curses in a book write
And he shall scrape them off into the bitter water
———-the words that will determine her plight

And he shall make the woman drink
The bitter water that brings a curse
And the water that brings the curse
Shall enter her to become bitter
———-according to this written verse

Then the priest shall take
The grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand
Shall wave the offering before the Lord
And bring it to the altar; so we are to understand
And the priest shall take a handful of the offering
As its memorial portion, so he shall do
Burn it on the altar
And afterward make the woman drink the water
———-as I am instructing you

When he has made her drink the water
Then it shall be, if she has defiled herself
———-like a bird she did flutter

And behaved unfaithfully toward her husband
That the water that brings a curse will enter her and become bitter
And her belly will swell, her thigh will rot
———-a fate grim and glum

And the woman will a curse among her people become
But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean
Then she shall be free and may conceive children
———-a happy family will be seen

'This is the law of jealousy
———-When a wife, while under her husband's authority
Goes astray and defiles herself in a faithless life

Or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a man
And he becomes jealous of his wife
Then he shall stand the woman before the Lord
And the priest shall execute all this law upon her
Then the man shall be free from iniquity
But that woman shall bear her guilt for sure

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true
We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 6:1-21 (THE VOW OF THE NAZIRITE)

Two separate and distinct subjects are detailed in the 27 verses of Chapter 6 – separation and blessing. And yet, they are also united in thought. The first deals with separation to God through the Nazirite vow. The second deals with the separation of the people, Israel, from among the people of the world through a unique and peculiar blessing.

Separation and division is a logical part of the way God works. The Lord separated the nations of the world according to His design. Israel is separated from the world's people. Levi is separated from among Israel. The priests are separated from their brothers in the tribe of Levi. Nazirites are separated for special service. And so on.

It is too often, and with a total lack of clarity, that we see separation as a bad thing. The people of the world have looked at the Jews as abhorrent because they have kept themselves separate from the nations. That was seen in the words of Haman in Esther, and it has been seen among the people of the world ever since.

The church is divided in ten thousand ways, and yet, it has been a force not for evil, but for good. Though there is one true invisible church, if there were but one true and visible church, the people would follow its path no matter how abhorrent it was. That has actually been seen in major denominations time and time again. It was also seen in the Old Testament system in Israel. It is the *division* within the church which has maintained the integrity of the church. Like the motto for the United States, the true church is E Pluribus Unum – “Out of many, one.”

Text Verse: *““I raised up some of your sons as prophets,
And some of your young men as Nazirites.
Is it not so, O you children of Israel?”
Says the Lord.
¹²“But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink,
And commanded the prophets saying,
‘Do not prophesy!’”” Amos 2:11, 12*

Like the world, which is trying to break down borders, unite as one, and remove all obstacles to complete control, there are those who are attempting to do the same in the

church. The World Council of Churches is one such example. There is a fundamental problem with this, both on a national level and on a spiritual, church-related level. With such breaking down of barriers, there will inevitably be a top-down control of all others. It is the inescapable outcome of removing set divisions. Those who resist these changes are the ones who will be reckoned as wrongdoers. Israel will never give up her Jewishness. True churches will never yield to an apostate body.

Division is good and it serves a purpose. And although the Lord is not divided in the sense of goals or purpose, there is a distinction between the members of the Godhead. This is the mystery of the Trinity – One God; three persons. Along with the separation of the Nazirites to the Lord, Chapter 27 gives us a taste of the unique nature of God Himself.

Unfortunately, we will only be able to complete the first section of the chapter today, that of the Nazirite vow. It was an important part of the life of Israel; but, unfortunately, the people abused the guidelines, caused their Nazirites to break their vows, and that surely brought on them a curse.

The separation of the people, Israel, and the separation of the Nazirites within the people during their time of vow, were intended to highlight the holiness of God. But God also remained separate from them because of their fallen nature. The law was born of an imperfect priesthood filled with fallible men. God allowed these things in order to bring about the coming of His Son to fulfill this very same law and bring about a new type of separation, and a new type of oneness which comes with a more perfect blessing.

This is the marvel of what God has done. He has brought forth a Branch of Righteousness – and a perfect, pure, and undefiled Vine – out of a system administered through fallible people. Today we will see the first half of this chapter's equation – that of separation. Next week, we will see the second half – that of blessing. In these you will learn a great deal about the working of God, both for Israel and in Christ. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Vow of the Nazirite (verses 1-12)

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Maintaining purity of the camp, and sanctity among the people, was highlighted in Chapter 5. There was the command to move all defiled people out of the camp. Then there was the idea of confession and restitution concerning guilt. After that came the law of the bitter water, the holy polygraph, for possibly unfaithful wives. Each of these held to the idea of maintaining both physical and spiritual purity.

Moses is now directed in a unique aspect of Israelite life, that of a particular type of vow of consecration to the Lord. This is not a command, but rather an instruction for those who so make the vow. Though not a command to perform the rite, it includes commands for the performance of it. This is seen with the next words...

² **“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:**

What is submitted to Moses by the Lord is for the people of Israel. It is something which is limited to them alone, and not intended for any who have not joined to the people. Thus, no stranger or foreigner among them can be included in what is now presented.

² (con't) **‘When either a man or woman**

This is actually a rather remarkable allowance. Almost all matters of law and society are directed specifically to males. Further, it is a stark contrast to the law of the bitter water which was just seen in Chapter 5. That was a law directed for the benefit of the males when a spirit of jealousy came upon them.

However, what is now to be presented is actually highlighted and receives a special dignity because it is available to both man and woman. The only time this would not come into effect for a woman is if her father or husband, under whose authority she was, negated the vow. However, other than that, it is something a woman could participate in. This begins to be seen with the next words...

² (con't) **consecrates an offering**

Here, the verb *pala*, or “wonder,” is translated as “consecrates.” It was translated as “miracle” in relation to God’s workings in Egypt. The idea is that as a wonder, or miracle, is something out of the normal, so a vow is something out of the normal. It is above and beyond what is considered regular. Even today, when someone does something above and beyond, we will proclaim, “Well, isn’t that wonderful.” This carries the idea being conveyed.

² (con't) to take the vow of a Nazirite,

The word is *nazir*. It is not the same as a Nazarene, meaning someone from Nazareth. What will be presented is not a marker of identification with the Lord Jesus in any way, shape, or form. Though He is separated to God in a unique way, it will be seen that it is not as a Nazirite mentioned here. We know this based on the restrictions to be imposed upon them, none of which applied to Him. Rather, the word comes from the verb *nazar*, or “to separate.” Thus it signifies separation or consecration. It was used to describe Joseph who was separated, or distinguished, above his brothers. Joseph was a type of Christ, but he was not a Nazirite. And so the word goes so far, but no further. It was also used concerning the untrimmed vines during the sabbath year observances in Israel. Being untrimmed, they would have a special appearance reflecting their consecrated status. As I said, it is true that Christ was separated among His brothers, like Joseph, but the intent of the Nazirite vow which is explained here has nothing to do with the life and conduct of Christ.

It needs to be noted that though this is a voluntary separation, there are instances where, by divine revelation, some people were devoted to the Lord throughout their lives. This was the case with Samson and John the Baptist. Further, Samuel was devoted by his mother as well.

² (con't) to separate himself to the Lord,

l'hazzir l'Yehovah – “to separate to Yehovah.” The meaning of the *nazir* finds its explanation in these words where the verb *nazar* is used. The person is consecrated to the Lord. Thus the *nazir* is one who is consecrated.

³ he shall separate himself from wine and *similar* drink;

mi'yayin v'shakhar – “from wine and blinko drink.” A Nazirite was to be wholly kept from drinks containing alcohol, be they wine, or be they something of a higher potency. In this, we see a stricter demand on the individual than even the priests. They were only forbidden from drinking during their times of service in the tent of meeting. In this, we also see a standard which was not imposed on Jesus who both made and drank wine. Thus we can see that the term Nazarene in Matthew 2:23 is not referring to Nazirites, in Numbers. However, the separation goes further...

³ (con't) he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from *similar* drink;

Here is a new word, *khomets*, or vinegar. It comes from *khamets*, or the verb meaning “to leaven,” and thus it signifies “to ferment.” The Nazirite is prohibited from vinegar made from either wine or blinko drink. Fermentation is a type of corruption, and thus the symbolism is that of purity and incorruption.

³ (con’t) **neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins.**

Here is a word found only this once in the Bible, *mishrah*, or liquor. It is from a word which gives the sense of loosening, and thus it is steeped juice. It is a liquor made from *anavim*, or grapes. The Nazirite is forbidden from any such drink. Along with this he or she is not to eat any grapes, period – either fresh or dried. And to ensure that there is no confusion, the words continue...

⁴ **All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.**

Two more unique words are found here. The first is *khartsanim*, or seed. It is from *kharats*, meaning to point sharply, as if in wounding someone. Thus it signifies the sharp bitter taste which comes from the seed. The second is *zag*, or skin. It is that which encloses the grape, and thus its skin. One must wonder on these prohibitions. The avoidance of all sorts of intoxicating drinks makes sense, but to be kept from grapes or even the products of grapes seems to have no meaning. However, the vine produces grapes, and grapes produce an effect. Deuteronomy 32 speaks of all three – the *gephen*, or vine; the *enav*, or grape; and *yayin*, or wine, in relation to the people of Israel –

“For they *are* a nation void of counsel,
Nor *is there any* understanding in them.

²⁹ Oh, that they were wise, *that* they understood this,
That they would consider their latter end!

³⁰ How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the Lord had surrendered them?

³¹ For their rock *is* not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves *being* judges.

³² For their **vine** *is* of the vine of Sodom
And of the fields of Gomorrah;
Their **grapes** *are* **grapes** of gall,
Their clusters *are* bitter.

³³ Their **wine** is the poison of serpents,
And the cruel venom of cobras.” Deuteronomy 32:28-33

The effect of the vine, grape, and wine can be positive or negative. As the Nazirite is dedicated solely to the Lord, the true Vine as He says in John 12:1, during their consecration, they are to be freed from any such external influence. We are not told what the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden was, but the effects of the fruit of the vine would place it as a good candidate.

Christ’s first miraculous sign was to make wine, resulting in good. Mystery Babylon has a cup filled with the wine of her fornication; a cup of evil. Following the symbolism of the vine, the grape, and wine throughout the Bible – from Genesis to Revelation – it becomes clear why this strong prohibition was made. The Nazirite is dedicated to the Lord, and thus the only effect for him is to be that which the Lord Himself determines. As a side note concerning this. Samson’s mother was given this same prohibition during her pregnancy. That is found in Judges 13:7 –

“Now drink no wine or *similar* drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.”

The consecration was not for her, but for her son. Thus, we have another of the numerous verses in Scripture which indicate that from conception itself, humanity of the child in the womb is indicated. The child is reckoned as a person from that moment.

⁵ **‘All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head;**

Here is a new and frightening word for people like me, the *taar*, or razor. It is also a sheath for a knife. Thus, it is that which makes bare or is bare. The Nazirite was to never use a razor upon his head. This was to be the case...

^{5 (con’t)} **until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the Lord, he shall be holy.**

The hair on the head was to be a marker of distinction, indicating the Nazirite’s separation to the Lord. In this, he was considered *qadosh*, or holy.

^{5 (con’t)} **Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.**

A new and rare word is found here – *pera*, or locks. It is the hair of the head which is expected to grow just as the vine of the Sabbath year was to be left untended, unkempt, and uncut. This lengthy, unwieldy hair was to be that marker of holiness and separation to the Lord. And there is a reason for this which is tied up in the word *sear*, or hair.

In the Bible, hair signifies an awareness. The hairy goat used as the sin offering is a *sair*. It was given as an awareness of sin committed. Esau was born hairy while Jacob, the son of promise, was smooth-skinned. The difference in their physical makeup was a picture of their spiritual heritage. But in order to receive the blessing, Jacob needed to emulate his hairy older brother. That was a picture of Jesus. The sinless Son of God took on the form of Adam in order to retrieve the blessing for us that he had lost. Here, the Nazirite's hair was a reminder of the vow of separation to the Lord – his awareness of that fact.

⁶ All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body.

This is now a third marker of the separation. The Nazirite was never, under any circumstances, to be near a dead body. To do so would render him or her unclean according to Levitical law. This prohibition would include entering a room where a corpse was, attending a funeral, and so on. Death is the final result of sin. Because of this, the one separated to the Lord was not to be defiled by the sin consequences of human death. The Nazirite was deemed as holy, but the unholiness of being near death would defile.

⁷ He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die,

The prohibition here raises the separation of the Nazirite at least to the level of the high priest. He was also instructed to not go near any dead body, including his mother or father. The Nazirite is told this, but even further, the prohibition extends to both brother and sister. The strictness of the prohibition concerning drinking was greater than the priests, the priests were not restricted from the produce of the vine at all times, and only the high priest was restricted from being near a dead body. The separation of the Nazirite is therefore much more specific than even the priests.

^{7 (con't)} because his separation to God is on his head.

The hair is considered as a crown of separation. It is literally that which marks the separation, just as Samson's hair is what separated him to the Lord. When the hair was cut, he no longer possessed the power which came with the hair.

⁸ All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the Lord.

The three markers of his separation – prohibition from alcoholic drinks and anything from the vine; the hair of the head; and being kept from defilement because of a dead person – all look to an unfallen life which was seen in paradise. The source of the knowledge of good and evil was kept away from, there was no awareness of wrongdoing, and there was no death. The Nazirite is wholly dedicated to the Lord. Thus, in the fullest sense, these physical aspects of the Nazirite spiritually reflect one who is in Christ positionally. We are not under law – the source of the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20); we are not imputed sin (2 Corinthians 5:19); and we are granted eternal life (a jillion verses).

⁹ 'And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him,

Here are two new words, one the source of the other – *befeta pithom*, or “very suddenly.” The idea here is that there was absolutely no way to avoid being near the death. Despite this...

^{9 (con't)} and he defiles his consecrated head,

Even by accidental nearness, the head of his consecration has become defiled. As this is so...

^{9 (con't)} then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it.

Numbers 19 gives the details for purification from defilement by death. A seven-day period involves ritual purification. When that is complete, the offender must shave his head. Even though this was unintentional, he is still an offender against the holiness of God. Therefore purification and atonement is required...

¹⁰ Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting;

The number eight is the number of new beginnings. Thus, it is on this day that the once-defiled Nazirite will again start the process of fulfilling the vow. The offering is actually brought to the brazen altar, but the brazen altar and the door of the tent of meeting are intricately connected in Scripture. It is through the sacrifice that access to God is restored.

And so, by bringing the offering to the altar, it is an acknowledgment of this. The reason for this particular offering, and its significance, is detailed in Leviticus 15. To spur you on to a biblically productive and spiritually healthy afternoon, you are implored to go back and watch or read that sermon once again.

¹¹ and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and *the* other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse;

These offerings are typical of the sacrifice of Christ, and they are given in anticipation of His coming. Through them atonement is made for him, as it says, “because he sinned in regard to the corpse.” The lesson is that sin transfers and defiles that which is holy, but holiness does not transfer the other way. It is a lesson described in Haggai 2 –

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests concerning the law, saying, ¹² “If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?” ’ ”

Then the priests answered and said, “No.”

¹³ And Haggai said, “If *one who is* unclean *because* of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?”

So the priests answered and said, “It shall be unclean.” Haggai 2:11-13

The lesson is learned here, it is repeated elsewhere, and it should be remembered by us. Though we who are in Christ are not imputed our transgression as violations of law leading to death, we still carry defilement with us when we participate in that which is unclean. We are asked to separate ourselves from such things.

¹¹ (con’t) and he shall sanctify his head that same day.

This means that he will once again begin to grow his hair during a renewed separation to the Lord. His hair shall remain uncut, and his actions shall be as prescribed already for the Nazirite.

¹² He shall consecrate to the Lord the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

Not only was atonement necessary for the sin committed, but a guilt offering is necessary as a type of payment for the days which have been lost, thus leading to a delay in the completion of the vow. The guilt offering is in acknowledgment of that.

*Holy to the Lord, set apart to Him alone
With a marker of separation on his head for all to see
In this marker, his special distinction is shown
For all the days of the vow, this is how it is to be*

*Who would dare interfere with the vow this one has made?
Who would cause him to violate his holiness?
Should we be the cause of such an unholy trade?
Should we his holiness purposely suppress?*

*If such is so with a vow made by man towards his God
How much more should we be holy when we are in Christ the Lord?
Shouldn't we ever conduct our lives with purity in this life we tread?
And faithfully abide in Christ, being obedient to His word?*

II. The Law of the Nazirite (verses 13-21)

¹³ 'Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

The Nazirite vows were always considered as specific time periods by which a person was dedicated. Those who were dedicated as Nazirites from birth are not of this category. Their entire lives were given to the Lord. For those who simply made a vow of consecration, when that time ended, they were to be brought before the door of the tent of meeting, meaning to the brazen altar.

¹⁴ And he shall present his offering to the Lord: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering,

For the ending of the successfully completed consecration, instead of two turtledoves or two young pigeons, lambs are brought forth for the burnt and sin offerings. The requirement for a sin-offering shows that even a person who was dedicated as a Nazirite was not without shortcomings which required such an offering. As a fallen son of Adam, original sin existed, and surely the conduct of the Nazirite's life, even under consecration, reflected that.

Due to the small size of the sin-offering, and the fact that it is named after the burnt-offering, it is an indication that any sin of the Nazirite was inconsequential in comparison to the faithfulness of the separation. However, the offering is still needed. It is an obvious picture that even the most faithful souls, who have carried out their lives in Christ in the highest manner of integrity to the Lord, still stand in need of the perfection of Christ to carry us through to the end.

¹⁴ (con't) **one ram without blemish as a peace offering,**

The ram of this peace offering is contrasted to the lamb of the guilt offering of verse 12. The guilt of loss of days there is now overcome by the victory of fulfilled days here. Instead of guilt, there is peace. The days of separation are accomplished without either his failure to meet them, or the Lord intervening and causing them to fail, such as in a sudden death occurring near him. Thus, the peace offering acknowledges this between the two.

¹⁵ **a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings.**

In this, along with the previous verses, we see that five of the ordinary offerings are made by the Nazirite – a burnt offering, a sin offering, a peace offering, a grain offering, and a drink offering. It is almost a festival of offerings acknowledging the accomplishment before the Lord. Unfortunately, it would take an entire sermon, or more, to show how all of these various offerings so marvelously point to the work of Christ, but that is why we went through the book of Leviticus. For any who either missed that, or who have forgotten what was taught there, they are available at the touch of your fingers to the keyboard of your internet-connected device in written, video, and audio formats. Such is the convenience we have provided for you at the Superior Word.

¹⁶ **'Then the priest shall bring *them* before the Lord and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering;**

Despite being named second in verse 14, the sin-offering is actually presented first. With the sin atoned for, the burnt-offering is then presented afterward. Both beautifully picture the Person and work of Christ.

¹⁷ and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering.

After the sin and burnt offerings come the peace offering which is offered with the unleavened bread. Then the priest offers the grain and drink offerings as prescribed. Again, every word of each offering points to Christ in one way and then another. No detail of these offerings is without its fulfillment in Him. To understand what these offerings reveal is to look directly at what Jesus did in one great act of offering Himself for us and to God.

¹⁸ Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put *it* on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

The hair reflected his uniting to the Lord in his separation. Now that this separation has come to its fulfillment, he is to shave it off and then put it not with the sacrifice of peace offering, but under it. Thus, it is not a sacrifice as so many scholars state. What seems to be the idea here is that the hair is returned to God through the fire as rightly belonging to Him.

It is an acknowledgment that the hair is as a picture of life in the Lord. If He wanted to, he could have caused the Nazirite to be defiled at any time by a death near him. Even if unintentional, the Nazirite would have to redo the vow until it was complete. Thus the hair of separation itself is as a crown of reward. It being cast back to the Lord then is comparable to the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4:10 casting their crowns before the throne and saying –

“You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power.” Revelation 4:11

Though the Nazirite completed his time, it was because of the Lord that he could even do so. The reward and glory belong to Him. The offering between the two is Christ, who is our Peace (Romans 5:1).

¹⁹ ‘And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put *them* upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated *hair*,

The peace offering is a meal of the one who makes the offering, and in which a portion is taken out of it for the priest who represents the Lord. Two things are different about this peace offering than that described in Leviticus 7. First, in Leviticus 7:13, leavened bread was offered with the sacrifice of the peace offering. That showed that the Lord accepted the offeror, despite his sin. That is not considered in this offering.

The Nazirite has lived a life separated to God, and he has offered a sin offering for any infraction that may have arisen. There is no need to include leavened bread now. Secondly, in Leviticus 7:34, the breast and the thigh of a peace offering were the Lord’s portion. Here, the boiled shoulder of the ram is added to that. Thus, it signifies that the Lord has accepted a fuller offering from the Nazirite because he more fully gave of himself to the Lord. As an understandable idiom, he put his shoulder into the work.

²⁰ and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the Lord; they *are* holy for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering.

Though the priests received the Lord’s sacred portion as their own, they were first waved before the Lord. This was accomplished by the priest placing his hands under those of the Nazirite. The idea of the wave offering is that it is first symbolically offered to the Lord. It is waved back and forth, up and down, and side by side. It is then received back by the priest as the Lord’s designated representative. The heave offering is the same. It is raised to the Lord first, just as Christ was raised on the cross. After that, it is received back by the priest. A full explanation of these things is found in Leviticus.

²⁰ (con’t) After that the Nazirite may drink wine.’

With the vow and separation of the Nazirite being complete, his only dilemma now is whether it will be Merlot or Cabernet.

²¹ “This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to the Lord the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide;

What this means is that the Nazirite was obligated to the offerings which have just been stated. They came as a part of the vow itself and they were mandatory. However, the

Nazirite could also add to those offerings with whatever his status and wealth could find sufficiency to give.

²¹ (con't) according to the vow which he takes, so he must do according to the law of his separation."

What this final clause means is that he is under full obligation to the requirements of the Nazirite. His vow was not considered acceptable or complete without the completion of the offerings which were required. This, along with any other vows to God, were expected to be performed. That is why Solomon said this –

“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;

For *He has* no pleasure in fools.

Pay what you have vowed—

⁵ Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.” Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5

For a person to vow such as in the case of a Nazirite (or indeed any such noble vow), he would appear holy and exceptional to the people of Israel. However, if he failed to fulfill the responsibility of the offerings that went with this perceived laudable conduct, he would only be a fool in the eyes of the Lord. This is the law of the Nazirite. In the end, it is a custom and a system which in its core pointed to the more glorious separation of God’s people because of Christ Jesus. Every detail of the rite and custom finds its true fulfillment in Him.

As seen in our text verse, Israel purposely caused their Nazirites to stumble by giving them wine to drink. What is sad about this, is that the vow was then annulled, and any time spent was wasted. When the Nazirite went to offer his offerings, they may have been accepted by the priest, but they were not accepted by the Lord.

That in itself stands as a lesson to us. Though in Christ we are not imputed sin, we still have rewards and losses being stored up in our lives and daily actions. There are times where we are drawn away to sin by others. There are times we fail to act in faith. There are also times that we actively act in disobedience. Our lives will be evaluated, and such things as are not acceptable will be burned up.

We will suffer loss because of it. And so, like the Nazirite, we should endeavor to be guided by the Lord alone, we should endeavor to stay away from external influences which misdirect us from the sure and sound path on which we walk, and we should fix our eyes on Jesus – the Author and Finisher of our faith. In doing this our lives will

remain acceptable, we will be free from defilement, and we shall receive the welcome words, “Well done” for the lives we live here in these fallen bodies. Better, greater things lie ahead, and so let us strive to pursue better, greater things now in anticipation of that.

Closing Verse: *“Therefore*

‘Come out from among them

And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you.’

¹⁸*‘I will be a Father to you,*

And you shall be My sons and daughters,

Says the Lord Almighty.” Numbers 23:8, 9

Next Week: Numbers 6:22-27 *Does the Lord wish the best for His people? Surely there is no need for guessing...* (The High Priestly Blessing) (12th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Vow of the Nazirite

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying

These are the words He was then relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:

‘When either a man or woman, according to this word

Consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite

To separate himself to the Lord

He shall separate himself from wine and similar drink

He shall drink neither vinegar made from wine

———nor vinegar made from similar drink too

Neither shall he drink any grape juice

Nor eat fresh grapes or raisins; such things he shall not do

All the days of his separation therein

He shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine

———from seed to skin

'All the days of the vow of his separation
No razor shall come upon his head; thus it shall be so
Until the days are fulfilled for which
— — —-he separated himself to the Lord, he shall be holy

Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow
All the days that he separates himself to the Lord
He shall not go near a dead body according to My word
He shall not make himself unclean
Even for his father or his mother, so I have now said
For his brother or his sister, when they die
Because his separation to God is on his head
All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the Lord
Thus shall it be according to My word
'And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him
And he defiles his consecrated head, as to you I submit
Then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing
On the seventh day he shall shave it
Then on the eighth day he shall bring
Two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest
To the door of the tabernacle of meeting
— — —-so shall he do this thing

And the priest shall offer one as a sin offering
And the other as a burnt offering, as to you I say
And make atonement for him
— — —-because he sinned in regard to the corpse

And he shall sanctify his head that same day
He shall consecrate to the Lord the days of his separation
And bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering
But the former days shall be lost
Because his separation was defiled by the occurrence of this thing

'Now this is the law of the Nazirite:
And so to the people these words you shall be repeating
When the days of his separation are fulfilled
He shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting

And he shall present his offering to the Lord:
One male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering
———so he shall do

One ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering
One ram without blemish as a peace offering too
A basket of unleavened bread
Cakes of fine flour mixed with oil also
Unleavened wafers anointed with oil
And their grain offering with their drink offerings; it shall be so
'Then the priest shall bring them before the Lord
And offer his sin offering and his burnt offering as I have said
And he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice
———of a peace offering to the Lord

With the basket of unleavened bread
The priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering
Such shall be the required proffering
Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head
At the door of the tabernacle of meeting, so he shall do this thing
And shall take the hair from his consecrated head
And put it on the fire which is under
———the sacrifice of the peace offering

'And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram
One unleavened cake from the basket
———and one unleavened wafer too

And put them upon the hands of the Nazirite
After he has shaved his consecrated hair, so he shall do
And the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the Lord
They are holy for the priest as I say to you
Together with the breast of the wave offering
And the thigh of the heave offering too
After that the Nazirite may drink wine
He is no longer restricted from the fruit of the vine
'This is the law of the Nazirite among the nation
Who vows to the Lord the offering for his separation

And besides that
Whatever else his hand is able to provide, according to his station
According to the vow which he takes
|So he must do according to the law of his separation

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 6:22-27 (THE PRIESTLY BLESSING)

There's a Jewish guy who is also a very militant atheist that lives on the Upper West Side of NYC. And yet, he sent his son, Morris, to Trinity School. Despite its denominational roots it's a great school which has become completely secular, so he didn't mind. After a month, Morris came home and said casually, "By the way, Dad, I learned what Trinity means! It means 'The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'" The father could barely control his rage. He seized Morris by the shoulders and declared, "Morris, I'm going to tell you something, and I want you to remember it. Forget this Trinity business. There is only one God... and we don't believe in Him!"

One way that people deny the doctrine of the Trinity is to say that the word "Trinity" is never used in Scripture. That is a theological football bat. There are lots of things that are taught in Scripture which are not specifically named there. The term "original sin" is never used, but it is clearly taught. The word "rapture" is not used, but the doctrine is perfectly explained by Paul.

Because the Trinity is revealed in the Bible, it has been studied, contemplated, and taught since the time of the apostles, and later by the Church Fathers. Tertullian, who lived during the second and third centuries, was an African apologist and theologian. He wrote a great deal in defense of Christianity, including on the doctrine of the Trinity – "We define that there are two, the Father and the Son, and three with the Holy Spirit, and this number is made by the pattern of salvation... [which] brings about unity in trinity, interrelating the three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are three, not in dignity, but in degree, not in substance but in form, not in power but in kind. They are of one substance and power, because there is one God from whom these degrees, forms and kinds devolve in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit." Tertullian After Tertullian, countless other scholars have added their thoughts to the ever-expanding body of knowledge dealing with this hugely complex doctrine. Some have been less than adequate, some have been downright wrong, and so we need to be careful to sort through commentaries and not just cut and paste whatever anyone says without really considering it. When speaking of the Trinity, heresy is just a simple misstep away.

Text Verse: *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
The whole earth is full of His glory!" Isaiah 6:3*

This verse is known as the *Tres Hagion* which is Scripture's great proclamation of the splendor of God. It alludes to a fullness in God that is hard to mistake. It is from this verse which is derived the beloved hymn written by Reginald Heber –

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity.

True Christians are Trinitarian monotheists. This may seem, on the surface, contradictory. And indeed, cults – such as the Jehovah's Witnesses – misunderstand the concept of the Trinity to such a point that what they claim mainstream Christians believe is actually a triad within *a* godhead, not a Trinity within *the* Godhead. But this is certainly not the case. The difference between a triad and the Trinity is the difference between the finite and the infinite.

We believe in one God and only one God. We believe this because the Bible proclaims it. But we believe there is a fullness to this God which is represented in the Trinitarian model. Why do we believe this? Because it is what the Bible teaches. Including in a rather unusual way in the sermon verses of Numbers 6. As the Bible is the rule and guide of our faith, we would be ignorant at best, and found false teachers as well, should we deny what this book proclaims. But this doesn't mean it's an easy concept to understand. Men have been struggling with it since it was revealed. John Wesley stated– “Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the Triune God.”

Today, we will look for that worm, because – at least in a limited way – we can comprehend the Triune God. We can comprehend His nature, and we can know that what we so comprehend is correct. Why? Because it is in accord with His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Monotheistic God

Malik Jabbar says –

“All of the monotheistic religions, which primarily include Islam, Christianity and Judaism are mythological representations of the natural environment. The ancients fashioned their spiritual concepts as mythical copies of natural phenomena, the environment and

its interactions. They pictured the sun as the ruler of the universe, the life giver, the conqueror of darkness and cold, the scorcher with its *intense* fire, the compassionate with its *soothing* heat. When the sun triumphantly appeared on the eastern horizon at the dawning of the day, the whole universe (from our earthly perspective) was seen bowing in submission to the greatest of all lights. All the stars and planets of the higher and lower heavens were vanquished without trace at the dawning of the great sun god. This physical reality is the true seminal generator of our religious rituals in reference to an omnipotent conquering god, evolved from the customs of the ancients.”

What Jabbar says here is incoherent at best. If man were to make a religion based on natural phenomena, it would be a rare occurrence for him to be a monotheist. The sun would be one of many gods, and this is what has occurred as religion has devolved throughout the ages. In the 19th Psalm David skips over the created god Jabbar proclaims and exalts the God who created the very sun who was supposedly the object of reverence in his confused analysis.

“The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork. (vs 1)

In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun.” (vs 4)

David understood that the Creator is above, not subservient to or part of, His creation. In modern times though, liberal theologians have twisted the evolution of religion, turning it completely upside down. It’s evident from the historical record in the worship of God by man that the most ancient belief is that of monotheism. From that point, worship has devolved into polytheism, animism, etc., not the other way around. The noted Assyriologist Stephen Langdon records –

“The history of Sumerian religion, which was the most powerful cultural influence in the ancient world, could be traced by means of pictographic inscriptions almost to the earliest religious concepts of man. The evidence points unmistakably to an original monotheism, the inscriptions and literary remains of the oldest Semitic peoples also indicate a primitive monotheism, and the totemistic origin of Hebrew and other Semitic religions is now entirely discredited.”

The region of Sumeria, which Langdon cites, is where many of the early Bible figures found their homes. And it is the record of these early people which are included in the pages of the Bible as breathed out by the One true God. From the first page of the Bible to its last, the existence of only One true God is proclaimed.

Man speaking to God – For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God.
Psalm 86:10

God speaking to man – For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: “I am the LORD, and there is no other. Isaiah 45:18

In the book of Isaiah alone, this claim is directly made almost a dozen times. Yes, there is one God. Reason and intellect tell us this and the Bible fully supports what we can know simply by thinking things through in a rational manner. However, how could a being that didn't understand fellowship create anything beyond Himself containing fellowship? Rather, he'd be completely contained within himself and without fellowship. The Principle of Analogy states that “The cause of being cannot produce what it does not possess.” Because of this, the fact that we're social beings confirms a plurality within a single essence such as the Trinity.

II. The Trinity

Despite the Bible proclaiming only one God, one of the most important tenants of true Christianity is the concept of the Trinity. It is clearly presented throughout the Bible, but it was a mystery long hidden at God's prerogative. It wasn't until Christ that the mystery of this profound secret was finally and truly revealed:

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, *be* glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.” Romans 16:25-27

The doctrine of the Trinity as understood by Christianity states that God has a threefold person-hood and yet they together are one God – three Persons in one Essence. The term “persons” comes from St. Augustine who agreed that it wasn't the best of terms but, as he said, “rather than being silent on the subject...” This Trinity as revealed through Scripture is God the Father, God the Son, & God the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, at one time or another, the pronoun “He” is used to describe each separate part of this eternal Godhead demonstrating an individual “Person” and yet this Person has all of the qualities of God – He is the Creator, He is eternal, He reads our hearts and

minds, etc. All of these attributes are attributed at one time or another to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Either the Bible is filled with confusion, or each of these is God. When Jesus uttered the Great Commission to His apostles, he said –

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19, 20

In the Greek, the word “name” is *onoma*. It is a singular noun, meaning each of these entities combines into one essence. It would be good to ask, “Is this completely unique to the New Testament or can we find a parallel in the Old?” The answer is “Yes, we can.” The *Sh’ma*, or “Hear” of Deuteronomy 6:4 gives us an example –

Sh’ma Yisrael Yehovah Elohaynu Yehovah Echad
Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is One!

In these words, it says, “The LORD is One.” A cluster of grapes is one; the people Israel are one people, Adam and Eve were called *besar echad*, or “one flesh.” These are made up of individual parts and yet are termed “one.” The word *echad* used in the *Sh’ma* enables this interpretation. Another word signifying one and only one – *yachid* was not used. We can rightly assume that the Creator knows Hebrew better than we do! However, the term *echad* was used in this most important of statements.

Throughout the ages, since the establishment of the church, people have used tangible concepts to try to explain this Trinity, such as water being steam, liquid, or solid. Or, a circle divided into three equal parts, etc. Or maybe an egg which has a shell, a yolk, and a white part. However, none of these accurately portrays the concept correctly, and if used will lead to heresy.

So we should ask, “Is it that there is no proper analogy?” Has God left us with a concept but no way to properly explain it? No. A concept has been provided, and it’s visible everywhere you look and is beautifully explained by Dr. Nathan Wood in the book [The Secret of the Universe](#).

He explains that the universe is made of a trinity of Space, Time, and Matter. All of them exist, all of them exist everywhere and at all times, and yet they are not the same. Furthermore, each of these is a trinity itself. Space is comprised of Length, Breadth, and Height. Time is expressed in Past, Present, and Future. And matter consists of Energy in Motion producing Phenomena. The universe itself is a trinity of trinities!

Further, we can make the assertion and equate Space with the Father – unseen and yet omnipresent; matter with the Son – visible, tangible, understandable; and Time with the Spirit – which is unseen and yet it is a medium in which we move and gain understanding. Taking this concept, Time, Dr. Wood breaks it down in an understandable way. After doing this, he changes only four words and thereby beautifully explains the mystery of the Trinity –

The Future is the source. The Future is unseen, unknown, except as it continually embodies itself and makes itself visible in the Present. The Present is what we see, and hear, and know. It is ceaselessly embodying the Future, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. It is perpetually revealing the Future, hitherto invisible.

The Future is logically first, but not chronologically. For the Present exists as long as Time exists, and was in the absolute beginning of Time. The Present has existed as long as Time has existed. Time acts through and in the Present. It makes itself visible only in the Present. The Future acts, and reveals itself through the Present. It is through the Present that Time, that the Future, enters into union with human life. Time and humanity meet and unite in the Present. It is in the Present that Time, that the Future, becomes a part of human life, and so is born and lives and dies in human life.

The Past, in turn, comes from the Present. We cannot say that it embodies the Present. On the contrary Time in issuing from the Present into the Past becomes invisible again. The Past does not embody the Present. Rather it proceeds silently, endlessly, invisibly from it.

But the Present is not the source of the Past which proceeds from it. The Future is the source of both the Present and the Past. The Past issues in endless, invisible procession from the Present, but, back of that, from the Future out of which the Present comes. The Past issues, it proceeds, from the Future, through the Present.

The Present therefore comes out from the invisible Future. The Present perpetually and ever-newly embodies the Future in visible, audible, livable form; and returns again into invisible Time in the Past. The Past acts invisibly. It continually influences us with regard to the Present. It casts light upon the Present. That is its great function. It helps us to live in the Present which we know, and with reference to the Future which we expect to see. Now, substitutes 4 words. God replaces Time. Father replaces Future. Son replaces Present. Spirit replaces Past.

The Father is the source. The Father is unseen, unknown, except as He continually embodies Himself and makes Himself visible in the Son. The Son is what we see, and hear, and know. He is ceaselessly embodying the Father, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment. He is perpetually revealing the Father, hitherto invisible.

The Father is logically first, but not chronologically. For the Son exists as long as God exists, and was in the absolute beginning of God. The Son has existed as long as God has existed. God acts through and in the Son. The Father makes Himself visible only in the Son. The Father acts, and reveals Himself through the Son. It is through the Son that God, that the Father, enters into union with human life, and so is born and lives and dies in human life. God and humanity meet and unite in the Son. It is in the Son that God, that the Father, becomes a part of human life, and so is born and lives and dies in human life.

The Spirit, in turn, comes from the Son. We cannot say that it embodies the Son. On the contrary, the Spirit in issuing from the Son into the Spirit becomes invisible again. The Spirit does not embody the Son. Rather it proceeds silently, endlessly, invisibly from Him. But the Son is not the source of the Spirit who proceeds from Him. The Father is the source of both the Son and the Spirit. The Spirit issues in endless, invisible procession from the Son, but back of that, from the Father out of whom the Son comes.

The Spirit issues, He proceeds, from the Father, through the Son. The Son, therefore, comes out from the invisible Father. The Son perpetually and ever-newly embodies the Father in visible, audible, livable form; and returns again into invisible God in the Spirit. The Spirit acts invisibly. It continually influences us with regard to the Son. It casts light upon the Son. That is His great function. He helps us to live in the Son which we know, and with reference to the Father which we expect to see. This is what has been evident since creation in the physical universe and to which God's word, the Bible, faithfully testifies to in the nature of the Godhead, such as –

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’” Genesis 1:26

In the first chapter of Scripture the terms “us” and “our” are used by the Creator reflecting His triune nature. And again, in Isaiah:

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
“Whom shall I send,

And who will go for Us?”

Then I said, “Here *am* I! Send me.” Isaiah 6:8

Zechariah 12 places the members of the Trinity together in one passage –

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the **Spirit** of grace and supplication; then they will look on **Me** whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for **Him** as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for **Him** as one grieves for a firstborn.” Zechariah 12:10

These words in Zechariah are so obvious in what they proclaim, that the Jehovah’s Witnesses, in their tragically flawed translation of the Bible, use a margin note, rather than the text itself, when translating this verse. They won’t even touch this verse because it destroys all of their already incoherent theology. The Gospel of John, time and again, reflects the relationship between the Father and the Son as well as the Spirit–

Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? John 14:8, 9

Paul shows he clearly understood God’s triune nature. He alludes to it several times in his epistles, such as –

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.” 2 Corinthians 13:14

These are just a couple of innumerable verses which either implicitly, or explicitly, reveal a Godhead.

III. God the Father

God the Father is clearly acknowledged by all Christians as well as most cults and sects who use the Bible as their reference. An unfortunate exception, of course, has come out of modern liberal denominations and translations of the Bible which have purposed a gender-neutral God and a gender-neutral Bible. Regardless of this nonsense, the texts as received from God for our Bible are in the masculine, and for that reason, we adopt political correctness in this matter at our own peril. God’s word stands though.

Concerning God the Father we read –

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
-John 4:23, 24

Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. John 6:46

These verses perfectly match the description Dr. Wood made concerning the nature of the Father within the Trinity.

IV. God the Son

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” John 1:1-5

John couldn't have been any clearer about the nature of the Word and His eternal relationship in God. It never ceases to amaze me how people can twist something so clear and so precise in order to deny the truth of the very words John so carefully penned. In his first epistle, he follows the exact same pattern concerning the Word. These verses, along with everything else John writes is so absolutely grounded in the deity of Jesus that it is inexcusable to misunderstand or deny what he is saying, such as –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—...” 1 John 1:1, 2

Later in Revelation, John quotes Jesus' own words, His own claim to deity –

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last.” Revelation 22:13

To be a fair evaluator of God's word, I want you to be careful about the next verse I give. The Greek used here is often cited as proof that Jesus claimed to be God –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” John 8:58

How many of you have heard that the words there translated as “I AM” prove Jesus was claiming to be God? The Greek words are *ego eimi*. However, going to the very next chapter, the same words, with the same parsing, are used by the man Jesus healed –

“Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, ‘Is not this he who sat and begged?’ Some said, ‘This is he.’ Others said, ‘He is like him.’ He said, ‘**I am he.**’” John 9:8, 9

In this verse, the man states *ego eimi* just as Jesus did. This person clearly wasn't claiming to be God, so we need to be careful to understand the context, not simply the words used. The claim of deity is evident from the construct of the verse – “Before Abraham was.” Further, He spoke Hebrew or Aramaic, not Greek. The words he used would have been understood as a claim to being Yehovah. He was making a claim to eternity and to deity. How do we know this?

“Then they took up stones to throw at Him;” John 8:59

The fact that they picked up stones to throw at Him testifies that He had claimed to be deity while speaking in Hebrew or Aramaic – He was being accused of blasphemy, for which stoning was the penalty. John 10 leaves no doubt about the nature of the Son –

“‘I and My Father are one.’³¹ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.” John 10:30, 31

In these words, both what Jesus said and the people's reaction again assure us that Jesus was claiming to be deity. Next, Luke had no doubt of Christ's deity. Listen to how carefully he worded the following, which is a pattern throughout his writings:

“‘Return to your own house, and tell what great things **God** has done for you.’ And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things **Jesus** had done for him.” Luke 8:39

Either Luke was making a point for us to read and understand, or he was an incompetent blasphemer. There's simply no other way to take the words. Paul completely supports the deity and Godhood of Jesus Christ with –

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” Colossians 1:15-17

The writer of Hebrews makes exactly the same claim as Paul –

“The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.” Hebrews 1:3

It is incomprehensible to think that a created being could somehow “sustain all things.” Not only is this the case, but the Principle of Contingency disallows it. An attempt to deny the principle will instead actually validate it. A contingent, or created being, cannot create or sustain anything else because it is already contingent.

No matter what else, the deity of Jesus Christ is not only fully supportable by the Bible, but it is the only logical and reasonable conclusion we can come to, if we believe the Bible. It is through Jesus that the eternal God reveals Himself to us. And it is the Holy Spirit who will, if we allow Him, teach us proper doctrine concerning the nature of God.

V. God the Holy Spirit

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:6-8

In the Bible, the work of “begetting” sons is the job of the Father, but it is also the work of the Spirit. To attribute this to the Spirit, were it not the case, would be blasphemous. The Jehovah's Witnesses naturally deny the deity of the Holy Spirit. They call Him an “active force” – whatever that means. They have to make up a term for the Spirit which is completely unbiblical in order to diminish His proper role as the third member of the Godhead. But the Spirit is the One who searches the Godhead and reveals to us God's workings –

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

-1 Corinthians 2:11

In 2 Corinthians, Paul, after talking about Christ (the Lord) does a changeup and says in practically in the same breath...

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.”

-2 Corinthians 3:17

Either Paul is theologically confused, or He is as clear as a crystal in his claim – Christ is the Lord, the Spirit is the Lord, and the Spirit is the “Spirit of the Lord.” Surely we praise our Creator – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! Scripture, in both Testaments, leaves no doubt about the Triune nature of God.

*A blessing upon the people of God
A blessing of His name resting on them in peace
No matter where on this earth shall their feet tread
His blessing is upon them, and it will never cease*

*The name of the Lord is their protection and life
The name of the Lord is their anchor and stay
In the name of the Lord is the ending of strife
When placed upon the people, peace leads the way*

*May Your precious and holy name rest upon us
May the glory of Christ be ours to protect us from harm
We look to the Lord, our precious Lord Jesus
His name reveals to us God’s tenderly caring arm*

VI. The Aaronic Blessing (verses 22-27)

Because our sermon text today is the High Priestly blessing of Numbers 6, you might have been wondering why we would first go through a short evaluation on the nature of the Trinity. The reason is that within this blessing, like within the *Sh’ma* we read earlier, there is an implicit hint of the Trinity. But this hint is more forceful than in that of the *Sh’ma*, as we will see...

²² And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

To close out Chapter 6, the Lord conveys a most magnificent set of words to the people of Israel. It is unsure when these words were spoken to Moses, but they have been placed here as a logical progression of thought concerning the camp and the armies of Israel. The Lord speaks first through Moses and then through Aaron, as is seen with the words...

²³ **“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying,**

The words are the Lord’s but they are intended for speaking by Aaron and his sons. Thus they are known as the Aaronic blessing, following after Aaron, the first high priest; or as the *birkat kohanim*, the Priestly Blessing, following after the line of priests to whom they were addressed. Both names are acceptable because it is to both Aaron and his sons that they are so instructed...

²³ (con’t) **‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:**

So far in Numbers, the armies of the Lord have been drawn up, their encampments have been identified. The priests and Levites have been given their charge and have been assigned their stations around the sanctuary. The camp has been purified from those who are unclean. The matter of confession and restitution has been addressed. The law of jealousy was dealt with, and the law of the Nazirite has been explained.

The people are now a united whole, laid out according to the Lord’s design. They will soon be ready to depart for Canaan. These details of organized life so far, and the departure which is soon at hand, are now to be accentuated and graced by the following, most memorable, verses. In the Hebrew, the main blessing consists of three verses of fifteen words of sixty letters. The verses are divided into double clauses with each clause referring to Yehovah, the LORD, in a petition that He bestow the stated blessing upon Israel.

It is a blessing that sustained them for 1500 years until the time of Christ. And, it is a blessing which still gives them hope and assurance since that day. Though they missed the significance of who Jesus is, they still have a hope in the Lord, even if misdirected at this time, because of what the words proclaim. Someday, their hope in the Lord, Yehovah, will be united with their understanding of who He is. It is this Lord who now speaks out the simple and yet life-sustaining words of blessing...

²⁴ **“The Lord bless you and keep you;**

y'berekhekha Yehovah

v'yshmerekha – In the Hebrew, the name *Yehovah* is spelled YHVH, as it always is. The accent to the name is written out with its accompanying vowel points which indicate the pronunciation and formative aspect of the name beyond the basic letters.

The words here, and throughout the blessing, are in the singular, *kha* instead of *khem*. Though Israel is a group of people, they are still one people. The many are blessed individually, and the individuals are thus collectively blessed.

“The Lord bless you” is a petition to bestow upon Israel all blessing – both spiritual and temporal. It is a call to such blessing in a continuous outpouring of God’s grace and mercy upon this chosen, but undeserving, people.

The word translated as “and keep you” clarifies, and more fully explains, the words, “The Lord bless you.” In blessing the people, they can anticipate being kept – both physically and spiritually – *for* good and *from* evil. Though curses have been assured already for disobedience, the blessing now is one which would keep them, even in their disobedience. To be kept is an ongoing fountain of support and relief. It is not a one-time, but an all-time, continuous outpouring of God’s sustaining hand upon His people. Remember, this is a cumulative blessing upon Israel the people. Has the blessing failed? No. They have been blessed, and they have been kept. Even in times of experiencing the curses of the law, the words have remained faithfully true to them.

**²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;**

ya'er Yehovah panav eleyekha

vi'khoonekha – The name *Yehovah* here is again spelled YHVH, but this time, the vowel points which indicate the pronunciation and formative aspect of the name beyond the basic letters are different than previously.

The blessing of the first two clauses of verse 24 is now elevated in the continuation of it in verse 25. “The Lord make His face shine upon you” is a way of saying that the very light of Yehovah, His infinitely bright countenance, should radiate upon Israel. The face of the Lord reflects who He is. His personality, His demeanor, and His eternity are all tied into the thought of His face. When these shine upon the people, they will receive the abundance of who He is in a ceaseless, endless, procession of His divine attributes. The face of the Lord can be turned away from the people in rejection, or it can be turned toward them in wrath. The blessing asks for neither, though either may come. But it

does ask that the radiance and goodness of Yehovah be directed to them. In the simplest form, for the face of the Lord to shine upon them is for Him to smile upon them as a father would to his children. Only goodness and mercy are anticipated in the blessing. The words of the clause, “and be gracious to you,” simply heighten the thought of the first clause. The Lord’s shining and radiant face is directed toward the people, and in His light they find grace. Though life for them is a vast wilderness of unknown duration, direction, and expectation, with the grace of the Lord upon them, they will find their way into safe places of rest and comfort. This is for both their physical existence and for their spiritual walk. The cool waters of life will come flowing into the parched soul when the Lord is gracious to them as a people.

As this is a cumulative blessing upon the people, has the blessing failed? No. The Lord’s face has shone upon them, and it continues to do so. And the Lord has been exceedingly gracious to them, granting them what they have not deserved for 3500 years.

**²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.”**

y’sha Yehovah panav eleyekha

v’yasem lekha shalom – The name Yehovah is again spelled YHVH, and for the third time, the vowel points are different than before. It is abundantly clear from this that there are three distinct and individual persons in one Yehovah – a Trinity. The Hebrew clearly indicates this.

The words, “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,” are a third elevation of the intensity of the blessing. They indicate a rising up of the refulgency of the Lord’s face over Israel in abundance of grace, kindness, love, and attention. He has gone from shining His face upon them to having it radiate over them, blotting out any darkness as His glory overwhelms everything else. He is on Israel’s side, and no foe can bring them harm or shame apart from His allowances. Wounds may come, but they will only be self-inflicted. The Lord has shone upon them, and they are secure because of that.

And the blessing closes out with, “And give you peace.” The word is *shalom*. This is more than a blessing for calm or quiet, but is a state of wholeness and completion in all ways. The lifting up of the Lord’s countenance finds its intended fulfillment in the peace of His people. They stand safe, secure, and in perfect harmony with the world around them, and with their ambitions, their desires, and their needs. And they find perfect harmony in their spiritual state as well. They have peace with God and are in

contentment with themselves and their neighbors. This is what the Lord commands for Aaron and his sons to bless the people with – words of light, life, love, and peace.

²⁷ “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

It is interesting that the Lord has given the responsibility of blessing the people to Aaron and his sons, and yet He retains the accomplishment and fulfillment of the blessing for Himself – So they shall put My name / and I will bless them. There is the audibly spoken name of the Lord which is pronounced upon Israel, and there is in return the conveyance of an unseen reality which rests upon them.

To fully understand what it means to have the name of the Lord placed upon Israel, it would be good to understand the meaning behind the name. The sermon on Exodus 3:13-15, entitled I AM THAT I AM, would be a logical place for you to go in order to more fully understand the magnificence of what is being proclaimed here in Numbers.

As I’ve already told you, the divine name is given three times, and it is pointed differently each time. Though the points did not exist in the original Hebrew, there is a reason that they were so pointed by the Masoretes. To them, the three instances are considered a mystery, but in Christ and in the New Testament, the mystery is revealed. They together are revealed in verses such as Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14, and elsewhere.

In Christ, it is no leap to go from a threefold repetition of the divine name in Numbers, to an understanding of the three Persons in the Trinity. Such is the nature of God, and how God reveals Himself. If you struggle with the doctrine of the Trinity, that’s OK, everyone does – even the finest scholars. What you should not struggle with is your faith *in* the Trinity. We don’t have to understand a thing in order to believe in it. I don’t understand my wife, but I believe in her. What is important is to accept God’s word despite our lack of complete understanding. His word proclaims there is a Trinity within the Godhead, and so we are asked to accept that.

And included in that is the subject of Jesus Christ, the second Member of the Trinity. It is through faith in Him that we are reconciled to this triune God. It is this same triune God who instructed through Moses that Aaron and his sons should proclaim to the people of Israel –

y’berekhekha Yehovah
v’yshmerkha

ya'er Yehovah panav eleyekha
vi'k_hoonek_ha
y's_ha Yehovah panav eleyekha
v'yasem lekha shalom
“The Lord bless you and keep you;
25 The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-26

Our Closing Verse: today may not be in your Bible, or it may be there and footnoted. It's true that many ancient manuscripts don't contain this verse, which has become known as the Johanne Comma, but it does date back to the time of Cyprian who lived in the 3rd Century and it survives in his treatise against the heretics who denied the Trinity—*“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” 1 John 5:7*

Next Week: Numbers 7:1-9 *Twelve days it took to accomplish these rites...* (An Offering for the Levites) (13th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Priestly Blessing

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
Memorable words he was then relaying
“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying the words I now tell
‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel
Say to them:

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” ’

“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel
And I will bless them as to you I now tell
Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 7:1-9 (AN OFFERING FOR THE LEVITES)

There is actually very little left to accomplish before Israel sets out for the land of Canaan. They have spent almost a year in the Wilderness, and about 330 days at Sinai. Within the next 20 days, they are scheduled to leave, and with an anticipated travel time of mere weeks, they should be standing on the bank of the Jordan River, ready to enter into their promised inheritance.

To help the Levites in what should be a most arduous trek through rough terrain, preparations have been made by the people, and they will be given as an offering to them. This is the subject of today's verses. After that, there will be more offerings made, and then in just a very short time after that, the people will be departing.

In all, Chapter 7 is probably the most repetitive and difficult passage in all of the five books of Moses, and indeed, the whole Bible. Several times, I have heard people say, I tried reading the Bible, but eventually gave up. For those that said "when" they gave up, Leviticus or Numbers is at the top of the list. For Numbers, my guess is that Numbers 7 was probably the clincher.

People love Genesis, they enjoy much of Exodus, struggle through Leviticus hoping for another narrative like Genesis, and get to Numbers... and lose all hope. They turn a few pages scanning for something that will be interesting, their eyes alight on these 89 verses, and they carefully and quietly close the book, promising themselves they will read more later, and they never come back. It's a shame, after Numbers 7, it's all uphill once again!

Text Verse: *"My soul faints for Your salvation,
But I hope in Your word.*

⁸² *My eyes fail from searching Your word,
Saying, "When will You comfort me?"*

⁸³ *For I have become like a wineskin in smoke,
Yet I do not forget Your statutes." Psalm 119:81-83*

Actually, in God's word, there are no low spots. Everything is a mountaintop when it is taken in its proper perspective. If we just keep looking for how things point to Jesus, the routine or repetitive verses don't seem so bad. We may not understand why they are

there, but we know they are there for a good reason. Before we finish today, we'll have a better idea about these nine verses, including some interesting things along the way. We will also revisit the ending of our verses from last week, tying them in with the purpose of the carts that are mentioned in our passage today. The reason for carts is to carry things along on the journey. The purpose of a journey is to carry us to a chosen location. The chosen location is because it is our goal.

Along the way, there may be difficult times, flat tires, cheating car mechanics (if such a thing is actually possible), and other difficulties. But when we are protected on the journey, there is no need to fret or worry. The carts make the burden light, the things that we do carry are because they are precious to us, and the safety of being protected makes the trip a content and happy one. This is the intended idea of the progression of thought so far, whether you have seen it or not. Today, you'll get a glimpse of that. More will be seen as we head out.

Oh, and just as we need food and provision along the way, please don't forget that all this time, and all of the time ahead, they are daily going out and gathering manna. Nothing is missing in the trek to the Land of Promise and nothing is missing in our walk to glory. Be assured of this. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. In That Day (verses 1-3)

¹Now it came to pass,

The Hebrew reads, *vayhi b'yom* – “And it came to pass in the day.” Because of the words, and what is next stated, some scholars look at this as a contradiction within the text itself. That contradiction is supposedly evidenced by the next words...

^{1 (con't)} when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle,

The date which Moses accomplished this is recorded in Exodus –

“And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was raised up.” Exodus 40:17

However, the narrative of Numbers has thus far been recorded from a month later than that. Numbers 1:1 said –

“Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:”

Thus, liberal scholars are happy to find an error of contradiction in God’s word, chiding the ignorant editor of the narrative for being so stupid as to record such an obvious error. In this, they only show their own inept ability to perceive what is being said. In verse 10 of this chapter, the exact same phrase, *b’yom*, or “in the day,” is also used. That verse will read –

“And the princes presented the dedication-gift of the altar on the day that it was anointed; and the princes presented their offering before the altar..” (DARBY)

All of the offerings to come are stated as being “in the day that it was anointed,” and yet the offerings will be presented over a period of twelve days. Thus, the term *b’yom*, or “in that day,” is inclusive of the entire period of the narrative, from Exodus 40, even up to now, more than a month later. The term *b’yom* then is a Hebraism meaning, “at that time.” It has been used this way to speak of indeterminate intervals of time, such as during and after the creation of man in Genesis 2:4, and of an entire period of a person’s life, such as in Genesis 35:3. No contradiction exists, except in the confused minds of liberal scholars who are willing to spend more time trying to undermine the word of God than they are in actually trying to learn it.

What is being said here is that the tabernacle is set up, but it is not yet fully set up. That process is ongoing, and it will continue until all of its implements, including those to be offered in the verses of this chapter, are included in its completion. That is certain based on the next words...

^{1 (con’t)} **that he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings, and the altar and all its utensils; so he anointed them and consecrated them.**

The anointing of these items was accomplished at the erection of the tabernacle, but it is said here to include not only its furnishings and the altar, but also “all its utensils.” These utensils include the offerings which are to be made by the individual tribes in the verses ahead, and over a twelve-day period.

An actual timeline is difficult to pin down, but some things are known for certain. There is a fifty-day period from the erection of the tabernacle in Exodus 40:17 and the departure of the people from Sinai which will be on the twentieth day of the second

month according to Numbers 10:11. The tabernacle was anointed in Leviticus 8:10, and the ordination of Aaron and his sons lasted eight days (Leviticus 9:1). During this time, there was also a Passover celebration.

Therefore, what is to be detailed concerning the offerings of the tribes probably occurred during the time of the writing of Leviticus. The twelve daily offerings would not take more than an hour or so, and the rest of the day, Moses would probably be in the tent of meeting, receiving the laws we have already gone through in Leviticus from the Lord. This would explain the words of the very last verse of Chapter 7 –

“Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that *was* on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.”
-Numbers 7:89

Adam Clarke rather boldly states that “the proper place of this account is immediately after the tenth chapter of Leviticus.” That is the chapter which recorded the death of Aaron’s two sons, and then which detailed the prescribed conduct for the priests. In this, we can see that the book of Leviticus was partially received and recorded during the events of the book of Numbers, as was stated in our introduction to Leviticus, a sermon presented to you on March 26, 2017.

These things are assured concerning the term *b’yom*, or “in the day,” because the tabernacle is one portion of the greater whole. What was the purpose of the tabernacle? It was to be the dwelling place of the Lord. But what use is that unless it is inclusive of the people – fully numbered and arranged around it – for whose sake it was fashioned and erected in the first place.

In other words, all of what we are reading is for a purpose. It is so that the Lord may dwell among His people. The census of them, their arrangement, the calling of the Levites, the duties of the priests – all of this and more – is one united act in regards to the account before us. Thus, the term *b’yom*, or “in the day,” carries the full significance of everything that is recorded, from the day of the tabernacle’s erection, until the day that these things are complete. But what is the actual importance of this? It is because, as we have seen, everything – even to the minutest detail – has been given as a picture of Christ. God incarnate came to dwell among His people. “In the day” then includes every aspect of what God has done, and is doing, in order for that to literally come about in the future. For those looking forward to the true dwelling of God with men, “in the day” is speaking of right now. Until the final detail is complete, we are “in the day.”

The finality of that day carries two major parts to it, the first is the millennial reign of Christ. The prophets speak of that day numerous times. The term “in the day” is used by Isaiah again and again and again in this manner. The second part is the eternal state which will continue on forever. It is where God will dwell with men in the fullest and most complete sense. Until then, the people of God are being numbered, arranged, and their offerings are being made in preparation for what God has determined since before a single atom came into existence.

² Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers’ houses, who were the leaders of the tribes and over those who were numbered, made an offering.

The Hebrew is completely the opposite in order of all English translations. It begins, not ends, with the words “And made an offering.” Only after that does it specify who made the offering. Again these words confirm to us the general, rather than specific, timing of the events which comprise *b’yom*, or “in the day.” Here “the leaders of Israel” are those who have already been named as such in Chapter 1 verses 5-16. This becomes even clearer with the words, “over those who were numbered.” Not only is this after the selection of the tribal leaders, but it is after the census of the men in each tribe. All of this is then after that naming and its subsequent census. And so, the writing of at least Leviticus 11 through Numbers 6, actually comes after that date. Numbers 7, comprising the twelve offerings over twelve days, certainly runs in a contemporary manner with the writing of those chapters.

If these offerings were started on the day after the census, which would have been an incredibly full day, the twelve offerings would end on the 13th of the second month. As the 14th of the second month will be designated as a special, second, Passover according to verse 9:11, this appears to be the correct timing of these events – from the 2nd through the 13th day of the second month. We cannot be dogmatic about this, but this seems to be a perfectly arranged time to accomplish what lies ahead.

It would mean that these offerings were presented without regard to the Sabbath. If so, then the presentation would probably have been made in connection with the morning offering by the priests, who ministered regardless of a Sabbath day. Again, we can’t be dogmatic about this, but it does appear from the account that the twelve offerings came on twelve consecutive days.

And so what is probably the case is that the offerings we will see were brought forward each morning, one tribe a day. After that, Moses would go into the Tent of Meeting and receive more of the law from the Lord. The amount of theological information received

and then passed on by Moses in these few short days has, as we have found out, been enough for people to study for 3500 years.

And yet, even today a new insight will arise from time to time concerning what is recorded here. How many have been found and recorded within the last year alone is unknown, but it is of no small amount. How much is left hidden for the future is likewise unknown, but it is certain that it is enough for numerous scholars to dedicate their lives to, and to rejoice in the amazing details to be drawn out which are hidden in picture, in prophecy, and in verse, word, and letter. Moses probably didn't even have an inkling that what he sat and wrote out from the mouth of the Lord was so rich, so filled with pictures of Messiah, and so instructive for the lives of God's people. It truly is almost impossible to imagine the level of wisdom which passed between Creator and his humble servant in those marvelous moments where they spoke face to face and issued forth for the people of Israel, and even for us today, the words which are so cherished by a few, and yet so unhappily ignored by so many. Thus it is with the word of God – the incomprehensible, glorious, and eternally relevant WORD OF GOD.

³ And they brought their offering

As you saw, most of the previous verse is parenthetical. It now resumes with the main thought. It is the leaders over the numbered men who accomplish this, bringing their offering...

^{3 (con't)} before the Lord,

The words *liphne Yehovah*, or “before the Lord,” will be explained at the end of verse 3 as “before the tabernacle.” They came forward from their tribes, walking a rather vast distance through the Levite's encampment, in order to come to the spot for the presentation of their offering. There in front of the beautifully ornamented screen of the gate which was woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and of fine woven linen, they presented their gifts to the Levites. These consisted of...

^{3 (con't)} six covered carts

shes eglot tsav. What the words actually mean is highly debated. The Greek translation of them doesn't help much. Many ideas have been put forth, two-wheeled carts, four-wheeled wagons, and litters – meaning something not borne on wheels, but between the two oxen, one in front and one behind. The idea with this is that the rough terrain

would make wheels impractical. However, the weight of these items makes litters equally impractical.

The word *agalah*, is translated as a cart, or wagon, elsewhere. It comes from the same word as *egel*, or calf. Both are derived from *agol*, meaning “circular.” The idea is that a calf in its youth will twirl about in a circular manner, enjoying life as it prances in the fields. Thus, these *agalah* are round-wheeled vehicles. Whether they are carts or wagons is unknown. We will stick with wagons for consistency, and because wagons – having four wheels – would be a smoother, more stately ride. It makes a nicer mental image.

The second word, *tsav*, is from a root meaning “to establish.” It then probably refers to a covering which is fixed to the wagon. Most translations say “covered,” or they just ignore the word altogether, hoping nobody notices.

^{3 (con't)} **and twelve oxen,**

The oxen are certainly for pulling wheeled vehicles, not carrying the items of the tabernacle. It is simply unreasonable to expect that the fabrics, wood, and metal pieces, which were of such great weight, would be carried on litters by so few oxen.

^{3 (con't)} **a cart for every two of the leaders,**

Despite what most commentaries state about the nature of these gifts being voluntary. The word for “offering” in this verse is *qorban*. It is simply an offering brought near, whether voluntarily or not. For example, the sin offering of Leviticus 4 is a *qorban*. Though willingly offered, it was still a required offering for atonement of sins. What is probable, is that these were built along with the tabernacle, and the Lord expected it as an offering. The same word is again used for the offerings which are coming in the verses ahead in this chapter. The reason why their construction wasn't mentioned in Exodus is simple. It is because they have nothing to do with the pictures of Christ which everything described by the Lord concerning the sanctuary did. When the Lord specified certain materials, measurements, weights, and the like, it was always to give us a picture of Christ. These carts, other than their number, have no details about their construction which point to Him.

The carts, if in fact built specifically for this service, as I submit is the case, they were built by the people and presented by leaders of two tribes each. As two leaders came forward to present them, it is probable that they were not merely common wagons, but

were rather beautifully made and ornamented. It would be an honor to come forth with a second tribal leader and present such a beautiful piece of craftsmanship.

³ (con't) **and for each one an ox;**

Twelve oxen, one representing each of the tribes, and thus two oxen for each wagon, were also brought forth. Six, being the number of man, the six wagons are the logical number to be brought forth for carrying the articles of the sanctuary which point, in every detail, to Christ the Man. The twelve oxen point to the number of governmental perfection. The twelve oxen, represent the twelve tribes of Israel. As the oxen draw along – in picture – the coming Messiah, so Israel pressed forward through time, bringing forth to the world the coming Messiah.

³ (con't) **and they presented them before the tabernacle.**

The words *liphne ha'mishkan*, or “before the tabernacle,” explain the term, *liphne Yehovah*, or “before the Lord.” They are used synonymously. To be presented before the tabernacle implies that they are thus presented before the Lord. What is amazing about the scene which is unfolding here is that these people have been at the foot of Sinai for over three hundred days. During that time, a great deal has happened, both good and bad. However, for much of the time, the tabernacle has been prepared. The materials were gathered, the people were selected for its construction, it was made, and it was finally set up. Now, almost as soon as it has been set up, it is time to break it down and depart. Within less than three weeks, that will occur.

*In that day, all will be right – right as rain
In that day, all things will be made new
There is coming a time when there will be no more pain
In that day it will come from our Savior, Faithful and True*

*In that day, we shall know even as we are known
The day is coming when these things shall come to pass
In that day, to us God's glory will be shown
As we stand before the sea, clear as the clearest glass*

*That day is coming for the redeemed of the Lord
In that day all will be as it was meant to be
Everything that was marred and corrupted will be restored
In that day we shall see Jesus smiling upon us so tenderly*

In that day. Oh what a day it will be!

II. The Offering for the Levites (verses 4-9)

⁴ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The translation is not correct. It says *v'yomer Yehovah el Moshe lemor*. The word is *amar*, or said, not *daber*, or spoke. The Hebrew words carry somewhat the same meaning, but "said" is used here because the task requires a partnership and people working together. It may seem like trifling, but there is no such thing when attempting to discern what the Lord is relaying to us. And so we rightly say now that "the Lord said to Moses, saying..."

⁵ "Accept *these* from them,

The Targum of Palestine inserts the thought that Moses would not originally accept the wagons because he doubted if they would be acceptable for use in conveying the tabernacle. That makes no sense at all. It is obvious that the items were to be conveyed on wagons, with the exception of the most holy things, each of which was built with rods for transport.

Further, the Lord would not wait until mere days before the departure to suddenly decide that wagons were needed, as if He forgot such an important detail. Rather, this entire offering was one prepared for the purpose, and in advance of this day. The edifice is standing, the priests have been ordained, and it is now the appropriate time to make the offering. Moses, as the leader, is accepting them from their hands in order to then present them to those who will use them. There is a dignity and a formality to the offering, not a haphazard and dubious state of events taking place.

^{5 (con't)} that they may be used in doing the work of the tabernacle of meeting;

Another incorrect translation. Twice already, in 7:1 and 7:3, the term *mishkan*, or tabernacle, has been used. Now a different term, *ohel moed*, or tent of meeting, is used. It completely destroys the movement of thought to translate the two words both as "tabernacle." The symbolism is all but lost when this happens.

To help in understanding this, we could use another example and equate the *mishkan* with the oval office within the White House. The tent of meeting would then be equated to the White House. In verse 1, Moses finished setting up the oval

office, and in verse 3, the offering is presented before the oval office, meaning where the president actually is. However, here, these things are to be used in the work of the White House. This is the importance of ensuring individual words are translated individually here.

⁵ (con't) **and you shall give them to the Levites,**

Moses is the leader of the congregation, and so on behalf of the Levites, he formally receives the offerings. This is no different than his inspection of the completion of the work in the construction of the sanctuary. At the end of the people's laborious work, we read this in Exodus 39 –

“According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. ⁴³Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.” Exodus 39:42, 43

Nothing is said about him inspecting the wagons. As there was no picture of Christ in their construction, other than the number of them, all that mattered was that they were capable of bearing the loads. Therefore, Moses accepted them for the Levites, maybe with a thumbs up, a pat on the back, and a “Job well-done guys.” Once they were accepted for the Levites, he was to pass them on...

⁵ (con't) **to every man according to his service.”**

This clause will continue to be explained, but it means that according to the need, based on weight and bulk, the carts would be portioned out. As there are three divisions of Levites, one would think that maybe they would go 2x2x2. But such is not the case. There were some extremely heavy objects that would need to be transported, and most of those went to one tribe...

⁶ **So Moses took the carts and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites.**

Just as the Lord said to Moses, so Moses complies with His words. He received the carts and the oxen in the same manner as a leader would receive an offering of assistance from a foreign country for one of his provinces that was in need, and then he would take what was offered, and formally present it to those needy souls. Everything about the ceremony here bears an air of dignity and formality. From the hands of their brother

Israelites, and through their great leader, the Levites are then presented with the wagons as follows...

⁷ Two carts and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon, according to their service;

As you perfectly remember, because we went through it in detail, the Gershonite's service was recorded in Numbers 4. There it said –

“They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting *with* its covering, the covering of badger skins that *is* on it, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, ²⁶ the screen for the door of the gate of the court, the hangings of the court which *are* around the tabernacle and altar, and their cords, all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things: so shall they serve.” Numbers 4:25, 26

These things were heavy and bulky. Layer upon layer of tent material would be carefully piled up between these two carts. Being covered, they would be kept safe from the elements. While hanging in the open, the rain wouldn't affect them, but if it were to rain on them while piled up, mold would quickly be a problem. Plus, the immense amount of dust raised by the vast multitudes of people in march makes having them covered much better as well.

In total, it was an immense amount of skins and fabrics by the time all the packing was completed. Commentaries which claim this was cumbersome, but not very heavy, have missed the reality of the matter. They were heavy, but not heavy in comparison to those items which were transported by those in the next verse...

⁸ and four carts and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari, according to their service,

Double the amount of carts and oxen went to Merari. Assuredly you also remember the list of items they were tasked with, but in case someone nodded off during those important verses – which certainly seems unlikely – here is what they said –

“And this *is* what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, ³² and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign *to each man* by name the

items he must carry. ³³ This *is* the service of the families of the sons of Merari..." Numbers 4:31-33

The weight of each socket is unknown, but supposing each was forty pounds, the combined weight of just those would be over 4000 pounds. That, along with the boards, bars, pillars, pegs, cords, and so on, would be an immense amount of weight. The oxen would earn their feed on their way from destination to destination, as they trudged through the dry, barren, rocky, inhospitable land.

⁸ (con't) **under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.**

These words are repeated from verse 4:28, after the service of Gershon was noted, and then 4:33 after that of Merari was noted. The thoughts are combined into one statement for both tribes. Ithamar was the youngest of Aaron and still a teenager, but he was given this great duty to supervise, just as he was given the duty of overseeing the inventory of the materials for the Tabernacle of the Testimony in Exodus 38:21, which was also for the service of the Levites. The name Ithamar means "Island of Palms" or "Land of Palms." The *tamar*, or palm, is a symbol of uprightness. Thus the Levites under the supervision of Ithamar are considered an island of upright people who are administering a service before the Lord.

⁹ **But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because theirs *was* the service of the holy things,**

Kohath, as you remember perfectly from Chapter 4, carried all of the holy things recorded in verses 5-15 – from the Ark with its coverings, to the brazen altar and everything in between. It was a great deal of things to carry, and some of them were rather heavy. But they were deemed most holy, and were never to be placed on a cart. Just as the king of Israel was carried upon a palanquin as seen in the Song of Solomon, so these items, representing the true and great King of Israel, were to be given this same respect and honor.

Correct translations of this verse say "holy things," "sacred objects," or "holy objects." The word is *ha'qodesh*, or "the holy." It is speaking specifically of these most holy items. Some translations say "the service of the sanctuary." That would be incorrect. The "sanctuary" is the entire compound in which the Tent of Meeting and Tabernacle reside, inclusive of its exterior borders, known in Exodus 25:8 as the *miqdash*. The Kohathites didn't carry the whole sanctuary, but only these particular holy objects, as is seen in our final words of the day...

^{9 (fin)} **which they carried on their shoulders.**

Though these items were heavy, they were carried on poles sufficiently long enough for the appropriate number of men to carry them. Further, there would be many Kohathites on the journey, and they could easily call to one another to come and provide relief as needed. Like geese moving in and out of the front of the formation to get relief at times, so these men could easily move in and out of the duty without even breaking a stride. In the end, the honor of carrying these most sacred objects would far outweigh the burden which temporarily weighed them down.

As we are slowly having Christ revealed to us, now is a wonderful time to see a comparison to Him as King of Israel from the Song of Solomon. Before going there, we need to remember the last portion of our previous sermon. It was the pronouncement of the *birkat kohanim*, or the Priestly Prayer. As I noted then, it was composed of sixty letters. In the song of Solomon, we read the following. As you listen, think of the tribes of Israel on their march towards the Land of Promise...

“Who *is* this coming out of the wilderness
Like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all the merchant’s fragrant powders?
⁷ Behold, it *is* Solomon’s couch,
With sixty valiant men around it,
Of the valiant of Israel.
⁸ They all hold swords,
Being expert in war.
Every man *has* his sword on his thigh
Because of fear in the night.” Song of Solomon 3:6-8

The words are written in the feminine, but it is noted that the form may more rightly be taken as neuter, because there is no specific neuter form in Hebrew. Thus, the question, in accord with the surrounding words, is asking, “Who is this group of people coming out of the wilderness?”

Solomon was in type a picture looking forward to Christ, but the words about him also look back in remarkable similarity to the people of Israel conducting their King, Yehovah. “Who is this coming out of the wilderness?” The word “wilderness” is *midbar*, the same name as the Hebrew book of Numbers, *b’midbar*, or “in the wilderness.” Israel is soon to be on a trek out of the wilderness.

“Like pillars of smoke” looks to the cloud, a picture of Christ, which will go forth with Israel throughout their journeys and out of the wilderness. “Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,” reflects two of the ingredients found in either the holy oil and/or in the holy incense each picturing Christ. The “merchant’s fragrant powders” are the other ingredients selected by the Lord, each picturing Christ in one manner or another. “Solomon’s couch,” is the resting place of the Lord, the Ark of the Covenant, where *shalem*, or peace (and also where the name Solomon is derived from) is granted. The sixty *gibborim*, or mighty ones, would be the sixty letters of the Priestly Prayer resting upon the people as they were blessed by Aaron. The words of the prayer would be as swords of protection for the *milkhamah*, or battle against the Lord’s enemies. The “fear in the night” is that terror which comes about in the night and which the Lord and His prayer of protection would keep them from.

The symbolism looks back to Israel, being led out of the wilderness to the Land of Promise, protected by the Lord, Yehovah. The symbolism also looks forward to Christ, leading His people through the wilderness of their lives, guiding us by His Spirit, until we are brought into the eternal presence of the Father. The multitudes of Israel, forming an immense cross in the wilderness when encamped, were a living picture of a spiritual reality of all of God’s redeemed.

We are safely in Christ because of His cross, and we are tenderly guided by His Spirit. We are enveloped in His fragrance, protected by the blessing of His name, and are on our way to the Land of Promise where our King of Peace will forever protect us from the harm of spiritual darkness. Fear in the night? It shall never be so. The High Priest has pronounced His blessing upon us. Who shall fear in the night?

Closing Verse: *So we may boldly say:*

“The Lord is my helper;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?” Hebrews 13:6

Next Week: Numbers 7:10-89 *This is one hugely long passage, but your attention shall not falter...* (An Offering for the Altar) (14th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

An Offering for the Levites

Now it came to pass
When Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle
That he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings
— — —-and the altar and all its utensils

So he anointed them and consecrated them; these jobs he did tackle
Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of their fathers' houses
Who were the leaders of the tribes, as we know
And over those who were numbered
Made an offering, and here is how it did go
And they brought their offering before the Lord
Six covered carts and twelve oxen
—-a cart for every two of the leaders, so their job they could tackle
And for each one an ox
And they presented them before the tabernacle

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These words to them He was then relaying
“Accept these from them
That they may be used in doing the work
— — —-of the tabernacle of meeting, you see

And you shall give them to the Levites
To every man according to his service, so shall it be
So Moses took the carts and the oxen too
And gave them to the Levites, as he was instructed to do
Two carts and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon
— — —-according to their service

And four carts and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari
— — —-according to their service too

Under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest
As the Lord instructed Moses to do
But to the sons of Kohath he gave none
Because theirs was the service of the holy things

Which they carried on their shoulders
Mostly by poles, slipped through appropriate rings

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 7:10-89 (THE DEDICATION OF THE ALTAR)

I'm going to be as honest as I can about today's verses in two ways. The first is that when I get to this particular set of verses, specifically verses 12-83, I only read the whole set of verses 12-17, and then only the first and last verse of the other eleven sets of verses, just as I have done for you today. Funny thing, my mom said to me that she does the exact same thing when she gets here. The reason we do this is that they are seemingly identical, word for word, all the way through with the exception of the names. I have a tight schedule, and repetition leads to time use, and time use leads to getting backed up in other areas.

Yes, I kind of feel guilty about skipping over the repetition, but repetition leads to time use, and time use leads to getting backed up in other areas. Now that we are sufficiently backed up because of my repetition, I'll move on by saying that not all repetition is tedious, and I will occasionally have someone say to me that they enjoy repetition in sermons and Bible studies. It helps things to sink in because they are repeated. I don't disagree with that at all, and things seem to sink in better when they are repeated.

In the case of these repetitive verses in this chapter, they aren't placed here for that reason. Rather than highlighting their similarities, they are actually given for quite the opposite reason. If you can make it all the way to verse 89, which will be in about 3 hours and 45 minutes, I will finish that verse and then explain the reason for it to you...

Text Verse: *"As I urged you when I went into Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, **4** nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith." 1 Timothy 1:3, 4*

The second way I need to be honest about today's sermon is that much of the final analysis of the sermon, after the verses are finished, actually came from the brain of Sergio Voitenko. Had he not looked into these some years ago, I have no idea what my final comments would have been like. Probably, I would have told you that the Bible was giving us a lesson on the beneficial use of repetition. If you need me to say that again, just holler out.

But he did analyze it, and then he went to the Jewish commentaries on this to see what they had to say. I am not a fan of Jewish commentaries in many respects, because they

don't stick to the Bible, and they often devolve into endless genealogies, just as Paul said about them. In the case of their conclusions here, they stuck to Scripture. In fact, they mirror much of what Christians say about Messiah. As Sergio noted in his thoughts, "...what a shame – some rabbis get so close to Jesus but [are] yet so blind. [C]an't imagine what it would be like when they realize one day what they've missed out on for 2000 years." As far as minute detail of the coming verses, John Lange says the following–

"We have thus a sample of sacred, divine book-keeping, whose separate lesson is that God is careful in all dealings with His people down to details and minutiae. And this revelation is so comforting that we must not grudge the large space allowed to these entries, and wish that they were replaced by records that would clear up many things in this part of Scripture that are now very obscure."

On that, he is right in that this is a sample of sacred, divine book-keeping. However, the minutiae actually clear up the seemingly obscure. Stay attentive as we go. And one final way I need to be honest – the sermon won't take 3 hours and 45 minutes. At best it will be 3 hours and 30 minutes. Great things lie ahead in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Offerings of the Dedication (verses 10-89)

¹⁰ Now the leaders offered the dedication *offering*

These words initiate the details of the recording of the dedication of the altar. What follows will be the longest set of repetitions in Scripture. The same words appear to be used twelve times in the same manner, with the exception of the names of the tribe making the offering, and the leader in the tribe who makes the offering. Each day's offering which follows consists of six verses which almost identically repeat.

The question is, "Why would the Lord repeat the same words twelve times over seventy-two verses? On the surface, it appears to be wholly unnecessary, even to the point of being overly tedious to the mind. Is God simply wasting words that could have been reduced to something like, "The same offering was presented by each tribe over the subsequent eleven days."?

One thing is for sure, no later writer of the account would have ever thought of compiling it in the manner in which it is written. Thus, it stands as a testimony to the fact that Moses is the author, and he recorded it as it occurred, and exactly as the Lord

determined. If we get nothing else out of this today, we should remember that fact. This account fully substantiates that Moses recorded what is presented.

Here, at the start of verse 10, it says, *va'yaqrivu ha'nesiim eth khanukat* – “and the princes brought near the dedication.” The word for “dedication” is a new one in Scripture which will be seen eight times, but four of them will be in this chapter. It is a word almost all people are familiar with, *khanukah*. Today it is used when speaking of the festival of Hanukkah which stems from the dedication of the temple by the Maccabees during the intertestamental period. The festival is noted in John 10:22 as something observed even when Jesus came. Now in Numbers, there is a dedication which is brought near...

10 (con't) for the altar

The Hebrew says, *ha'mizbeakh* – “the altar.” The altar is dedicated by these offerings. The offerings are brought forth by each tribe for this purpose. Thus, each day is a dedication of the altar by the tribe bringing forth its offering. This will be expressed in verse 84. It is the thing spoken of which is dedicated, not the offering itself. Here, and in 2 Chronicles 7, it is the altar which is spoken of. In Nehemiah 12, it is the wall that is referred to. And Psalm 30 speaks of the dedication of the house of David.

There is a question as to whether the term “for the altar” is speaking of both the brazen altar and the altar of incense. The reason why is because incense is one of the ingredients presented. That doesn't seem to be a necessary conclusion. Frankincense is presented with offerings on the brazen altar as is noted in Leviticus. Further, the special incense for the golden altar was to be made for, and used only by, the priests. There is no reason to assume that the incense presented here is for anything except the brazen altar. The dedication is speaking only of the brazen altar...

10 (con't) when it was anointed;

Here it says, *b'yom hi-masakh* – “in the day it was anointed.” As we have seen before, this doesn't mean literally on the day of the anointing, but in the time of its anointing. The anointing occurred in Leviticus 8 in a ceremony which lasted seven days. The presentation here is one which takes twelve days. And so the offering of dedication is during the time-frame of the altar's anointing.

10 (con't) so the leaders offered their offering before the altar.

The leaders represent the people under them, and they thus represent the individual tribes, twelve of them. The offerings are made for their tribes, and they are offered in exactly the same order as the listing of the tribes around the sanctuary as is detailed in Numbers 2 and again in Numbers 10. As they encamped, and as they will head out in procession, so each also presents an offering.

¹¹ For the Lord said to Moses, “They shall offer their offering, one leader each day, for the dedication of the altar.”

As is often the case, the Hebrew reads much more elegantly – “And said Yehovah unto Moses, ‘One prince a day — one prince a day — are they to bring near their offering for the dedication of the altar.’” The offerings were to be made, but what should be the order? Should they be by birth order? Should they be all in one day? In what manner were they to come near? The Lord determined what was to be done, and then He passed that on to Moses. It is as the tribes are laid out according to the cross, and as the sun lights the sky during the spring of the year, from east to south to west to north, so the offering of each leader is to be made. And they are to be one day at a time. It is a royal procession to bring an offering before the King of the universe.

¹² And the one who offered his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah.

Starting with Judah, the fourth born to Jacob, but from whom would come Messiah, the first offering is made. Other than these three names, Nahshon, Amminadab, and Judah, we won’t repeat the meaning of the three names of each offering as they have been listed already in two previous sermons. Nahshon means “Serpent Person.” Amminadab means “People of the Prince.” Judah means “Praise,” In selecting Judah first, we have a picture for us to always remember, “Praise is to go first before the Lord.”

¹³ His offering was one silver platter, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels,

The translation is lacking. It says, *v’qarebano* – “And his offering.” Things like this are placed into the word of God for a reason. To leave them out leaves the studious reader with a lack of understanding concerning what is being relayed. The offering presented is first to be a *qaarat keseph*, or “dish silver.” The word *qarah*, or dish, is used 17 times and only in Exodus and Numbers. It comes from a word which means to tear, or cut out. Thus it is something hollowed out like a shallow bowl. Silver pictures redemption. The weight is given as one hundred and thirty shekels. As this is silver, it was not used in the

tabernacle, as only gold vessels were used there. This one, in the future, would probably be used at the brazen altar for mixing grain offerings.

13 (con't) and one silver bowl of seventy shekels,

Next is a *mizraq*, or bowl. This comes from the word *zaraq*, meaning “to scatter,” and so it would be a deeper bowl than the first presented. This one is to be a bit more than half the size of the previous dish; seventy shekels. This one would probably have been used in the future for receiving the blood of sacrificial animals and then splashing it upon the sides of the altar. The weight of each of these vessels was to be...

13 (con't) according to the shekel of the sanctuary,

The shekel of the sanctuary is described five times in the Bible as being the weight of twenty *gerahs*. A *gerah* is a set standard, like a grain in our modern weights. Of these bowls...

13 (con't) both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering;

Both bowls were to be filled with *soleth belulah ba'shemem* – “fine flour mixed with oil.” The flour, or *soleth*, comes from an unused root meaning “to strip.” Thus it is fine flour. Into that is mixed oil so that it becomes one mixture. That mixture was brought as a grain offering. These picture Christ as has been seen in previous sermons. As they are in silver, it points to the human aspect of Jesus working out our redemption in His humanity. Next...

14 one gold pan of ten shekels, full of incense;

The word here is *kaph*. It means “hand.” Thus it is a pan or cup, but being only ten shekels, it would be dinky. In it was to be incense. The gold points to the deity of Christ; the incense to His intercessory role in His divine nature. Also...

15 one young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year,

The *par*, or “bull” comes from the word *parar*, to defeat. The *ayil*, or ram, is from the same as *ul*, or mighty. And the *kebes*, or lamb is from an unused root meaning, “to dominate.” The lamb is in its first year indicating innocence. Each of these points to the work of Christ, as has been seen in previous sermons. It is Christ who defeats the devil

through His might, and who remained innocent and free of sin, pictured in these animals. These then are offered up...

15 (con't) as a burnt offering;

The burnt offering is one which is burnt up completely. It pictures a life dedicated wholly to God. The symbolism then is that these are offered on behalf of the people who have dedicated their lives in this way, but the offerings picture Christ who makes that possible.

16 one kid of the goats as a sin offering;

This is a *seir izzim*, or shaggy goat. The word *sayir* means hairy. The word *izzim* means goat, coming from the word *azaz*, or prevail. It is the same as the two goats presented on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16:5. It is presented because hair in the Bible denotes awareness. In this case, it is an awareness of sin. The first time this word, *sayir*, or "hairy" was used was when speaking of Esau who is called a hairy man. He pictured fallen Adam who became aware of sin through his disobedience of the Lord's command. Paul says in Romans 8:3 that "Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin." In doing this, "he condemned sin in the flesh." He prevailed over it. This is the purpose of presenting a hairy goat. It pictures Christ who came in this manner. This then acknowledges the sin of the people, but that the animal (picturing Christ) is given to take their place.

17 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings: two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs in their first year.

Also is a peace offering which consists of two *baqar*, or oxen. That comes from a verb signifying "to seek out." Also, five *ayil*, or rams, signifying strength. Further, five *atud*, or male goats. These *atudim* have never been mentioned before in the sacrificial system. The word comes from *athod* which signifies "destined" as in "ready to become." Along with them are to be five *kebes*, or lambs, of the first year. They again signify "to dominate."

As these are peace offerings, they picture seeking out peace with God through Christ, resting in His strength, destined to be what God expects of us in Christ, and looking to dominate over the flesh through the power of Christ. To understand the significance of the offerings themselves, meaning the burnt, sin, and peace offerings, took sermon after

sermon in Leviticus. Time prohibits repeating all of that here, and so a review of those Leviticus sermons is necessary to grasp all that these short verses now encompass.

17 (con't) This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

This concludes the offering of the first day as given by Nahshon.

18-23 On the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar, leader of Issachar, presented an offering. ... This was the offering of Nethanel the son of Zuar.

The second day sees the offering of the second tribe, which is also the second tribe under Judah's standard to the east.

24-29 On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, leader of the children of Zebulun, presented an offering. ... This was the offering of Eliab the son of Helon.

The third day sees the offering of the third tribe, which is also the third tribe under Judah's standard to the east.

30-35 On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shedeur, leader of the children of Reuben, presented an offering. ... This was the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur.

The fourth day sees the offering of the fourth tribe, which is also the first tribe under Reuben's standard to the south.

36-41 On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, leader of the children of Simeon, presented an offering. ... This was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.

The fifth day sees the offering of the fifth tribe, which is also the second tribe under Reuben's standard to the south.

42-47 On the sixth day Eliasaph the son of Deuel, leader of the children of Gad, presented an offering. ... This was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel.

The sixth day sees the offering of the sixth tribe, which is also the third tribe under Reuben's standard to the south.

⁴⁸⁻⁵³ On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, leader of the children of Ephraim, *presented an offering.* ... This was the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud.

The seventh day sees the offering of the seventh tribe, which is also the first tribe under Ephraim's standard to the west. As the seventh day is noted here, it should be considered that whether this was a Sabbath or not, eventually there would be at least one, or even two presentations which occurred on a Sabbath. If so, it may be considered acceptable as it occurred in conjunction with the established religion. However, it may be that there was no offering at all made on a Sabbath, and the counting of days skips over the Sabbath. Thus, the term "on the XXth day" speaks of the day of the offerings, not the subsequent day in time. As the people were told to rest on the Sabbath, this may be the case, but as we saw in the previous sermon, it very well may not be.

⁵⁴⁻⁵⁹ On the eighth day Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, leader of the children of Manasseh, *presented an offering.* ... This was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

The eighth day sees the offering of the eighth tribe, which is also the second tribe under Ephraim's standard to the west.

⁶⁰⁻⁶⁵ On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, leader of the children of Benjamin, *presented an offering.* ... This was the offering of Abidan the son of Gideoni.

The ninth day sees the offering of the ninth tribe, which is also the third tribe under Ephraim's standard to the west.

⁶⁶⁻⁷¹ On the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, leader of the children of Dan, *presented an offering.* ... This was the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

The tenth day sees the offering of the tenth tribe, which is also the first tribe under Dan's standard to the north.

⁷²⁻⁷⁷ On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ocran, leader of the children of Asher, *presented an offering.* ... This was the offering of Pagiel the son of Ocran.

The eleventh day sees the offering of the eleventh tribe, which is also the second tribe under Dan's standard to the north.

78-83 On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan, leader of the children of Naphtali, presented an offering. ... This was the offering of Ahira the son of Enan.

The twelfth day sees the offering of the twelfth tribe, which is also the third tribe under Dan's standard to the north.

84 This was the dedication offering for the altar from the leaders of Israel,

The Hebrew says *zot khamukat ha'mizbeakh* – "this dedication the altar." The altar is dedicated through the twelve offerings from each tribe, tribe by tribe.

84 (con't) when it was anointed:

It again reads, "in the day" it was anointed. Thus, this is speaking of the entire period of the offering as being in relation to the day in which the altar was anointed.

84 (con't) twelve silver platters, twelve silver bowls, and twelve gold pans.

The dedication spoken of in the first clause is now explained by this and the following verses. What was presented is what brings about the dedication of the altar. One of each item here was presented by each tribe.

85 Each silver platter weighed one hundred and thirty shekels and each bowl seventy shekels.

The combined weight of the silver platters is 1560 shekels. The combined weight of the silver bowls is 840 shekels.

85 (con't) All the silver of the vessels weighed two thousand four hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.

The combined weight of the silver is given. This according to the sanctuary shekel which is twenty gerahs to the shekel.

86 The twelve gold pans full of incense weighed ten shekels apiece, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; all the gold of the pans weighed one hundred and twenty shekels.

Interestingly, the weight of the gold in gerahs, which is twenty gerahs to the shekel, is the same number as shekels of silver. There are 2400 shekels of silver and 120 shekels of gold which equals 2400 gerahs. 2400 is 12 x 200. Not to read too much into that, but the number 12 is that of governmental perfection, and the number 200 is the number of insufficiency. As this is for the dedication of the altar, it appears to point to the insufficiency of this Old Testament sacrificial system to accomplish what it is designed for. Thus, it is an implicit reference to the need for a New Covenant led by Christ and structured around His twelve apostles.

⁸⁷ All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve young bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs in their first year twelve, with their grain offering, and the kids of the goats as a sin offering twelve.

The totals for the burnt and sin offerings are given, one of each animal for each tribe. The grain offerings are only now mentioned, but it is understood from the laws given in Leviticus that these would accompany the sacrifices. All of these together, the burnt, grain, and sin offerings were given in anticipation of Christ to come. In themselves, they could accomplish nothing except to picture what He would do. This is explicitly stated in the book of Hebrews.

⁸⁸ And all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings were twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, and the lambs in their first year sixty.

The combined totals of each animal for the peace offerings are given here. Those combined then total 204 animals. And then combining these with the burnt and sin offerings equals a total number of animals offered at 252 over a period of 12 days, 36 as whole burnt offerings, and 216 were partially burned and the rest eaten according to the laws given for the sin and peace offerings.

^{88 (con't)} This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed.

The word *akhar*, or after, confirms what has already been deduced. The term *b'yom*, or "in the day" of the anointing of the altar, which has already been used, is speaking of the entire duration of the dedication. The entire process of the dedication is counted as the day of the altar's anointing. With this, the altar is now dedicated to serve in the capacity for which it was built.

Through the offering presented by each leader, the people have, tribe by tribe, symbolically offered themselves to God through Christ; they have had their sins

symbolically atoned for through Christ; and they have symbolically partaken of the body of Christ. Now, everything in Leviticus concerning the sacrifices to be conducted at this altar, and all of which point to the coming Messiah, can now be performed and accepted because of this time of dedication.

⁸⁹ Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him,

To close out this long and very complicated chapter, we have a verse that seemingly has nothing to do with anything, but actually, this isn't so. The first verse of Chapter 7 said, "Now it came to pass, when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, that he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings, and the altar and all its utensils; so he anointed them and consecrated them." That took us all the way back to Exodus 40:17 when the tabernacle was said to have been set up.

Since then, the entire sacrificial system has been outlined, and numerous laws have been given. Also, the priests have been consecrated and the Levites were then set apart for service to the priests. Here in this chapter the people have consecrated the altar and offered themselves, tribe by tribe, in anticipation of the coming Christ. Now, to close out all of that, we come to this verse.

We understand in this how Moses received his word from the Lord. It says that he would go into the tent of meeting to speak with Him. What is understood is that "Him" is Yehovah who has been speaking out His word to Moses. This is confirmed back in Exodus 25 at the giving of the directions for the construction of the Ark –

"You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. ²² And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which *are* on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel." Exodus 25:21, 22

That is now revealed to actually be the case. When Moses went in, it says...

⁸⁹ (con't) he heard the voice of One speaking to him

The verb here is in a particular form where it expresses the reflexive voice where the subject of the verb is both performing and receiving the verbal action. Maybe better stated, this should say, "...he heard the voice conversing with him" (Pulpit). It is debated if Moses stood outside of the veil, or if he alone was allowed inside the veil, apart from

the special Day of Atonement allowances. In Exodus 33:11, it says that “the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.” This means that they had open and free discussion, not literally necessarily seeing one another’s face. However, in Numbers 12:8, it also says that Moses “sees the form of the Lord.” That implies a physical manifestation of the Lord, presumably the eternal Christ in His incarnate form. Either way, the voice was audible. And it both spoke to and responded to Moses. As God doesn’t have parts, and as a voice requires something to make the voice resonate, it is at least a foreshadowing of the incarnation where God would literally speak with a mouth through the Person of Jesus. For now, though, the mouth of the Lord would speak...

^{89 (fin)} from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

The eternal Word of God, Yehovah, who is the Lord Jesus, would converse with Moses from above the mercy seat that was on the Ark. As the mercy seat points to the place of Christ’s atoning death, and as the ark of the Testimony points to Christ, the fulfillment and thus embodiment, of the law, it is appropriate that this verse is placed here. It is after the offering of the tribes for the dedication of the altar, which points to the sacrificial work of Christ which Christ would accomplish, that we are told how He spoke to Moses.

The name Moses means, “He who draws out.” Moses went in to draw out from the Lord, that which needed to be expressed to the people and the Lord would be there, conversing with him. From the spot which pictures His fulfillment of the covenant, He would speak out the words of the covenant which anticipated His coming in order to fulfill it. It is a rather remarkable thing to consider.

*An offering to God; an offering for peace
One which signifies fellowship so sweet
It stems from our daily trod, and in Christ it shall never cease
Because in Him our fellowship is complete*

*Cleanse us in our inward parts; lead us in Your peace
May we join together with You, O precious Lord
Purify our minds and hearts; may this joy never cease
Through Christ, may we always be in one accord*

*Thank You for the cross from whence atonement came
Upon that offering, we can now add an offering of peace*

*Together they point to the same great Name
Both look to Jesus where joyous fellowship will never, never cease*

II. Why So Many Repetitive Verses?

It has always been a curiosity why the Lord didn't just say what the offerings were for the first day, and then say that the leader of each subsequent tribe made similar offerings over the next eleven days. The tally at the end would have clarified that well enough. But He didn't do this. And so being curious as to why, our friend Sergio put these verses into the computer and looked for any differences. There actually are some. First, the only tribe that doesn't use the term *nasiy*, or "prince," is that of Judah. All the others say, "On the XXth day XX the son of XX, leader (*nasiy*) of the children of XX, *presented an offering*. In verse 12, however, it says of Judah, "And the one who offered his offering on the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah."

Secondly, verse 13 is identical to all the other eleven corresponding verses, but with one exception. It contains the letter *vav* at the beginning of the verse, translated as "And," – "And His offering..." The other eleven simply begin with, "His offering was..." It would make more sense to say "And" at the beginning of the last eleven, not only say it during the first, but this is how it is.

And then thirdly, the exact same offerings are used, letter for letter, in all of the other verses, with two exceptions. In verse 17, and in verse 23, the word *atudim*, or "male goats" is spelled *ayin-tav-vav-dalet-yod-mem*. However, in the other ten, it is spelled without the letter *vav*. Those are the only differences in all 72 verses – the word *nasiy*, and three *vav*'s.

The reason for the exacting repetition of these 72 verses is clear. The Lord had these variations which needed to be highlighted. The way to accomplish this was to write every section, verse, word, and letter identically, with those changes as well. In doing this, the changes would then be seen as purposeful.

The first change, the leaving off of the term *nasiy*, or "prince," is though Nahshon is the prince of Judah, he was not named specifically as prince because from this tribe would come its true *nasiy*, or Prince. This is actually referred to in 1 Chronicles 5 –

"For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came he that is the prince..."
JPS Tanakh 1977

Though that was speaking immediately about David, it is referring prophetically to Messiah, the seed of David. Hence, the term *nasiy*, or prince, is left off here in anticipation of Christ.

The second variation, that of the *vav*, or “And,” beginning verse 13 is explained by the lack of the term “prince” in verse 12. The “and” there acknowledges that an offering was made by Nahshon, who though the leader, was not acknowledged as such. The *vav* is the sixth number of the aleph-bet. Six is the number of man. Nahshon made his offering, but the title being left off looked forward to the greater Man who would lead the tribe and the congregation.

Even the ancient rabbis understood the *vav* points to Messiah. Although their commentaries are not the Bible, in this case, they are, like any other scholars’ comments, based on the Bible. In the Midrash Rabbah of Numbers, they looked at the *vav* as an anticipation of six righteous men who would come from Judah. Nahshon is the grandfather of Boaz, and Boaz is the grandfather of David. Thus David, who anticipates the coming Messiah, is sixth from Nahshon. Along with him, the sages list the four other righteous men listed in the Bible – Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah. They say the sixth to come would be Messiah. It is he who is the greater David. The way that they determine this is the same way we determine that Christ is the Lord; from Isaiah 11. There, the seven spirits of the Lord are named, but the first is the Spirit of the Lord. After that, six spirits would rest upon the Man, Messiah the Lord –

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
² The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. Isaiah 11:1, 2

The third variation, that of the two *vav*’s in the *atudim*, or male goats, of Judah and Issachar point to the Person of Messiah as well. As I said, the word comes from *athod* which signifies “destined” as in ready to become. The first of the two uses is in the male goat offering of Judah, which means Praise. The *vav* signifies Messiah destined to be the Praise of God for and among His people.

This explains the extra *vav* of the offering of Judah, which seems obvious because Messiah comes from Judah. But, it doesn’t explain the extra *vav* of Issachar’s offering. In this, we need to look at the meaning of the name of Issachar. It means, “He is wages.”

Thus, unlike the other ten tribes that have no *vav*, we see here that the Messiah was giving us a clue as to His mission. He is destined to be the payment which brings us peace with God, as seen in this peace offering which is made upon this very altar being dedicated.

There is no need for the *vav* in any other tribe's offering, because these two sum up the role of Messiah as is intended here. He is the Praise of God which brings peace to man, and He is the payment which brings peace with God, represented by the altar where these sacrifices are made. It looks to the cross of Calvary. It was a long set of verses to go through to make the point, but the point is made.

If nothing else from this very long passage, which we even cut short in both its reading and its analysis because of the repetition, I would hope that you have learned that nothing is superfluous in God's word. That which seems to make no sense, makes all kinds of sense when it is studied. Reading isn't study, but it is what you should do every day with this precious word. The study is what you should do with those who have the time to prepare the study. Here, that's my job. And in our time together, you can combine what you know from reading, with that which you learned from the study. In putting them together, you have a much fuller and more beautifully laid out picture of Christ. In the end, it is all about Him.

Closing Verse: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."* Ephesians 1:3-6

Next Week: Numbers 8:1-26 *Don't be anxious. Don't lose your nerve...* (Acceptable to Serve) (15th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

An Offering for the Altar

Now the leaders offered the dedication offering
For the altar when it was anointed
So the leaders offered their offering before the altar
They did this as they were so appointed

For the Lord said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering
One leader each day, for the dedication of the altar
— — —such shall be their proffering

And the one who offered his offering on the first day
Was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, from the tribe of Judah
— — —as the record does say

His offering was one silver platter
The weight of which was shekels one hundred and thirty
And one silver bowl of seventy shekels
According to the shekel of the sanctuary

Both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering
One gold pan of ten shekels, full of incense as well
One young bull, one ram, and one male lamb in its first year
— — —as a burnt offering
One kid of the goats as a sin offering, as the account does tell

And for the sacrifice of peace offerings
Two oxen, five rams, five male goats, not grown in a lab
And five male lambs in their first year
This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab

On the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar
Leader of Issachar
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Nethanel the son of Zuar

On the third day Eliab the son of Helon
Leader of the children of Zebulun
Presented an offering the same as before

This was the offering of Eliab the son of Helon

On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shedeur
Leader of the children of Reuben, for sure
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur

On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai
Leader of the children of Simeon, by and by
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai

On the sixth day Eliasaph the son of Deuel
Leader of the children of Gad, as the account does tell
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel

On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud
Leader of the children of Ephraim, so it is understood
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud

On the eighth day Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur
Leader of the children of Manasseh, for sure
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur

On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni
Leader of the children of Benjamin, as we see
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Abidan the son of Gideoni

On the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai
Leader of the children of Dan, by and by
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai

On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ocran
Leader of the children of Asher, as stated hereon

Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Pagiel the son of Ocran

On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan
Leader of the children of Naphtali
— — —-by the Lord his name was drawn
Presented an offering the same as before
This was the offering of Ahira the son of Enan

This was the dedication offering
For the altar from the leaders of Israel
When it was anointed
Twelve silver platters, twelve silver bowls
— — —-and twelve gold pans as the record does tell

Each silver platter weighed one hundred and thirty shekels
And each bowl shekels seventy
All the silver of the vessels weighed
— — —-two thousand four hundred shekels
According to the shekel of the sanctuary

The twelve gold pans full of incense weighed ten shekels apiece
According to the shekel of the sanctuary
All the gold of the pans weighed
Shekels one hundred and twenty

All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve young bulls
The rams twelve, the male lambs in their first year twelve, as well
With their grain offering
And the kids of the goats as a sin offering twelve
— — —-as the record does tell

And all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings
were twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty
— — —-all as duly appointed
And the lambs in their first year sixty
This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed

Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting

To speak with Him, the voice of One speaking to him he heard
From above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony
From between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him
— — —-thus He conveyed His word

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 8:1-26 (ACCEPTABLE TO SERVE)

Today's passage speaks of the purification of the Levites, readying them for service. There are several things they were required to do, and we will go through them as we go along. However, if you noticed, they were all externals. Sprinkling of water, shaving of hair, and washing of clothes. We'll see how these point to spiritual truths, but it is obvious, even before we start, that none of those things could make a person pure in the truest sense.

Monks of all religions do things like this. Muslims wash themselves in certain ways before praying. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to find any religion that doesn't perform some type of external ritual that doesn't really do anything to change the person internally. Were it not for the truths which point to Christ, it almost seems like it's all just an outward show without any real significance.

We're told later, in Hebrews, that the sacrifices of the Old Covenant didn't actually do what they were intended to do. After all, it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. But the people were not left without warnings that the externals needed to be met with internal conviction.

Further, as the Bible goes on, it is explicitly stated that things like circumcision of the body needed to be matched by circumcision of the heart. That is found as early as Deuteronomy 10. Eventually, the prophets started to really call out that things like rote sacrifices without holy living were useless, and even an abomination to the Lord. Were those things written just for Israel? Or are they written for us as well?

Text Verse: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* 2 Timothy 3:16, 17

Paul says that "All Scripture" is given to us as he then describes. But what was he writing about? There was no New Testament at that time. The only New Testament consisted of the letters of the apostles that had been written, but other than Peter elevating Paul's letters to the same level of authority as the rest of Scripture, the only Scripture that actually existed at the time is the body of writings we now call the Old Testament.

Numerous times the New Testament says, "It is written," or something comparable to that, when speaking of the Old Testament. Everything found there was to lead us to understand how we are to conduct ourselves now. That includes the idea of purification and holiness as is outlined there.

If we go through the motions of living an externally pious life, but don't match that up with a life that is morally pleasing to the Lord, we are far worse off than a person who lives a rather rugged life, but who desperately loves the Lord and mourns when he falls short. The difference between King David and the high priest Caiaphas is obvious.

The Levites were purified for service, and that service continued on for 1500 years, but during that time, they fell into the same error as everyone else. If you don't believe it, take time to read Ezekiel 44. What we need to do is to constantly evaluate ourselves in relation to that internal call for holiness that the Lord has given us. And we need to not assume that because someone is behind a pulpit, or wears a fancy set of garments, that they are holy. As soon as you start idolizing such a person, they will let you down.

Keep all things in their proper perspective, hold fast to what is sound, and understand that things, like we will see today, do nothing in making a person holy unless they have an internal change to accompany the rite through which they pass. In fact, as we read and look into these verses, keep reminding yourself that some of the same people who are being set apart for the ministry will be rebelling against Moses and Aaron, and thus against the Lord within the span of just a few weeks. Remember these things as we go on. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Arrangement of the Lamps (verses 1-4)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The census has been conducted, the camp has been laid out, the offerings have been presented, and now a new direction is forthcoming as evidenced by these words of verse 1. When the words of this section were actually spoken is unknown.

It could even be at the same time as verse 7:1 which spoke of the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle and had anointed it and everything in it. However, the placement of the words here has purpose. The gift offerings of the tribes have been made for the priest's use, and what follows will be the actual purification and dedication

of the Levites. In between these two events, the Lord places the instructions concerning Aaron's duties in relation to the menorah...

²“Speak to Aaron, and say to him, ‘When you arrange the lamps,

Moses is told to speak to Aaron. It is he who is to arrange the lamps. Aaron is the high priest, and the high priest was to be a type of Christ to come. The description for making the menorah is found in Exodus 25. The instructions for its care are found in Exodus 27. The first lighting of it was accomplished by Moses in Exodus 40:25. It could be that these instructions now were given to Moses prior to that. Or maybe they came later. Either way, the instruction that Aaron was to tend the lamps has already been given, but now come these directions concerning the lamp's arrangement. As this is so, one must ask, “Why place it here?”

An obvious answer would be that the camp is only now laid out in the shape of the cross. Thus it would be a reference to the light having been in the world, but that it was only seen for what it was at a specific time. If so, then that is what John is referring to concerning the Light, meaning Christ, coming into the world in John 1. The light had always shone in the darkness, but there is a time when the light came forth for all to see. Christ Jesus is our High Priest, and His work of illumination to even the darkest parts is being pictured by the instructions now presented to Aaron.

^{2 (con't)} the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand.”

b'ha-alotekha eth hanerot – the words say, “In causing the lamps to rise.” The meaning is that when the lamps are lit and the light shines, then they are to shine *el mul pene ha'menorah yairu shivat hanerot* – over-against face the menorah shall shine seven the lamps. The Hebrew is complicated and translations vary.

Exodus specified that the menorah was to be on the south side of the tabernacle, across from the table of showbread. Further, they were to give light in front of it, meaning towards the north. These instructions are not just a repetition, but they are more specific in how they are to be arranged. They are to cast light towards the north where the table of showbread was.

However, being in the south, it would illuminate from east to west as well as to the north. But facing the north where the table was, there would be no darkness there, it would be fully illuminated. Christ is the Bread of life. It is through His death that we partake of Him. Thus, the layout of the camp as a cross, showing how Christ died, is the

sign. The menorah, lighting up the north then pictures the seven-fold illumination of Christ, meaning the seven Spirits of God, shining even in the darkest places, even to death itself, and which the darkness cannot overcome, as stated in John 1:5.

³ And Aaron did so; he arranged the lamps to face toward the front of the lampstand, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Some scholars say that this actually goes back to the initial lighting and care of the lamp in Exodus 40. However, Aaron was not yet ordained to conduct those duties. It was Moses who originally lit them. After his ordination, Aaron assumed this responsibility. But again, regardless as to when Moses instructed Aaron, this is noted now because of the logical progression of thought which has been seen in the layout of the camp, the purification of it, the acceptance of the offerings, and so on. Each step, whether chronological or not, is purposeful as to where it is placed in the narrative. Aaron, as the high priest, is typical of Christ who performs all of these things.

⁴ Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold; from its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work. According to the pattern which the Lord had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

The details of this were given in Exodus 25. The pictures of Christ which it reveals are many. The repetition of what has already been stated there is to remind us of that, and to consider it in light of what Israel represents. They were to be a light to the world. They are being prepared for their journey to the land of promise. Almost everything is set. And so now, prior to the purification of the Levites – those who minister between the high priest and the people – the description of the menorah is once again given. The light of Christ, given by God’s High Priest, is to illuminate even the darkest places. It is reflective of what is quoted by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:47 –

“I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,
That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.” Acts 13:47

*The purest of gold, fit for a King
Was used to make a seven-branch lampstand
Seeing its beauty makes my heart sing
The workmanship marvelous; stunning and grand*

*Every detail is so beautiful, each knob and flower
The glistening of the branches as they catch the light*

*It shines in the dark for hour after hour
Illuminating the holy place throughout the night*

*The glory of God is seen in each detail
Every branch speaks out a marvelous story
And in what it pictures, nothing will fail
As the Lord reveals to us His unending glory*

II. The Purification of the Levites (verses 5-26)

⁵ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

With the matter of verses 1-4 established, the narrative returns to the Levites. In Chapters 3-5, they were called, their genealogies were recorded, they were dedicated in place of the first born, they were counted, and they had their duties assigned. Now they are to be purified and ordained for their service. There is a difference here and in that of Leviticus 8. The priests were consecrated for their service. Here, the Levites are purified, but they are not consecrated.

If we were to look at the reason for this following the previous passage about the menorah, it is to show that Christ is the One who is the Light, and through Him, the Spirit of God is given, just as the job of lighting the lamp belonged to Aaron. However, the Levites are given to accomplish the other, non-priestly duties. This is similar to how ministers in the church stand before the Lord and are to do those duties as He commands them in His word.

⁶ “Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them *ceremonially*.

In Exodus 29:1, the term used was *qadash*, or consecrate, the priests. Here the word *taher*, or purify, is used of the Levites. The law of the firstborn being dedicated to the Lord was traded for the calling of the Levites to be so dedicated.

⁷ Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purification on them, and let them shave all their body, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

There are three things which were to be accomplished in the purification of the Levites. The first is to sprinkle the *me khatat*, or “sin water,” on them. The speculation on what this water is, or where it comes from is long and detailed. It is probably not the *me nidah*

khatat, or water of separation, described in Numbers 19. That water was specifically intended to purify the sin of those who had been defiled by a dead body. This water symbolically purifies the Levites from sin, and so it was probably taken from the bronze laver. But this is also only speculation. As the Bible doesn't explain its source, we cannot be dogmatic about it.

Secondly, the Levites were to "shave all their body." They were to use a razor over *kal basar*, or "all *the* flesh." Hair in the Bible signifies awareness. Also, the flesh is that which is opposed to the spirit. As this is a cleansing from sin, it is symbolic of removing all awareness of sin from oneself in order to live in the Spirit.

And thirdly, they were to wash their clothes. It is an external act, signifying purification. These rites picture the work of Christ. One example of this is recorded in the book of Hebrews where it says –

“...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.” Hebrews 10:22, 23

The washing of the garments is an emblem of the internal conversion of a person. It symbolizes a sinless nature because of the work of Christ. On the last page of the Bible we read –

“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” Revelation 22:14

This symbolic purification of the Levites will be more perfectly realized in the millennial reign when there will again be offerings in Judah and Jerusalem. This more perfect purification is prophesied in Malachi 3 –

“But who can endure the day of His coming?
And who can stand when He appears?
For He *is* like a refiner's fire
And like launderers' soap.
³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;
He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,
That they may offer to the Lord

An offering in righteousness.

⁴ “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem
Will be pleasant to the Lord,
As in the days of old,
As in former years.” Malachi 3:2-4

⁸ Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you shall take another young bull as a sin offering.

This is the same offering that was required for various sacrifices in Leviticus, a *par ben baqar*, or “bull, son of oxen.” *Par* comes from *parar*, meaning to defeat. *Baqar* means to inquire or seek out. It pictures Christ who defeated the devil, seeking out those He would redeem. Along with that was to be a grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil. This pictures the purity of Christ being completely filled with the Spirit. These would be for a burnt offering. A second young bull would be brought forward for a sin offering. It is the same sin offering required for the whole congregation in Leviticus 4:14. As the Levites stand in the stead of the firstborn, and as the firstborn represents the family, the same sin offering is made as for that of sin by the whole congregation.

⁹ And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel.

It would be impossible for 22300 Levites to stand within the confines of the sanctuary. The size of the sanctuary is about 1250 square yards. Five people per square yard, which would be hugely cramped, would be 6250 people. And that doesn't even take into consideration the tent of meeting or any other articles in the courtyard. At best, you could get maybe 1000 in there, and that would still be cramped. It would further be impossible for all 2-3 million of the people to gather at the area immediately in front of it. Therefore, it must be assumed that all of the Levites are standing outside of the sanctuary with their leaders representing them inside, and the leaders of the tribes of Israel also standing in there as the representatives of the whole congregation. From there...

¹⁰ So you shall bring the Levites before the Lord, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites;

With those designated to represent the others, there is then the laying on of the hands. In this act, the representatives of the people are symbolically transferring the congregation's obligation of dedicating their firstborn to the Levites. From this time on,

the Levites would be so dedicated to the service of the Lord. They are given over wholly to the priests as the people's representatives. They are, in essence, a living sacrifice to the Lord.

¹¹ and Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord *like* a wave offering from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the Lord.

Obviously, Aaron didn't pick up the Levites and wave them, and based on the numbers, it is obvious this was not done to every Levite individually. As there are 1440 minutes in a day, if you were to wave 5 in a minute, it would take over 3 days, night and day without bathroom breaks, to do them all. What most likely happened, is that he pointed at those representing the whole, and then he made the motion that would be made in a wave offering. The waving is "before," or "in the face of," the Lord. It was an acknowledgment of the omnipresence of His vision. In this waving, the Levites are symbolically shaken loose from the congregation, and henceforth devoted to the service of the Lord, under Aaron.

¹² Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the Lord, to make atonement for the Levites.

Now, with the Levites detached from the congregation, and attached to the service of the Lord, their first act is to offer their offerings for atonement. This is accomplished now by their own laying on of hands. The sin offering acknowledges and pleads for atonement of their sin, making them acceptable for service. The burnt offering pictures the giving of their lives and their abilities wholly over to the Lord. By going verse by verse, the logical and orderly procession of thoughts becomes clear. One thing needs to be done before the next, and one thing then follows after another.

¹³ "And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then offer them *like* a wave offering to the Lord.

This is not a second waving, but it describes more fully what is occurring. The Levites are first stood before Aaron and his sons when they are offered to the Lord. In other words, they are being separated from the people, taken in place of the firstborn, and offered to the Lord, but as servants to the priesthood. The lesser in position is stood before the greater. The reason for all of this is...

14 Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.

The whole purpose of the rite is that of separation and attachment. The Levites are to be separated from the greater body of the congregation, and they are to be attached to the Lord. If one were to translate this verse using the meaning of Levi, which is “Attached,” its intent actually comes through – “Thus you shall separate the Attached from among the children of Israel, and the Attached shall be Mine; they shall be attached to Me.”

15 After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting.

In saying, “go in to serve the tent of meeting,” it means for the service of the tent of meeting. The Levites were not authorized to go into either the holy place or the most holy place, but were to remain in the courtyard and assist the priests as needed. They were also responsible for taking down, and setting up, the entire sanctuary, including the tent of meeting and tabernacle. And, they were designated to carry the most holy objects once they were covered by the priests.

15 (con’t) So you shall cleanse them and offer them *like* a wave offering.

The words are to be taken in the past tense. In other words, they are to do their service after they have been cleansed and waved.

16 For they *are* wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel.

If the whole purpose of the rites is explained in verse 14, the explanation for that is given in this verse. The firstborn was claimed by the Lord in Exodus 13:2, and the exchange for the Levites was stated in Numbers 3:12. The emphatic words of verse 3:9, *netunim netunim hemah lo*, or “given, given to him” (meaning Aaron) are repeated here as *netumin netunim hemah li*, or “given, given wholly to Me.” The claim on the firstborn is released for the males of Israel, and an absolute claim on the Levites is now enacted by the Lord. That is further explained with...

17 For all the firstborn among the children of Israel *are* Mine, *both* man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself.

The words here are exceedingly similar to Numbers 3:13. The Lord is repeating that the firstborn of both man and beast were claimed by Him. The plague upon the firstborn came upon Egypt. The only thing that saved the firstborn was the sign of the blood. Because the Lord spared them, they were claimed as His from that time on. The firstborn of Levi was then exchanged for the firstborn of Israel, both man and beast. However, the firstborn of Levi was a permanent release. The firstborn of the beasts was a one time release to level the playing field. After that initial granting of the exchange of firstborn animals, each new firstborn was still to be offered to the Lord. What will happen to the firstborn of the animals is first explained Numbers 18, and then that is further defined in Deuteronomy, but in short, they were to be redeemed, if a man or an unclean animal. Or, they were to be set apart as holy if a clean animal. When set apart as holy, they were to be eaten by the people at their annual feasts. Yes, like the first and second-year tithes, the people ate their firstborn clean animals in celebration to the Lord.

18 I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel.

He has given up the claim on the firstborn, and made a permanent claim on the Levites. However, as noted in the previous verse, the firstborn of Israel would still need to be redeemed. That was by payment of five shekels of silver, because all firstborn were considered holy to the Lord.

19 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel,

The words, “as a gift,” are not right. It is a plural verb. It should say something like, “And I have given the Levites – assignments to Aaron and to his sons...” He has made a claim on them, and they are His. However, He has given them to Aaron and his sons for assisting in their work.

This is similar to the land of Israel, of which the Lord says “the land is Mine” (Leviticus 25:23, etc). It is His. However, He gave it to Israel for use. It is not a gift, as if they have a right to do whatever they want with it. When they are obedient, they may live there and use it. When they are not, they may not live there or use it. Similarly, the duties of the Levites are for assistance of the priesthood and the people, but they are ultimately for the Lord.

19 (con’t) to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting,

This means that they are to do the work instead of the children of Israel. Without having called the Levites to service, the duties they would do would have gone to the people, especially the firstborn of each family. In calling the Levites to service, the people would no longer be under this obligation. And there was a benefit to this...

¹⁹ (con't) **and to make atonement for the children of Israel,**

The idea of atonement here is not of sacrificial offerings. That was the priests' duty. Rather, the type of atonement being spoken of here is the turning away of wrath in the performance of one's duties. It is seen in a marvelous parallel passage later in Numbers—

““Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ¹¹ “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. ¹² Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ¹³ and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’”” (25:10-13)

Phinehas defended the honor of the Lord when he ran a spear through a man and a woman who were doing what they shouldn't be doing. In that, he turned back the wrath of the Lord, covering over that which was not right. The Levites were authorized to come near the sanctuary and assist the priest. No other person could come near unless they came with an offering. The Levites thus turned back the wrath of the Lord in the sense that they performed services which would incur wrath for any non-authorized commoner. This continues to be explained with...

¹⁹ (con't) **that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary.”**

This word used here, *negeph*, or plague, is only used seven times in the Bible and all are in relation to the people of Israel. The first was in relation to the blood of the lamb saving the firstborn. The second was in relation to the redemption money for the firstborn. Now it is used in relation to the Levites in place of the firstborn. They had replaced them and are considered purified for the tasks of service. If the people approached unlawfully or incorrectly, the plague would result. The final time *negeph* is used is in Isaiah 8 where it is ascribed directly to the Lord in relation to the people of Israel –

“He will be as a sanctuary,
But a stone of **stumbling** and a rock of offense
To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Isaiah 8:14

That verse from Isaiah is then used by Paul when speaking of Christ in Romans 9, and by Peter – also speaking of Christ – in 1 Peter 2. In essence, Christ became the very plague upon Israel that the blood of the lamb, the ransom money, and the Levite was to protect them from. In their rejection of Him, they rejected what these types and shadows only pictured. It is a terrible mistake to underestimate and thus reject God’s provision in Christ.

If you have noticed, the term “children of Israel” has been used five times in this single verse. Five, being the number of grace, is surely used here to show that what God has done in the selection and appointment of the Levites is intended as an act of grace among the people. Its very intent is to atone for them and spare them from inevitable plague.

²⁰ Thus Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel did to the Levites; according to all that the Lord commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the children of Israel did to them.

Moses and Aaron performed what they were told to perform, but the children of Israel likewise did what they were asked to do. Again, this certainly must mean the leaders of the tribes. The impossibility of the entire congregation gathering in front of the tent of meeting, and all of the Levites being inside the sanctuary for ordination, necessitates that certain designated representatives were chosen as emblematic of the whole. Understanding this, what was said to be done was, in fact, accomplished.

²¹ And the Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes;

This was in accord with verses 6 & 7. As instructed, so they did. The symbolism was explained there and with all of the information you’ve gotten in the subsequent verses up till now, it is best that you go home and reread the entire sermon. In this, the parts that have leaked out will return in clarity as to why they were specified.

^{21 (con’t)} then Aaron presented them *like* a wave offering before the Lord,

This is in obedience to verses 11 and 13. As instructed, so it was accomplished.

²¹ (con't) **and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them.**

This is in accord with verse 12. As instructed, so Aaron performed. It is rather amazing to think that after all of the details concerning the Levites so far in the book of Numbers, and especially in several chapters which dealt almost solely with them, that they still needed atonement apart from the regular atonement of the people. It should tell all of us that we may be the most qualified people in the world, we may be of the most noble lineage of all, we may perform rituals of purification greater than anyone else on the planet, and yet without atonement, we are wholly unacceptable to enter into the presence and service of the Lord. However, for the Levites these things are now all completed, and so something new begins...

²² **After that the Levites went in to do their work in the tabernacle of meeting before Aaron and his sons;**

Again as before, the Levites could not enter the tent of meeting. However, the brazen altar, of which they would assist at, is directly connected to the tabernacle. The performance of their duties there would be considered as part of the duties of the tent of meeting. Further, they were assigned to the duties of taking it down, transporting it, and then putting it up again. From this time on, they are now set apart to the Lord and for the service of the priesthood.

²² (con't) **as the Lord commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them.**

This is a standard note of obedience. Directives are given, the action is taken, and then a note of completion of the work, as it was commanded, is then provided. It is given time and again to show that nothing required of the Lord was allowed to fall. As John Gill says, [he] "exactly observed every punctilio of it and complied with it." A+ for Moses.

²³ **Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,**

Now a supplementary, but new, section is introduced. It is supplementary to that concerning the Levites, but it is new in what it specifies concerning the ages authorized to serve and what they could do in that service.

²⁴ **"This is what *pertains* to the Levites: From twenty-five years old and above one may enter to perform service in the work of the tabernacle of meeting;**

This verse does cause a perceived conflict with verse 4:3 which said, “from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.” However, there is no conflict between the two. First, the census was for the set purpose of determining the *tsava*, or hosts, prepared for war. In other words, those who would perform the function of the honor guard of the Lord. Secondly, they were tasked with the *melakah*, or work of the tent of meeting. That would certainly include the honor of the movement of the sanctuary.

Here in this verse, those 25 and above would enter into the *tsavah ba’avodah*, or ‘warfare in the service’ of the tent of meeting. What is probably being said then is that this pertains to the time when Israel arrives in Canaan. It was actually anticipated to be in less than a couple of months. Until they arrived, the census was for those who were to perform functions including the transport of the sanctuary. Once in Canaan, that would only happen under rare circumstances. In such a case, those twenty-five and above could serve in the lighter service duties until thirty when they would join into the full labors required of Levites.

Later in 1 Chronicles, David will assign Levites for service at the temple at twenty years of age. That was probably because the Levites were spread out throughout Israel, and there was a need for more Levites to assist with the increasing wealth and numbers of people in the kingdom. The age assigned by David continued from that point on, and even after the exile. Sergio while looking at the numbers of these three instances noted that they form a numeric chiasm –

Start at age 30 = serve 20 (4:3)

Start at age 25 = serve 25 (8:24)

Start at age 20 = serve 30 (1 Chronicles 23:24)

²⁵ and at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more.

Regardless of the age of starting the duties, the service of the Levites was to end at fifty. There are commentaries, some from Jewish sources, that state that this meant only in the service concerning breaking down, moving, and putting back up the tent of meeting. This doesn’t agree with that. It clearly says that they are to turn from serving in the *tsavah*, or Lord’s guard, and they were to no longer to serve. Regardless of what Israel actually did, the law is clear – work until fifty and then cease performing work any longer. However...

²⁶ (fin) **They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they *themselves* shall do no work. Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties.”**

Here is a clear distinction between the heavy work of the service and the *mishmeret*, or charge of the tent of meeting. They could perform the watch of the Lord, ensuring all went well and ministering in this capacity with their brothers, but they were to no longer perform any of the heavier, burdensome tasks.

EW Bullinger defines the number fifty as that of “deliverance and rest following on as the result of the perfect consummation of time.” That suits quite well with the concept of Levites retiring at that age. As I explained in a previous sermon, everything relating to the temple and the service, including the temple itself, the sacrificial system at the temple, the duties within the temple, the person of Moses and all he did, Aaron the High Priest and His sons, and also the Levites, all of it pictures the Person and work of Christ. As standing in place of the firstborn, the Levites performed the functions of the firstborn, just as Christ does in reality.

In the New Testament, the term “firstborn” is used nine times. Seven of those are in relation to Christ in one way or another. In this capacity, Christ is the One who performs all of the duties that would have been accomplished by the Levites who were taken in place of the firstborn.

It is true that in some ways, they tended to things between the people and the priests in somewhat of a fashion as a minister does today, and scholars often point that fact out. But even those duties are given as gifts of ministry by the Lord. Our ability to accomplish those things is only because He has enabled us to do so.

In the end, and despite the complexity of passages like today’s, if we just keep telling ourselves that what we are seeing here is merely a snapshot of how God tends to us through Christ, it all makes much more sense. But it also should alert us to the fact that God is holy and He expects us to be holy. The Levites were set apart to, as we saw, make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among them. God is holy. To fail in treating Him as such, consequences were sure to come. The people could go so far, but no further. The Levites could go so far and no further. The priests below Aaron could go so far and no further. And even Aaron was limited in his duties. Holiness is something we must be on guard to maintain.

As Hebrews 12:14 says, “Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” Verses like that shouldn’t scare you though. The Lord calls us to holiness because He has made us holy. We are holy *because* of Christ, and therefore we will see the Lord. However, it is our responsibility to pursue that which we possess. To squander that is to squander the joy we can possess in this life as we live in the presence of God, and in anticipation of a more perfect life in the presence of God.

In your calling, whatever it is, do it in love always, in peace towards all, and with a sense of holiness that you are the Lord’s, and He has called you to such. In this, you will prosper in the work of your hands, and in the walk set before you.

Closing Verse: *Bless the Lord, O house of Israel!*

Bless the Lord, O house of Aaron!

²⁰ *Bless the Lord, O house of Levi!*

You who fear the Lord, bless the Lord!

²¹ *Blessed be the Lord out of Zion,*

Who dwells in Jerusalem!

Praise the Lord! Psalm 135:19-21

Next Week: Numbers 9:1-14 If you miss it the first time, there are provisions for you as a holdover... (The Lord’s Passover) (16th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Acceptable to Serve

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

These are the words He was then relaying

“Speak to Aaron, and say to him

‘When you arrange the lamps, so you shall do

The seven lamps shall give light

In front of the lampstand, as I am instructing you

And Aaron did so

He arranged the lamps to face

Toward the front of the lampstand
As the Lord commanded Moses, in that very place

Now this workmanship of the lampstand was hammered gold
From its shaft to its flowers it was hammered work
According to the pattern which the Lord had shown Moses
So he made the lampstand; no detail did he shirk

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
“Take the Levites from among the children of Israel
And cleanse them ceremonially
Do these as to you I now tell

Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them:
Sprinkle on them water of purification, so I mean
And let them shave all their body
And let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean

Then let them take a young bull
So you shall do this thing
With its grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil
And you shall take another young bull as a sin offering

And you shall bring the Levites
Before the tabernacle of meeting, so to you I tell
And you shall gather together the whole congregation
Of the children of Israel

So you shall bring the Levites before the Lord
And the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites
———according to My word

And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord
Like a wave offering from the children of Israel
That they may perform the work of the Lord
Do this things as to you I now tell

Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls
And you shall offer one as a sin offering

And the other as a burnt offering to the Lord
To make atonement for the Levites, so you shall do this thing

“And you shall stand the Levites
According to this word
Before Aaron and his sons
And then offer them like a wave offering to the Lord

Thus you shall separate the Levites
From among the children of Israel
And the Levites shall be Mine
To tend to their duties in this sanctuary in which I dwell

After that the Levites shall go in
To service the tabernacle of meeting
So you shall cleanse them and offer them like a wave offering
These tasks I have assigned you shall be completing

For they are wholly given to Me
From among the children of Israel as to you I now tell
I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb
The firstborn of all the children of Israel
(These four lines were left out of the spoken sermon by accident)

For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine
Both man and beast, as to you I have described
On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt
I them to Myself sanctified

I have taken the Levites, this group of personnel
Instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel

And I have given the Levites as a gift
To Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel
To do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting
And to make atonement for the children of Israel; so to you I tell

That there be no plague among the children of Israel
— — — such shall not be

When the children of Israel come near the sanctuary

Thus Moses and Aaron and all the congregation
Of the children of Israel did to the Levites, as the Lord bid
According to all that the Lord commanded Moses
Concerning the Levites, so the children of Israel to them did

And the Levites purified themselves
And washed their clothes, through and through
Then Aaron presented them like a wave offering before the Lord
And Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them
———-as he was told to do

After that the Levites went in to do their work
In the tabernacle of meeting before Aaron and his sons, so they did
As the Lord commanded Moses concerning the Levites
So they did to them, according to what the Lord to them bid

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These words He was then relaying

“This is what pertains to the Levites:
From twenty-five years old and above, as directed by Me
One may enter to perform service
In the work of the tabernacle of meeting, so shall it be

And at the age of fifty years
They must cease this work from performing
And shall work no more
To this directive they shall be conforming

They may minister with their brethren
In the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs as to you I say
But they themselves shall do no work
Thus you shall do to the Levites regarding their duties
———-as I instruct you today

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You

Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 9:1-14 (THE LORD'S PASSOVER)

The words of today's passage show both a sense of responding to the human condition in mercy, and also a sense of sternness in response to the human condition as well. We will see this as we go along. There is a rigidity in the law which shouts out to us to be careful, lest we fall in to condemnation. The lesson of the law is that we dare not push the Lord's goodness and find that we have overstepped boundaries which He will not forgive.

If a person were to purposefully neglect the observance of the Lord's Passover, they were to be cut off from their people. That is clear, and the penalty is precise and fixed. But is that then end of the story? Or is there a condition in God which, when properly pursued, will find even the disobedient obtaining grace and mercy?

The law is written, the requirements are set, and that is that. Any infraction or failure to meet the written code means getting whacked. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. STOP AND READ 2 Chronicles 30:1-20.

Text Verse: *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Ephesians 1:7*

Hell-fire preaching usually has one of two main effects – 1) It will lead a person to the Lord out of fear of being lost, but it will turn that person into a staunch legalist, or 2) it will simply turn the listener further away from the Lord when they see that God is a vengeful ogre who just wants to torment those who won't yield to His rules and demands.

Both of those options are unsound. God is a God of fixed rules, but God is the God who sent Jesus Christ to save sinners, even from those fixed rules. Hezekiah and those with him failed to observe the Passover at its appointed time. They should have been whacked. But Hezekiah, and those who were willing, petitioned the Lord for a second chance, an undeserved one at that. And the Lord heard them, and the Lord healed them. When you get fearful about the hand of God coming down on you too heavily, just turn your heart to Him and appeal to Him based on His great love and mercy which is found in the giving of His Son. When You do this, there is nothing in heaven or earth that can keep You from His good and tender mercy. Please remember this as you contemplate the rigidity of the law which is set against us. It's all to be found in His superior word.

And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Keeping the Passover at It's Appointed Time (verses 1-5)

¹Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai,

The introductory words of this section vary from the usual opening words which simply say, "Now the Lord spoke to Moses." This more closely matches the opening words of the Book of Numbers. It gives the name of the speaker, meaning the Lord (Yehovah), it gives the addressee, Moses, and it gives the location – *b'midbar sinay*, or "in the wilderness of Sinai." One must ask, "Why has the Lord lengthened this introductory statement in this way?" In questioning the text, one will then pay attention to the surrounding text. In this case, the very next words explain the emphasis...

^{1 (con't)} in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

Isn't that odd? "In the first month of the second year." The book of Numbers began with—

"Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first *day* of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt..." Numbers 1:1

That means that the words spoken here actually precede every chronological thing that has been stated so far in Numbers. Further, the events of Exodus 40, which close out that book, are said to have occurred on a specific day. Exodus 40:17 says –

"And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was raised up." Exodus 40:17

Therefore, the events which are now recorded in Numbers 9 occur sometime during the events of the book of Leviticus, between the first day of the first month and the fourteenth day of the first month. This is because the Passover, which will next be referred to, occurs on the fourteenth of the first month.

What makes this more difficult to understand is that no specific day is mentioned in this verse. It simply says, "in the first month." Had the Lord given the day this was spoken,

the entire thought would have been less obscure. However, He chose to only mention that it is “in the first month.” Normally though, this would mean the first day of the month.

It then seems like an odd placement for Chapter 9 of Numbers, and some scholars, such as Adam Clarke, go into great detail about how such an error could have taken place. Others neglect the basic reasoning of the Lord for placing the account here by simply questioning, but not answering, why it is so placed. Instead of neglecting the context, though, John Lange provides a reasonable explanation for the placement of the passage—

“The present section gives us very plain evidence that all the representations of the book of Numbers up to this point are devoted to the equipment of the army of God for its military expedition. For instance, in respect to time, this regulation concerning the celebration of the Passover by such as were become unclean reaches very far back beyond the fourteenth day of the first month. But it is placed in this connection because here it treats of the completeness of the celebration of the Passover by the entire army of God, and because those who were unclean and those on journeys would be absent at the legal period. This gap must also at length be filled up. The chief stress is thus on the Little Passover.”

The nice thing about John Lange is that he takes the reliability of God having preserved His word, both in intent and in order, as an axiom. He then reasons, “Because this is so, let us figure out why He has placed the passage where it is.” In other words, he follows the primary rule of hermeneutics and looks at the passage *in context*. From that context, the reason for its placement will likely present itself.

And the context is that a second, little, Passover is to be held a month after the first. This Little Passover occurs after the events of the previous chapters, but before the hosts of Israel depart Sinai and towards the Land of Promise, Canaan. And so, understanding that these words are exactly where they should be, and that the Lord is instructing the people on a matter which will then pertain to all of the people of God, He continues his words to Moses...

²“Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time.

Remembering that these words precede the events so far in Numbers, and that we are going back to a previous date in time which is between the first and fourteenth day of the preceding month, the Lord had said this to Moses. In essence, “OK Moses, the time

for the Passover is coming, and you are to be sure to observe it when that day arrives.” The reason why He is doing this is because of what it says at the giving of the first Passover while they were still in Egypt –

“And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. ²⁵ It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service.” Exodus 12:24, 25

The people had been told that when they entered Canaan, they were to observe the annual Passover feast. However, they had not yet entered Canaan. They were still in the desert, and the time of the Passover had arrived. Were they to observe it or not? The delay in entering Canaan was necessary, but they were not in Canaan. To ensure that the feast was to be understood as one which was not limited to entry into Canaan, but was an annual marker to be celebrated despite that, the Lord speaks out these words.

Some scholars disagree that this is the reason for the Lord’s instructions to Moses about the Passover. They instead state that it is because with the sanctuary now standing, the sacrifice of the Passover was to be in accord with the rules of sacrifice at the sanctuary rather than at individual homes.

This is true, and all sacrifices were to be conducted in this way. The blood of the sacrifice was to be splashed on the altar, not put on the entrance to the people’s homes as when in Egypt. However, the primary purpose must be that the Passover was to be observed. The details of how to observe it are secondary to the necessity to do so. And so the Lord now provides these words...

³ On the fourteenth day of this month,

Nothing is said about taking the lamb on the tenth of the month, as was required in the first Passover. There was a specific reason for doing that on the first Passover which was because of the plague of darkness which would cover Egypt for three days. In fact, there are four things which occurred in the original Passover which would no longer be repeated by the people.

The first was eating the lamb in their houses dispersed throughout Goshen. They were now gone from Egypt. The second is taking the lamb on the tenth day of the month. The third was striking the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of the houses. And finally, the eating of the Passover in haste. The feast was now to be an observance of what had occurred. The Destroyer would no longer come, the people would no longer

depart their homes, and so on. Therefore, there would be these changes to what occurred one year earlier.

³ (con't) **at twilight,**

The Hebrew says *ben ha'arbayim*, or "between the evenings." It seems like a perplexing phrase, but it is one that is based on biblical time. In the Bible, a day is divided into "evening" and "morning." Thus there are actually two evenings to be reckoned. The first began after twelve and runs through until sunset.

The second evening begins at sunset and continues till night, meaning the whole time of twilight. This would, therefore, be between twelve o'clock and the termination of twilight. Between the evenings then is a phrase which allows for the three o'clock sacrifices at the temple to be considered as the evening sacrifice even though to us it would be considered an afternoon sacrifice.

It is a phrase used only eleven times in the Bible and it always points to the timing of the death of Christ, which the gospels record as three o'clock in the afternoon. It is at this time of day, meaning "between the evenings" that the Lord says...

³ (con't) **you shall keep it at its appointed time.**

The word for "appointed time" is *moed*. It is the same word used when speaking of the tent of meeting – *ohel moed*. It signifies an appointed time, or a meeting. In the words, "appointed time," in this verse there is surely a reference to both the day and the time of day. On the fourteenth of the month, at the time between the evenings and on that day, there is to be an appointed time; a meeting. It is a fixed time which points to the work of Christ, and thus to maintain the imagery, the details were to be carefully adhered to. It was on this day and at this time that...

³ (con't) **According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it."**

The words here include all of the required details of Exodus 12, where the Passover was first instituted. However, it would also include the details of sacrifice for such an animal which are recorded in Leviticus, including the splashing of the blood upon the altar. A problem arises here simply because of the number of people in the camp, and the amount of time it would take to sacrifice all of those lambs between the evenings. This is especially so because there are only three priests at this time, Aaron and his two surviving sons.

There are a few things to consider. The Passover was mandatory, and the Lord would not have mandated something the priests could not accomplish. Therefore, we can assume that the people probably slaughtered their own lambs and brought the blood to the priests. The Levites have not yet, at this time in the chronology of events, been selected to assist the priests.

Secondly, there may still be a mixed multitude, not yet reckoned as native Israelites. So not all counted in the census would partake of the Passover because no uncircumcised person could do so according to the original instructions given in Exodus 12 –

“And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. ⁴⁹One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”

-Exodus 12:48, 49

Though the census is future to the narrative now, the numbers do not change. As was seen in Numbers 3, there were 22,273 firstborn of Israel recorded. If one were to figure on large households of 10 for each firstborn, which would be a huge exaggeration, that would equal 222,730 people. Then add in the 22,300 Levites with their families of ten each, and you would have a total of 445,730 people. If one lamb fed 10 people, that would be 44,573 lambs. If one fed 20, that would be 22,287 lambs. And this is figuring very high on family size.

The number is completely manageable when taken in this light. In fact, Josephus records that during temple times, one year 256,500 paschal lambs were sacrificed. The Passover would have been handled as the Lord required, and without the difficulty some scholars attempt to find.

⁴ So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover.

This verse confirms the supposition that the primary purpose of the Lord’s words is to ensure that the people knew the Passover was to be observed, even though they were not in Canaan. The necessity of holding the rite is the preeminent reason for the command. How it should be conducted is secondary. This same thought continues to be seen, even into the next words...

⁵ And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai;

The record is specifically showing the event (the Passover), the day (the fourteenth of the first month), the time (between the evenings), and also the location (the Wilderness of Sinai) were all kept according to the word of the Lord. This is the primary reason, and it was given as a memorial which would look forward to the coming Christ. Each word looks forward to Him. He is our Passover Lamb; He was crucified on the fourteenth day of the first month. He died between the evenings, and his crown was woven from thorns, represented by Sinai. The word Sin from which Sinai is derived means “thorn,” as in a thorn bush. The name Sinai means “Bush of the Lord.” The people’s observance of this feast looked forward to the coming of Messiah and the true redemption found in Him.

What is curious is that only the Passover, and not the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is mentioned. However, for the context of instituting the Little Passover, the words now are given. It is probable that Unleavened Bread was observed, but the issue of this chapter is “What happens if I miss the Passover.” Because of that, only the Passover is mentioned. And it was conducted...

^{5 (con’t)} **according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did.**

It is certain that many details of the Passover, and how it was conducted, have been left out. However, the issue at hand deals with what lies ahead in the coming verses. Regardless of the details, we don’t have, we do have the statement that the people did as expected, and they observed the Passover at its proper time. From here, there is speculation that the Passover was not celebrated again during the entire time of the wilderness wanderings. The reason for this is found first in verses already read from Exodus –

And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. ⁴⁹ One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”

-Exodus 12:48, 49

No uncircumcised person could partake of the Passover. But this is recorded in Joshua 5, just days after crossing the Jordan –

“At that time the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time.’ ³ So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. ⁴ And

this *is* the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt *who were* males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. ⁵ For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.” Joshua 5:2-5

Just a few verses later it says –

“Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho.” Joshua 5:10

Jewish tradition says that no Passover was held because of this. However, this dismisses the fact that some of the people twenty and above who were circumcised remained alive, even until the last year before crossing the Jordan. Further, everyone nineteen and below who were born before the Exodus, and who would enter into Canaan with Joshua, were all circumcised. It is those who were born in the wilderness that were not circumcised. The reason for that will be addressed when we get to Joshua 5 hopefully around early to mid 2022. Until then, there is no reason to assume that those who were brought out of Egypt, and who were circumcised, didn't observe the Passover.

*In judgment I will pass through the land
I will destroy those who remain at war with Me
In My anger, I will strike with My mighty hand
A crushing blow for all the world to see*

*But there is also mercy for those who pay heed
I will not strike those who have faith in My word
When I see the blood, then it is agreed
That I will extend mercy, even I the Lord*

*Their judgment came in a Substitute
An innocent Lamb for them has died
My righteousness to them I will impute
For to their hearts, the Lamb's blood they have applied*

II. The Little Passover (verses 6-14)

⁶ Now there were *certain* men who were defiled by a human corpse,

It is believed that these men were Mishael and Elzaphan who had carried out the bodies of Aaron's sons when they died before the Lord. As it was during their ordination, their deaths could not have happened before the eighth of the month. The Passover is on the fourteenth, and so if defilement lasted seven days, they could not eat the Passover.

Leviticus 21:1 shows that touching a dead person would bring defilement. That referred to the priests, but the principle must be true for anyone. However, there is nothing recorded which says how long that defilement would last. For this reason, it is assumed that the law of purification for that very purpose, which is found in Numbers 19, has already been given, and the people were aware of it. Whether correct or not, they are considered defiled. Thus...

^{6 (con't)} **so that they could not keep the Passover on that day;**

According to Leviticus 7:1, defilement meant that a person could not participate in a sacrificial meal, specifically a peace offering. This appears to extend to the Passover, and therefore, a defiled person would be excluded. No matter what, the people were unclean, they understood that it lasted for a certain duration, and it meant they could not eat the Passover.

^{6 (con't)} **and they came before Moses and Aaron that day.**

It is of note that it says they came before both Moses and Aaron. Moses is the lawgiver, but Aaron is now the recognized high priest. If a matter of uncleanness which could be resolved was seen, then he would be the one to handle it. However, if it was a matter which could not be resolved by him, then Moses would be the one to provide the necessary directions.

Regardless of any other events in the timeline, this had to have occurred during the first month as stated in verse 9:1. This is because Numbers 5:2 said that everyone who was defiled was to be put outside the camp. This means that these men, if they were defiled, could not have come up to Moses and Aaron inside the camp. Therefore, the unclean in the camp had not yet been put out.

Though it is incredibly hard to pin down the exact timing of some events, it is also impossible to find error in the events as they are recorded. The unseen hand of the Lord has ensured that His word was carefully recorded and maintained without contradiction or error. Difficulties are seen, but they are simply difficulties to us, not such that would speak against the integrity of the word.

Understanding this, the reason for including this passage in a place which is seemingly out of place, is because it deals with how to handle those people who could not participate in the regular Passover. For them, a special provision will be made based on their next words to Moses...

⁷ And those men said to him, “We *became* defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the Lord at its appointed time among the children of Israel?”

Though the men were said to come before both Moses and Aaron, their words are to Moses alone. The preposition is in the third person singular. They understand that Moses is the leader and the one to first make a determination concerning the matter. The words of the men here may be more directed toward the loss of a right rather than a fear of failing to perform a required duty. They had left Egypt just a year earlier, and were probably excited at the prospect of observing the Passover. However, it may be that they also do fear that missing out on the Passover could be a cause of incurring the wrath of the Lord. It seems as if there is a two-pronged reason for coming forward as they have.

It is fair to guess that these men are, in fact, Mishael and Elzaphan. They had been instructed to accomplish the task of carrying away the dead. And more, they were Aaron’s sons who had died. In this, they would be the most likely to feel deprived of not observing the Passover. If their defilement was accidental, or not related to the events which are recorded in Leviticus, they probably would have just accepted their lot. But in their case, it was for the Lord’s honor, and the continuance of the priesthood, that their defilement had come about.

The Hebrew words say, *temeim l’nephesh adam*, or “defiled by *the* soul of a man.” It does not say, “by a corpse.” It is the same term used in Leviticus 21:1 when informing the priests not to become defiled in this way. The idea is that of a dead body, however. When a soul leaves the body, we mourn not for the body, but for the soul that has departed. The body without a soul is defiled, and that defilement transfers to whoever touches it. Such is the case here.

⁸ And Moses said to them, “Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you.”

Here we have a unique event which has no answer as of yet. It shows an imperfection of the law thus far given in its mandated precepts. There is the requirement to keep the

Passover, but there is the prescription to not keep the Passover when one is unclean. The missing details have caused an apparent conflict of duties for these men. What will Moses decide? The answer is, he cannot decide. The law is explicit on both accounts, and therefore he must go to the Lawgiver to obtain an answer. And so he tells them to stand while he obtains an answer. In this, he certainly went before the Lord in the tent of meeting, and there petitioned Him for clarification concerning the matter at hand. There is a lesson here for us which is expressed clearly by Paul when he says to “not think beyond what is written.” In other words, the law has been given to Moses. It contains two prescriptions which are not reconcilable without more instruction. And so he goes to obtain that instruction. The same must be true with us, but in a more complete sense. We have the full counsel of God. What it says is our guide. We are not to go beyond that guide, making things up in order to suit our own will. Rather, we are to seek the Lord’s will from His word, and then properly apply it to our lives.

⁹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

This is the standard formula which is most often seen when the Lord has words of instruction for Moses. It tells us that he did, in fact, go to seek the Lord in the tent of meeting. And there he obtains the answer to the difficulty...

¹⁰ “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord’s Passover.

Two exceptions are made here. The first is uncleanness, and the second is being on a journey which would hinder the individual from keeping the Passover. Less likely, but still possible, is that the term may be an idiom which is exhaustive in nature. In other words, it would be like saying, “For any great reason you may still keep the Passover.” If this is so, it would still have to be a true reason and not one which merely fit the man’s convenience.

As a side note, the word of this verse translated as “far away” is pointed in the Hebrew text with a dot above it, known as a *puncta extraordinaria*. This is one of only ten such pointings in the Pentateuch. Rabbinical explanations are that the word either doesn’t belong there, or that it means something other than “far away.” The reason for this is that it is not repeated in verse 13. Although the pointing does call attention to the word, the reason it is pointed doesn’t change the fact that the word is there, and that it should be considered as original. If the words of the Lord are exhaustive in nature, then it is even more appropriately stated as “far away.” It is showing that even to the extreme case, the law applies. Regardless, the provision is made, and it is granted for...

¹¹ On the fourteenth day of the second month,

The Passover for one who cannot make the first Passover is to be held exactly one month later. This is the time of the coming of the full moon, and so it is appropriate that the exact interval of one month is given. The symbolism of the Passover was not to be missed, even down to the condition of the night sky which points – as all other parts of the Passover do – to the work of Christ.

As the moon is full at night, it is on the opposite side of the earth from the sun. When the sun is out, the moon is hidden. In other words, it is impossible to have an eclipse of the sun during a full moon. Thus, the darkness of the earth at the death of Christ was not merely an eclipse at that time. It was a sign to the people that it was not a natural occurrence which darkened the skies that day, but rather a supernatural one which reflected the state of the heavens at the death of the Lord.

¹¹ (con't) at twilight, they may keep it.

Again as before, the words *ben ha'arbayim* or “between the evenings” is given. Though the month is allowed to be changed for the needs of the individual, the symbolism outside of that is to be carefully maintained. The time of day that Christ died on the cross must be maintained, despite the authorized change.

¹¹ (con't) They shall eat it with unleavened bread

And again, the symbolism is maintained. This was not necessary to be stated for observing the Passover at the normal time because it was already given as a precept at the time of the original instructions. However, someone might think, “I am not observing the Passover on its intended day, and so I can modify the dinner to something nummier that I want.” This cannot be. Christ, the Bread of Life, was and is sinless, therefore, there was to be no leaven in the bread eaten by the observer.

Christ is seen in the unleavened bread or *matzah*. Leaven pictures sin. It causes bread to be puffed up, such as man is when filled with pride. And leaven is a species of corruption because it is produced by fermentation. In Christ, there is no sin, and in Christ, there is no corruption. The Passover meal was to picture that the people were participating in Christ, just as we are to now. This is explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5. There, he explicitly ties leaven to sin, and how we are to live in Christ just as He is –

“Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”

-1 Corinthians 5:6-8

The feast Paul is speaking of here is the fulfilled feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread. It does not mean that we are to actually observe the Passover, but that we are to come to Christ and live out our lives for Him.

¹¹ (con't) **and bitter herbs.**

The bitter herbs were a lesson to the Israelites and to us. To Israel, they pictured the bitter bondage that they were about to leave. For us, it is a similar picture. We are to remember the bitterness of our own Egypt, the life of sin that we had once been a part of. It was a land of torture, bondage, and living under the wicked ruler of this world. The bitter herbs signify a memorial of Christ's work leading us out of that sorry place and to the wonders of eternal life with Him. But they more significantly picture the bitterness that He endured in order for us to receive that blessing of true life in Him.

¹² **They shall leave none of it until morning,**

Two reasons for this point to Christ. First, it is to ensure that nobody would keep any bone or other part of the animal as a talisman or memorial. Secondly, it was to ensure nobody else could gather them and use them for profane purposes. Both show that we are to carry with us the sacrifice of Christ, not in idols, but in our hearts and in who we are. His is also not a sacrifice which can be used by others for their own profane purposes. There is one sacrifice of Christ, and it is only for the people of God to be carried internally. We are to honor and revere the God who gave us this great Lamb and who has redeemed us through His death.

¹² (con't) **nor break one of its bones.**

The Passover lamb of Israel was the type made to correspond to the Antitype found in Christ. The fulfillment of this picture is found anticipating Christ in Psalm 34:20, and it is then realized in John 19 which tells of Him on the cross –

“For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not *one* of His bones shall be broken.’” John 19:36

He died prior to the need for the soldiers to break His bones in order to expedite His death. This was anticipated each year in the observance of the Passover by Israel.

¹² (con’t) **According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.**

The word “ordinances” is incorrect. The Hebrew reads, *ke-kal khuqat ha’pesakh*, or “According to all the ordinance *of* the Passover.” It is singular, and thus a unified whole. No part of the many ordinances was to be dropped out, but all were to be observed alike. In other words, there are other commands within the law of the Passover which the Lord did not specify. Instead, He highlighted these and then expands on that by essentially telling them, “These and all things which have already been instructed.”

Later Jewish commentators say that the feast of Unleavened Bread was not observed here, and that it was not necessary to put leaven out of the house. However, this shows that to be incorrect. It was a part of the Passover feast, and it was certainly observed. In fact, the departure from Sinai, as recorded in Numbers 10, occurs on the twentieth day of the second month. That gave sufficient time for those who observed the Little Passover, to also observe Unleavened Bread.

Each of the details given here has been to ensure that the people would not think of changing any of the symbolism of the first Passover. Whether observed in the first month or the second, it was to have the exact same observances, looking forward to the exact same fulfillment in Christ. There was to be no less solemnity regardless of when it was observed.

¹³ **But the man who *is* clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the Lord at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.**

Verse 10 says, “If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or *is* far away on a journey.” That is being repeated now to show that the Passover observance was absolutely mandatory for those who were able to attend. There was to be no tolerance for any who could observe it and simply wanted to put it off until later. The appointed time was set because it is the same day that Christ died on the cross. An exception was only made for those who were incapable of participating in the observance, but only as clearly specified.

For such a person who refused, he was to be cut off from among his people. The explanation of that is given in the final words, “that man shall bear his sin.” He was to be executed, and his sin would remain unatoned for.

¹⁴ ‘And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the Lord’s Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land.’”

These words are a close repeat of what is stated in Exodus 12. In essence, if someone were to keep the Passover, they were to first meet the requirements outlined there, and then they were to be automatically incorporated into the body of Israel. Here is how it is said there –

“And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. ⁴⁹One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you.”

-Exodus 12:48, 49

Two of the three signs of truly being an Israelite are given here, Passover observance and circumcision. The third sign, that of Sabbath observance, would go along with this after accepting the first two. The words of Exodus 12 say that if he agrees to these things, he shall be as an *ezrakh*, or a native of the land. The word comes from *zarakh*, meaning native, or home-grown. From that time forward, the stranger was to be counted as Israel. In his Passover observance, he was then bound to the same statute of the Passover as any other.

It is a picture of faith in Christ. A native who did not observe the Passover was to be cut off. He was demonstrating no affiliation with Christ. However, a foreigner who did observe was to be counted as native of Israel, sharing in its commonwealth. Such is the relationship of those who are in Christ. Paul shows as much in Romans. In the end, it all comes down to a matter of the heart. The physical pictures and requirements of the law only point to spiritual truths in Christ.

We cannot rely on externals to get us to heaven. We can only rely on Christ, whom all of these things we keep seeing pictures. He is the fulfillment of everything we see, and in Him is the embodiment of this otherwise impossible law. But the Lord is gracious enough to give us all second chances, even if we fail at first. The lesson of Hezekiah which we brought up at the beginning of the sermon shows us this.

The people had failed to observe the Passover at its appointed time, and for reasons not allowed under the law, and yet the Lord still heard them and responded by accepting them. This is the marvel of God in Christ. Yes, there are types and pictures which point to Him, but they cannot completely reveal the magnificence of the mercy and grace of God toward truly repentant sinners.

God is not a cosmic pushover, but He will not refuse the cries of one who turns to Him, even if it is later than was originally intended. His love, grace, and mercy go beyond the rigid walls of the law, even to the furthest extent of the human soul willing to turn to Him in faith that He will respond. Let us then accept this premise, and let us not think that we have gone beyond His ability to forgive us. If we are still alive, we haven't. Call on Christ and because He is the Lord's Passover, He will be your Passover too.

Closing Verse: *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."* Colossians 1:13, 14

Next Week: Numbers 9:15-23 *How are we obedient to the word? By...* (Keeping the Charge of the Lord) (17th Numbers sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord's Passover

Now the Lord spoke to Moses
In the Wilderness of Sinai; words he was relaying
In the first month of the second year
After they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

"Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time
On the fourteenth day of this month, so to you I submit
At twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time
According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it

So Moses told the children of Israel
That they should keep the Passover; so he did to them tell

And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day
Of the first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai
According to all that the Lord commanded Moses
So the children of Israel did, by and by

Now there were certain men
Who were defiled by a human corpse, to their dismay
So that they could not keep on that day the Passover
And they came before Moses and Aaron that day

And those men said to him
“We became defiled by a human corpse, as the Lord to us did tell
Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the Lord
At its appointed time among the children of Israel?”

And Moses said to them
In order for this issue to see through
“Stand still, that I may hear
What the Lord will command concerning you

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These words to him He was then relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying:
‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean
Because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey
He may still keep the Lord’s Passover, as will now be seen

On the fourteenth day of the second month
At twilight, they may keep it
They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs
So to you these things I do submit

They shall leave none of it until morning
Nor break one of its bones, to these rules they shall commit
According to all the ordinances of the Passover
They shall keep it

But the man who is clean and is not on a journey

— — —-and ceases to keep the Passover
That same person shall be cut off from among his people
— — —-that guy shall be done in
Because he did not bring the offering of the Lord
At its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin

'And if a stranger dwells among you
And would keep the Lord's Passover, as detailed by Me
He must do so according to the rite of the Passover
And according to its ceremony

You shall have one ordinance; so you are to understand
Both for the stranger and the native of the land

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 9:15-23 (KEEPING THE CHARGE OF THE LORD)

There is seemingly a lot of repetition in today's verses, but each thought complements the previous thought, building upon it and providing a bit more insight into what the life of Israel in the wilderness was like. When you come to repetitive passages like this, you can almost bet they form a chiasmic structure.

About halfway through the sermon, I was convinced this was so, and though I didn't want to take the time out to look for a chiasm, I also thought it would be the best time to do so. I may never take the time again. And so I laid it out as I normally would, and sure enough, there is a chiasm there. Before we look at it, I will tell you that I then copied it to my regular folder where I keep them and, surprisingly, someone named Vince already found one in these same verses.

Vince has to be a friend of mine, because 1) it is in my folder and 2) I simply said, "found by Vince." For the life of me, I cannot remember who Vince is or when he sent it to me. However, though the chiasm he found is in the same verses, and though it is laid out in basically the same manner as the one we'll now look at, he cut his off shorter than it actually should be. So I don't feel bad about both giving him credit for the chiasm, and for now presenting it as one I found on 17 September as well. All that does, is confirm that it was meant to be found twice.

I only wish I'd checked the folder before spending the time to look for it. It would have made my day a bit easier. But I also may not have noticed the full scope of it. So nothing is lost and something is gained.

Numbers 9:18-23 (The Charge of the Lord)

Should we stay, or should we go? 17 September 2018

- a. at the command of the Lord
 - b v. 19 Israel kept the charge of the Lord
 - c v. 20 according to the command of the Lord they would remain encamped, and
 - according to the command of the Lord they would journey
 - d v. 21 when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey;
 - x v.22 Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey
 - d v. 22 but when it was taken up, they would journey
 - c v. 23 At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed
 - b v. 23 they kept the charge of the Lord
 - a. at the command of the Lord

Text Verse: *“When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, ⁵ then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there will be a covering. ⁶ And there will be a tabernacle for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain.” Isaiah 4:4-6*

Israel had a tabernacle in their midst. They encamped around it, and they moved at the command of the Lord to their next appointed stop on their journey towards Canaan. Above the tabernacle, there was a cloud visible by day, and within it, fire visible by night. In the future, not just a tabernacle, but all of Jerusalem will be covered with a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. And there too will be a tabernacle.

The difference is that this one will not move. There will be no speculation as to when the Lord will pick up stakes and move on. What Israel in the wilderness hoped for, meaning attaining the promised rest of the Lord, Israel of the future will have realized. Each step of Scripture leads us a little further along the path to final glory. Along the way, the glory of the Lord is revealed, but it is also concealed. Until the coming of Christ, the reason for all of these things was completely unclear. But in Christ, every picture finds its fulfillment, and every shadow finds its substance. This is what is so wonderful about studying the Old Testament in Sunday sermons. When we come to our weekly Bible study where we are in the New Testament, which you all surely come to or listen to later, those things we talk about there make so much more sense. The two halves make a complete whole.

For now, let's once again get into the first half. Great treasures are to be found in it. Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Moving as the Lord Moves (verses 15-19)

¹⁵ Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up,

These words now take us all the way back to Exodus 40. Right at the end of the book, we read the following words –

“Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.” Exodus 40:34-38

This thought will be restated and expanded upon in our few short verses today. However, it is showing that the presence of the Lord is what remained with Israel, and it is what directed them throughout their journeys.

The account here is not chronological, but it expressive of what occurred from the time when the tabernacle was erected, through the departure from Sinai, which happened after the Second Passover, and which will continue all the way through the time in the wilderness. As Israel has been given the instructions on the Second Passover, and as they will depart shortly after that, this is the logical place to put this section. This presence was first noted in Exodus 13 at the time of Israel’s departure from Egypt –

“So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. ²¹ And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. ²² He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people.” Exodus 13:20-22

Upon arrival at Sinai, the cloud rested upon the mountain. However, it would move to Moses’ tent at times in order to summon him –

“So it was, whenever Moses went out to the tabernacle, *that* all the people rose, and each man stood *at* his tent door and watched Moses until he had gone into the tabernacle. ⁹ And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood *at* the door of the tabernacle, and *the Lord* talked with Moses. ¹⁰ All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing *at* the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man *in* his tent door. ¹¹ So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.” Exodus 33:8-11

At various other times, this visible manifestation of the Lord has been, or will be mentioned again. This is especially so to call attention to the importance of the events which are occurring. And, the last time that this pillar will be seen is towards the end of Deuteronomy. It will be when the Lord commissions Joshua to assume leadership of Israel –

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting, that I may inaugurate him.’

So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. ¹⁵ Now the Lord appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle.” Deuteronomy 31:14, 15

That is immediately before the death of Moses, and just prior to entrance into Canaan. And so it can be seen that the presence of the Lord was truly with Israel from the exodus to the entrance; from Egypt to Canaan; from that which pictures leaving our life of bondage to sin, to that which pictures our entrance into the true Land of Promise where God’s rest is assured.

Before going on, and for the sake of clarity, two different things are spoken of in these verses. The first is *ohel moed*, or “the tent of meeting,” and the second is the *mishkan*, or “tabernacle.” It is rare to find a good translation which makes a distinction between the two, and because of this, there is inevitably a false sense of what is being relayed. The tabernacle is an edifice which is inside of the tent of meeting. To correct the translation every time the tent of meeting is noted would be futile. However, when they are spoken of in the same verse, or in the same paragraph, it really is necessary to define which is being referred to. Otherwise, one would think they were the same thing. This becomes evident in the next words...

¹⁵ (con’t) **the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony;**

kisah he’anan eth ha’mishkan le’ohel ha’edut – “covered the cloud the tabernacle of the tent the testimony.” Most translations make the two appear synonymous, as if the tabernacle is the tent of the Testimony, elsewhere known as the tent of meeting. They are not synonymous though. This is evident from the verse we already cited from Exodus 40:34 –

“And covered the cloud tent of meeting, and the glory of Yehovah filled the tabernacle.” (Charlie’s translation)

And so now in Numbers, we have no reason to assume that the cloud only covered the area of the tent of meeting where the Ten Commandments were kept. This is more evident because in Exodus 40, it then went on to say that Moses couldn't enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested upon it. The entire structure is being spoken of here when the term "tent" is used. The cloud covers the entire tent of meeting which covers the tabernacle.

This might seem like a frivolous thing to spend so much time on, but the Lord is the One who has, time and again, purposefully made a distinction between the two. One should ask, "Why the specificity?" The answer must be that one is referring to the deity of Christ, and the other is referring to His humanity. The tabernacle is kept from the sight of the people, whereas the tent is in view of all. The visible manifestation of the cloud and fire shows the people that the Lord is, in fact, residing in the tabernacle, and it is thus He who leads the people when the cloud moves.

The cloud is that which reveals, and it is also that which hides. The Lord's glory was revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration, but it was also hidden by the cloud. Likewise, the ascension of the Lord on the Mount of Olives was evident in the cloud which also obscured Him from their presence. At the rapture, the saints will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord. There is a revealing, and there is a concealing. Precision of terminology here in the events in the wilderness set the stage for concepts which continue on throughout Scripture.

And there is yet more detail to consider. The tent here is called the "tent of the Testimony" rather than its more common term, "the tent of meeting." Instead of now referring to it as the place where Moses went in to meet with the Lord, it is referring to it as the tent where the tablets of the Ten Commandments were rested in the ark of the covenant. What the people saw from the outside, and which was covered by the cloud and the fire, was to be a constant reminder to them of the glory which they saw on Sinai when they were given the Ten Commandments. At that time, because of the grandeur of what their eyes beheld, this was the next thing the Bible records –

"Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood afar off. ¹⁹ Then they said to Moses, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'" Exodus 20:18, 19

By saying, "tent of the Testimony" here, it is given in relation not to Moses, but to the people. It is a witness and a reminder to them of what they had seen and been so fearful

of. Understanding this, the cloud represents safety, as in a covering – such as from heat; protection – both for and from; God’s omnipotence and man’s ignorance; and so on. The presence of the cloud was the daily sign to the people that the Lord was there with them, but that Moses was the one who spoke to them. For them, it is the “tent of the Testimony.” For Moses, it is the “tent of meeting.” For both, it is where the word of the Lord issues from. For us, it is Christ Jesus, the embodiment of the law and the Word of God.

15 (con’t) from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire.

Whereas the Lord’s presence was visible as a cloud during the day, it would be as fire at night. Fire has multiple meanings in the Bible, but the fact that it is associated with the Lord, it would be emblematic of His glory, holiness, protection, judgment, purification, and so on. In both the cloud and the fire, there is the thought of a welcoming presence, and yet the need to stand in awed reverence and fear at the same time. The people were to be comforted that they were cared for by the Lord, and yet they were to remember that they were to honor the Lord as their God, and not tread upon, nor question, His sovereignty.

16 So it was always: the cloud covered it *by day*, and the appearance of fire by night.

The word *tamid*, or “always,” is the reason for these words now. The cloud was there on the day the edifice was erected, and throughout that night, it had the appearance of fire, but this wasn’t a temporary display. Rather, it was there from that time on. The words, “by day” are inserted here, which is fine. It says as much in Exodus 40:38. However, the idea is that it is the same cloud at all times. The appearance changes only because of the surrounding circumstances in relation to the people’s eyes. The Lord made Himself manifest in such a way that the people would always know He was there with them.

The amazing thing to ponder at this point, is that despite this cloud and fire being perfectly evident to the people, twenty-four hours a day and every day of the year, they still found reason to grumble, complain, and doubt the Lord. They literally saw an outward manifestation of His presence, and they lacked faith in Him nonetheless. It sounds like Israel at the time of Christ’s first advent, doesn’t it?

17 Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle,

The Hebrew says, *ohel*, “tent,” not “tabernacle.” It is in reference to instruction for the people as a whole. In other words, the cloud rested upon the tent of the Testimony, but when it was time to move, it would rise on high. When this happened, it could be seen by all people, even to the extremities of the camp. When this occurred, it would be a sign to all. Then...

17 (con’t) after that the children of Israel would journey;

The rising of the cloud indicated that it was time to move. In obedience to that, the people would break camp, the priests would prepare the most holy objects, the Levites would perform their duties, and then the signal would blast, and the camps would depart, beginning with Judah. From that moment, they would continue on until the spot which the Lord would direct them to...

17 (con’t) and in the place where the cloud settled,

This should not be taken to mean that the cloud itself directed the people. Rather, when the people, according to the word of the Lord, had arrived at the spot where He had directed them to, the cloud would come down from its lofty height. It is the ark, carried by the Levites of Kohath, that would lead the entire procession. Above them would be the cloud on high for all in the ranks behind to see. This is certain because of Numbers 10:33, 34 –

“So they departed from the mountain of the Lord on a journey of three days; and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them for the three days’ journey, to search out a resting place for them. ³⁴ And the cloud of the Lord *was* above them by day when they went out from the camp.”

The ark set out with the cloud above it. Where the ark rested, so the cloud dwelt, and this is where the tent of the Testimony would again be erected, and also it was...

17 (con’t) there the children of Israel would pitch their tents.

The ark would be set down, the tent would be erected over it, and then the priests would uncover it. At the same time, the children of Israel would be arriving according to their placement around the sanctuary, and they would there pitch their tents.

18 At the command of the Lord the children of Israel would journey,

Here it says, *al pi Yehovah* – “according to the mouth of Yehovah.” Most scholars treat the rising, movement, and stopping of the cloud as “the command of the Lord.” However, this seems unlikely. What appears to be the case is that the command of the Lord is given to Moses, signifying they were to move out. In confirmation of this, the sign to the people is the rising of the cloud. From there, Israel would journey to where they were told to go. While going, the cloud remained above the ark wherever it was carried by the Levites who had been told where to go. From there...

18 (con’t) and at the command of the Lord they would camp;

Again it says, “according to the mouth of the Lord.” The Lord directed when and where to go, and the sign to them was His presence above the ark as it traveled. From there, they would stay until directed to break camp once again. This was what was expected, and it was for...

18 (con’t) as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped.

As Matthew Henry says of their movement, “There is no time lost, while we are waiting God’s time.” The people were to do as instructed, and to remain where the presence of the Lord was. To depart from that would mean disobedience. These things are certain, because in Numbers 14, after a rebellion by the people in refusing to go into Canaan, the Lord told them that they were to remain in the wilderness until they died. Some of them, however, decided to go forward and right the wrong of their refusal by entering the land. However, that meant only more disaster –

“Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. ⁴⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, “Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!”

⁴¹ And Moses said, “Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. ⁴² Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord *is* not among you. ⁴³ For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you.”

⁴⁴ But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp. ⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.” Numbers 14:39-45

The people lacked the ark, and thus they lacked the presence of the Lord that moved with the ark. The details are coming soon to a disaster sermon near you.

¹⁹ Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle,

The term *yamim rabim*, or “days in abundance” can mean “years.” It is an indefinite amount of time, and it was left solely up to the word of the Lord to determine when the camp would again be broken down and moved. While not moving, it says that “Israel kept the charge of the Lord.”

One might wonder why this is expressed. But it becomes obvious when we think of what it might have been like. Was it a horrible spot that lacked any excitement or beauty? Were the tents laid out over rocky, uncomfortable patches of land? Was there nothing but briars and thorns all around? That didn’t matter. The people were to look to the Lord and not the dull, barren, and bitter landscape. He provided them water, manna came six days a week, and He was to be their hope and confidence, not a lust for the world in which they lived.

^{19 (con’t)} the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and did not journey.

The word *mishmeret*, or “charge” signifies that which is to be kept or watched. The people posted sentinels; the people kept the commands of the Lord, living out their lives in accord with His commands and precepts; the people obeyed the law to stay until directed; the priests obeyed the daily rituals and sacrifices of the sanctuary. All of this, and surely more, is included in keeping the charge of the Lord. But mostly, according to the verse itself, it speaks of not journeying as long as the cloud continued above the tabernacle. The people stayed put and kept His charge in doing so.

*The spot where we are now is so beautiful and nice
There is a stream of cool water running through it
We can relax and eat dates, and have a meal filled with spice
But to this place, our hopes we surely won’t commit*

*When the call is made, on we shall go
And maybe the next spot won’t be so grand
But we will be content there; certainly it is so
Even if we spend a year in that barren, wasted land*

*Our joy isn't found in a temporary oasis
Nor are we despondent in a rough and ruined land
Such temporary things for our joy are not the basis
Instead, our hope and joy comes from the Lord's gracious hand*

*Thank You for Your presence that fills our souls with delight
Thank You, O Lord, our hope, our joy, our ever-shining light*

II. At the Command of the Lord (verses 20-23)

²⁰ So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the Lord they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the Lord they would journey.

The opening words, *v'yesh asher*, or “and sometimes...” are given now to show obedience to what was stated in the previous verses. In other words, one might say, “When Charlie ran the wastewater plant, and whenever he changed the shift schedule, the employees would work their new shifts. He might change them every month, or once every year. But whenever he changed the schedule the employees obeyed the directive. And sometimes he changed the schedule after two weeks, according to his change, the employees would show up to work. And sometimes he changed the schedule once a year, according to that, so they would show up to work.”

For now in Numbers, one might wonder how many different ways the idea of staying put and picking up and moving out can be expressed. Already, the idea has been spoken out three times in three different ways. The last was “many days.” Now it speaks of *yamim mispar*, or “days of a number,” meaning “a few days.”

Whereas verse 19 spoke of being obedient and staying put, even if the scene was one which was boring, ugly, and deprived of comfort, the spot they next arrived at may have been a beautiful oasis in the middle of the desert where the children could play and the people could smell the fragrant beauty of flowers. Where the tents were set up, the ground might have been soft and cushy. Surely in such a place, the Lord would allow them to hang around for a while and enjoy the comfortable life. But no! This didn't matter. When it was time to go, they would have to acknowledge the Lord's call and depart to wherever He next led, not knowing if it would have dates and grass, or rocks and snakes. The Lord's word was their call to depart.

²¹ So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning:

Again is says, *v'yesh asher*, or "And sometimes." Now the thought is expressed again, but in another new way. The people picked up and moved, arriving in the evening. Their bodies were tired, their minds were racing at the anticipation of sleep and then exploring their surroundings, and the children were intent on finding their friends and playing in a new environment. But no! They set up camp in the evening, sat down to eat, went to bed unable to sleep because of the day's events and the events of the anticipated day to come. And yet, no sooner had they gone out to collect the day's manna, then they were alerted to the rise of the cloud and the call to move.

The beautiful date palms were filled with ripe fruit. The junipers smelled of delight, the wild ibis covered the hillside, waiting to be shot with an arrow, roasted over a fire, and mixed in with curry and spice kept from the departure from Egypt. But no! The cloud had arisen, the call to move was made, and the laborious job of breaking down camp, the tedium of waiting for the signal to move, and the tiring trudge in the heat commenced once again. All of this because...

21 (con't) when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey;

He is the Lord; we are His people. We are to keep His watch, including the call to move. So we shall do. He is the Lord; we are His people.

21 (con't) whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey.

Many days or few, or even after a single night. But now, now we are to pick up and move by night! The word went out, and the fiery cloud has risen. There would be no chance to go out and pick a few dates for the trip, and there would be no chance to watch the sun set over the two v-shaped rocks one more time. No. The ark is setting out and so too shall we.

At least walking in the night would be cooler than during the day. That is a plus, unless it was winter time. Even in the desert, the temperatures would get uncomfortably cold at night. And more, traveling at night would mean uncertainty about where to step, if there were snakes or scorpions, and the like. For every positive about traveling by night, there were also two negatives. But the Lord is on the move, and we are His people. We too shall move.

The notion that the Lord first spoke the word of when to go and where to go, and that it wasn't just following the cloud as he led, is confirmed by the words of Moses to his father-in-law Hobab. In Numbers 10, where we will read –

“So *Moses* said, ‘Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes. ³² And it shall be, if you go with us—indeed it shall be—that whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same we will do to you.’” Numbers 10:31, 32

If it were merely a matter of following the pillar of cloud and fire, Moses would never have said this to him. Moses did not shun acknowledging a sound guide could both lead the way to where they were next instructed to go, but one who would lead them on a path that was conducive to such a trek. Going left around the next mountain might take an extra two hours, but it would be flat earth and not paths of rocks. The Lord gave the word, the pillar was the sign of it, and the people responded in accord with the word given and the sign provided, even at night.

²² *Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey;*

And again, the thought is expressed in another entirely new way by stating words which encompass several thoughts already expressed. First, it says *yomayim*, a way of expressing a two-day period, such as when the manna was given on the sixth day for a day and another day. It would be long enough to wash the clothes and relax, or have a sabbath if they arrived on a Friday. There would be time to see what was around them, but not enough time to get up and really explore. As soon as they were ready to call the place home, they would be told it was time to go.

Next, it says, a month. The Lord might give them time to gather up what was usable in the land around them, make some bows and arrows or spears, enjoy a feast period, or whatever. A month would be long enough to tell them if they didn't like the place. If so, they would be happy to leave. Or, it would be long enough to tell them they loved the place and wished they could have stayed longer.

And finally, it says, “or a year.” The term is *yamim*; days. It generally gives the sense of a fullness of time. It may mean a year, and based on the previous two time-frames, that is not unlikely. It is simply an indeterminate amount of time. The thing about it being two days, one month, or one year, is that it didn't really matter.

Because the Lord could move at any time, there was no time that the people could say, “Well, we can settle down here and relax.” And there was no time that the people could say, “It will be great to leave here soon.” They had no idea. The time period to us is one of looking back on a known. The time period to them was looking forward to an unknown. They were wholly dependent on the Lord’s decision, and there was nothing that could change that, whether they were content in a spot or not they would stop and wait...

²² (con’t) **but when it was taken up, they would journey.**

Apart from the Lord, there could be no long-term planning, but because of His presence with them, there was no excuse for only short-term planning. The two thoughts are both beautifully summed up elsewhere in the Bible. First from James –

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.” James 4:13-16

The second thought is expressed in the proverbs –

“A good *man* leaves an inheritance to his children’s children,
But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.” Proverbs 13:22

The people were to occupy, but not assume. They were to be diligent in their daily life, but ready to depart from it on a moment’s notice. In essence, they were to trust in the Lord, be obedient to His call, and willing to accept His decision in whatever occurred in their lives.

²³ **At the command of the Lord they remained encamped, and at the command of the Lord they journeyed;**

Letter for letter, the words are identical to the final clause of verse 9:20. The repetition is given as a sign of obedience to the word. Preceding it in verse 9:20, it went from many days to a few days. Here it goes from two days to a year. The idea is one of voluntary, complete, and absolute submission to the call of the Lord, and to that alone. The words of this section had to have been recorded at the end of the wilderness wanderings, and

were probably penned by Moses just prior to his being called up to the heights of Mount Nebo to see the Land of Promise before he died. However, they are logically inserted here, just prior to their departure, to highlight the words now before the times of trouble, leading to punishment, come about. Despite those failings, the people remained under the care of the Lord, moving at His command and direction, in order to eventually find their way to the place where they would enter into their allotted inheritance.

23 (con't) they kept the charge of the Lord,

This is a general repeat of verse 19 which said, “the children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord. They followed His commands, they spent their lives in obedience to the law, they moved when He directed, the priests tended to their sacred duties, the Levites broke down and re-erected the sanctuary, and they waited... they waited upon the Lord and upon His word to continue on the path He set before them. As it says, they kept this charge...

23 (fin) at the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

The Lord spoke to Moses, and Moses relayed the words to the people for their hearing. Again, as before, we can see that the movement of the cloud was a sign in confirmation of the word of the Lord. If the charge of the Lord includes obedience to the movement of the people, as it surely does, then that movement was spoken out first to Moses and then relayed to the people. When they moved, it was in ranks behind the ark. And where the ark moved, so the cloud moved with it.

In this, the word of the Lord is confirmed by the Lord. It was not Moses' word to the people, but the Lord's word through Moses. This is why a challenge to Moses was implicitly a challenge to the Lord Himself. Such will be the case in the chapters ahead, and so terrible will be the downfall of those who so challenge him. In the end, when the Lord speaks, it is the duty of man to pay heed to the Lord's word, and to accept it in the context of the day in which it is received. The Lord spoke to and through Moses, and His words were found binding upon the people who heard them. The Lord continued to speak through His prophets until the time of John the Baptist, proclaiming the word of the Lord, but also proclaiming a greater Word to come.

Moses himself testified to the coming of Christ. Philip confirms that in John 1 when speaking to Nathanael. He said, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (1:45). Jesus Himself

says the same. In John 5:46, speaking to the Jews, He said, “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.”

Think it through... if the Lord spoke through Moses, and if Moses wrote about Jesus, then the Lord was speaking through Moses’ hand about Himself, when He would come as a Man. As this is so, then Jesus’ words are the word of the Lord and are binding on those who hear it. We cannot escape judgment if we reject Jesus, and that means Jesus in the context of the day in which He is proclaimed.

Christ came under the law, He lived out the law, and He died in fulfillment of the law. There is no other place to go than to the New Covenant which supersedes the Old. We study Moses in this church because we love Jesus. We are obedient in this church by being obedient to Moses... What! Yes, not to the Law of Moses, but to what the Law of Moses says to us about Jesus. It is He who said, “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. ¹⁹ And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him” (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19).

Yes, Moses foresaw Jesus and said, “If you want to be obedient to the Lord, then you will hear the word of the Lord through this Prophet to come.” The Old is not an end in and of itself, and the trek to Canaan was not the end of the story. It was merely a step on the way to the coming of true glory. What the cloud and fire only anticipated was the coming of Christ.

Let us not be found deficient in our theology by assuming that tents, boxes of wood and gold, and tablets secreted away from sight, to be carried on the shoulders of men, is the end of our faith. No, the Lord whose blood was shed and sprinkled on the true Mercy Seat, and whose Spirit we carry in ourselves when we call on Christ – it is He who is the Author and the Finisher and the end goal of our faith. It is He who is only pictured in these temporary manifestations of the future glory found in Christ Jesus.

Each step of the book of Numbers is another step leading us to that glory. Without this law, we cannot actually appreciate what it took to get us to Him. Every step in the barren wilderness is a step towards the coming of the Lord. In this land where snakes bit at the heels of those who complained, but on whose feet were shoes that didn’t wear out for forty years, miracle upon miracle heaped up as a way of bringing this group of people to a unity that would last beyond all possibility. It is this foundation which united them, and it is in their remaining united that Christ was able to come. And it is in their continued unity for which Christ will come again.

But in the meantime, he is building a church. Someday, before He returns to His people Israel, in the land of Israel, He will first come for that church. It is hoped that you will be ready for that day by calling on Him now. When the call is made, you need to be ready to move.

Closing Verse: *“Moreover You led them by day with a cloudy pillar,
And by night with a pillar of fire,
To give them light on the road
Which they should travel.” Nehemiah 9:12*

Next Week: Numbers 10:1-10 *Tastier than tea and crumpets...* (Two Silver Trumpets)
(18th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Keeping the Charge of the Lord

Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up
The cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony
— — —-this did transpire
From evening until morning
It was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire

So it was always:
The cloud covered it by day
And the appearance of fire by night
Such was this marvelous display

Whenever the cloud was taken up
From above the tabernacle, at the time of these events
After that the children of Israel would journey
And in the place where the cloud settled
— — —-there the children of Israel would pitch their tents

At the command of the Lord the children of Israel would journey
And they would camp at the command of the Lord

As long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle
They remained encamped, according to His word

Even when the cloud continued long
Many days above the tabernacle; however long it would be
The children of Israel kept the charge of the Lord
And did not journey

So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days
According to the command of the Lord, so would it be
They would remain encamped
And according to the command of the Lord they would journey

So it was, when the cloud remained
Only from evening until morning; this amazing sight
When the cloud was taken up in the morning
Then they would journey; whether by day or by night

Whenever the cloud was taken up, then so would it be
Then at this time they would journey

Whether it was two days, a month, or a year
That the cloud remained above the tabernacle, so would it be
The children of Israel would not journey
— — —-but would remain encamped
But when it was taken up, they would journey

At the command of the Lord they remained encamped
And at the command of the Lord they journeyed
— — —-so we understand
They kept the charge of the Lord
At the command of the Lord by Moses' hand

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land

May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
| Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 10:1-10 (TWO SILVER TRUMPETS)

What does it mean to be remembered before the Lord? How do we take that? The Lord doesn't forget, and indeed He cannot forget. He is all knowing, or He ain't God. The thought of forgetting something in the Bible is that of pushing something actively out of remembrance, even if it isn't actually forgotten. And then remembering something is an active calling it back to mind, meaning to the attention of one's focus.

And so when we read a passage like today's and the Lord says that He will remember the people, it does not mean that He forgot them. Rather, it is that He will take action on their behalf. The verses today are often spiritualized to indicate that the sound of the trumpets is as the sound of preachers and others, proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Although that is flowery and fun, it doesn't convey the intent of what is being presented here.

And more, that analogy is then taken further by some to say that the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:8, are speaking of the different sounds of the trumpet explained in this passage. There Paul says, "For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?" Hence, we need to have clarity of speech when we preach the gospel. That isn't correct, thank goodness, because as you know, I have the most twisted tongue on the planet.

It is wrong for a couple of reasons. First, it is mixing types of trumpets. The silver trumpets and the ram's horn had different purposes. Secondly, Paul is referring to the speaking of tongues in a congregation, not specifically preaching the gospel. He was looking for order within the church, not people confusing others with languages unknown to the hearer. As a hint of what these are picturing, we go to Malachi for our text verse today...

Text Verse: *"Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, And the Lord listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the Lord And who meditate on His name." Malachi 3:16*

Another commentary I read also noted that the analogy of these trumpets as being the preaching of the gospel was wrong. In his eyes, they picture prayer before the Lord. He based that on the idea of being remembered before the Lord God, and prayer is what makes that happen. After a page long analysis, he still didn't defend the case very well.

He was correct that it isn't the preaching of the gospel, but his thoughts on it being prayer don't add up.

The reasons are too long to go through now, but with a complete and thorough evaluation of the verses, you will see this as well. The two main things to focus on and keep asking yourself while we are going through the passage are, "Why two trumpets?" and "Why silver?" The answer to those questions, combined with the four main purposes which are given for them, will provide the answer.

There is the literal, historical meaning concerning these two trumpets, and then there is, as almost always with passages like this, a pictorial meaning as well. No it is not the preaching of the gospel, nor is it prayer. But both of those are a part of what is pictured. The passage is a marvelous part of His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Make Two Silver Trumpets (verses 1-8)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The timing of these words cannot be known. It could be that they were given at the time of the construction of the sanctuary first mandated all the way back in Exodus 25:1. It could have been at some point after the sanctuary was fully set up as is recorded in Exodus 40. It may be that the Lord waited until the camps were arranged in the form of a cross that He speaks out the words to Moses, simply because of what the coming words proclaim.

Each is possible, but no option can be dogmatically claimed. All we have is that the words are stated here, regardless as to when they were spoken. What is important then is not the timing of the instructions given, but the placement of the words in relation to the events which surround them.

The context is that the Little Passover was proclaimed and observed. That was followed by the note about the pillar of cloud and fire which covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony, and that it would continue to be with the people throughout their journey to Canaan. Now, after mentioning that, this passage of ten verses is given. Immediately following this section will be the actual departure from Sinai.

Therefore, what will be presented, even without yet looking at the verses, is intricately connected to the thought of the movement of the people as a united force. Anything beyond that thought will require explanation, but the placement of the passage here is meticulously determined and should be considered as such. With that understanding, we now turn to the purpose of the passage and the reason for the words to Moses, which is that he is to...

²“Make two silver trumpets for yourself;

aseh lekha shete khatsotsrot keseph – “Make for yourself two trumpets silver.” It is a new word in Scripture, *khatsotsrah*, or trumpet. These will be seen twenty-nine times, five in Numbers and the majority of the uses will be in 1 and 2 Chronicles. The word is derived from *khatsar*, meaning “to blow.” That, in turn, comes from a primitive root meaning “to surround with a stockade, and thus to separate from the open country” (Strongs). Knowing the meaning of the root, and without going any further, we can immediately assume that the trumpets will have the intent of gathering together, or separating things one from another. These are not to be confused with the *shophar*, or ram’s horn trumpet which is seen elsewhere, such as in Leviticus 25:9 which said –

“Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.” Leviticus 25:9

As they are specified to be made of silver, it would be good to remember what silver symbolizes in the Bible. In short, it pictures redemption and in paying of a ransom. In other words, redemptive works in general. This has been seen time and again from Genesis on, but especially in the construction of the sanctuary and in the payment of the ransom money by the people. It is certain then that the same general and consistent meaning would continue to be applied here in these silver trumpets.

^{2 (con’t)} you shall make them of hammered work;

miqshah ta-aseh otam – “of hammered work you shall make them.” The work is to be *miqshah*, translated here as “hammered.” The word has only been used to describe the cherubim at the ends of the mercy seat, and of the making of the menorah. Whether it is actually “hammered work” or not is disputed. The word comes from *miqsheh* which means “a fancy hairdo.” So, it could be a turning of metal, like the braids of hair, or it could be a hammering of metal for shaping.

This is the last use of it in the books of Moses, and it will be seen only one more time in Jeremiah 10:5, where it is widely translated, showing that even the best translators can't come to a sound agreement on what is being relayed there. However they were formed, they were of silver and Moses is then told...

² (con't) **you shall use them for calling the congregation**

v'hayu lekha l'miqra ha'edah. There is one verb and two nouns. It, therefore, actually more precisely says that they are to be used "for *the call of* the congregation." What is implied is that the congregation is in one state, and the trumpets are used as a call, thus alerting for a change in that state. At this point we don't know what the call is, but that will be defined in the verses ahead. It is not a single call, but a call as a particular sounding is made.

The call could be for breakfast, tootle-doo. The call could be made for doing laundry, tootle-dee. The call could be made for dinner (mmmm lamb chops), tootle-dum. These are to be used for "the call" of the congregation, whatever that call is. Precision of translation, in using the noun, reveals this more poignantly to us. Though a bit stiff in wording, Robert Young gives a very good sense of the words by saying, "and they have been to thee for the convocation of the company."

The trumpets are the instruments used for the convocation of the congregation. The sound of the call is the instruction for what part of the congregation, or the specific direction to the congregation. It's actually exciting to understand the nuances of the words in advance of the coming instruction. Along with this first purpose, there is a second purpose next given, which is...

² (con't) **and for directing the movement of the camps.**

U-l'massa eth ha'makhanot – "and for the breaking of the camps. The word *massa*, or "the breaking," is a noun. The word *ha'makhanot* has an article, *ha*, and then *makhanot* is plural – "the camps." The idea one gets from these words is that the people are encamped. The trumpets will be used for alerting them that it is time to break down their tents and to move. However, the plural, *ha'makhanot*, or "the camps," is specific. Some translations say, "the camp," as if the entire congregation is to suddenly break down and move. That is not the intent at all. The term, "the camps," means the several divisions that were described in Numbers 5.

There we learned that it was either the various camps as they are arranged around the sanctuary, such as the divisions to the east, which included Moses and Aaron and the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Or, it may mean the three divisions of camps – the sanctuary itself, the Levites which surround that, and then the rest of Israel which branches out.

In this case, it is probably the former. After this short passage, the rest of Chapter 10 will deal with the actual departure of the people from Sinai, being led by the standard of the camp of Judah. After that, the tabernacle will be taken down, and so on. It would be the trumpet to direct these individual movements. It is a process which would take hours to complete.

For the last of the camps to break down at the same time as the first of the camps, it might mean that they would be standing in the hot sun half the day. Rather than that, the trumpets would call to the individual camps and alert them that they would need to prepare based on the movement of the camp which went before them. This would be an orderly movement which would be accomplished in a marvelously fashioned way.

Sadly, the vast number of translations do not do a good job of properly conveying the intended meaning of this verse. As an example of really missing the intent, the Douay-Rheims says, “Make thee two trumpets of beaten silver, wherewith thou mayest call together the multitude when the camp is to be removed.”

The number of errors in that one translation makes it impossible to grasp the beauty of what Moses is being so meticulously instructed by the Lord. He is carefully and methodically detailing the purpose of these now so that we, 3500 years later, can mentally follow along as if we were there, watching the people kick up the dust of departure and head out to the sound of these tootling trumpets.

As far as their actual shape, we, fortunately, have a visual depiction of them revealed to us from antiquity. After the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in AD70, the Romans commemorated the event with a carved mural on the Arch of Titus. There, on the mural are several of the implements used in the service of the Lord, including these two trumpets, and so there is no need to guess what they look like. They are straight thin horns that flare out at the end. Flavius Josephus says they were a bit less than a cubit in length. The depiction on the arch seems to show them being much longer, but that is probably because the end piece is placed onto a wooden pole as it was stored. In reality, they were a bit less than the length of a man’s arm from elbow to fingertip.

The reason for being two of them isn't given, and it is supposed that it is because there are only two priests, Eleazar and Ithamar, to sound them. That may be, or it may not logically follow. First, Aaron is also a priest, but he is not included in this duty. Only his two sons are. Secondly, in Joshua 6, there will be seven priests who blow seven ram's horns, not seven of these, before the ark. In 1 Chronicles 15:24, seven named priests are said to blow this same type of horn described now before the ark. And in 2 Chronicles 5:12, there will be 120 priests all blowing this same type of trumpet. Only two are specified to be made here.

What seems more likely is based upon the words of Josephus. He indicates that one trumpet was always used to call the nobles, and the other was used to call the people to assemble. Thus, they were probably different in sound so that those who heard could distinguish first by 1) the sound of both being blown together, 2) the sound of each individually, and then 3) by any particular tune. The fact that there were many of the same general types of trumpets made later does not mean that they were used for the same purposes as these two which have been specially mandated by the Lord. Regardless, the Lord now gives particular instruction concerning them...

³When they blow both of them,

v'taqeu bahen – “when they shall blow with them.” The plural indicates “both” as will be distinguished from the words of the next verse. The word *taqa* means to thrust, clap, blast, blow, and so on. It can be used to indicate pitching one's tent, because one must thrust the tent pegs into the ground. It is used in Judges to describe thrusting a dagger into the belly of another, and so on. The horns would be blown in a forceful manner, as is the case with such wind instruments. In this case, it would be with both being blasted out at one time, this was so that...

^{3 (con't)} all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

This was a general sounding to alert the entire congregation. However, it doesn't mean that, literally, the entire congregation would show up there. Depending on the amount of open area, it might be impossible for such a large number to gather at that spot. What is probably meant is the representatives of the numbers – tens, hundreds, and/or thousands. Even then, it could be a very large gathering.

⁴But if they blow *only* one,

v'im b'akhat yitqau – “and if with one they blow.” This is a rather difficult set of words to be dogmatic about. It says, *akhat*, or one, but then it says *yitqau*, or blow, but it is plural. Therefore, it could be that one of the two is being spoken of, or that both blow “but once.” Meaning “at the same time.” Both are blown, but they are one, uniform, even sounding.

^{4 (con't)} **then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you.**

These would be the heads of thousands, or divisions. It is probably the same twelve leaders who were named in Numbers 1:5-16 during the original census who are being referred to here.

⁵ **When you sound the advance,**

u-teqatem teruah – “And when you blow *a* shout.” The word *teruah* signifies a loud, continuous alarm. This would be different than the calling of the congregation or the leaders, which was a short blast – whether by one or by both trumpets. The similarity to the Roman sounding of the Clarion, taratantara, leads some to believe that this would be short, broken tones, which are then terminated with long ones. Regardless, this blast would be a recognizable alarm that would probably have brought a sense of true excitement to everyone as...

^{5 (con't)} **the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey.**

With the sound of the *teruah*, Judah would head out, following the ark of the covenant which would lead the way, as is noted in verse 33 of this same chapter. It would be a rather amazing feeling to hear that sound, and to contemplate what lay ahead. Each step taken would be one step closer to the land of promise. With the ark of the Lord leading their way, covered by the pillar of cloud, it would be a wonderful assurance to them that their true home was ahead and waiting for them.

⁶ **When you sound the advance the second time,**

u-teqatem teruah sh'nit – “and when you blow a shout *the* second.” It is the same blast which began the procession, and which is now being blown to continue with the advance, as next stated...

^{6 (con't)} **then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey;**

To get a mental picture of this, there is first the ark. Then after that will be the tribes with Judah east of the sanctuary. This would be followed by the carts carrying all of the items of the sanctuary except the most holy objects. Once they were broken down, placed on carts, and had departed, then those on the south side, meaning the right side of the massive cross, would then begin their march.

^{6 (con't)} **they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys.**

teruah yitqeu l'masehem – “a shout they shall blow for their breaking camp.” With these words ends the directions for the setting out. But this leaves an obvious question, “What about the camps to the north and to the west?” Everything so far has been so detailed and so specific, and yet no direction is given for them. There are one of two possibilities for us to consider. The first is that a portion of the text is missing because the Greek translation of the Old Testament adds in the following –

“And ye shall sound a third alarm, and the camps pitched by the sea (i.e., westward), shall move forward; and ye shall sound a fourth alarm, and they that encamp toward the north shall move forward; they shall sound an alarm at their departure.” (Ellicott’s translation).

The second possibility is that the horns were carried along in the same procession with the most holy objects. If so, then the final tribes would have to simply be ready to depart at the appropriate time. This seems the most plausible explanation. The ark went first, but a distance of holiness was most probably to be maintained between it and the people, and so when that distance was sufficient, the horn would blow to alert the standard of Judah to move.

And again, the implements of the sanctuary would follow them at a distance, and so another blast would be needed to alert those on the south when to go. After that, the most holy objects, which were carried by the Levites would then go out when instructed by Eleazar and Ithamar, including these trumpets. Finally, the last two tribes could pick up and move out in order without a need for the trumpets to alert them.

Requiring a certain span for the objects on the carts and for those carried by the Levites would be wise because the amount of dust in the air would cover those sacred things unless a suitable span was made to allow it to settle. After the carried items set out at an agreeable distance, there would be no need for this concern again.

This seems all the more sure, because the addition to the Greek translation is not supported by the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Coptic versions, or anywhere else of note. Instead, the omission seems purposeful, and it is because of the implements of the sanctuary in relation to the tribes that this is so.

And so, to finish this thought, the blast is an indication of marching divisions in relation to the ark and the sanctuary implements. As those are complete after the divisions to the south move, no further blast was necessary. The march of the Lord's honor guards, meaning the Levites and their implements, was now complete.

⁷ And when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance.

This is taking us back over the previous verses, and it is intended to show a specific difference between the blasts for calling the assembly as directed in 3 & 4, and for the sounding of the advance as directed in verses 5 & 6. There is the calling together of the people with a long, even, and uninterrupted peal, and there is the compelling of them to separate in the advance with short, sharp blasts. The two were to be carefully adhered to. The advance was not to be sounded at the calling of the assembly.

⁸ The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets;

Here we see that the blowing of these particular trumpets is reserved for the priestly class alone. At least for these sacred callings, it was not a duty to devolve to either Levite or commoner, but was for the line of Aaron. The same word for trumpet used here is used later in Kings and Chronicles to describe a trumpet not used by priests. If these were the same type of trumpet or not, or if those were not counted in the sacred callings mandated for the priests, isn't known. However, for the special callings noted here, only the priests were to make the sound.

As the priests mediated between the people and the Lord, the idea is that when the sounds of priestly call were made, it was as if the Lord Himself was making them.

^{8 (con't)} and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations.

The words here indicate that the trumpets were not just for the call of the assembly on their march to Canaan, but they were for calling the people in that regard now, and for what will next be mentioned in the final two verses of the passage. The call was to be made by the priests on behalf of the Lord, and it was to be as an ordinance under the

Mosaic covenant *olam*, or “to the vanishing point,” and throughout the generations of the Aaronic priesthood. The effectual nature of both of these thoughts is ended in Christ. However, the fulfillment of the symbolism of them continues on in Christ.

*Trumpets to gather the people together
Trumpets to set them off on their way
Two silver trumpets to be blown whenever
Blown whenever the Lord’s mouth does say*

*The people begin their advance at their sound
And the people come before the Lord when they are heard
Come My people, gather around
Listen to the trumpets blast forth My word*

*I have a plan of redemption laid out before you
And that plan is blasted forth with a shout
Listen to the trumpets; so you are instructed to do
In their sounding forth, you shall have no doubt*

*Redeemed! This is what the trumpets proclaim
So I have sworn by My holy name*

II. As a Memorial Before the Lord (verses 9 & 10)

⁹ “When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you,

The verse begins with *v’ki*, or “And when.” There is already no doubt that war will be coming. It has been implied, and it will be stated explicitly again. They will go into an inhabited land, and they will meet them in battle. However, it is already called “your land” by the Lord. There will be battles to take possession, and it is obvious that there will be battles to retain possession. It is not an “if,” but a “when,” that this will occur. When it does...

^{9 (con’t)} then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets,

The word is *rua*, shout. It is a battle alarm to sound as a memorial. We can select two particular times when this is seen. The first is from Numbers 31. This is even before entering Canaan, meaning the land of their possession. However, it is a battle against the adversary, and so the trumpets accompany the army –

“So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel one thousand from *each* tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. ⁶ Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from *each* tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand. ⁷ And they warred against the Midianites, just as the Lord commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. ⁸ They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of* those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.” Numbers 31:5-8

The second is found in the land at a time when the northern tribes of Israel were arrayed in battle against the southern tribe of Judah. In essence, the adversary is Judah’s own brothers. This is found in 2 Chronicles 13:12-16 –

“Now look, God Himself is with us as *our* head, and His priests with sounding trumpets to sound the alarm against you. O children of Israel, do not fight against the Lord God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper!’ ¹³ But Jeroboam caused an ambush to go around behind them; so they were in front of Judah, and the ambush *was* behind them. ¹⁴ And when Judah looked around, to their surprise the battle line *was* at both front and rear; and they cried out to the Lord, and the priests sounded the trumpets. ¹⁵ Then the men of Judah gave a shout; and as the men of Judah shouted, it happened that God struck Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ¹⁶ And the children of Israel fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hand.”

The carrying of these trumpets to battle was, however, not necessarily to stimulate the troops to fight. Although that is always a positive aspect of battle to hear the blow of the trumpet, that is only a secondary benefit of this for Israel. The main purpose is next explicitly stated by the Lord...

^{9 (con’t)} **and you will be remembered before the Lord your God,**

The Lord promised that the people would be remembered by Him at the sounding of the trumpet blasts. Thus, carrying the trumpets to battle, and sounding them in the battle are acts of faith in and of themselves. Whether these were carried into all of their battles or not is not stated. Other trumpets are noted in battle, such as Joab sounding the *shophar* in 2 Samuel 18:16 to call the people from engaging the enemy any longer. Such calls were made according to the rules of war set up by commanders and the like. But the use of these silver trumpets is specifically for calling for them to be remembered before the Lord. As such, a promise is made...

⁹ (con't) **and you will be saved from your enemies.**

This must be taken in a rather broad sense. The trumpets could not be used as a talisman to prompt God to act in an unholy way. Further, the word “you” is plural, meaning that the people would be saved, but individuals were still sure to die in battle. In the end, even if the battle was lost, as long as Israel remained, it would have to be considered a fulfilled promise of the Lord.

At what point could this be considered as a failed promise by the people would be up to how they perceived what had happened, but the very fact that someone could question the matter meant that he was still alive to do so. The Lord did remember Israel, and He has always saved them from their enemies. The two trumpets were carried off to Rome at the destruction of the temple in AD70. Can that be considered a failure of this promise? No. Here we are 2000 years later, and Israel has still remained saved.

As a side note, two words are translated as “enemy” in this one verse. The first is *tsar*, adversary. The second is *oyev*, enemy. The Lord says there will be adversaries, and he proclaims that as such, they are enemies who will be defeated.

¹⁰ **Also in the day of your gladness,**

u-beyom simkhatkhem – “and in *the* day of your joy.” This signifies any time that the people celebrated a day of joy as a national unit. The Lord will define some of them in the words ahead, but it is not limited to those times. The trumpets were blown at the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem by David. They were blown at the dedication of Solomon’s Temple when the ark was brought to its place of rest. They were blown at the time of the cleansing of the temple by King Hezekiah. They were blown at the laying of the foundation of the second temple in Ezra, and at the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah.

The day of Israel’s joy even includes the day in which the wicked queen Athalia was dethroned and a legitimate king was reinstated on the throne of David. He received the throne, and she got whacked outside the house. Such times of national joy were times to sound the trumpets as a means of thanks and praise to the Lord.

What should be noted is that each of these days of gladness in some way points to the Lord: the movement of the ark which pictures Christ – blow the trumpets; the dedication of the temple where Christ reigns – blow the trumpets; the cleansing of that

same temple – blow the trumpets; the restoration of the Davidic line leading to Christ – blow the trumpets.

10 (con't) in your appointed feasts,

u-b'moadekhem – “and in your appointed feasts” is speaking of the feasts of the Lord. This would include the weekly Sabbath, and also the seven annual feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23. It would also include the later instituted Feast of Purim as noted in Esther 9, and the Feast of Dedication, now known as Hanukkah, noted in John 10. These are all recorded in Scripture, though the last is only noted in the New Testament. However, it was, and to this day still remains, a day of national joy. All of these feasts point to Christ. The Leviticus 23 feasts, and the Feast of Purim have all been analyzed in previous sermons. The Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah, points to Christ as the Light of the world. In all of them – blow the trumpets!

10 (con't) and at the beginning of your months,

The beginning of the months, or the New Moon celebrations, are mentioned 22 times in the Old Testament, but the reason for them is not detailed in any special way. They are mentioned in connection with the Sabbath quite often, and also in connection with the other feasts. In Amos, we see selling grain was not allowed on the New Moon, just like the Sabbath. Thus it was a time of rest and celebration in anticipation of the month ahead. Psalm 81 is often cited as a fulfillment of what is said in this verse. There it says –

“Sing aloud to God our strength;
Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.
² Raise a song and strike the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the lute.
³ Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon,
At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.” Psalm 81:1-3

However, the word for “trumpet” in the psalm is *shophar*, a ram’s horn. That would be trumpets blown by the people in joy, not the horns blown by the priests as a memorial. Though both occurred, one thought should not be mixed with the other. The silver trumpets were as a memorial for remembrance by the Lord. The ram’s horn would be for a celebration by the people to the Lord. Again, like the other feasts, Paul shows in Colossians 2:16 that the new moon celebrations pointed to Christ – blow the trumpets!

^{10 (con't)} **you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings;**

Only two types of sacrifices and offerings are mentioned here, the burnt offerings and the peace offerings. The first is an offering burnt wholly up to God. The second is an offering which is shared between the Lord and the offeror. Having the horn blown over these is again as a memorial to the Lord. In the first, it is as a memorial of the life of the Lord Jesus offered wholly to God. In the second, it is a participation in that same life between God and His people, comparable to our Lord's Supper today. Both look to the work of the Lord on our behalf – blow the trumpets!

^{10 (con't)} **and they shall be a memorial for you before your God:**

The blowing of the horns over the offering appears to be as important in type and picture as the offering itself. Here we are explicitly told this. The offering is made, but the sounding of the trumpet is what is said to make it as a memorial before their God, and to ensure they understand that not just any god is their God, he firmly states that all of these things only apply because...

^{10 (fin)} **I am the Lord your God."**

Ani Yehovah Elohekhem – I am Yehovah your God. It is the often repeated and emphatic statement that the same God who brought them out of Egypt is the same God who is with them at Sinai, and who is the same God who will be with them at all times that the details of this covenant apply. There is no time that the words here can be twisted to include any other god. The blowing of the trumpets to another god is to waste the very breath of air which makes them sound. The Lord has spoken the words, the words apply only to Him, and Israel's relationship with Him is dependent on that fact. Not one part of this body of law can be transferred to another god.

*Trumpets of silver calling to the Lord
As a memorial of the surety of His Word*

III. Why Two Trumpets; Why Silver Trumpets?

The surface meaning of what we have seen is rather obvious, but it doesn't really explain why two trumpets were mandated, or why they were to be silver. They could have been gold, bronze, or even ram's horns. And there could have been one or five mandated. As

we learned, the fact that there are two sons of Aaron at this time doesn't sufficiently answer why two were mandated.

Two in the Bible signifies that a difference exists. In one, no difference exists, but in two, there is a division, and thus a difference. If there are two things, even though they differ, they form the whole. And so two signifies a contrast, but a confirmation. There is good and there is evil. They contrast, but they confirm the totality of the state of morality. There is light and there is dark. They contrast, and yet they confirm the state of light or its lack. Jesus is the God/Man. They contrast, and yet they confirm the nature of Christ. The word of God is of two testaments. They contrast, but they confirm the word of God – law/grace; prophets/apostles; pre-incarnation/post-incarnation; etc.

The two trumpets are for the gathering of the people, for the advancement of the people from their camps, for remembrance in battle, and as a memorial before God at various times. Those are the four main reasons. Though each is further defined, these are the four main reasons for them.

Simply stated, the purpose of each of these four is found mirrored in the purpose of the word of God. It is to gather God's people. It is to advance them forward as they go. It is for the people to be remembered before the Lord in battle. And it is as a memorial before God at the various times of our lives which point to Christ. The two trumpets then reflect the two divisions of the word of God as we have already described them.

The reason that they are silver is because silver, as we know, pictures redemption. Some have tried to equate the silver to the Bible itself by using the words of Psalm 12 which say, "The words of the Lord are pure words, *Like* silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times." That is not a good analogy. The word isn't being equated to silver, but rather the purity of the silver. The Word of God, however, does portray the redemption of man. From its earliest pages, to its very last, this is one of the several main themes of Scripture, and it is what the silver of these trumpets is picturing.

In Exodus 12:14, the keeping of the Passover was to be to Israel a memorial to the Lord. In Exodus 30, the silver ransom money was then equated directly to the blood of the Passover and was to be a memorial before the Lord as an atonement for them. In Leviticus 23, the first day of the seventh month, the day known as Yom Teruah, was to be a holy convocation and a memorial before the Lord. That looked forward to the day of Christ's birth, when the One who would come to redeem man entered into humanity. Here in Numbers, the silver and the trumpet are now combined into one, picturing the word of God which proclaims the Word of God, the coming Lamb of God. It is this then

which is the memorial before the Lord. When we hold this word to read it, when we open it to preach from it, when we plug it into our CD and listen to it, we are having the blast of two silver trumpets proclaiming God's redemption in Christ blasted before us.

The memorials in Scripture, and the memorial which is Scripture, are used to bring God's people to being redeemed. They are to bring to remembrance the past deliverance of His people, and they continue to remind His people of that same state of being – redeemed. The redemption silver of the ransom money for Israel was used in the tabernacle construction. That shows us that everything about our redemption stands on Christ and is supported by Christ alone. The silver of the trumpets shows us that the redemption of Christ is only revealed in Scripture, but it is to be found in both testaments as they together blow forth the glorious message of God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself by no longer imputing our trespasses to us.

If you wonder why no memorial was blown over the sin offerings, it is because God no longer remembers our sins. They are gone. The memorial is only blown over that which pictures Christ's life wholly given up for us, and our life together with Him in fellowship. Here we have two trumpets of silver, blowing as a memorial of the great and wonderful things that God has done in Christ from the very foundation of the world itself, and off into a glorious eternity from this day and forevermore.

As a final note concerning these things, the trumpets were used to call the people together. This is what the Bible is for. When we come together, it is to learn this word. They were also for the advancement of the people. This is what the Bible is for – be it advancement within the ministry, in sending forth missionaries, or for advancing in our own personal, spiritual walk. They were also for remembrance in battle. This is what the Bible is for. We are, as Paul clearly tells us in Ephesians 6, in a spiritual battle. We must rely on this word when engaging in it. When we do, we will be remembered before the Lord.

They were also for times of joy and feasts. This is what the word of God is for. It is to be shared at all times when we gather, to read and cherish within our hearts, and as a devotion to God. And, they were blown over the burnt and peace offerings. This is what the word of God is for as well. It is the intimate connection that we have with God which tells us of Christ's giving of Himself for us, and of our fellowship with our heavenly Father because of Him.

Let us not forget the lesson of the two silver trumpets. There are two testaments of God's word which together peal out the sound of man's redemption which is found in

Christ Jesus our Lord. In all things good and holy, blow the trumpets! Let their sound go forth to the glory of God and as a memorial to Him that we are seeking His face in this life. Indeed, blow the trumpets! Let the trumpets resound!

Closing Verse: *“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth;
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.*

⁵ Sing to the Lord with the harp,

With the harp and the sound of a psalm,

⁶ With trumpets and the sound of a horn;

Shout joyfully before the Lord, the King.” Psalm 98:4-6

Next Week: Numbers 10:11-36 *The walking just went on and on...* (From Sinai to Paran)
(19th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Two Silver Trumpets

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words He was to him then relaying

“Make two silver trumpets for yourself
You shall make them of hammered work; so you shall do
You shall use them for calling the congregation
And for directing the movement of the camps
———as I am now instructing you

When they blow both of them
———all the congregation shall gather before
You at the tabernacle of meeting’s door

But if they blow only one, then the leaders
———the heads of the divisions of Israel
Shall gather to you, as to you these directions I now tell

When you sound the advance therein

The camps that lie on the east side shall then their journey begin

When you sound the advance the second time
Then the camps that lie on the south side therein
Shall begin their journey
They shall sound the call for them, their journeys to begin

And when the assembly is to be gathered together around
You shall blow, but not the advance sound

The sons of Aaron, the priests
Shall blow the trumpets as one of their vocations
And these shall be to you as an ordinance
Forever throughout your generations

“When you go to war in your land
— — —-against the enemy who oppresses you
Then you shall an alarm with the trumpets sound
And you will be remembered before the Lord your God
And you will be saved from your enemies, even if they abound

Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts
And at the beginning of your months
— — —-when you make your profferings
You shall blow over your burnt offerings the trumpets
And over the sacrifices of your peace offerings

And they shall be a memorial before your God for you
I am the Lord your God, so these things you shall do

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 10:11-36 (FROM SINAI TO PARAN)

What kind of a guide are you? There are people that need to be led, and there is a place that they need to be led to. Today's passage is a curious one when you first read it. The people are said to have started out on the journey from Sinai to Paran. There is then a sudden, even abrupt, introduction of someone named Hobab. It is a name never mentioned before in Scripture, and which will only be mentioned one more time, in Judges 4:11.

After a short conversation with him, the story reverts back to say that the people departed the mountain of the Lord on a journey of three days. Its apparent that the Lord put this person, Hobab, in here for a reason. Moses asks him to be their eyes on the journey. Some people are just blind. They may have the path right in front of them, and they may even have the evidence of the Lord – in all of His splendor – directly in front of their faces, and yet, they cannot find their way. How do we know this is correct? Paul says as much in Romans 9 with the words –

“Their sound has gone out to all the earth,
And their words to the ends of the world.” Romans 10:18

People know the truth of God, but they can't seem to find their way to following Him. This is how Israel was, apparently. Moses knew it. The Lord is there in the pillar, and the ark is going before them, and yet Moses asks for a guide for the people.

So, let me ask again, “What kind of guide are you?” The Lord does His part in the equation, making Himself painfully evident to the people of the world. And yet, it still takes us, doing our part, to lead people on the proper path and to conduct our affairs in the right way in His presence.

Think about it. How many denominations in Christianity alone are there? Well, depending on who is counting, the number goes from 1,100 up to about 43,000. Surely, they can't all be right. After that, we could count the number of other religions in the world who are certainly not right, but there is no point. In the end, there is a path which needs to be taken, and there needs to be people to be eyes for those who are too blind to find it on their own, or to know what to do once the path is found.

Text Verse: *“I was found by those who did not seek Me;
I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.” Isaiah 10:20*

Somehow, there are those who don't seek the Lord, and yet they find Him. And yet Israel, supposedly seeking the Lord, completely missed Him. How did that happen? I mean, like Israel in the wilderness, the Lord was right there in front of them, and yet they needed a guide along the way. And then when Jesus came, He stood right there in front of them. There He stood, in all of His glory and splendor, and... they missed Him. What they need is a guide to lead them back to Him, and guess what, it ain't going to happen all by itself. They are not seeking Him now, and the only way they will find Him is if we open our mouths and speak. And this isn't just true with the Jews. It is true with people who sit in churches every single week of their lives. And yet, they are no closer to finding that path than a blind man is. Without someone leading them to it, they will never find it.

But it needs to be someone who already knows the way. Hobab has been asked to assist Israel. The account today doesn't say if he accepted the invitation or not. Did he? Well, let's go through the verses and find out what we can. And you, will you not just sit there in your chair once a week feeling satisfied that you know the path! Will you please respond to the call to be the guide the Lord intends you to be? The path is there, you know what it is, where it is, and what it takes to get on it, so please do what you're called to do. That is... after you hear today's sermon. You've already started, and so you might as well stick it out. It's a marvelous part of His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Day of Departure (verses 11-28)

¹¹ Now it came to pass

v'hi – “and it came to pass.” It is a very common expression in the Hebrew, used well over 750 times, and yet this instance bears an excitement and a wonder that is almost palpable. Something marvelous is about to be described, and which will lead the people of Israel into the second major section of the book of Numbers. The first section was a “wilderness section” found in Sinai. That went from verse 1:1 to 10:10. This next section is what we might term a “road trip.” It is a time of travel, going from verse 10:11 to 12:16. It covers the travel between Sinai and the next wilderness section found in the wilderness of Paran.

^{11 (con't)} **on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year,**

A review of several dates needs to be made in order to understand the significance of this date now provided. First, Exodus 12:40 established the time of the exodus as the year 2514AM. From there, Israel had a 45-day journey to reach Mount Sinai, where the Israelites worked to construct the Sanctuary. In Exodus 40:17 it stated,

“And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first *day* of the month, *that* the tabernacle was raised up.”

The date now in numbers is fifty days later. It has been 395 days since the Exodus (one year, one month, and five days), and it is 350 days since their arrival in Sinai (Exodus 19:1), or just ten days short of one year. It is still the year 2515AM. The Lord is being extremely precise in these dates. The second Passover has been observed, and the details concerning the silver trumpets are the last item recorded to date. There is a reason why that was so. They are about to be used for their intended purpose...

^{11 (con't)} **that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony.**

The sign of Israel’s time of departure has come. As it said –

“Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents.” Numbers 9:17

But what is the significance of this day? Sergio, while reading Numbers just a couple months ago, emailed with a marvelous pattern. Because the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month, and it is now the 20th day of the second month, that means that it matches the Jubilee pattern. It was set up and rested 49 days, and it was then set for departure on the 50th day. There is a sense of Jubilee, or release, from the labors of Sinai, after the erection of the tabernacle.

What is also rather amazing, based on this verse, is that from this day until Israel crosses the Jordan into Canaan, it will be exactly 14,000 days – to the day – by the biblical calendar. That is recorded in Joshua 4:19 –

“Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.” Joshua 4:19

That was the 10th day of the first month of the 41st year. Subtracting one from another, the count is exactly 14,000 days. More interestingly, is the pattern which is seen which follows this. Christ was hailed by Israel as their King on 6 April AD32. They rejected Him, and exactly 14,000 days later, on 5 August AD70, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people were scattered.

The people saw the glory of the Lord on Mount Sinai, and yet they disbelieved (Numbers 14) and were punished. The people saw the glory of Christ Jesus, they disbelieved, and they were again punished. It is a pattern which bears the divine mark of God's work in redemptive history, verifying that Christ Jesus is Yehovah incarnate. For now in Numbers though, it is time for Israel to begin its trek to the Land of Promise, as is seen in the next words...

¹² And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys;

Israel has set out, as it says, from the Wilderness of Sinai. Sinai means "Bush of the Thorn." Israel has, during all of this time, revealed the glory of the Lord in type and shadow. The name Sinai has been used to anticipate the work of Christ on Calvary where He would bear the crown of thorns. It is the ultimate picture of everything seen over these past days and months. From there, Israel will trek to another wilderness location, next named...

^{12 (con't)} then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran.

The cloud went until it arrived in Israel's next place of rest, the Wilderness of Paran. However, Paran is not the first stop, but the third. The words here summarize the trip from beginning to end.

Paran comes from the same root as *porah*, meaning a branch. But the idea from which it comes is that of ornamentation. That is found in the root of both words, *paar*, signifying to beautify or glorify. Abarim defines the name then, not on it being a place abundant in foliage, but in the sense of glory, because it is there, in that area, that the Lord had deposited His covenant law. From there, they make the obvious connection that the next time this occurred was when He once again deposited a New Covenant in human form in the Person of Jesus Christ. In other words, here we are being given a picture in Israel's first move. From the Sinai, the cross of Christ as the fulfillment of the Law, to Paran, the New Covenant in Christ, where He rules from heaven. One precedes the other, and one leads to the next. This is why John 1:14 says –

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

It was only after the cross and resurrection that they realized the true glory of Christ. It is only after Sinai that Israel goes to Paran, or “Glorious.” Israel’s very movements are being used to show what God would do and reveal in Christ.

¹³ So they started out for the first time according to the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

The trek now beginning is described in Deuteronomy 1:19. There it says, “So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites.” The terrible nature of the wilderness will be seen in the verses ahead as they progress. For now, the departure is said to be *al pi Yehovah b’yad Mosheh*, or “according to the mouth of Yehovah, by the hand of Moses.” This movement is now described by the order of precedence of arrangement around the tabernacle, which has already been described, but which is now explained in order of departure...

¹⁴ The standard of the camp of the children of Judah set out first according to their armies; over their army was Nahshon the son of Amminadab.

As we saw in the previous sermons, Judah, or “Praise” goes first before the Lord. It is the tribe from which Jesus descends, and the tribe from which we derive the term “Jew” today. They are the tribe which was situated furthest east, and they are first to depart. Nahshon means Enchanter, or Serpent-person. Amminadab means My Kinsman Is Noble or People of the Prince. Along with Judah, marching under their standard, and yet individual armies, are two other tribes to depart with them. First...

¹⁵ Over the army of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nethanel the son of Zuar.

Second to travel is Issachar, or “He is Wages.” Nethanel means Given of God. Zuar means Little One. Next is...

¹⁶ And over the army of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon.

Third to travel is Zebulun, or “Glorious Dwelling Place.” Eliab means My God is Father. Helon means Very Strong. Next...

17 Then the tabernacle was taken down;

After the tribes to the east had begun their march, the tabernacle itself was taken down. It would follow immediately after this first set of armies under Judah's standard.

17 (con't) and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set out, carrying the tabernacle

Gershon means "Exiled One." Merari means "My Bitterness."

18 And the standard of the camp of Reuben set out according to their armies; over their army was Elizur the son of Shedeur.

After the tabernacle, the tribes from the south side were next to break down and depart. They fall under the main standard of Reuben, meaning "See a Son." Elizur means God of the Rock. Shedeur means Spreader of Light.

19 Over the army of the tribe of the children of Simeon was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.

Simeon means, "He who hears." Shelumiel means Peace of God. Zurishaddai means Rock of the Almighty.

20 And over the army of the tribe of the children of Gad was Eliasaph the son of Deuel.

Gad means "Good Fortune." Eliasaph means God has Added. Deuel means Known of God.

21 Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. (The tabernacle would be prepared for their arrival.)

Kohath means "Obedience," or "Congregation." It is this family of Levi who is given the responsibility for *ha'miqdash*, or "the holy things." The word literally signifies the sanctuary, but in this case, it is speaking of the things for which the sanctuary was constructed, meaning those items which were carried by man, not transported on wagons. They follow after Reuben because this would then allow time for those of Gershon and Merari to unload the wagons and have the tabernacle set up and ready for their arrival. They would march directly to it, place them where instructed, and then the priests would conduct the tasks necessary to have them ready for service.

Interestingly, Reuben – the second set of tribes to set out – follows the sanctuary, and behind him are the sacred things of the tabernacle. Thus, his name, “See a Son” is perfectly reflected in his position. Both to the front and to the rear of his standard are those things which picture the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

²² And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set out according to their armies; over their army *was* Elishama the son of Ammihud.

The tribes to the west of the sanctuary broke camp next, following those sacred objects carried by the Kohathites. Ephraim, or “Twice Fruitful,” is the main standard. Elishama means God has Heard. Ammihud means My Kinsman is Glorious. Next, and with him is...

²³ Over the army of the tribe of the children of Manasseh *was* Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.

The main meaning of Manasseh is “To Forget.” Gamaliel means Reward of God. Pedahzur means The Rock has Ransomed.

²⁴ And over the army of the tribe of the children of Benjamin *was* Abidan the son of Gideoni.

Benjamin means, “Son of the Right Hand.” Abidan means Father of Judgment. Gideoni means Feller (as in one who cuts down).

²⁵ Then the standard of the camp of the children of Dan (the rear guard of all the camps) set out according to their armies; over their army *was* Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

Taking up the rear of the entire procession would be the camps found on the north side of the sanctuary. Dan was the main standard of these armies. Dan means “Judge.” Ahiezer means Brother of Help. Ammishaddai means My Kinsman is the Almighty. Along with Dan were two tribes, starting with...

²⁶ Over the army of the tribe of the children of Asher *was* Pagiel the son of Ocran.

Asher means “Happy.” Pagiel means Occurrence of God. Ocran means Troubled. Also under the standard of Dan was...

²⁷ And over the army of the tribe of the children of Naphtali *was* Ahira the son of Enan.

Naphtali means, “My Wrestling.” Ahira means Brother of Purpose. Enan means Having Eyes.

28 Thus was the order of march of the children of Israel, according to their armies, when they began their journey.

The order is set, as it says, according to their armies. Taking the meaning of the names of the tribes, this is what we come up with –

Praise / He is Wages / Glorious Dwelling Place

Sanctuary – Gershon means “Exiled One.” Merari means “My Bitterness.”

See a Son / He Who Hears / Good Fortune

Holy Things – Kohath means Congregation (Obedience)

Twice Fruitful / To Forget / Son of the Right Hand

Judge / Happy / My Wrestling

*We are on our trek to the Promised Land
Setting out, the Lord goes before us
We are safe when in Him we make our stand
And so we shall faithfully follow the Lord Jesus*

*Though we are in a wilderness, we will surely be brought out
He will guide us every step of the way
In this walk, Him we will bless – and we shall never doubt
Our faith will remain strong day unto day*

*Our arrival is a sure guarantee
And so in our hearts we shall never doubt
Until we stand before Him at the glassy sea
And there to Him we shall joyfully shout*

II. A Beloved Gentile Among Israel (verses 29-36)

29 Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law,

The account suddenly, and without any explanation, turns to this person Hobab. He is 1) the son of Reuel, 2) the Midianite, and 3) Moses’ *khathan*, or father-in-law. Thus, he is the same person mentioned in Exodus 18 who was there called Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law. Or, he is his son, who accompanied Jethro. Either way, it

was explained during that Exodus 18 sermon that the events recorded there occurred between Numbers 10:10 and 10:11, just prior to the departure of Israel from Sinai. This now completes that account. The reason for its placement in Exodus was explained at that time. Hobab, or *Khovav*, means “Beloved.” Reuel means “Friend of God.” Midian means “Place of Judgment.”

²⁹ (con’t) **“We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, ‘I will give it to you.’**

The words are spoken prior to the departure recorded in the previous verses. But the account is recorded now as a logical insert to show what occurred at the time of the call for departure. A decision had to be made concerning what Hobab wanted to do in relation to moving or not moving with Israel. In hopes of him coming along, we next read...

²⁹ (con’t) **Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good things to Israel.”**

It is obvious that Moses wanted him to join them on their trek to the Promised Land. As the Lord has promised good things to Israel, so he is asking Hobab to share in those same good things by joining them on their journeys, and becoming a part of them.

³⁰ **And he said to him, “I will not go, but I will depart to my *own* land and to my relatives.”**

It is a certainty that Jethro did return to his home. That is recorded in Exodus 18:27 –

“Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land.”

-Exodus 18:27

If Jethro is Hobab, then he departed according to his word here. If he is Jethro’s son, being given the same title, then Moses is asking him to separate from his elderly father and his home people, and to join the people of God on their trek to Canaan. This second option is possible as we will see in another two verses...

³¹ **So Moses said, “Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes.**

Despite his adamant desire to return to his own land and relatives, Moses again implores him to stay, explaining that he is knowledgeable concerning the land, the ways of the

land, and about how to interact with the land. The statement, “and you can be our eyes,” implies that they were blinded to the nature of the journey, they were incapable of seeing the avenues to easy travel and proper camping, they were unaware of the haunts of enemies and how they would lay out ambushes, and so on. To be their eyes, then, means that he would be the one to lead the blind on their journey.

Out of this arises an obvious question. “Why, if the Lord is leading Israel, would they need someone to tell them these things?” The answer is the same found in the establishment and running of a church, or a reliance on the success of a company started under the principles of the Lord, or a marriage dedicated to the Lord, and so on. The answer is, as Adam Clarke plainly says it, “Man cannot do God’s work; and God will not do the work which he has qualified and commanded man to perform.” There are things the Lord will do in leading His people, and there are things His people must do in following Him. Moses, understanding this, continues...

³² And it shall be, if you go with us—indeed it shall be— that whatever good the Lord will do to us, the same we will do to you.”

The repetition of the word *v’hayah*, or “and it shall be,” is a spoken stress of the guarantee of what is promised. Whatever good they receive from the Lord, it will be granted also to Hobab and his posterity. The words end the conversation and nothing is recorded as to what his decision is. And so we can only guess based on the rest of the evidence found in Scripture. First, the descendants of this man are recorded as living in the land of Israel. That is seen in Judges 1:16 –

“Now the children of the Kenite, Moses’ father-in-law, went up from the City of Palms with the children of Judah into the Wilderness of Judah, which *lies* in the South *near* Arad; and they went and dwelt among the people.” Judges 1:16

There, he is called “the Kenite,” indicating the area in which he settled. He is again seen in Judges 4:11 –

“Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which *is* beside Kedesh.” Judges 4:11

A likely reference to them is again made at the time of Saul –

“Then Saul said to the Kenites, ‘Go, depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.’” 1 Samuel 15:6

Because of these references, a couple options are possible: 1) Jethro and Hobab are the same person, and after Jethro returned to his home, as is recorded in Exodus 18, he later joined with Israel as their guide. 2) Jethro and Hobab are father and son. Jethro returned to Midian, but Hobab relented and joined Moses, maybe after taking his father home. (The word *khathan* does not necessarily mean “father-in-law,” but an in-law of some sort). No matter, Hobab did join with Israel, but he never became a part of Israel, meaning a convert through circumcision of the flesh. He remained a Gentile. We know this because his descendants do come into Canaan, and their kindness to Israel was long remembered by the Israelites, and yet they remained Gentiles, receiving the same promises as Israel.

For now, what is certain is that Israel departed Sinai as the Lord directed. Whenever he joined them, his descendants after him entered and remained in the land of Canaan.

³³ So they departed from the mountain of the Lord on a journey of three days;

This is the actual departure which was first recorded and anticipated in verse 12. The intervening verses were placed where they are to dispose of the matter requesting Hobab join with Israel on their trek. With those verses complete, the actual moment of departure for the people is recorded. Here, Sinai is called, “the mountain of the Lord.” It is a term that will later be used by Isaiah to describe Jerusalem, where the temple of the Lord is, and where Christ will sit in authority.

In their first journey, they travel a distance requiring three days. The meaning is probably two-fold. First, there would have been two periods of stopping the procession without setting the camp in its expected layout. Secondly, the entire journey is one trek, even if interrupted by periods of rest. From the time they left, until the time they reached the first goal, it is but one journey.

We use the same terminology today. If we drive from Florida to Oregon, we might take four days. It is one journey, even if we stop for three nights. Further, we don’t consider the stops as anything other than rests on the larger trek. A second option is that the distance of the journey took three days, even if there were extended periods of time at each stop. If we travel to Oregon, which is a four-day drive, but we stop for a week at

each stop, it will take us a month to make the four-day journey. Either is possible because no specific days are given after that in verse 11.

³³ (con't) and the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them for the three days' journey,

Some find a contradiction in these words. The holy objects were said to travel between the standard of Reuben and the standard of Ephraim. To resolve this, some say it means that the ark symbolically led the congregation, as a general is said to do so, even if he is in the middle or rear of the advancing army. However, there is no reason to assume that this is the case. It says the ark went before them, and that in no way contradicts that the other holy objects went between the tribes as indicated. Where the ark was, so was the pillar of cloud, high above. It was a sign to all behind that the Lord was leading.

What is interesting is that the ark here is not called the ark of the testimony, which relates to what it contains, but it is rather now called the ark of the covenant of Yehovah because of its purpose and intent for the people of Israel. It is the Lord who goes before His people in covenant faithfulness which is in accord with the covenant between them. In this, He goes forth first...

³³ (con't) to search out a resting place for them.

A new word is introduced here, *tur*. It is a verb to meaning to seek out, spy, or investigate. It cannot be said that the Lord actively searched out a resting place, as if He didn't know where to go, but that He is leading the people. Their eyes on the cloud show them that the Lord is leading to the place searched out for them.

³⁴ And the cloud of the Lord *was* above them by day when they went out from the camp.

In the poetry of the psalms, this cloud is said to have covered all the people. Opinion about what this means varies. Some see it as the cloud covering the entire congregation. Some see it as being above them visibly, but only above the ark. And so on. The two things which are absolutely certain is that 1) The cloud is a special, recognizable cloud known as *anan Yehovah*, or "*the cloud of Yehovah*," and that 2) it was literally above them in some respect. The people would have no doubt that the Lord was with them as they journeyed.

As we know from earlier, it had the appearance of a cloud during the day, and that of fire by night. It was with them during the entire time of their journeys. It was the determining factor of when the people moved, and how long they rested in any given location. When the Lord decided, it was time to again break down camp. At that time, Moses had a special petition of the Lord...

**³⁵ So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said:
“Rise up, O Lord!
Let Your enemies be scattered,
And let those who hate You flee before You.”**

The words of Moses here are closely followed by David in the 68th Psalm –

“Let God arise,
Let His enemies be scattered;
Let those also who hate Him flee before Him.” Psalm 68:1

Moses’ words are an anticipatory look ahead to the resurrection of Christ. The ark is, as we have seen, a picture of Christ, the embodiment of the Law. In His death, He rested from His labors. In His resurrection, the enemies of the Lord are scattered and those who hate Him flee before Him. In the physical petition by Moses for protection from human enemies, there is a picture of the spiritual realm and protection from the forces which work there.

But there is much more than this. In Christ’s resurrection, those who hated Him, and those who continue to hate Him today, are His own people, Israel. The curses of Leviticus 26 prophesy that they would be *scattered*, by Him, even to the utmost parts of the earth. That occurred, and that has continued on for 2000 years. It will continue until He returns to His place of rest, which was prophesied by Isaiah –

“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.” Isaiah 11:10

That is seen in Moses’ words which comprise our final verse of the day...

³⁶ (fin) **And when it rested, he said:**
“Return, O Lord,
To the many thousands of Israel.”

The resting of the ark looks forward to the return of the Lord, but it looks more specifically of the return of the Lord to Israel. The Gentiles sought Him while Israel rejected, even hated Him. The Gentiles streamed to Him; Israel was scattered and they fled. But someday, after the rapture of the church, there will be a change. The exact same phrase, *shuvah Yehovah*, is translated as “restore, Yehovah” in Psalm 126. There, it is a petition to restore the people of Israel from their captivity. As it reads –

“Bring back our captivity, O Lord,
As the streams in the South.” Psalm 126:4

Thus, there is in this a prophetic double entendre. It is a petition for the Lord to *return* to the many thousands of Israel, but it is first a petition to “Restore, O Lord, the many thousands of Israel.” Only in their restoration will He return to them and sit in His place of rest.

As the Lord scattered His enemies, meaning His own people Israel, someday they will call out to Him and He will restore them and He will return to them. Israel is leaving Sinai and is heading to Paran. Christ left the cross and went in glory, to that place which is Glorious. It is this which is seen in our verses today.

This explains why Hobab was mentioned in this passage. It is a picture of the Gentiles seeking after the Lord and finding His rest, even when Israel failed to do so. Hobab was, and he remained, a Gentile. However, as we saw in the Exodus 18 sermons, he is used as a type of Christ. His name means, “Beloved.” For those in Christ, they are – as He is – beloved. Paul’s words to those in Rome explain this relationship. In Romans 9, while citing the prophet Hosea, and when discussing Israel’s rejection of the Lord, he says this about the Gentiles –

“I will call them My people, who were not My people,
And her beloved, who was not beloved.”
²⁶ “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them,
‘You *are* not My people,’
There they shall be called sons of the living God.” Romans 9:25, 26

Moses' petition was for Hobab to be Israel's eyes, implying that they were blinded and in need of him. He refused and returned to his place, all explained in the Exodus 18 sermons. Israel was left with only the Old Covenant types to guide them, and they have been blinded on their journey because of it. Their only sure guide is what they have, for the most part rejected, the New Testament epistles which tell of Christ.

It is – whether popularly accepted or not – the Gentiles who have held to the New Covenant, and who have led the remnant of Israel during the movement of the Ark, meaning Christ, through history. While Israel's bodies have been scattered in the wilderness, the Gentiles have guided the process of understanding God's work in Christ, and leading those few Jews who have been a faithful remnant also spoken of by Paul in Romans 11. Someday, that will change. The Lord will restore, and the Lord will return – to Israel.

This is why the term "mountain of the Lord" is used. It is speaking of Jerusalem where the Jews departed from in their exile, and it is in this exile that they journey for three days before reaching their destination. It is reflective of the words of Hosea, taking a day for a thousand years –

"Come, and let us return to the Lord;
For He has torn, but He will heal us;
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.
² After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight." Hosea 6:1, 2

The restoration is happening in our lifetime. The return cannot be far off. Moses' petition cuts like a sword, and yet it petitions for balm. It is what any faithful leader of the Lord's people should pray for – "Scatter your enemies, O Lord! Make those who hate You flee before You." But at the same time, "Restore Your people O God, and return to them when they are restored." May it be so.

Closing Verse: *"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." Romans 11:25*

Next Week: Numbers 11:1-15 *Through his distress, to the Lord he will get his wordin...* (Moses' Heavy Burden) (20th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

From Sinai to Paran

Now it came to pass on the twentieth day
Of the second month, in the second year, so we see
That the cloud was taken up
From above the tabernacle of the Testimony

And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai
On their journeys, yes they moved on
Then the cloud settled down
In the Wilderness of Paran

So they started out for the first time as we now understand
According to the command of the Lord by Moses' hand

The standard of the camp
Of the children of Judah set out first, but not in a taxicab
According to their armies
Over their army was Nahshon the son of Amminadab

Over the army of the tribe of the children of Issachar
Was Nethanel the son of Zuar

And over the army of the tribe of the children of Zebulun
Was Eliab the son of Helon

Then the tabernacle was taken down
And the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari set out
Carrying the tabernacle
Praising the Lord as they went, no doubt

And the standard of the camp of Reuben
———set out according to their armies, for sure
Over their army was Elizur, the son of Shedeur

Over the army of the tribe of the children of Simeon, by and by
Was Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai

And over the army of the tribe of the children of Gad
———so the record does tell
Was Eliasaph the son of Deuel

Then the Kohathites carrying the holy things set out
The tabernacle would be prepared for their arrival, no doubt

And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim
———set out according to their armies, looking good
Over their army was Elishama the son of Ammihud

Over the army of the tribe of the children of Manasseh, for sure
Was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur

And over the army of the tribe of the children of Benjamin
———as we see
Was Abidan the son of Gideoni

Then the standard of the camp of the children of Dan
The rear guard of all the camps, by and by
Set out according to their armies
Over their army was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai

Over the army of the tribe of the children of Asher
———as they moved on
Was Pagiel the son of Ocran

And over the army of the tribe of the children of Naphtali
Was Ahira the son of Enan, so we see

Thus was the order of march of the children of Israel, as we see
According to their armies, when they began their journey

Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel
The Midianite; Moses' father-in-law too
"We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said

'I will give it to you

Come with us, and we will treat you well
For the Lord has promised good things to Israel

And he said to him, "I will not go, please understand
But I will depart to my own relatives and to my own land

So Moses said, "Please do not leave
Inasmuch as you know, yes to you it is no surprise
How we are to camp in the wilderness
And you can be our eyes

And it shall be, if you go with us—
Indeed it shall be—
That whatever good the Lord will do to us
The same we will do to you; this is my guarantee

So they departed from the mountain of the Lord
On a journey of three days, as it came about
And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them
For the three days' journey, a resting place for them to search out

And the cloud of the Lord was above them by day
———His approval stamp
When they went out from the camp

So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said:
"Rise up, O Lord!
Let Your enemies be scattered
And let those who hate You flee before You."

And when it rested, he said:

"Return, O Lord,
To the many thousands of Israel."

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You

Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 11:1-15 (MOSES' HEAVY BURDEN)

I knew I was in trouble at 8:45 on Monday, 15 October. I did my morning devotional work in the book of Hebrews and got that posted, and then around 5:15 to 5:30 I started typing this sermon. I left for about 45 minutes to clean the mall and 7-11 and then came back home. By 8:45, I thought that I had finally finished the first verse. That was about 2 or 2 ½ hours of typing. Once I got into verse 2, I realized that verse 1 was incomplete. If I was to get 15 verses done at that pace, it would be well into Tuesday morning, without any more breaks, before I got them finished. Fortunately, not all were as complicated as verse 1. But it seemed like it was more than I could bear. Now imagine Moses. He didn't just have his duties as the leader of the people who were all in one accord. Rather, as the account today shows, they were not only not in one accord, they were all over the place.

People were inciting the multitude into rebellion, and there was – literally – nothing that Moses could do to appease them over what had them riled up. If you've ever supervised a group of people, you know how difficult it can be. Every person is an individual who possesses his own biases, pet peeves, neuroses, desires, hopes, faults, failings, and shortcomings. Toss that one in with 10 or 20 of the same, and it is a recipe for difficulty. Now imagine what Moses had to deal with!

Text Verse: *“And the Lord said to Moses, “Has the Lord’s arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not.” Numbers 11:23*

Our text verse comes from the same chapter in which we are looking at, but it's not cheating. Rather, we won't get to that verse until next week. However, it is a good reminder to us now as we begin these almost mournful verses today. Moses has one victory with the Lord which is followed by – quite possibly – the lowest spot of his entire life. He will be found wanting elsewhere, and will be punished for that, but it is probably a more difficult thing to deal with his shortcomings here than it is with his failings later. His obvious care both for the people and for the glory of the Lord's name is a point which will weigh heavily on him. His inability to correct the situation will bring him almost to ruin.

If you are facing, or if you come to face, any situation which seems to be absolutely overwhelming, this passage is a great place to come to in order to see that you are not alone. It is also a great place to come to know that the Lord has it all figured out, in

advance. All we have to do is remain faithful and place the really complicated stuff in His capable hands. He will tend to it because He cares for you. This is a marvelous lesson we can learn from His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Taberah (verse 1-3)

¹Now *when* the people complained, it displeased the Lord;

This seems like a simple set of words to open up the chapter, but it is actually hard to be dogmatic about what is being said. The Hebrew reads *v'hi ha'am kemitonemim ra b'azene Yehovah* – “and it happened the people complainings evil in ears of Yehovah.” The Hebrew can say either as the NKJV, “Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord. Or it can say, “Now when the people complained of their hardship in the hearing of the Lord.” Or it can say, “And it happened the people sinfully complained in the ears of the Lord.” Or, it can even be, “And it happened that the people were evil complainers in the ears of the Lord.”

The word *ra*, or “evil,” can be attributed to the bad things which happened to the people, causing them to complain. It can be ascribed to the evil attitude of the people. It can be that the people were evil because of their complaints. Or, it can be attributed to how it is negatively received by the Lord. Sergio looked at it and ascribed the evil to the people. He said, “And it happened that the people were as evil complainers before the Lord” (SLT).

Young's Literal Translation may give the most precise rendering. He says, “And the people is evil, as those sighing habitually in the ears of Jehovah.” First, the word “when” is not in the Hebrew. Next, the verb “complain” is plural, it says “complainings.” Third, it says, “in the ears of Jehovah.” It is as if a constant whining from an evil people is coming into His ears, deafening out anything else. Adding to this is a new and extremely rare word which is translated as “complain,” *anan*. It signifies to complain or murmur. It is used only here and in Lamentations 3:39, and nowhere else –

“Who *is* he *who* speaks and it comes to pass,
When the Lord has not commanded *it*?
³⁸ *Is it* not from the mouth of the Most High
That woe and well-being proceed?

³⁹ Why should a living man **complain**,
A man for the punishment of his sins?"

Like in Lamentations, the Lord determines the path and the outcome, and yet there is complaint against what He has determined. We don't need to be told why the people complained, we are simply told that they did, and that their attitude is evil in that they did so. If for no other reason, the context of the passage's placement shows this. The people have been brought out of Egypt, they were brought to Sinai and the Lord made a covenant with them, they have been taken care of for over a year as the tabernacle was being built, they have received a priesthood, they have been given the Lord's laws, and they have been divided up into their individual armies. After these many wonders have been brought about, the very last thing recorded was the departure of the people on their way to Sinai as they are led by the pillar of cloud. Nothing has been recorded concerning any hardships. They are still receiving manna, and they are simply on the march to the Land of Promise. And yet, *the very first recorded thing after their departure* is that the people have sighed habitually in the Lord's ears. Literally, in the turning of the page, it is the very first recorded thing to happen – they are found to be evil complainers. It becomes more certain that it is the people's complaints which are being described as evil with the next words...

¹ (con't) **for the Lord heard it,**

v'yishma Yehovah – “and heard Yehovah.” There is no “for” in the words as if it is explaining something. It only says that the complainings of the people were evil in the ears of the Lord, and the Lord heard it. All we need to do is think of the disobedient child in the grocery store. Everything he needs or wants has been, or will be provided, and yet the little whiner just keeps on whining.

He had breakfast, he is assured of food in the hours ahead, he has a great home awaiting him, and he will be taken there when the trip to the store is done, he has mom to care for him, and so on. There is literally nothing else that could be given him to satisfy him any more than he is right at that moment, and yet he whines through the entire time they are there, he whines through the entire trip back, and he whines about everything that happens in the process. Mom may be able to block this out, but dad just happens to be out with them today, and he is hearing what he cannot believe...

¹ (con't) **and His anger was aroused.**

v'yikhar appow – “and burned His nostrils.” It is as if fire shot out of His nose over the whining which was going on. “Ooh, it’s too rocky.” “Oh me, it’s so hot.” “Waaa, all this dust.” The whining was unending as if dealing with spoiled democrats, and the Father simply fumed at their attitude.

¹ (con’t) **So the fire of the Lord burned among them,**

v'tivar bam esh Yehovah – “and burned among them *the* fire of Yehovah.” We are not told what the “fire of the Lord” is. In fact, John Lange says, “The punishment is as obscurely expressed as is the charge of fault.” In other words, just as obscure as the first few words of the verse were, so is the vagueness of the punishment levied upon the camp. We can only speculate what it means. The same idea, however, is found in 2 Kings and in Job. In Job, it may refer to lightning. No matter what it is, it is a directed fire which is destructive and it is ascribed directly to the working of the Lord.

¹ (con’t) **and consumed *some* in the outskirts of the camp.**

The word *akal* means “to eat,” and thus it seems likely that people were consumed. Rather than just tents, it seems to be saying that there is loss of life. And the fire is directed to the *qatseh*, or extremities of the camp. A few things must be considered here. The first is that of the severity of the judgment which came upon them. Time and time again during the Exodus and on the way to Sinai, the people murmured against the Lord and against Moses. And yet, there was not an outburst of this sort from the Lord. However, now the fire of the Lord has gone out and destroyed them. This is similar to what occurred with Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, and uses the same general terminology. The law has now been given, and in the giving of the law, there is the imputation of sin, and then expected judgment. In Hebrews it says –

“For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.” Hebrews 2:2, 3

The word of law was spoken, and now every trespass and disobedience will receive its just reward. The people can no longer expect the same treatment that they had received before they agreed to the terms of the law. This is reflected again in Hebrews where the author there must have been thinking of this very account in Numbers –

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” Hebrews 10:26, 27

And again in Hebrews 12, after telling the people, “For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven...,” He goes on to say, “For our God *is* a consuming fire.” The people of Israel learned this for the first of many times in their history, and it is just a moment after their departure from Sinai.

The second point about these words begs the question, “Why the outskirts of the camp?” Some people say it is because this is where the “mixed multitude” was, as if Israel was pious and noble, and that it was the mixed multitude who were the only ones complaining. There is nothing to substantiate this in either regard. Others have their own explanations concerning it, but the answer falls in the fact that the camp is marching as a military procession.

When an enemy attacks an army, he will start at the outskirts and work his way in. By attacking there, the people will move away from the danger and cluster together. What is obvious here is that the fire coming upon the outskirts then bears a two-fold significance. First, the Lord is acting as an enemy would, working as the author of Hebrews says, in fiery indignation. However, He is also working as a leader of the people He has redeemed, urging them to cluster more closely around Him. In this, it is as if He is saying, “Close to me is safety, but as you depart further from Me, there is danger.” The events of this account are recorded for us by Paul in 1 Corinthians in order to teach us the lessons of the past –

“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷ And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’ ⁸ Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹ nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” 1 Corinthians 10:6-11

The complaining of the people is a sign of distrust in the provision of the Lord. It is an offense to Him, and it demonstrates a lack of faith in His goodness towards those whom

He has redeemed. As Paul uses the wilderness account as typology for us, let us take the lesson to heart, and not provoke the Lord through our distrust of His goodness. He has made His promises, and we shall benefit from each and every one of them in due time. What happens in the interim is simply life. It is what we are expected to endure, be it rocky, hot, dusty, or otherwise. But even in our times of forgetfulness and complaining, there is mercy to be found...

² Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the Lord, the fire was quenched.

We're just now getting to verse 2. Maybe you can see why that particular Monday sermon typing was so difficult! It is remarkable that the people cry out to Moses. There is a definite understanding that they must go through a mediator. And in this, they find Moses, not Aaron, as the appropriate one to mediate. Though the law has been instituted, and though Aaron is designated to mediate, they still defer to Moses. Moses is loved and trusted by the people, and they know that he is loved and trusted by the Lord. Aaron is the one to handle the technical aspects of the law, such as sacrifices.

However, Moses is the one who speaks to God, and he is the one through whom the law came. He is thus filling the type of Christ to come in this regard. It is Jesus who speaks directly to the Father, and it is He through whom the New Covenant has come. Jesus will also handle all of the technical aspects of the priestly duties set before Him. But in this case, it is Moses who more accurately reflects Christ for us in such a time of need. In this verse is another new word in Scripture, *shaqa*, which means "to sink down." It is rather rare, being seen just six times. The fire which came was from the Lord, and the quenching, or sinking down, of it is also from Him. At the petition of Moses, the Lord responds accordingly.

³ So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the Lord had burned among them.

The name Taberah means "Burning." It comes from the word *ba'ar* or "burn" which was used in verse 1 and then again here in this verse. At times, the word is used in regards to purging evil from among the people. That is the intent here. It is a lesson that the people have been evil, and the Lord's intent is to purify them through this fire.

An important point about this location is that Taberah is not the name of a place of encampment. In Numbers 33, where the stops on the way from Egypt to Canaan are recorded, no such place as Taberah is named. Therefore, the location of this

encampment is what is given in verse 34 of this chapter, Kibroth Hataavah, or Graves of Craving. The name Taberah is the place within the encampment where the burning took place. It is representative of hell itself, the place of burning in the graves of craving.

*The flesh which God has sent, it is food indeed
It is sufficient to fill us and give us life anew
And when we have partaken, we will then follow at the lead
Of our Lord, who has given Himself for me and you*

*The dew of heaven has left behind a gift for us
There is bread enough for all to eat
And this only pictures the coming Messiah, Jesus
Oh my! How delicious is this Bread... so very sweet*

*Thank You, O God, for filling our souls in such a way
You have granted us life through Your Son
And so we will exalt You through Him, each and every day
Until when at last this earthly life is done*

*Then we shall praise You forevermore O God
As in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall forever tread*

II. The Manna (verses 4-9)

⁴ Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving;

Here is a word found only once in the Bible, *asaphsuph*. It is a reduplication of the word *asaph* which signifies to gather together, or take away. Translating this as “the mixed multitude” is misleading. The “mixed multitude,” who came out of Egypt and who are mentioned in Exodus, is a completely different pair of words. It is obvious that the different word is intended not to speak of that group, but of a gathering together of miscreants. One could think of any modern gathering of democrats and socialists who do nothing but incite violence and stir up rage and anger. This is the idea that is being relayed here.

Another new word is given, *avah*, or desire. It is an intense desire, and even a craving. It can be good or bad. In Isaiah 26, the prophet says the people desire after the Lord. It is as if they had an intense craving for Him. Here in Numbers, it is not for the Lord, but for

something else. Here, there is a group of people who crave after what they do not have, and they will incite the rest of the people to a state of agitation as well...

⁴ (con't) **so the children of Israel also wept again and said: “Who will give us meat to eat?”**

The rabble led the entire congregation, referred to here as “the children of Israel,” to also join them in their cravings. The words, wept again, don’t make any sense. The last time that any weeping was recorded was in Leviticus 10 at the time of the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. The word is *shuv*, and it indicates to return or turn back.

What is happening here isn’t that they are weeping again, as if connected to the account in verses 1-3. Instead, they “turned back and wept.” In other words, the coming words of verse 5 explain the “turning back.” It is in memory of what they once had in Egypt. In their weeping, they ask for *basar*, or flesh, to eat. It is any type of meat, not specifically what they will ask for next...

⁵ **We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic;**

The people’s craving is for what they once had, but which they no longer can obtain. They first say that the fish came freely. They were so abundant and cheap that it was as if they were free. They also mention five types of plant which they remembered with passion. All five of these are new to Scripture, and only one, leeks, will be seen again. The other four are mentioned only once in the Bible.

To understand the connection to us, the symbolism of Egypt needs to be reconsidered. That was a picture of life in sin. Israel was redeemed out of that. It pictures what Christ did for us when He redeemed us from a life of sin. Their desiring flesh to eat, and the delicacies of Egypt, is a picture of us when we are tempted back into sin. Paul refers to this in Ephesians 2:1-3 –

“And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”

However, in this instance, the people had been redeemed out of sin to life under law. It led to constant failure, because by the law is the knowledge of sin. Our redemption is far greater, because we are not under law, but under grace. As we are under grace, we are not to remember and long for those things which we have left behind, but we should want to live out our lives, not desiring the lusts of the flesh and those things which tempt us. Rather, we are to desire Christ, and be content in Him alone. The opposite of that, however, is seen in the next verse...

⁶ but now our whole being *is* dried up;

The words are hyperbole. The things they have described – flesh, fish, and tasty fruits and vegetables – would be juicy and refreshing. They have been in the desert where there is nothing either juicy or refreshing in that regard, as will be explained. Again, think of life before Christ and what your soul lusted after. Those things were tempting, and they satisfied, but only for a moment.

As soon as the melon is eaten, you are hungry again. That is why the people left Egypt. They were never fully satisfied. If they were, there would have been no need to leave. But leave they did. Now they have forgotten. Let us never forget. We now have that which fills forever, and which will forever satisfy...

^{6 (con't)} *there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!*

Of these words, the supposed scholars at Cambridge say, “No account has been given in this chapter of the sending of the manna; and it is possible that the writer means to describe not a miraculous food from heaven but a natural phenomenon of the district.” It is as if they purposefully want to destroy the narrative and pick apart Scripture. First, the fact that the manna is mentioned here is exactly an account of the sending of the manna. Secondly, if they had read their Bible in full even just once, they could not help to remember these two passages –

“And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.”

-Exodus 16:35

“Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.” Joshua 5:12

It is as if they took Hebrew lessons, learned the language, and then were told to write a commentary on the Bible – not because they are Bible scholars, but because they knew Hebrew. The manna was given for the entire time Israel was in their wanderings. Will one person call out what the manna pictured, please? The explanation is found in John 6–

“I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” John 6:48-51

The manna is a type of Christ to come. The picture, then, is that Israel fed upon that which never ceases, Christ. It is as He said, His flesh. They wanted the flesh of Egypt, but God offered Himself to them. And yet, they found Him bland, unfulfilling, and tedious. No wonder the reaction of the Lord later in this chapter is what it is. He has provided for them from Himself, and they have rejected His gracious offering.

The manna which came for forty years is only mentioned in Numbers in these two verses, and so as we continue through the rest of the book, let us remember that everything that occurs does so while the manna continues to be provided. Every evil that Israel will face is a self-inflicted wound based on their rejection of the Lord. And every day of every account which is given is to be considered one more jab in the eyeballs of the unscholarly folks at the University of Cambridge.

Now, to show that what the Lord provided was not an unfair allowance, but one which demonstrates the ungrateful, perverse nature of the people, a description of the manna is once again provided in the narrative. It was first described in Exodus 16, but because we are as slow to learn and as quick to forget as Israel, we are given our own review of it...

⁷ Now the manna *was* like coriander seed,

v’haman kizra gad – “and the manna *was* like seed coriander.” The word for coriander seed, *gad*, is only used twice in the Bible and both times it is used to describe manna. All translations agree that it is coriander, but some scholars don’t. However, it still is sufficient to describe the size of it, which is small and round. We can now wave goodbye to the word *gad*, or coriander.

7 (con't) **and its color like the color of bdellium.**

Bdellium is a whitish transparent wax-like resin. Along with these two descriptions, Exodus 16 gave a little more information on the manna. First, it said –

“...in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as fine as frost on the ground.*” Exodus 16:13, 14.

There, the word translated as “lay” was *shekavah*, which means “an emission.” It seems like a risqué word to be used to describe the food of the people, but nothing sexual should be inferred. It is defined by scholars as the “(seed of) copulation” (HAW). It then would imply “that which gives life.” And that, in turn, perfectly fits with Jesus’ words of John 6 –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” John 6:32, 33

The term “a small round substance” gives us clues into the manna. The word for “small,” *daq*, literally means “thin.” The word for “round” is *khaspas*, and it means round, but not round like a ball. Rather it is round like a scale. And so we get the idea of a round thing which is very thin.

Also, the word for “frost,” *kphowr*, indicates “to cover” as in the frost covering the ground. That word comes from *kaphar*, which means to appease, atone, forgive, be merciful, etc. It is again a picture of Christ who covers our sins in His mercy. The daily receiving of the bread by Israel looked forward to our atonement and the sustaining of our salvation as we walk in this fallen world. As long as we are here, we can and must continue to rely on the true Bread from heaven to sustain us until we enter the Land of Promise, which is also exactly when Israel’s manna ended.

As the Manna only became visible when the dew had lifted each day, it explains the enigmatic expression used by Jesus in Revelation 2:17 where He promises those who overcome “some of the hidden Manna to eat.” Until the dew lifts, it remains hidden. Finally, in the same chapter of Exodus, it said –

“...and the taste of it *was like wafers made with honey.*” Exodus 16:31

It was described as having the *taam*, or taste, of wafers with honey. But if you think of it, if someone didn't know what wafers and honey tasted like, they would be in the dark about the taste of manna. However, honey is a food that is found pretty much everywhere throughout the entire world. This is because honey bees have been domesticated in all places. Further, honey doesn't spoil and so it can be transported anywhere. This probably isn't coincidence. The taste of the very substance which is described as "bread from heaven," and which pictures Jesus Christ, is pretty much universally known.

And therefore, we have another revelation from God's word. The word is used to describe Jesus and it is said to be "sweeter than honey" to the mouth. Jesus is the Subject of the word and is described in picture through the manna as having the taste of honey. It is like a beautifully wrapped package which has been given to the people of the world.

And so, with all of these images given both here and in Exodus, we can have a pretty good idea of what it looked like. As coriander seed is small and unnoticeable, it forms a picture of Christ – small *in* the eyes of the world and yet the only Source of true nourishment *for* the world. The color white would signify His purity, without any defilement at all.

⁸The people went about and gathered it,

A new word is used here, *shuwt*, or "go about." It signifies roaming from place to place. The gathering of the manna would have been like going out for blueberries. You'd start picking it up here, see a bigger pile there and go to get that. It would be a process of work, but not in the sense of labor. It would be something to anticipate and enjoy, like looking for Christ in the many passages of Scripture, which is exactly the idea that seems to be conveyed here. The gathering itself is explained in Exodus 16 –

““And Moses said to them, “This *is* the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. ¹⁶This is the thing which the Lord has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, *according to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those who are* in his tent.’”

¹⁷Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one’s need. ¹⁹And Moses said, “Let no one leave any of it till morning.” ²⁰Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part

of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹ So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.””” Exodus 16:15-21

8 (con't) ground *it* on millstones or beat *it* in the mortar,

This was never mentioned in Exodus, and it is giving us new insights into the manna. It was hard enough, meaning not sticky, so that it could be ground on a millstone, thus powderizing it so that it could be made into various things – from bread to soup stock, to whatever else cooks use powderized stuff for.

The odd thing is that though it melted as the sun rose and became hot, that was only if it wasn't gathered. When it was gathered in the morning, it apparently became hard like some type of grains so that it could be ground.

If not ground, it could be beaten in a mortar. The word is *duk*, and it is only found here. One can get the sense of beating in a mortar by the sound of the word – *duk, duk, duk*. This would make the manna so that it would be soft and malleable for rolling up into taco shells, although they probably didn't call them taco shells. They probably called them *shawarma* as they do today. It could be beaten into anything else that a mortar is used for as well.

8 (con't) cooked *it* in pans,

The word translated as “cooked” signifies, “to boil.” The word for “pans” means something deeper than a flat pan. This is probably referring to how we make donuts, by putting them in oil and letting them boil until both tasty and delicious.

8 (con't) and made cakes of it;

These would be bread that would be round like a disk, or heaped up into a loaf, and cooked like a cake on a hearth or a fire.

8 (con't) and its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil.

In Exodus, it said it tasted like wafers made with honey. Here it says it is like pastry prepared with oil. There is no contradiction in this. One is speaking of it in its raw state, and the other when it was baked into cakes.

Here though, we have another new word, *lashad*, translated as pastry. It's an important addition to what the manna was like when prepared. The word signifies juicy, or with moisture. In a person, it would be his vitality. It is only used here and in Psalm 32:4 where David said his vitality was turned into the drought of summer.

One might wonder why all of the detail concerning the different ways to prepare the manna, but if the reason for complaining is considered, it becomes obvious. The manna could be eaten plain, cooked, baked, boiled, and so on. As these are all of the ways of preparing any type of food one would eat, it shows that it was a universal basic staple to which anything could be added. If boiled, it could be boiled with spices. If baked, it could be baked with whatever stuffing could be dreamed up. And so on.

When prepared in a certain way, it would be juicy and bring vitality. Every want and need could be met with the manna, but the only true obstacle to overcome would be the thought of eating the same substance each day. Once one simply thought through the obvious though, it would not seem so burdensome. They got it for free, it was always available, it met every need, it came with a guarantee that it would outlast the trip to the Promised Land, and so on. In other words, it was, in its truest sense picturing Christ. We can go roaming about in a thousand different directions, but wherever we go, He will be there. He offers Himself freely, He is always available for us, He meets every need, and He comes with a guarantee that He will outlast our trip to the Promised Land. He will never fail to appear, and He sustains us completely, wholly, and forever. And yet, how often do we turn our hearts back to Egypt, and turn our desires to that which can never satisfy.

The interesting thing is that no matter what is done to the manna, it always reflects Christ. If in its natural state, it tasted like wafers and honey. He is the word which is sweeter than honey to our taste. In its prepared state, it was like pastry prepared with oil. He is the suffering servant who was beaten and bruised, and yet He came forth with vitality and the full measure of the Spirit. In Him, there is never any lack, but only increasing delight and wonder.

⁹ And when the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it.

The wording here shows that the dew came down, and the manna then came down on the dew. It says that the dew lifted in the morning in Exodus 16, and so there is a layering of the dew, hiding it and protecting it from any defilement. As I said earlier, that looks to Christ who gives the hidden manna of Revelation 2:17.

*A heavy burden has been placed on me
It is greater than I can bear
Take this burden Lord, or kill me
To the land of the dead, please send me there*

*I cannot stand in the gap to handle all these things
I am overwhelmed and cannot do it, my Lord
I am ready to snap and my head rings
Here my petition, O God, hear my word*

*I know Your grace is sufficient for me, this I know
But that is enough for only me
How can I carry the load of others, how can it be so?
I am overwhelmed with my burden, O God can't You see?*

III. Moses' Displeasure (verses 10-15)

¹⁰ Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent;

The picture we are to get here is that the rabble who got the people stirred up caused the entire camp to start grumbling, maybe over their manna as it was being prepared. From there, instead of just grumbling in their homes, they start going to the doors of their tents and moaning, "Hey Moses, we are sick – utterly sick – of this manna!" And then more people come out, and they go into a tizzy, casting dust up in the air, moaning, and weeping at their misery. And to think that none of this would have been the case if people simply stopped and considered. But being a society of infants, they collectively whined so much that the noise reached to heaven itself.

¹⁰ (con't) and the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused;

At the rejection of His provision, the Lord saw it as a rejection of Him. The two are united as one thought in the Lord's mind. One cannot reject the word of God without also rejecting the God who gave His word. Such is true with the manna as well.

¹⁰ (con't) Moses also was displeased.

This is a connecting thought which stems from the people's attitude toward him, and the Lord's placement of the responsibility for the people on him. He is venting in two directions at once with seemingly nowhere to go to find relief.

¹¹ So Moses said to the Lord, "Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of all these people on me?"

Here we have the first of several instances where the prophet of God is utterly defeated in his spirit. It will happen with Elijah after he defeats the prophets of Baal. It will happen again with Jonah after he prophesies to Nineveh and they repent at his preaching. The same attitude of despair shows forth, and the same final request for relief is seen in each of them.

Moses has come to the point of utter frustration, and he cannot find it in himself to go on. The burden has become too heavy. It is actually reflective of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane who cried out, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." The burden was so great that only relief is sought.

¹² Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers?

When Moses says, "I," it is emphatic. "Did I conceive?" "Did I beget?" He has been appointed over a people who are unruly, childish, and they are not even his own children. If they were, he could handle them as a parent, but he cannot. They are not his, and yet he has the burden of caring for them. Keil notes, however, that "This is the language of the discontent of despair, which differs from the murmuring of unbelief." He is looking for deliverance, not questioning God's plans or purposes.

One cannot help but see Christ in these questions of his. Did I conceive? "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13). Did I beget? "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1) Carry them ... to the land which You swore to their fathers... "because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5).

Moses felt the burden and required help to do what was not his responsibility. Jesus felt the burden, but did alone what was required, because it is His responsibility. The promise has been made, and He will see it through to the end. This shows us the weakness of the law, both in its mediator and in its ability to accomplish what it was destined to do. It then highlights the infinitely greater New Covenant which accomplishes all that the law could never do.

¹³ Where am I to get meat to give to all these people? For they weep all over me, saying, ‘Give us meat, that we may eat.’

Moses is chided by some for caving into the people’s desire for meat, as if he agrees that they have a valid case in that the manna is insufficient for the health, well-being, and happiness of the people. This is surely not the case. What Moses is concerned about is a riot and his own possible demise.

How do you quell the anger and distrust of several million people who are upset about their lot? Telling them to be satisfied with their manna may be true, but it will not improve his lot one bit. This is a rhetorical question in the same vein as those of the previous verse, nothing more. He is asking how he wound up in the position he finds himself, and he desperately needs relief because...

¹⁴ I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden *is* too heavy for me.

In Exodus 18, Jethro had recommended that Moses divide the people into leaders of thousands, hundreds, and tens in order to take the burden off of him in his administrative and judicial duties. That is not a consideration here. This is something that cannot be delegated or decided upon in that type of capacity. It is an infectious growth of discontent which is probably agreed to by most of those leaders. And even if not, those leaders could do nothing about the matter.

Moses is not asking that his job be terminated. Instead, he is a man who is dealing with a matter which required more than a man could handle. Only God could resolve the matter which lays before him. The burden was too great, and the means of relief was not attainable through his abilities.

¹⁵ If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—

v'im kakah ath oseh li haregeni na harog – “and if like this You are doing to me, kill me, I pray, kill.” The repetition of “kill” with the word *na*, or I pray, along with the form in

which the second word kill is in, shows the impassioned nature of his request. His death would be welcomed in comparison to going on a moment longer. You can almost imagine him curled up on his knees before the ark, unable to lift his eyes, and simply crying out in agony. Again, the parallel to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is striking. This is what Elijah asked for, “Now, Lord, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!” And it is what Jonah asked for, “Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for *it is* better for me to die than to live!” The burden of the office crushed these men, but they each were carried through it for another day of the battle they were called to.

15 (con’t) if I have found favor in Your sight—

The thought here is that death would be a grace in comparison to being left alive. And so as a grace, he begs for it.

15 (fin) and do not let me see my wretchedness!”

The final words today indicate experiencing the matter. “To see my wretchedness” means to live through it. Moses had come to his end, and he wanted no more than to be ended. It shows the truly caring nature of the man. He wanted the best for his people, and he wanted to do the best for the Lord, but in this, he could do neither. To do less than his best would be failure, and indeed in the eyes of the people, he would fail. Their desires could not be met by him.

We leave on this sad note, and it is a good place to do so. The Jews look to Moses as their great lawgiver, and he indeed is. But if they truly looked at the law, including Moses’ role in it, they would see that there is no hope in it, no hope in him, and only futility in pursuing either. The only place where satisfaction can come from is the Lord. The only place where contentment can come from is the Lord, and the only place where hope can come from is the Lord. Trusting in Moses, trusting in the law, or trusting in one’s own accomplishments under the Law of Moses will only lead to futility and dissatisfaction. And ultimately, it will lead to death.

The joy of life, and the joy found in eternal life, can only be experienced through the One whom Moses petitioned to take the burden from Him. That burden, in the ultimate sense, is the yoke of the law itself. And the one whom Moses petitioned is the One who also carried that burden up to the cross of Calvary and who at that place cast it far away. In its place is something better, something light and easy, and something glorious.

Closing Verse: *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

-Matthew 11:28-30

Next Week: Micah 5:1-5 *Of the coming King the Bible does tell...* (The One to Be Ruler in Israel) (Christmas sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Moses’ Heavy Burden

Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord
For the Lord heard it, and His anger was aroused
———so it did become
So the fire of the Lord burned among them
And in the outskirts of the camp consumed some

Then the people cried out to Moses
And when Moses prayed to the Lord
The fire was quenched
According to his prayed word

So he called the name of the place Taberah, as we have learned
Because the fire of the Lord had among them burned

Now the mixed multitude who were among them
Yielded to intense craving; they were in a state of defeat
o the children of Israel also wept again and said:
“Who will give us meat to eat?”

We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt
The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks
———the onions, and the garlic; each meal was a prize
But now our whole being is dried up
There is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!”

Now the manna was like coriander seed, have you ever seen some?
And its color like the color of bdellium

The people went about and gathered it
Ground it on millstones or beat it in the mortar also
Cooked it in pans, and made cakes of it
And its taste was like the taste of pastry prepared with oil
— — — as we now know

And when the dew fell on the camp in the night
The manna fell on it; what an amazing sight!

Then Moses heard the people weeping
Throughout their families, everyone at the door of his tent
And the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused
Moses also was displeased, and so he had to vent

So Moses said to the Lord
“Why have You afflicted Your servant? How did this come to be?
And why have I not found favor in Your sight
That You have laid the burden of all these people on me?

Did I conceive all these people?
Did I beget them, that You should to me say
‘Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child
To the land which You swore to their fathers? Tell me, I pray

Where am I to get meat to give to all these people?
For they weep all over me, saying
‘Give us meat, that we may eat
Give me relief from this, to You I am praying

I am not able to bear all these people alone, You see
Because the burden is too heavy for me

If You treat me like this
Please kill me here and now and end this mess
If I have found favor in Your sight—
And do not let me see my wretchedness!”

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 11:16-35 (BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR)

A person becomes a true Christian by having faith in Christ. The requirement is given, and when it is met, he becomes a part of that holy body. But, unless you think a bit too highly of yourself, you'll have to admit that you aren't the perfect Christian. And in fact, every one of us is on a different level. Still speaking of saved believers, there are some very faithful souls, and there is any degree below that, right down to those who have fallen back into the world's way, having even forgotten the commitment they made. As Christians, we can find sufficiency in the Lord, or we can keep looking back to the world, hoping to find delight or satisfaction in something else. I'm not opposed to people buying a lottery ticket, especially when the jackpot gets up to a billion dollars. A two dollar investment could pay off rather well there. But there are people, including Christians, that seem to lust after the lottery, or the next big thing at work, like a promotion, or the next faster car that they can buy.

Having any of these, or countless other things, is not wrong in and of itself. It is the attitude concerning those things that can be, and usually is, wrong.

Is it wrong to eat quail? Is it wrong to think, "Gee, I'd like to have quail for dinner?" No. This isn't wrong. But it would be wrong if someone said, "Ever since I became a Christian, I haven't been able to afford a single quail for dinner. I used to have quail all the time. This deal stinks." It's not the quail; it's the attitude.

Where we find our ultimate sufficiency is where we will find our fullest joy. If we really love quail, even if it is completely unavailable, but we are still content in Christ, then it doesn't matter if we don't have quail.

Text Verse: *He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens;
And by His power He brought in the south wind.
²⁷ He also rained meat on them like the dust,
Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;
²⁸ And He let them fall in the midst of their camp,
All around their dwellings. Psalm 78:26-28*

The person who says, "I can afford the lottery ticket and this should be fun to see what happens," is in a completely different position than the person who says, "I sure hope I

win the lottery. That will pay off all my bills.” If you have bills you can’t deal with, the last thing you need to do is be buying lottery tickets.

But normally, the people who can afford them the least are those who will spend the most on them. When they get what they ask for, it will almost always turn into a curse. The number of lottery winners who are in worse shape than before they won is huge. They weren’t responsible before they had the money, and they won’t be responsible after they get it. They got what they asked for, and it didn’t profit them at all.

Today we will see a group of people who are unsatisfied with that which is of the highest value of all. In turn, their hearts turn back to what they first had, not realizing that what they want will never satisfy. If you can’t be satisfied in the One who made the quail, you sure won’t be satisfied with the quail He made. Let us remember that only the Lord can truly fill every need and desire we have. Anything less will disappoint. This is one of those important lessons we find in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. You Shall Eat Meat (verses 16-22)

¹⁶ So the Lord said to Moses:

It was in the preceding verses that Moses, overwhelmed with his duties and responsibilities, said that he was not able to bear all the people alone. He simply could not foresee any relief from the box in which he found himself, and so he poured out his anguish before the Lord. It is with this context being understood that we come to these words now.

Rather than, “So the Lord **spoke** to Moses,” it says, “So the Lord **said** to Moses.” As we have seen in the past, the subtle change in wording, from *daber* (spoke) to *amar* (said), indicates that the task requires a partnership and people working together. It may seem like trifling, but it isn’t.

¹⁶ (con’t) “Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them;

Here we have two different distinctions being made. The first are the *zaqen*, or elders. The word comes from *zaqan*, or beard. It thus signifies someone who is old, recognizable because of his pronounced beard. Secondly, they are noted as *shoterim*, or officers. This

word comes from an unused root which probably signifies, “to write.” Thus, they were old men who were also some type of magistrate or scribe. The only other time this word has been used was in Exodus 5.

The Lord is directing Moses to gather together seventy of such advanced and skilled men. They have years of experience, and they have skills already developed to conduct affairs necessary to bear authority over others. The Lord is not asking simply for Moses to gather together friends, but truly qualified men.

Of the number seventy, Bullinger defines it as “...spiritual order carried out with all spiritual power and significance. Both spirit and order are greatly emphasized.” The very context of the passage confirms this as being exactly what the number identifies. The seventy here in this verse are said to have been later used as the basis for the number which formed the Sanhedrin in Israel, seventy men with a leader, like Moses, appointed over them. It is also the same number that Jesus sent forth in Luke 10:1.

16 (con’t) bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you.

The Lord has completely overlooked the plea of Moses which closed out the verses in the previous sermon. Moses had said, “If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!” Instead of rebuking Moses, He simply redirects him to a new path that will correct Moses’ inability to handle the congregation by himself.

This is evident because these men are being brought forward to the tent of meeting to stand together with Moses. This is the place of ordination as much as it is the place of seeking God’s mercy. That has been seen in the ordination of the priests and the Levites. Now a new group is set to be ordained for a new purpose...

17 Then I will come down and talk with you there.

The Lord is already speaking to Moses, and so this seems like a superfluous statement, but this is not an unnecessary set of words. First, it is an act of honor to Moses that he would be addressed while these men were there. The Lord is still setting him apart even in the act of raising up those who stood around him.

Secondly, the fact that the Lord will speak to Moses while the leaders are at the tent of meeting is an assurance that they are acceptable to be there. As the Lord had said in the past, “...none shall appear before Me empty-handed.” And yet, they have not been

asked to bring anything but themselves before the Lord. Instead of presenting a gift, they are presenting themselves, and it is they who will be given something...

17 (con't) I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put *the same* upon them;

There is one Spirit, and He is indivisible. What is being conveyed here is not that the Spirit upon Moses will be lessened, but that the gifts which Moses is endowed with will likewise be endowed to these men in whatever measure the Lord determined. This is confirmed by Paul's words which say –

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

It is the Lord who distributes to each one individually as He wills. He had willed to have His Spirit rest upon Moses in certain gifts, and now He would allow that same Spirit to rest upon these men. Just as the lamp in the tabernacle was lit, one lamp to the next without diminishing the light of the first lamp, so these men will receive the spiritual gifts of Moses without diminishing his. There is one fountain from which the Spirit proceeds. That fountain will now be directed to flow to these men...

17 (con't) and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone.

With the Spirit imparted to them, the heavy burden which overwhelmed Moses would be relieved. That “spiritual order carried out with all spiritual power and significance,” as explained by Bullinger, would be sufficient to handle the burden so that Moses will never ask the Lord to take his life again.

18 Then you shall say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat;

In Exodus 19, the Lord instructed that the people consecrate themselves before His appearance to them on Sinai when He gave them the Ten Commandments. In Jeremiah 12:3, the prophet asks the Lord to consecrate (prepare) the people for the day of slaughter. The idea here is, “Prepare to meet your God” in the way that He determines. In this case, it is at the same time a mercy bestowed upon Moses, and it is also a judgment to be wrought upon the people. That is why the two accounts are interlaced as they are. That this is judgment upon them is next seen...

18 (con't) for you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, "Who will give us meat to eat? For *it was well with us in Egypt.*"

The Lord heard their weeping, but it was a weeping of complaint where verse 10 said, "the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused." They openly and directly lied when they said, "*it was well with us in Egypt.*" They may have had meat to eat, but things were not well with them. It is they who cried out in their bondage, and it is God who responded to their cries. They had meat while in bondage. Now they have no meat while in freedom. To show them how sinful their complaining is, he will show them the difference between the two...

18 (con't) Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat.

Their complaints were directed against the Lord, and in judgment, He would give them what they asked for, and more...

19 You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days,

In Exodus 16, the Lord sent quail to the people along with the manna. That appears to have been one day, and it was prior to the giving of the law. Despite complaining, they had not yet been given the law, and so the Lord graciously provided for them in their complaints. Now, after the law is given, he will righteously give them what they ask for in their complaints as judgment upon them. The counting of the days in an upward manner indicates this...

20 but *for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you,*

Whether the quail came for thirty days, or whether they were given enough quail to last them for thirty days, the Lord has promised that they would have quail sufficient for thirty days of meals. It would be such a vast amount that they would over-indulge in it and come to loath it. The words, "until it comes out of your nostrils" are probably both metaphorically and literally spoken, though at the time Moses conveyed the words to them, they would have only taken it metaphorically.

20 (con't) because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, "Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?"""

The idea here is that the Lord will remind them exactly why they came up out of Egypt. With the memory of the meat they ate wiped away because of it becoming so distasteful to them, they would no longer look back on what was positive, but instead would only remember what was negative. The bondage of Egypt would hopefully be seen for what it rightly was. And so the giving of the quail in this manner is a necessary step in order to cut the people's dependency on desiring that which could never satisfy.

²¹ And Moses said, "The people whom I *am* among *are* six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, 'I will give them meat, that they may eat *for* a whole month.'

He is incredulous. It's clear that he believes what he just heard, but it would require a miracle. This is also one of those verses that shows that this was not recorded by some later writer. Instead of citing the exact number from the census, or instead of rounding that number up and including all the counted Levites, or even giving a superlative number which included all the women and children, Moses speaks out the number of those counted as ready for warfare, and he rounds the number down. This would hardly be what a later writer would record. Despite this, the amount of meat it would take to feed only six hundred thousand would be huge. Multiply that times thirty days, and what would be needed?

²² Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them?

Scholars here sharply chide Moses for failing to believe. That may be true to some point, but Moses hasn't disbelieved. He only cannot understand how it could otherwise come about. They had flocks and herds. His question is whether that is the Lord's remedy for it. If so, that would totally deplete the supply. What he asks reflects the words of the apostles who questioned Jesus at the feeding of the five thousand. They asked, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and given them *something* to eat?" In both, they are looking at what is expected of them more than how the Lord would otherwise resolve the matter apart from them. That second option is then explicitly stated by Moses...

²² (con't) Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?"

The very fact that Moses asks this indicates that he knows it cannot happen apart from God. They are nowhere near the sea, and so it is something that would truly be miraculous to otherwise occur. He has been told to tell the people they will eat meat for a month, and he wants to be able to explain how when he goes to them. The stress of

the complaints, and the pressure of the burden on him, causes him to want more than just the word that it will happen, but an explanation of how it will come about. But the Lord doesn't give that, he simply proclaims that His word will be realized...

*You shall know that I am the Lord your God
I will make it evident in the works I do
Be confident that as in this earth you trod
I have given sufficient evidence to you*

*I prevailed over the law, which no one else could do
I showed that I am the Holy One of Israel
And then I went to Calvary's cross for you
And so of My works, you are to tell*

*I proved My sinless life when I broke death's chains
In the resurrection, I proved that I have set you free
Now the only thing which remains
Is that You reach out your heart and receive Me*

II. And the Spirit Rested (verses 23-30)

²³ And the Lord said to Moses, "Has the Lord's arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not."

It doesn't say, "arm." It says, "hand." "Has the Lord's hand been shortened?" The hand is what provides, it is what gives out, it is what demonstrates ability to sustain. The Lord rhetorically asks if His ability to provide and keep on providing has somehow become limited. The obvious answer is, "No." It doesn't matter how He will provide, the fact that He has spoken means that He will provide. Moses needs to simply accept Him at His word, and to trust that His word is true. And apparently, he does...

²⁴ So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle.

The words, "So Moses went out," indicate that he had been conversing with the Lord in the tent of meeting. After that, he passed on all of what the Lord had said and gathered those chosen as elders together, placing them, as it says, "around" the tent. This probably means in a semi-circle in front of the tent, facing its front.

²⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud,

The cloud, which remained above the spot where the mercy seat was within the tabernacle, physically moved from there to confirm that His presence was absolutely there with them in what was about to occur. There could be no mistake that what would come about was purposeful. From there...

^{25 (con't)} and spoke to him,

This is exactly what He said He would do in verse 17. It confirms that Moses is still set apart from those who are about to receive the Spirit, and it shows that the men are accepted before the Lord by the invitation of Moses. The speaking of the Lord to Moses is a foreshadowing of what is recorded concerning Jesus in relation to those with Him in John 12 –

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, “I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again.”

²⁹ Therefore the people who stood by and heard *it* said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

³⁰ Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.” John 12:27-30

^{25 (con't)} and took of the Spirit that *was* upon him, and placed *the same* upon the seventy elders;

Again, as He said He would do, the Lord performs His word. Each step is in confirmation of His words to Moses, and it is a purposeful event which could not otherwise be denied by any who saw it occur.

^{25 (con't)} and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again.

Here is the first use of the verb *nava*, or prophesy, in the Bible. It comes from the noun *navi*, or prophet. We are not told what they prophesied, and so for us it doesn't matter what they said or sang. It simply indicates an uttering forth of praise of, or of the will of God. What matters is that the same Spirit rested on all, demonstrating that the Spirit that was upon Moses was sufficient to meet the challenges he faced, even if he

was not. Now, that same Spirit would be with the seventy who would work with Moses to meet the challenges as a united whole.

That they never prophesied again simply means that they were not called to be prophets. Instead, they were called to be assistants to the prophet. The Spirit is One, and He apportions the gifts according to His wisdom.

²⁶ But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they *were* among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp.

The name Eldad means Whom God Loves, in essence, Beloved of God. Medad means Beloved. A written notice, as the Hebrew indicates, had been made for them to come. However, and without giving the reason for it, they were still in the camp. But they were chosen, and the Spirit rested upon them, just as among the others. This was sufficient to show that the Lord was not constrained to the area of the tabernacle, just as Ezekiel's calling showed that the Lord was not constrained to the area of Israel. Likewise, the book of Acts shows that the Lord is not constrained to any location or people group, but that His Spirit extends beyond any supposed borders which we tend to mentally impose on Him.

The names of these men seem to have been specially chosen by the Lord to show that whom God loves, and those who are His beloved, are never out of reach of the bestowal of His Spirit. As they are the only two named elders, they are thus representative of all of them.

²⁷ And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp."

The Hebrews says, "And **the** young man." It doesn't say who he is, but he is singled out by the definite article. However, it is likely that it is Joshua. The same term, *naar*, or "young man," is used of him in Exodus 33:11, which was within the past year. Regardless of his actual age, he is considered a young man in relation to Moses.

What may have happened, is that Joshua, being Moses' assistant, was the one who was sent out with the written names of the seventy chosen men. Sixty-eight had arrived, and Eldad and Medad were probably the last on the list. Before they even had a chance to gather themselves together and head to the tabernacle, the Spirit came upon them. In

seeing this, he was so concerned about what had taken place that he made a beeline for Moses to tell him what was going on. This seems likely because...

28 So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, *one* of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!"

The Hebrew doesn't say, "*one* of his choice men." It says He was Moses' assistant "from his youth." This verse explains the previous verse. Joshua had been Moses' assistant from his youth, and he is still a young man who preciously guarded the relationship, desiring Moses to be held in proper esteem. For these people to be in the camp prophesying, Joshua must have thought that it disparaged Moses' authority in the eyes of the people. This same general thing happened at the time of Jesus' ministry, as recorded in Mark 9 –

"Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.'

³⁹ But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is on our side. ⁴¹ For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.'"

-Mark 9:38-41

At all times, one must contemplate who he is looking to honor. In the end, it is the Lord, above all else, that deserves that from us. Moses understood Joshua's misguided passion, and he gently rebukes him for it...

29 Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake?"

Moses knew that Joshua was jealous of the gifts bestowed upon the men, possibly because he had been Moses' assistant, and yet he did not receive the Spirit, but more directly because he was Moses' assistant and he wanted Moses' authority to not be diminished. But Moses felt otherwise...

29 (con't) Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets *and* that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"

Moses was so far from having an ego, that he would have enjoyed full fellowship in the Lord with all of the Lord's people. And in fact, it would have been a relief to him. The

very grief he faced, and which had led him to the point of despair, would be fully lifted from him if this were the case. One cannot help to think that his plea here is actually given as a foretaste of what would occur in the giving of the New Covenant in Christ. His words are a hopeful anticipation of a time when this would come to pass. Sadly, however, though all of the Lord's people have received of His Spirit, we still, more often than not, do our best to run our lives apart from HIM. Even Moses will be found to do so in the pages ahead. None of us are exempt from listening to our own selves and shutting out the word of the Lord and the leading of the Spirit.

³⁰ And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

This is the last time that the role of these elders is mentioned. We have no idea how they assisted Moses, or under what circumstances. The account itself stands as a witness to the fact that it happened because Moses felt unable to bear the weight of the people of the camp alone. And yet, it testifies to the fact that the Spirit, whether alone on Moses, or spread out among many, was sufficient to the task. With the matter settled, the men returned to the camp to consecrate themselves for the next day, as instructed. What we have in these verses is a snapshot of Christ's ministry. He had, in the first 15 verses of the chapter, been pictured in the manna. The people had rejected that and lusted after other flesh. That was reflective of Christ's words in John 6:27. He told the people not to labor for food which perishes, but for the food – meaning Himself – which endures to everlasting life. He is the manna pictured in the wilderness. Israel rejected that and wanted something else, something temporary and corruptible.

During that same earthly ministry, Jesus appointed seventy to go forth and tell of Him and His kingdom. They were given the ability to perform His work on His behalf, just as these men are appointed to assist Moses. As I noted, there were only two named elders and thus they are representative of them.

In the New Covenant, believers are called both Beloved of God and Beloved throughout the epistles. They represent those who have been endowed with the Spirit. They were first given a special dispensation of it for the time of Christ's earthly ministry, but that eventually went out to all followers of Christ after His work was complete. The parallels are given to show us these patterns to lead us to understand that Christ is the fulfillment of the pictures found in Moses and the Old Covenant.

*The flesh which God has sent, it is food indeed
It is sufficient to fill us and give us life anew*

*And when we have partaken, we will then follow at the lead
Of our Lord, who has given Himself for me and you*

*The dew of heaven has left behind a gift for us
There is bread enough for all to eat
And this only pictures the coming Messiah, Jesus
Oh my! How delicious is this Bread... so very sweet*

*Thank You, O God, for filling our souls in such a way
You have granted us life through Your Son
And so we will exalt You through Him, each and every day
Until when at last this earthly life is done*

*Then we shall praise You forevermore O God
As in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall forever trod*

III. Graves of Craving (verses 31-35)

³¹ Now a wind went out from the Lord,

v'ruakh nasa me'et Yehovah. It is the same word, *ruakh*, used to indicate the Spirit in the previous verses. It is not coincidence that the Spirit and the wind are both mentioned and which use the same word in these passages. The connection should not be missed. This is a divinely appointed wind which is intended to instruct the people in no less a way than the Spirit was also given to do.

^{31 (con't)} and it brought quail from the sea and left *them* fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground.

The Hebrew here is highly debated, but what is certain is that there was a whole o' heap of quail, regardless of how it is translated. In this is a new and very rare word, *guz*. It signifies "to pass over (or away) rapidly." The wind which arose came and it came suddenly. The birds were completely caught up in it, and they were deposited all around the camp. They were probably so exhausted from the turmoil of the wind, that they would be easy pickings, hardly even able to flutter away.

The *selav*, or quail, is only found four times in the Bible. Once was in Exodus 16, twice here, and once in the 105th Psalm while referring to this time in the wilderness. The

word is derived from *shalah*, meaning “to prosper.” That idea comes from a root meaning “to be quiet” or “to be at ease.” The connection between the words is that quails are fat and slow in flight because of their weight, and so they are given this name. These would have blown up from the region of the Red Sea, but what is miraculous is that it occurred exactly at the time the Lord said it would, and in the amount that made His promise possible. A day’s journey on either side and all around would be miles and miles of quail, worn out and ready to be captured, plucked, and laid out for drying...

³² And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers);

One thing we know for certain is that it is not a Saturday. Other than that, we can only speculate about much of what is said. The Lord sent so many quail that the people were gathering for as much as 36 hours. A homer is the largest measure used in the Bible, and it is used at times, such as in the piling up of frogs during the plague of Egypt, to indicate a massive amount.

The number ten is used several times in Scripture to denote a large, indeterminate amount as well. Therefore, the idea is that the one who gathered the least gathered great heaps. In their gathering, they would catch the bird alive and wring off its neck, draining its blood, and then adding it to their ever-increasingly large pile.

The excitement of the gather, however, would be replaced with a sense of loathing soon enough. Like anything, too much of a good thing becomes a bad thing.

³² (con’t) and they spread *them* out for themselves all around the camp.

Here is another new word, *shatakh*, or “spread.” It is used of casting out grain, or spreading out one’s hands. It is used twice in this verse and just four more times in Scripture. In this, they took the quail and spread them wherever there was space for them to be dried out in the sun.

³³ But while the meat *was* still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague.

The account goes directly from the gathering to the eating and its resulting plague. There are various ideas about when this occurred. Some say “before it was chewed.” Some say, “before it came to an end,” meaning before all of it was consumed. No matter

what, their cravings eventually caught up with them. Here the word “plague” is *makah*. It is one of the promised punishments first noted only weeks, or at best a couple months, before in the explanation of the punishments the people could expect for disobedience. In Leviticus 26:21, it said –

“Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more **plagues**, according to your sins.”

This was a foretaste of what lay ahead for Israel when they would walk in a manner contrary to the Lord. They lusted after the things of the world, the lust of the flesh, and they suffered because of it. So much so, in fact, that it says *va’yak Yehovah ba’am makah rabah meod* – “and struck Yehovah the people plague great very.” The superlative nature of the words indicates that many fell. The people would not only loathe the quail because of overindulgence, but because it had so greatly plagued those who died among them.

³⁴ **So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah,**

Qivroth ha’taavah means, literally “graves the lusting.” *Qivroth* comes from *qever*, a grave, or a place for burial. *Ha* is the definite article, and *taavah* means desire. That was first used in Genesis 3 –

“So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* **pleasant** to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” Genesis 3:6

It isn’t by chance that this is the second use of *taavah* in Scripture. Just as Eve looked to the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, instead of being obedient to the Lord, here the people have looked to the lusts of the flesh and not to the provision of the Lord. His manna, picturing Christ, and the quail of Exodus 16, provided as a picture of Christ’s death, was replaced with an unhealthy lusting for something more.

In Exodus 16, they complained due to hunger, not yet having the manna. Further, that was before the law was given. Here, they complained despite the manna, and it was after the giving of the law. They left the Lord and turned their hearts back to Egypt, even after He had fully provided for them. In this, the people forfeited their lives as examples of what we too can expect in turning back to the world and away from God’s provision found in Christ.

³⁴ (con't) **because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.**

Here the verb form of grave, meaning “to bury,” and the verb form of craving are both used, giving the basis for the name of the place. The *avah*, or craving, is first used here, and it is the basis for *taavah*. The naming of the place is, as often happens for places and for people, the result of the surrounding circumstances.

³⁵ **From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.**

As noted, Kibroth Hattaavah means Graves of Lusting. Khazeroth is the plural of *khatser*, or village. Therefore, it means “Villages.” The people were probably immensely happy to depart from their first sad stop along the way to Canaan. There, the Lord burned among them, and then He caused the plague to destroy many. Their yielding to the lusts of the flesh, and their inability to trust the Lord and to be satisfied in His provision was a memorable lesson.

In the end, the lesson of the quail needs to be explained. The quail are mentioned in only two accounts, Exodus 16 and here. Other than that, the Psalms merely reference what occurred here. In Exodus 16, the quails came at specific time of day which looked forward to Christ’s cross. In the morning, they had manna, a picture of Christ’s body given for us. It was a one time, and for all time, sacrifice, after which it was expected to be sufficient for the people. But here, they lusted again for meat, not finding sufficiency in Christ. This is why the manna was highlighted in verse 6. There it said, “but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna *before* our eyes.” They had come to partake of Christ in an unworthy manner and they suffered because of it. The parallel is found in Paul’s word to the Corinthians that we remind ourselves of every week during the Lord’s Supper –

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰ For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

Israel failed to accept the provision of the Lord. They failed to find sufficiency in Him. And, they lusted after those things Egypt provided. The scholar Keil notes that –

“God purposed to show the people His power, to give them flesh not for one day or several days, but for a whole month, both to put to shame their unbelief, and also to punish their greediness.” Keil

That practically matches what Paul said to those in Corinth. He said, “Therefore, when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” The people complained and the Lord burned among them. They complained against the manna. Moses couldn’t bear the weight of the people, despite the *ruakh* which was on Him. The Lord took of the *ruakh* which was on Moses and placed it on seventy others. But Moses was excited by the prospect of all the Lord’s people having the *ruakh*. After that, the Lord then sent a *ruakh* to bring quail to the people. The people ate the quail and many died.

When the *ruakh* went out from the Lord, it brought what the people complained after. Those who were ungrateful or uncaring about the Lord paid the penalty for their disobedience. The lesson for us is to be careful what you ask for. James says –

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? James 4:4, 5

These types and shadows from the Old are intended to instruct us on life in the New. Now, every one of the Lord’s people has been given the Spirit, and that Spirit yearns jealously. Let us not crave what the world provides, but let us find sufficiency in Christ alone. He is the Bread from heaven, and He is fully capable of satisfying our souls, if we will simply accept His provision.

Please, turn your hearts to Christ, be satisfied in the Lord, and have faith that what You have is exactly what He desires for You. This doesn’t mean not to strive to be your best and to attain the best, but to do so knowing that the Lord is sufficient for you as you strive ahead. Seek Him first and all good things will be added to you, according to His wisdom, not yours.

Closing Verse: *“So they ate and were well filled,
For He gave them their own desire.*

*³⁰ They were not deprived of their craving;
But while their food was still in their mouths,*

³¹ *The wrath of God came against them,
And slew the stoutest of them,
And struck down the choice men of Israel.” Psalm 78:29-31*

Next Week: Numbers 12:1-16 Being defiled is its own marked stamp (Unclean and Shut Out Of the Camp) (22nd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Be Careful What You Ask For

So the Lord said to Moses:

“Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel
Whom you know to be the elders of the people
And officers over them; as to you I now tell

Bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, this thing you shall do
That they may stand there with you

Then I will come down and talk with you there
I will take of the Spirit that is upon you
— — — and will put the same upon them, so to you I submit
And they shall bear the burden of the people with you
That you may not yourself alone bear it

Then you shall say to the people
‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat
For you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying
“Who will give us meat to eat?

For it was well with us in Egypt, it was a culinary treat
Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat

You shall eat, not one day, nor two days
Nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, it’s true
But for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils

And becomes loathsome to you

Because you have despised the Lord who is among you
And have wept before Him, saying
“Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?
These unhappy words to me you were relaying

And Moses said
“The people whom I am among are on foot
———six hundred thousand men
Yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat
That they may eat for a whole month! Tell me that again!

Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them?
To provide enough for them, so I ask
Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them?
To provide enough for them... that is one major task!

And the Lord said to Moses
“Has the Lord’s arm been shortened a little or a lot?
Now you shall see whether what I say
Will happen to you or not

So Moses went out and told the people
The words of the Lord
And he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people
And placed them around the tabernacle, according to the word

Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him
———and took of the Spirit that was upon him
And placed the same upon the seventy elders – these chosen men
And it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them
That they prophesied, although they never did so again

But two men had remained in the camp:
The name of one was Eldad, yes – Eldad it’s true
And the name of the other Medad
And the Spirit rested upon them too

Now they were among those listed
But who had not gone out to the tabernacle
Yet they prophesied in the camp
Their gift of prophecy they did tackle

And a young man ran and told Moses, and said
“Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp
———by the Spirit they are being led!

So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant
One of his choice men, answered and said
“Moses my lord, forbid them!
They are prophesying as by the Spirit they are led

Then Moses said to him
“Are you zealous for my sake?
Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets
And that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!
———that He would this move make

And Moses returned to the camp, so we know
He and the elders of Israel, to the camp they did go

Now a wind went out from the Lord
And it brought quail from the sea
And left them fluttering near the camp
About a day’s journey on this side and on the other side
———about a day’s journey

All around the camp, yes all around
And about two cubits above the surface of the ground

And the people stayed up all that day, all night
———and all the next day
And gathered the quail, but not by the pound
(he who gathered least gathered ten homers)
And they spread them out for themselves in the camp all around

But while the meat was still between their teeth

Before it was chewed, so the account does state
The wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people
And the Lord struck the people with a plague very great

So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah
Because they buried the people who had yielded to craving there
From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth
And camped at Hazeroth, yes that is where

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 12:1-16 (UNCLEAN AND SHUT OUT OF THE CAMP)

As is always the case with stories like this one today, there are several levels of things going on. There is obviously the true narrative which actually occurred. Along with that, there are moral lessons which can be derived from the text which are always good for life application sermons. There are also pictorial representations of other things – normally pointing directly to Christ, and often adding in other aspects of redemptive history. And tied in with that third is a fourth, prophetic, aspect of the stories. There are things which are prophesied in Scripture which are seen in mere shadows, which are then spoken forth as future events by later prophets, and which will be realized at various points of time in redemptive history. This account is no different. We'll look at some of each of those details today. One of them stands out as an obvious tenet though right from the surface of the narrative.

Moses is said to have married an Ethiopian, and it says that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of her. Although it's not always plainly evident in Scripture because of rather hard words against certain people groups, one of the things which the Bible teaches is that all people are on the same level before the Lord when it comes to salvation. No person is exempt, and no one is favored over another. That isn't always evident in churches too but it is explicit in Scripture, regardless of how the preacher or teacher attempts to manipulate the text to say otherwise.

Text Verse: *“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.” Acts 17:24-27*

God made all men from one man, one blood, and God has placed all men in the exact spot where they would be most likely to call out to Him and be saved. What this means is that the guy in Mongolia in AD1227 would be no more likely to seek out the Lord than he would have been if he was born in Sarasota in 1964. He has placed us all in a spot where the hope is that we will seek Him.

Miriam and Aaron didn't like that their brother married an Ethiopian. That is what the surface text says, and so we can see that they were what we would today call racists. That will be explained as we go on. But that racist attitude is actually hiding a more deep-seated type of contempt in them. We will see that as we go on as well. Sometimes, negative attitudes against people, or peoples, come from places we may not even know exist.

We shut out the deeper animosities and express our hatred of someone or something in order to divert the attention away from something that others might find even more offensive. And if not others, certainly the Lord. A quick example would be hatred of the Jews. There are lots of reasons people say they hate the Jews. A couple days before I typed this sermon, some loser shot up a synagogue and killed eleven Jews because he said they were behind all kinds of crazy conspiracies.

Jews get blamed for a lot of conspiracies, but that is usually not the reason for people hating them. First, they remain isolated as a culture, and secondly, they tend to be extremely successful in whatever they do. Combine the two, and you have a recipe for real jealousy. No matter what the Jews do, they always seem to do it a bit better than the next guy. And because they collectively seem to excel as well, the world hates it. They can't figure out the secret to their success, and so they blame them for ... all types of crazy conspiracies. "Those Jews get ahead, but it can't be because they have earned it. Therefore, they are cheating." In the end, I would say the majority of Jew hatred is simply that – jealousy. It has festered since their inception, and it continues today. Whatever other reason for hating them, the main reason is found in jealousy. It's the human condition.

That may have seemed like a pointless diversion, but it's not. Jealousy is a green-eyed monster, and it is found not against only the Jews, but it is found in the Jews as well. Their jealousies are just directed in other ways. We might see a picture of that in our verses today. Maybe so. One thing is for sure, great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Not So With My Servant Moses (verses 1-8)

¹Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses

va'te-daber miryam v'aharon – "and she started speaking – Miriam and Aaron." There is an immediate stress on the misdeeds of Miriam here. First, the words, "then spoke" are

in the feminine in the Hebrew, highlighting Miriam's role. Further, Miriam is mentioned before Aaron. It is apparent from this, as it was from the account of the golden calf, that Aaron is a rather weak and indecisive figure. Miriam is the one who has taken offense, and she grabbed Aaron by the hand and led him into the sin of speaking against Moses. This is all the more certain based on the outcome of the events where she alone is punished with leprosy.

Despite this, Aaron is not innocent. First, because he didn't immediately attempt to put out the fire that Miriam had started, and secondly, because in his not doing so he only urged the matter on further. This now becomes the greatest threat of all of those which had come, or would come, against Moses. Though seemingly not so, at all other times, Aaron has stood, or will stand, with Moses. But this is an insurrection which comes from within Moses' own house, and from his two older siblings. It could presumably be a point where the two outvote the one. But more so, if this rebellion were to advance, it would compromise the entire structure of order which had been developed for the people on their trek to Canaan.

And further, Miriam was called a "prophetess" in Exodus 15:20. Though that is probably not an office, but rather a description of what occurred in relation to the song she had sung, she may have felt over-confident of her station because of the title. The fact that this comes after the granting of the Spirit that had rested on Moses to seventy others is not to be missed. Miriam was probably incensed that she did not receive any such favor, nor did Aaron. In this, they appear to be jealously responding to having not received something to which they had no right.

What "Miriam" means is not well agreed upon. It comes from two separate words *marar* which means either "bitter" or "strong" and *yam* which means "sea." And so her name may mean "Bitter Waters," or "Waters of Strength." At this time, she is rushing forth as strong waters which are unbound and unrestrained, and this...

¹ (con't) **because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married;**

The meaning of this is highly debated. The Hebrew word is *kushi*, the same word used to describe an Ethiopian. Some say this is speaking of Zipporah because of the location of Midian, where she was from, was actually once a part of land belonging to Cush. Some think Zipporah had died and Moses married another wife who was an Ethiopian. Or, it could be that Moses took a second wife who was from Ethiopia. The details don't matter, other than to say that this is not Zipporah. That will be evident in a minute.

For now, whether Zipporah is dead or not is irrelevant. The only thing the text focuses on is that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. In this, there was nothing forbidden. The only prohibition so far on marriages is found in Exodus 34:19. Speaking of the inhabitants of Canaan, it says, “and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.”

Cush, or Ethiopia, was a descendant of Ham, the son of Noah who had done something perverse to his father. His brothers included Mizraim, or Egypt of today, Put, who became some of the troublesome North African peoples, and Canaan, the son of Ham who was directly cursed by Noah. It is evident that Miriam felt superior to this woman and despised the fact that Moses had married down the social ladder.

However, Joseph had married an Egyptian, and their sons became two tribes of Israel. The disgust Miriam displays for Moses’ union to an Ethiopian stands as a sad testament to racial or cultural prejudice which continues on in the world. However, the Bible, on several occasions, shows that the supposedly pure Jewish line is no better than that of any other. For example, a comparison between Israel and Cush, meaning Ethiopia, is made in Amos 9 –

“Are you not like the people of Ethiopia to Me,
O children of Israel?” says the Lord.
“Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt,
The Philistines from Caphtor,
And the Syrians from Kir?” Amos 9:7

That was a strong rebuke to Israel that they were no better than the supposedly lesser peoples who surrounded them. Miriam will be imparted this same knowledge indirectly through what occurs.

^{1 (con’t)} **for he had married an Ethiopian woman.**

The addition of this clause shows undoubtedly that this is not speaking of Zipporah. Even if someone was slanderously called a Cushite as a term of contempt like we use such terms today (and which actually seems like a likely pejorative of the time), the repetition of these words shows that this woman was, in fact, an Ethiopian. Whether Zipporah is dead or alive is irrelevant. The focus is on the animosity of Miriam towards the lowly Cushite and how she has taken it as offensive and degrading to Moses, and thus to her. If her younger brother had made such an unwise and socially poor decision, then it would

mean his lofty position within the camp was not so lofty that they could not also partake of it...

² So they said, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses?”

The words are emphatic, *haraq akh b’mosheh*, “only and solely through Moses?” They are not denying Moses’ prophetic office, but they are elevating themselves to that same level as seen with...

^{2 (con’t)} Has He not spoken through us also?”

Exodus 4:15 and elsewhere confirms that the Lord spoke through Aaron at times – either directly or indirectly. Exodus 15:20 shows that Miriam’s words were divinely inspired as well. However, those were rare instances, and they confirmed nothing concerning the office of prophet. They simply confirm that the Lord used them as His instruments for His own purposes. In 1 Chronicles 12:18, the Spirit is said to have come upon Amasai who then prophesied. However, it doesn’t follow that because of this he was a prophet. Again, this jealous streak was certainly aroused, not because Moses married an Ethiopian, but rather that was being used as a pretext for their jealousy which stemmed from them not being among those who received the Spirit which rested on Moses. Their attitude, however, is not without a greater audience...

^{2 (con’t)} And the Lord heard it.

Here is an ominous statement. It is true that the Lord hears all things, but at times He chooses to not hear some things. This complaint may have simply been between Miriam and Aaron. Regardless of the scope of those to whom the words were conveyed, the Lord heard and *chose to hear*.

This is in contrast to Moses, who confessed his displeasure to the Lord in the previous chapter. Despite that, the Lord chose *not to hear*, but responded in kindness and longsuffering with him. Such is not the case with what He now hears. Especially because...

³ (Now the man Moses *was* very humble, more than all men who *were* on the face of the earth.)

Here is a new word in Scripture, *anav*. It can signify humble, meek, depressed in mind or circumstances, afflicted, and so on. It comes from the verb which means to be humbled

or afflicted. The context drives the meaning, and here the context appears to be different than translations state. I say “appears” because I first held to one view, and then came to another. The preceding chapter spoke of Moses’ affliction because of the ingratitude of the people towards both him and towards God. No man had endured such responsibility, leading to affliction, that he had.

This is confirmed in his words when he appealed to the Lord. He had carried the pains and burdens of the people as if his own. It was he who found the very authority and power that he possessed as oppressive, and yet it was his own sister and brother who envied that same authority. They assumed that they could carry the burden as well as he could, but they had not been endowed with the Spirit which had rested upon him.

⁴ Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!” So the three came out.

Well, here you have it, the Lord spoke directly to the three of them. It doesn’t say that He spoke to Moses who then relayed that on to the two others. They knew the Lord’s voice, and they responded to it accordingly. The word “suddenly” was introduced in verse 6:9 when speaking of a person dying *suddenly* next to a Nazirite, thus violating their vow of consecration. In other words, there is a sudden, abrupt, and unusual call out to them. One can sense the displeasure and the foreboding of disaster in the use of the word.

When it says for them to come to the tent of meeting, that in no way implies “inside” of the tent. Time and again, people and offerings are presented at the tent of meeting without actually going into it. There is no violation of law in calling Miriam in this manner. They will stand before the tent, as is next seen...

⁵ Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle,

The same terminology was used in verse 11:25 where the Lord is said to have come “down in the cloud” to speak with Moses and impart the Spirit to the seventy elders. Further, the Lord is at the door of the tent, and therefore they are outside, not inside of it.

^{5 (con’t)} and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.

The Lord's voice obviously issued from the cloud, calling them to stand before Him. They would have passed the altar of offering on their way there. This is problematic, because Miriam has come forward bearing the sin of presumption, she has brought no offering, and she has had no sacrifice for her sin. She is in the presence of the Lord, but without the required atonement.

**⁶Then He said,
“Hear now My words:**

shimu na davaray – “Hear, I pray, my words.” The meaning is obvious. “You have evidently not taken to heart My words as spoken through Moses. Now, please hear My words directly from Me to you.”

**⁶(con't) If there is a prophet among you,
I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision;
I speak to him in a dream.**

The words should connect the name Jehovah with “prophet” as Young's translates the verse –

“And He saith, ‘Hear, I pray you, My words: If your prophet is of Jehovah — in an appearance unto him I make Myself known; in a dream I speak with him;’” Young's Literal Translation

There are prophets, and there are false prophets. The prophet of the Lord will have the Lord revealed to him, a false prophet will not. When a prophet receives a message from the Lord, it is in an obscure way. The word “vision” is translated elsewhere as a “mirror.” It is a shadowy reflection, just as a dream is. There is no externally audible communication in such revelation. Rather, there is an internal voice issuing forth. They were themselves mere organs used for the purpose of transmitting the word. However...

⁷Not so with My servant Moses;

What is being said here is that the revelation communicated to Moses is on a *completely different level* than that of any of the other prophets of the Lord. How this is so is yet to be explained.

⁷(con't) He is faithful in all My house.

The Lord shows there will be a contrast between any prophet of the Lord and Moses, but before explaining that contrast, he says the reason for it – “He is faithful in all My house.” The words are picked up by the author of Hebrews concerning Moses, but they are also then contrasted to that of Christ Jesus –

“For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God. ⁵And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, ⁶ but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.” Hebrews 3:4-6

The house being spoken of is the entire economy in which the Lord works. In the case of Moses, it is the *house* of the Old Covenant, which stretches out even until the coming of Christ. In the case of Christ, He is the Son over *His own house*, meaning the New Covenant. What this means then is that Moses was the only person in the entire Old Covenant economy who would ever have this particular type of communication. All other prophets would have a lesser form of revelation than that of Moses. It is this statement here, which then is the basis for what is stated in Deuteronomy 18 with these words –

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.” Deuteronomy 18:15

This Prophet like Moses would be unlike any other prophet in that He would receive His revelation directly from the mouth of the Lord. This was what the people were referring to in John 1:21, and which was then confirmed to be Jesus by Stephen in Acts 7:37. The words now communicated to Aaron and Miriam are to be used to point directly to Christ. For now, the Lord speaks of Moses’ *faithfulness*, obviously in contrast to the *unfaithfulness* of Miriam and Aaron, and he then gives the contrast of thought concerning the regular prophet of the Lord under the Old Covenant...

⁸ I speak with him face to face,

peh el peh – “face to face.” This was first stated, and obviously well known to the congregation, in Exodus 33:11, which said, “So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.”

^{8 (con’t)} Even plainly, and not in dark sayings;

Here is a new word, *khidah*, or that which is enigmatic, or a riddle. That comes from *khud* meaning “to propound a riddle.” All other prophets during the period of this covenant would receive revelation in an obscure manner, whereas Moses received his in an open and fully understandable way. This doesn’t mean that Moses knew all the pictures and patterns which the words he penned contained, but that the words themselves were not a curiosity or enigma as to why they were being received.

8 (con’t) **And he sees the form of the Lord.**

The word “form” is the same word translated as “likeness” in the Ten Commandments when speaking of the likeness of anything in heaven, on earth, or in the water under the earth. Moses saw a likeness of the Lord which no other saw. Quite possibly he saw the physical manifestation of the Lord that the apostles later saw, and touched, and walked with.

8 (con’t) **Why then were you not afraid
To speak against My servant Moses?”**

They knew these things, they had seen Moses ascend the mountain to meet with the Lord. They had seen him go to the tent outside the camp to meet with the Lord, they had seen him enter the tent of meeting daily to meet with the Lord, and they knew that the words he received there would come true as spoken for the people’s benefit, such as in the giving of manna. And yet, they spoke presumptuously against him. In this, it was not Moses that they actually spoke against, but the Lord Himself who spoke to them through Moses.

*My Servant is faithful in all My house, it is true
With complete trust, in Him I am confident
No matter what the job, faithfully that He will do
Yes, in Him I know that my trust is well spent*

*He is as a Son over His house, doing what is right
And all things are tended to with perfect care
Never does He slack, through day or through night
Of every need He is perfectly aware*

*And so in Him, you too can be confident
He will be sure to tend to your needs, so it is true*

*When you trust in My Son, Jesus, your trust is well spent
For you when you call on Him, great things He will do*

II. And There She Was, A Leper (verses 9-16)

⁹ So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed.

v'yikhar aph Yehovah bam va'yelek – “And burned nostrils Yehovah against them, and departed.” The Lord’s fury, as described by burning nostrils, raised up. In this, the Judge determined His sentence, and without allowing them to even respond, He departed as if from the bench of judgment.

¹⁰ And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow.

The punishment of leprosy shows the terrible consequences of what she had done. The same penalty came upon Gehazi, the servant of Elisha in 2 Kings 5:27 for having violated his trust as a servant of the prophet of God. And again, the penalty of leprosy came upon the forehead of King Uzziah for attempting to usurp the rights of the priests by entering the temple of the Lord in order to burn incense on the altar of incense. Each of these trespasses was in relation to the sacred trust which they had been given, and each of them received the penalty for their actions. However, she was not the only one who was punished in this act...

^{10 (con't)} Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper.

It is speculated why only Miriam was punished. That is not valid speculation. Aaron *indeed* received punishment. Miriam was the instigator of this, and yet Aaron did nothing to restrain her, showing his weak and malleable character. The punishment upon her would be a torturous punishment to him because of his failure to man up to the situation before it got out of hand. Secondly, he could not even reach out to comfort her without becoming unclean and violating his office. And thirdly, simply because of his office, he was spared the leprosy – an implicit rebuke to him came because of the office which necessitated his not being afflicted despite deserving it.

Miriam, however, received the punishment she was due for failing to come with an acceptable sacrifice to atone for her sins. Unlike the seventy elders who were called for the impartation of the Spirit, the Lord calling her to the tent did not negate the requirement that no person was to come before the Lord empty-handed. When the

seventy were called, the Lord showed His approval of their presence by speaking to Moses. Here, Aaron and Miriam were called, and the Lord showed His displeasure by speaking to them and not to Moses. Concerning her leprosy, John Lange says –

“She would stand above Moses snow-white in righteousness, while she looked down on him as unclean. She would be a lady over the Church, for she dominated over Aaron, and now, even as a leper, she must be excluded from the Church.” John Lange

¹¹ So Aaron said to Moses, “Oh, my lord! Please do not lay *this* sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned.

Aaron’s words here show that the punishment inflicted on Miriam is a punishment upon him as well. He acknowledges his guilt, he acknowledges his sin, and he acknowledges his punishment – all united with that of Miriam – *alenu*, “on us.” Further, this is the second recorded time that Aaron calls his younger brother *adoni*, or “my lord.” The first was at the incident of the golden calf when he was clearly in the wrong. Now he again calls Moses “my lord.” His acknowledgment of Moses’ authority is once again highlighted.

The petition is directly to Moses as if he could pardon the offense, but it obviously means that Aaron wants him to go to the Lord and beg for mercy. He uses a new and rather rare word here, *yaal*, a verb meaning “to act foolishly.” Their actions were foolish, and though they deserved the punishment of fools, he petitions for the mercy of the all-wise God. Only a short while earlier, they had united in rebellion as if they could speak for the Lord, now all such thoughts are gone. His only hope is that Moses would go, as it was his right and duty to do so, and speak to the Lord, and so he continues...

¹² Please do not let her be as one dead,

This is the ceremonial aspect of leprosy. Though alive, the afflicted one is treated as dead. He is cut off from the congregation, and can have no contact with them. Thus, all lepers are also separated from fellowship with the Lord at His sanctuary.

¹² (con’t) whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother’s womb!”

This is the physical aspect of the leprosy. A leper wastes away, limb by limb and with a loss of flesh that eventually gives him the appearance of a stillborn child who has, for some extended time, remained in the mother’s womb. When it comes forth, it is a lifeless mass of corrupted tissue. Aaron knows the outcome of the disease, and he again

petitions Moses directly, as if he can ensure the outcome, to heal her. And as one would expect, Moses acts...

¹³ So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “Please heal her, O God, I pray!”

The words in the Hebrew are in a most passionate form where Moses repeats himself – *el na repha na lah* – “God I pray, heal I pray, her.” The use of *el*, or God, signifies His mighty power. The word comes from *ayil*, or ram. Such an animal is the symbol of strength as it butts with its horns. Moses’ use of it here acknowledges His power, and petitions for Him to use it once again, for good and not for destruction.

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “If her father had but spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days?”

The idea of one spitting in another’s face has not changed in our society from that of the Hebrews. It was an act of great contempt. It is seen in Job where the young men who once revered him now contemptuously would spit in his face. Further, it is referred to in Isaiah 50 when prophesying of those who would spit in the face of Christ. That prophecy is fulfilled in the words of Mark 14:65.

For a father to spit in his daughter’s face, the Lord says that she would be *kalam*, or ashamed, for seven days. It is a new word signifying being humiliated or insulted. If such was the case with a mere spit in the face by a close relative, how much more shamed should Miriam be when the Lord has afflicted her with the due penalty for her contempt of Him!

¹⁴ (con’t) Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and afterward she may be received *again*.”

According to Leviticus 13, a person who was confirmed to have leprosy was to be put outside the camp. Once that was healed they were to be checked again and if cleansed, certain rituals were to be conducted and they would be allowed into the camp, but not into their tent for another seven days. Whether the leprosy was healed by the Lord immediately, but the penalty for defilement caused her to be kept outside the camp, or whether she was not healed until the seventh day, either way, she bore the disgrace of having become unclean through the leprosy.

The irony was thick in her regard. She had challenged her brother who was the leader of Israel, thus placing herself above all others in the camp. Now, she would be shut out as defiled and in less regard than all who were in the camp. And so out she went...

¹⁵ So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in *again*.

It is obvious that any defiled people traveled with Israel, but not in the ranks of Israel. There would have been defiled people at any given time during their travels. Therefore, there must be more to this verse than merely waiting for her to be brought in again, as if it was necessary for the camp to move. Such wouldn't be the case.

Rather, it is the fact that they actually waited for her to be brought in again that is of note. The entire camp was made aware of the reason for their delay. Miriam had offended the Lord, and she was being punished for it. First, the entire camp would know that she was reduced to a leper and disgraced. And second, the entire camp would share in the punishment of Aaron and Miriam as a warning to never oppose Moses in such a manner again. The word for bringing her back into the camp is *asaph*, or gather. Until they gathered her in, the camp would not move on.

¹⁶ And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth and camped in the Wilderness of Paran.

As noted in Chapter 11, Khazeroth means Villages. Paran means "Glorious." Only after Miriam was *asaph*, or gathered in were the people ready to move into the wildness of Paran.

*Oh! We have sinned and done so foolishly
We have not been faithful to You as we should
We have acted unfaithfully and acted jealously
Please forgive us, and do not cast us out for good*

*Oh! That You would forgive us of our wrong
We stand before You knowing that we have offended You
Please don't let our punishment last very long
Restore us, O God, and to You we will be true*

*Take away our guilt and our shame
And restore us to Your favor, heal us in Your sight*

*We have done wrong and we have received the blame
Heal us, O God, and going forward we shall do what is right*

III. Pictures of Christ

What we have in this passage today is a snapshot of what would happen to Israel after their rejection of the Lord. Moses here is typical of Christ. He has married an Ethiopian wife. In this case, it doesn't matter if this is Zipporah or not. Moses has taken a Gentile as his spouse and brought her into his tent. It is the Lord's sovereign act of grace that He has included Gentiles in His covenant graces.

Miriam here pictures the prophetic witness of Israel, and Aaron the priestly witness of Israel, both of which testified to the Person and work of Christ, but which Israel collectively has rejected. In other words, their jealousy of Moses is reflective of Israel's jealousy of what was understood from their own law and the words of the prophets. But what is more is that, as noted, their hatred of the wife was merely a pretext for hatred of the fact that they did not receive the portion of the Spirit that the elders of Israel did previously. Both Christ and the apostles were hated because of their witness of the work of the Lord and the acceptance of a Gentile bride.

Israel saw the mysteries of God's workings being revealed to the Gentiles through the apostles, and they hated that. They were jealous of it, and they fought against it. This is all revealed in the New Testament, much of it in Acts. The plague on Miriam is the curse upon Israel which happened because of the stand against Christ. However, Aaron the high priest begged Moses for relief and healing. This is just as Jesus called out, "Father, forgive them, Father, for they do not know what they do." In this, Christ, the true High Priest, petitions for the healing of Israel. But a time of punishment must first be fulfilled. The seven days of Miriam's punishment is reflective of the words of Leviticus 26 where the Lord said He would punish Israel seven times for their sins if they didn't heed Him the first time. Israel didn't heed after exile to Babylon, they rejected Christ, and their second punishment is for seven times. Israel didn't move on again for seven days until Miriam was gathered in again. And only after their extended second punishment of seven times over would Israel, the people, be gathered in. That has actually happened in our lives, and they are almost ready to move on.

As far as the location here, it is Khazereth, or Villages. It implies a place of many villages, and thus many people. It is a fitting description of the land of Israel's exile around the world among many settlements and a wide range of peoples. The people remained there until Miriam was gathered in. It is the same word, *asaph*, which speaks of the

people of Israel having been gathered again into the land of Israel in the latter days. In type and picture, we are seeing a simple snapshot of what occurred after Christ's ministry as was revealed in the previous chapter.

Israel didn't want the manna, Christ. They lusted after other flesh which only brought death. They saw the witness of the seventy who prophesied. They came against their Prophet like Moses. They received their punishment, being defiled and unclean ceremonially, and in a state of corruption and death during their period of banishment. But they were eventually restored and gathered in again. They are heading into the Wilderness of Paran, or Glorious.

More snapshots of the history of Israel will be seen when they arrive there. God has selected these individual stories to show greater pictures of what lies ahead both for Israel, and for the world at large, in the future when Christ would come. Of Miriam and Aaron, think of Israel's rejection of Jesus, when you hear John Calvin's words about their attitude –

“...that they not only abuse the gifts of God towards the brother whom they despise, but by an ungodly and sacrilegious glorification extol the gifts themselves in such a manner as to hide the Author of the gifts.” John Calvin

If that doesn't sound like the attitude of the nation as displayed towards Christ, I'm not sure what else would do better. They rejected Him and His apostles, they looked to glorify themselves through the law rather than through Christ, and they have done their best to hide the Author of those gifts. The patterns from Numbers look to the reality of the world in which we, even this very day, continue to live in.

Closing Verse: *“For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
I redeemed you from the house of bondage;
And I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” Micah 6:4*

Next Week: Numbers 13:1-25 After this next sermon, we'll keep going till the chapter is done (A Taste of the Land of Promise, Part I) (23rd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Unclean and Shut Out of the Camp

Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses
| Because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married
For he had married an Ethiopian woman
From the standard Hebrew woman, his choice had varied

So they said, “Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses?
Has He not spoken through us also?”
And the Lord heard it
To His ears, their words did go

(Now the man Moses was very humble, not exalting his worth
More than all men who were on the face of the earth)

Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam
“Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!”
So the three came out
When the Lord spoke, there was no need for repeating

Then the Lord came down
In the pillar of cloud and stood in the door
Of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam
And they both went forward, probably scared sore

Then He said, “Hear now My words:
If there is a prophet among you
I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision
I speak to him in a dream, as I choose to do

Not so with My servant Moses;
He is faithful in all My house; he gets my top mark
I speak with him face to face
Even plainly, and not in sayings which are dark

And he sees the form of the Lord
Why then were you not afraid
To speak against My servant Moses?”
Why was your boasting not stayed

So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them
And He departed without further haw or hem

And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle
Suddenly Miriam became leprous, as snow – so white
Then Aaron turned toward Miriam
And there she was, a leper – a terrible sight

So Aaron said to Moses
“Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us
In which we have done foolishly
And in which we have sinned by making such a fuss

Please do not let her be as one dead
Whose flesh is half consumed
When he comes out of his mother’s womb!
And is ready even then to be entombed!

So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying
“Please heal her, O God, I pray!” To You my petition I am relaying

Then the Lord said to Moses, “If her father had but spit in her face
Would she not be shamed seven days?
Let her be shut out of the camp seven days
And afterward she may be received
———after the punishment for her errant ways

So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days
And the people did not journey till was brought in again Miriam
And afterward the people moved from Hazeroth
And camped in the Wilderness of Paran

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy

Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 13:1-25 (A TASTE OF THE LAND OF PROMISE, PART I)

In today's verses, there is a surprising lack of detail about the time the men spent in the land of Canaan checking things out. Their travels took them a long way, through a lot of different areas and climates, and yet, almost all of the focus is centered on four verses which are in one part of the land. The verses coming up in a week give a bit more detail, but it is after-the-fact detail.

If one were to make exacting records, as Moses asked for, you might think they would have made several books of notes, and yet we get less than a paragraph of that here. It really should make one wonder. And yet, at the same time, it is obviously exactly what the Lord wanted us to read. There is nothing superfluous added in, and all the other details of travels and other adventures must, in fact, be superfluous.

And so, we will look through the details today, as they have been provided. Wherever the Lord is leading us, that is where we need to go. As I typed this introduction, the truth is, I had no idea where the narrative was going. It was 4pm on November 5th, I had evaluated all 25 of the verses of today's text, and I had no idea at all what they were trying to say.

That kind of dilemma means there will either be a nice life application at the end of the chapter next week, or the Lord will have eventually revealed it so that I could compose a final explanation of what is given here as a record of how it all points to Christ. I didn't know what the outcome would be, but by the time I present these two sermons, we'll know which way it went. Such afternoons are very frustrating!

Text Verse: *"Every word of God is]pure;
He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.
⁶ Do not add to His words,
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar." Proverbs 30:5, 6*

If nothing else, the Bible makes it abundantly clear – both in this verse and elsewhere, that every word of Scripture is important. The Lord has a set plan which is compiled into a small, organized, and highly detailed book. Despite being small, it is larger than any man's brain can fully grasp. Despite being organized, even highly so, it is still extremely difficult to be able to understand the organization in any reasonable manner. And being highly detailed, we still tend to want to go beyond the detail in order to make it flow

more smoothly, make more sense, or make us not feel so incompetent at not being able to deal with the detail we do have.

The real rewards, however, are to be able to grasp what is being said, within the confines of the book itself. Yes, we can use thoughts and ideas from outside this marvelous treasure if, and only if, they line up with what the word says. But we need to be careful to never try to read into the Bible what we want it to say. Instead, we need to draw out from it what the intended meaning is.

That is where the real effort comes in. “Lord, what are you telling us?” This is where the treasure is found, and this is what makes searching out Scripture so enjoyable. It is a puzzle filled with puzzles. Each one helps explain and reveal the next one a bit more. We’ll see where this one goes... For now, let’s get into these verses to see what they say, at least on the surface. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Chosen to Go (verses 1-16)

Geographically, we are now beginning the third major section of Numbers with this chapter. The first section was a “wilderness section” where the people were located at the foot of Mount Sinai. That went from verse 1:1 to 10:10. The next section was a road trip between Sinai and Paran which went from 10:11 to 12:16. The people have now arrived in Paran, and this section will last from 13:1 to 19:22. With this understanding, we now begin the narrative.

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The words are to be taken in the light of Deuteronomy 1:19-22 –

“So we departed from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the mountains of the Amorites, as the Lord our God had commanded us. Then we came to Kadesh Barnea. ²⁰ And I said to you, ‘You have come to the mountains of the Amorites, which the Lord our God is giving us. ²¹ Look, the Lord your God has set the land before you; go up *and* possess *it*, as the Lord God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.’

²² “And every one of you came near to me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come.’”

Those words from Moses show that the intent was for the people to simply go forth in the strength of the Lord and to possess the land. However, instead of just agreeing to go forward, it is they who proposed a delay, demonstrating a faithless fear rather than a faithful fortitude. As a pretext for simply wanting to have things clearly laid out as to how to enter the land, they ask for representatives to go forth first and check out the land.

Their words asked for 1) to search out the land, 2) instructions on which way they should go up, and 3) details about the cities. First, the Lord had already told them of the land, saying, “You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey” (Leviticus 20:24). It was a good land and it was given by promise to them. All they had to do was accept His words and go forward.

Secondly, He said that He would go before them – “For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off” (Exodus 23:23). There was no need to decide upon the best route. All they would need to do is follow the Lord as He determined.

And thirdly, the state of the cities is irrelevant. Whether they were open areas without defense, or highly fortified cities with no seemingly possible way of being taken, the Lord has said already that they would not be able to defend against His hand. This is repeated several times in Exodus. It is He who would drive them out. All they needed to do was go in and follow His lead. All of this brings about these first words of Chapter 13 – “And the Lord spoke to Moses saying.” It is actually not the Lord who initiated this conversation, but rather Israel. And so, in agreement with their faithless request, He then says...

² **“Send men to spy out the land of Canaan,**

Despite there being absolutely no need for spies to be sent, the Lord agrees to their request, knowing the outcome, and knowing what the request will lead to. The Lord cannot be blamed for what lies ahead, but He can use it to make patterns, parallels, and pictures of Jesus. And this is exactly what He will do. Israel’s faithlessness is used as an opportunity for us to see, in advance of Christ’s coming, things which would confirm

who He is as the events which surround Israel will be repeated in events which surround Him and His ministry.

And so, the Lord says they are to do as requested and send out men to spy out the land of Canaan...

² (con't) **which I am giving to the children of Israel;**

The words are not a superfluous addition. Instead, they are an integral part of what is being relayed. It is an accomplished fact that the land is a gift to Israel. One can only give what he possesses. In saying that He is giving the land to the children of Israel, it means that the land is already His. If they want to delay the process, be it forty days or forty years, that is their choice. The Lord has already assured them of it and Moses has, according to what is recorded in Deuteronomy, already told them to go forward and possess it. If they want a detailed report, that is what they will get. And it will be from competent men...

² (con't) **from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man,**

ish ekhad ish ekhad la'mateh avotav – “man one man one for tribe of their fathers.” The repetition is a way of specifying each tribe is to send one man per tribe.

² (con't) **every one a leader among them.”**

It is the same term, *nasiy* – a “prince” or “leader” – that was used of the men who were selected as leaders of each tribe in Chapter 1. These will also be such men, but they will not be the same men. The Lord specifically calls for such men to ensure that what they report will be reliable, and that it will have its intended effect – whatever they decided – upon the people. If twelve Charlie’s were picked at random, upon their return, if they even found their way back to camp, their words would never be considered as acceptably representative of what they searched out.

³ **So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the Lord,**

In agreeing to their suggestion, and by the mouth of the Lord, Moses sends the chosen men from the encampment. These were...

³ (con't) **all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel.**

Again, the men are given a descriptive title, *rashe*, or heads, of the children of Israel. The word *rosh* signifies a head, and thus the top or the first. They are men who are trustworthy. One can almost sense, based on the disobedience already displayed by the people since leaving Sinai, that highlighting these men in this second way implies a sense of impending doom. The question which is already being raised is, “Which head will they listen to?” Will it be their true Head who has spoken out His assurances, or these lesser heads who are “head men,” but still just men?

⁴ Now these were their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur;

The following verses give the names of those who went and their father’s name as an identification. Some of the names are debated, but you will hear the most likely meaning of each. Shammua means “Hearing,” or in the sense of being heard, and thus “Renowned.” Zaccur means “Remembered,” or in the sense of remembering and thus “Mindful.”

⁵ from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori;

Shaphat means, “He has judged.” Hori could have one of several meanings, it being derived from *chor*, a cave or a hole, or something white or burning. It’s hard to say for sure.

⁶ from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh;

Caleb means “Dog.” Jephunneh means “He will be beheld.” or “He will turn.” Caleb will later be identified as a Kenizzite, a descendant of Canaan. Thus, it is likely that he is of foreign birth, but brought into the people of Israel and the tribe of Judah.

⁷ from the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph;

Igal means “He avenges,” or “He redeems.” Yoseph means, “He will add.”

⁸ from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun;

Hoshea means “Salvation.” Nun comes from a word meaning “to propagate” or “to increase.”

⁹ from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu;

Palti means “Yehovah has freed.” Raphu means “Healed.”

¹⁰ from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi;

Gaddiel means “God is my fortune.” Sodi means “My counselor.”

¹¹ from the tribe of Joseph, *that is*, from the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi;

Gaddi means “My Fortune.” Susi means “Horseman.” Here it says that this person is “from the tribe of Joseph.” Ephraim, the other son of Joseph, has already been listed, and it did not say this. This is especially odd because Ephraim is usually listed specifically in this way. The reason appears to be looking forward. Hoshea (Joshua), who is from Ephraim, will remain faithful to the Lord, but Gaddi will reflect dishonor upon Joseph who was considered a noble ancestor who held faithfully to the Lord.

¹² from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli;

Ammiel means “My Kinsman is God.” Gemalli means “Camel driver,” or “Possessor of Camels.”

¹³ from the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael;

Sethur means “Hidden.” Michael means “Who is Like God?” As a point of interest, the letters of the name, Sethur, equal 666. It is almost a puzzle to consider because his name here reads, “Hidden, the son of Who is Like God.”

¹⁴ from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi;

Nahbi means “Concealed.” Vophsi means “And (My) Abundance” and thus “Rich.”

¹⁵ from the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi.

Geuel means “Majesty of God.” Makhi means “My Poverty.”

¹⁶ These *are* the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land.

Nobody from Levi is named here because they are set apart to the Lord, and also because they were to receive no land inheritance. Also, like in the listing in Numbers 1,

Joseph was divided into his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. However, three of the tribes in Numbers 1 have their order changed in this listing here. Zebulun, Manasseh, and Gad move to a lower place.

¹⁶ (con't) **And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.**

Hoshea, as we saw, means "Salvation." Joshua, or Yehoshua," means "The Lord is Salvation." When and why Moses first called him Joshua is unknown. The Hebrew can be read as indicating any time. It may be he was given the name when they battled the Amalekites in Exodus 17, or it could be that he gave him the name here, but the name Joshua has been used in advance of the actual granting of the name, just as Peter is recorded as Peter earlier in the gospels, even before Jesus gave him the name. The "why" of his name change is possibly because when he first came to Moses and Moses asked his name, he might have said, "I am Hoshea," meaning, "I am salvation." Moses might have smiled and said, "No, you are Joshua, because the Lord is salvation."

The reason for stating the name change here is probably because Joshua would have been listed as Hoshea in the tribal records. However, with the changing of his name by Moses, it is now recorded officially as Joshua. In this, Joshua is a type of Christ. In fact, the Greek name of Joshua is identical in spelling to the Greek name of Jesus, or Yeshua, in the New Testament. He thus anticipates Jesus in the name, "The Lord is Salvation." When Yeshua, or Jesus, came He is the Lord who is "Salvation."

Joshua will be the one who will have come from the Land of Promise with a zeal to bring his people where he has been. This is then typical of Christ who came from heaven and fervently completed His work to bring His people to where He had been. Similarly, it is Joshua who will lead the people into their temporal salvation in Canaan. It is Jesus who leads the people in their spiritual salvation in a return to paradise. The acknowledgment of the name change here is to anticipate Joshua's faithful return from Canaan as the figure who is typical of Christ.

*Be of good courage, be brave, and resolute
Do not fear as you pass through the land
I mean to encourage, so that you bear fruit
Know that the Lord is with you, at your right hand*

*And soon enough, you will have the task completed
You shall be heading for home where I await*

*Don't let length of time seem as if you will be defeated
Just set your eyes on the goal, and keep your path straight*

*Be of good courage, your work is a part of My plan
And what you do shall be used for that good end
I mean to encourage; set yourself for the entire span
And on this life's mission, you I shall send*

II. Be of Good Courage (verses 17-20)

¹⁷ Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, “Go up this way into the South, and go up to the mountains,

The word is singular, *ha'har*, “the mountain.” It is a term meaning “hill country.” Moses directs them to go through the Negev, or South land of Israel first. This is the barren and wasted part of the land. It is dry and inhospitable and is truly the dregs of Canaan. Thus, in venturing through this area first, they would go from the least favorable to the more choice areas. That is comparable to the wedding feast noted in John 2. The poorer wine was brought out first, and only afterwards was the finest wine made available.

The intent was that the memory of the inhospitable land would be forgotten on their return, and that which was of delight and worthy of exciting the people would be fresh on the lips of the spies.

¹⁸ and see what the land is like:

The people are now in the wilderness. They were sustained by manna, but they have had very little variety in their lives. A detailed account of the land was to be an encouragement to them. There were mountains, rivers and streams, forests, an ocean with beaches on one side, fruit trees, open lands for herds, and on and on. The men were to do a thorough inspection of the land in order to whet the appetites of those who awaited word of what lay ahead. Moses then defines the meaning of this first clause with a list of specific instructions of what they were to be on the lookout for...

¹⁸ (con't) whether the people who dwell in it *are* strong or weak, few or many;

The Pulpit Commentary chides Moses here for these words, saying he is guilty of some indiscretion for asking them to consider these points. But this is not so. The Lord has already said He would go before the people. The report can only reflect on the faith of

the people in that promise. It would take no faith to go into a land filled with a bunch of pusillanimous punks. Rather, the people are to be presented with a fair and proper evaluation of what lies ahead. Their faith in the Lord will be tested by their response to whatever is presented to them. In this clause is a new word, *raphah*. It is an adjective meaning weak.

19 whether the land they dwell in is good or bad;

The Lord has already told them that it is a land filled with milk and honey. The people have tested the Lord by asking for an inspection. Moses is asking the spies to confirm His word. When it is confirmed, and it will be, it is intended to have at least two effects on them – 1) They should be ashamed of their doubting His promises and intents for them, and 2) they should be more willing to trust that His other promises are equally as true. In the future, there should – logically – be no further reason to doubt His word. These things are unknown to the people, but they are known to the Lord. Is experiential knowledge necessary for belief? Or, is the Lord to be taken at His word? It is a lesson for us today as much as it was for Israel as they stood ready to enter Canaan. Moses then says...

19 (con't) whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds;

If the people lived in camps, they would be open prey to the forces of Israel. But if they were in strongholds, they would be defended and they would be able to slowly reduce the numbers who came against them. The word for “strongholds,” *mibtsar*, is new. It indicates a fortification, coming from a root meaning “enclosed,” or “inaccessible.” The Lord knows already what the land is like, but the people don’t. They wanted a report; the Lord is providing that report. What they do with it is up to them. Will they trust Him, regardless of the description, or will they grow fainthearted at the mention of difficulty? They wanted to know about Canaan, but the Lord wants them to know their own hearts.

20 whether the land is rich or poor;

u-mah ha’arets ha’shemenah hi im razah – “and what the land – the fat is, or lean.” Fat in this sense is that which is rich and luxurious, even to abundance. This is the opposite of *razeh*, or lean. It is a new word seen only here and in Ezekiel 34:20. The idea here is, if there are cows, are they chubby or scrawny. If there are trees, are they mighty or twig-like. If there is fruit in season, are they large, juicy, and nummy; or are they poor, desiccated, and sour.

Again, the Lord has promised what it will be like. Will His words be confirmed? If so, the people should be ashamed. If not, then they have been misled. But such will never be the case. The placement of their faith is what is under evaluation.

20 (con't) and whether there are forests there or not.

The words say, “and whether there is wood in it or not.” It isn’t until Deuteronomy that the *yaar*, or forest, is first mentioned. For now, regardless of there being numerous trees, or wooded forests, Moses is asking for a description of whatever is available. As forests will be a part of the report (as we can tell from Deuteronomy), it would, again, be a great encouragement to the people who have been living in an environment with an extremely limited supply of wood – both in Egypt, and now in the wilderness.

20 (con't) Be of good courage.

v’hit-khazaqtem. The single Hebrew word basically says, “And you all be of good courage.” It is plural. One can see Moses, after having pointed to head to the South land, and then having given these instructions, now looking at them all collectively, and then each individually, and saying, “Don’t fear you guys. Be strong, and be encouraged.” Moses is perfectly at peace with their mission, and he is desirous that they be just as much so as he is. And to assure them that their way will lead them back to the camp, and in fact, they will make it back to the camp, he says...

20 (con't) And bring some of the fruit of the land.”

To ask them to bring home fruit has several important aspects to it. First, it is something that they would do towards the end of their travels, signifying that they would, in fact, get to that point. Secondly, it would show the people what they were missing out on by staying in the wildness any longer. And thirdly, it would be a pledge and confirmation of the good things promised to them.

20 (con't) Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.

This places the account around July or August unless it is speaking of the time of the return with grapes. Then they would have left forty days earlier, making their departures May-July sometime. The traditional date of Jewish teaching is that they returned on the 8th day of the month of Av, and the people heard their report and moaned against the Lord on the 9th of Av, setting a date in Jewish history which is especially marked with bad tidings, including the destruction of both temples in Jerusalem. If this correct, it is the

July/August time-frame, and thus they would have left forty days earlier than this clause of verse 20.

*What is the land like? We can't wait to see
Is it truly flowing with milk and with honey?
What does future hold? We are waiting expectantly
We anticipate a land where the skies will be sunny*

*When will be the day when we finally set out?
And head for the land we have been waiting to see?
We anticipate good news, we are hopeful – no doubt
Yes, we are in anticipation, and waiting expectantly*

*The news will be brought back, and we will hope it is good
We anticipate that a good report it will be
Surely that will be the case, this is understood
And so we wait for the news, ever so expectantly*

III. The Valley of Eshcol (verses 21-25)

²¹ So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehov, near the entrance of Hamath.

Zin, if from a biblical word, gives the sense of a thorn or a barb. It is not the same as the Wilderness of Sin, which was closer to Egypt. This is right on the border of Israel. From there, they traveled, essentially following the course of the Jordan north to Rekhov, which means “Open Place.” It is right at the northern extremity of the land, near the area of Dan. It is on the road which leads to Lebo-Khamath, or “the entrance to Hamath.” Hamath means “Defense,” or “Citadel.”

²² And they went up through the South and came to Hebron;

The Hebrew goes from the 3rd person plural to the 3rd person singular. It says, And **they** went up through the Negev and **he** came to Hebron. Hebron means “Association,” or “League.” What this means is that the spies all went up through the Negev, and one branched off and went to Hebron while others searched out other towns. In this, they would be able to cover much more land dividing among cities within geographical areas. This then would be speaking of Caleb. In Joshua 14, we read –

“I *was* forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as *it was* in my heart. ⁸ Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. ⁹ So Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance and your children’s forever, because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.’”

-Joshua 14:7-9

Caleb was the one who searched out this area, it stirred his heart, and he was granted the right to it by Moses. This is common in the Bible, where a matter is stated concerning its end, and then only later are the details filled in. Such was the case where Genesis 1 completed the creation, and where Genesis 2 then filled in the details. From there, it occurs again and again in Scripture.

²² (con’t) **Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, were there.**

Akhi-man means “My brother is a gift.” Sheshai means “Whitish.” Talmi means, “Plowman.” Anak means “Long Neck,” or “Necklace.” They are a tribe known for their appearance. This is sure, because the Hebrew says, “the Anak.” It is not speaking of an individual, but of a group of people. These people – the Anakim – thus became known as the “Long Necks,” or for the distinctive neck ornamentation they wore. The latter is more probable because it means they were like the Egyptians who were known for their unusual neck ornamentations. That would help explain the unusual clause which is next stated...

²² (con’t) **(Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)**

This is a parenthetical thought without seeming relevance to the narrative. However, it appears that Moses may be confronting the belief of the Egyptians that they were the most ancient of civilizations. In fact, then, Hebron is of greater antiquity than Zoan, now known as Tanis, in Egypt. Zoan means “Lowland,” but to a Hebrew, it would sound like “Nomadic.” This would then indicate that the Anak are a people group related to the Egyptians and shared in the same ostentatious display of neck ornamentation.

²³ **Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol,**

This is not a valley as one would think of it today. The word is *nakhla* and it signifies a wadi where water would flow through during the seasons of rain. That word comes from *nakhla* meaning, “to take possession,” or “inherit.” Eshcol means “cluster.” But that

comes from the word *eshek*, meaning testicle. Again, the details are given, and then the blanks are filled in. The valley is named for the cluster which was cut. This is actually explained in the next verse.

23 (con't) and there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes;

Here is another new word, *zemorah*. It is a branch which is pruned. It is a single branch of *anavim*, or grapes. In the Bible, grapes are used to provide a sense of cultural expression.

23 (con't) they carried it between two of them on a pole.

After cutting the cluster, they placed it on a pole. The same word is used to describe the pole on which the menorah and the golden altar of incense were carried. It is a shaking pole, meaning one which would be carried between two people, thus moving with their body movements. The Hebrew says that it was carried *b'shnayim*, or between two of them, but it doesn't say which two. However, it can also mean, "in twos." That means they could have taken turns.

23 (con't) They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs.

The *rimmon*, or pomegranate is associated with the word *rum*, or "to be high," or "exalted." It carries the connotation of mental maturity and calling to remembrance. The *te-enah*, or fig has not been seen since Genesis 3. It is the third tree mentioned in the Bible, and its significance is one of a connection to God, or a disconnect from Him. Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves as a type of work, demonstrating a disconnect from God. The fig tree that Jesus cursed had no fruit, only leaves. That was a walking parable of the temple which no longer held a connection to God, and which was destined to be cursed, never to bear fruit again. People say the fig represents Israel, but that is incorrect. When used in connection with Israel, it represents its connection to God. Is it spiritually healthy, or not?

24 The place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there.

This verse provides the details of that which has already been stated. The place they came to is named the Valley of Cluster. However, the name may also be a confirmation of Abraham's friend, Eshcol, who lived in this area many centuries before.

²⁵ And they returned from spying out the land after forty days.

The number forty is defined as a period of probation, trial, and chastisement, but not judgment. It is a time of testing to determine an outcome. It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of grace (5), leading to and ending in revival and renewal (8). The forty days are ended, and the spies have returned. What will be the outcome? At this point, the answer remains unstated, and it won't be until we complete the verses next week where the answer will hopefully be given.

For now, and as we finish up, we should remember what precipitated this journey into Canaan by these spies. It wasn't something directed by the Lord, but something requested by the people. In this, it truly is a lack of faith in His word that brought this about. It is the only reasonable explanation. He had told them they would possess the land, He had told them that He would go before them and ensure it would be accomplished, and yet they wanted to follow this course of action – looking for a sign that things would be favorable.

If we can walk away with one main thought from this, it should be of the parallel thought in our own lives. The Lord has spoken, His word is written, and He asks us to accept it by faith. How difficult that is when things aren't going well, with the unknown just over the next set of hills, or with the prospect of facing a battle that we have only been told will come out OK.

He has said death is defeated, but the cancer is eating away at us. He has said that paradise awaits, but so does the grave. He has said that the devil is defeated for those who are His, and yet we act as if the devil has possession of our very souls at times. Will we be like faithless Israel and ask for more? Or will we stand content that what the Lord has promised He will – in fact – bring about?

Let us trust the Lord, put our confidence in Him, and know with every fiber of our being that He has it all under control. But, that is only true if you are His. Only after that, then comes the path to full and complete trust. Be sure to know your destiny now. Once that is settled, then you can steadily work on developing a faith that nothing can shatter.

Closing Verse: *Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer,
The Holy One of Israel:*

*"I am the Lord your God,
Who teaches you to profit,
Who leads you by the way you should go." Isaiah 48:17*

Next Week: Numbers 13:26-33 What will happen, I had no idea at the time of typing this sermon, it is true... (A Taste of the Land of Promise, Part II) (24th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Taste of the Land of Promise

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words He was then relaying

“Send men to spy out the land of Canaan
Which I am giving to the children of Israel
From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man
Every one a leader among them, as to you I now tell

So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran
According to the command of the Lord
All of them men who were heads of the children of Israel
According to His word

Now these were their names:
From the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur
From the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori
From the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh, for sure

From the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph
From the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun
From the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu
From the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi, yes Sodi’s son

From the tribe of Joseph, that is
From the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi
From the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli
From the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael, as we now see

From the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi

From the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi

These are the names of the men
Whom Moses sent to spy out the land
And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua
As we now perfectly understand

Then Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan
And said to them, "Go up into the South this way
And go up to the mountains
And see what the land is like, as to you I now say

Whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak
Few or many you should find out too
Whether the land they dwell in is good or bad
Whether the cities they inhabit are like camps or strongholds
— — —-as I am now telling you

Whether the land is rich or poor
And whether there are forests there or not
Be of good courage
And bring some of the fruit of the land back to us here at this spot

Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes
So they went up and spied out the land
From the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob
Near the entrance of Hamath, so we now understand

And they went up through the South and came to Hebron
Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were there
(Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt)
Of such interesting information, the Bible does not spare

Then they came to the Valley of Eshcol
And there cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes
— — —-so they did do
They carried it between two of them on a pole
They also brought some of the pomegranates and figs too

The place was called the Valley of Eshcol
Because of the cluster which the men of Israel cut down there
And they returned from spying out the land
After forty days so ended this particular affair

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

Shammua means "Hearing," or in the sense of being heard, and thus "Renowned."

Shaphat means, "He has judged."

Caleb means "Dog."

Igal means "He avenges," or "He redeems."

Hoshea means "Salvation."

Palti means "Yehovah has freed."

Gaddiel means "God is my fortune."

Gaddi means "My Fortune."

Ammiel means "My Kinsman is God."

Sethur means “Hidden.”

Nahbi means “Concealed.”

Geuel means “Majesty of God.”

Zaccur means “Remembered,” or in the sense of remembering and thus “Mindful.”

Khori could have one of several meanings, it being derived from khor, a cave or a hole, or something white or burning. It’s hard to say for sure.

Yephunneh means “He will be beheld.”

Yoseph means, “He will add.”

Nun comes from a word meaning “to propagate” or “to increase.”

Raphu means “Healed.”

Sodi means “My counselor.”

Susi means “Horseman.”

Gemalli means “Camel driver,” or “Possessor of Camels.”

Michael means “Who is Like God?”

Vophsi means “And (My) Abundance” and thus “Rich.”

Machi means “My Poverty.”

NUMBERS 13:26-33 (A TASTE OF THE LAND OF PROMISE, PART II)

The day I typed this sermon, the enemies of Israel down in Gaza sent missile after missile into Israel. The notifications on my iPad went on, continuously, for hours. Sergio was so annoyed by them while trying to do his work, that he turned off his notifications so he could think clearly. I left mine on, despite how annoying they were, because I wanted to be able to empathize with Israel when they face these cowardly attacks by their enemies. By the time I got to typing this introduction which I do last on sermons, over 200 had been fired.

The text in today's verses speaks of the land devouring its inhabitants. Nothing has changed since that was written, and it will continue to be that way until Israel calls out to Christ. In fact, until then, it is only going to get much, much worse. But this has been a constant, repeating pattern for Israel. Since their Exodus from Egypt, they have been consistent in rejecting the Lord and His work. Today, we will see the spies begin the process of doing exactly that.

Later, they will do it in Canaan, time and again. It is rare in the Bible that when one turns a few pages, someone, some tribe, or the whole nation *doesn't* turn away from Him. We can look at this pattern, shake our head, and wonder how stupid they could be. And yes, it is true that with the constant presence of the pillar above the tabernacle, the people had to be considerable dolts in order to reject Him and His word. But that pillar wasn't always there.

However, when the pillar was gone, the word remained, and the call of the prophets rang out, warning them of their wayward ways. Eventually, exile came, but the disciplinary effects of that soon waned away, another temple was built, and Israel failed to be the holy nation they were called to be. And then... and then Christ came.

Text Verse: *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”* 1 John 1:1-4

Everything about Jesus and His ministry was already explained to Israel. All they had to do was to simply believe in Him. But once again, they didn't. We'll see that pictured in today's verses. Now, obviously, the spies who went into Canaan didn't realize that the things they did, and the places they went to, were pointing to Christ and His work, but for those who spoke Hebrew, knew what the passage said, and saw the work of Christ, you might think they would have figured this out.

And those spies, as I've already said, they had the presence of the Lord right there with them. In the end, they are simply without excuse. But, Peter tells us that those who hear the word and reject it are actually more guilty than even they were. Like Israel of old, Peter says that he saw the Lord on the sacred mountain, and despite that, he says that we have the more sure prophetic word.

In other words, what is written about Christ, and the fulfillment of those things in Christ, is so certain that it is more sure than actually having seen Him. Our eyes can deceive us, our minds can conjure up false ideas about what we have seen, but something prophesied, and then fulfilled, cannot be more sure. And so as we see what happened today with Israel, let us remember that what they saw actually doesn't compare to what we have in Scripture.

Numbers 13 is a prophetic look into the work of Christ. After it is explained to you, will you say, "That doesn't mean what Charlie said." Ok, we'll grant you that, one time. But not the thousands of times that Christ is revealed – again and again – in picture, in type, in symbolism, and in prophecy. God is trying to wake us up to what is revealed in Christ. What is recorded in the New explains what we see about Him in the Old. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Bad Report (verses 26-33)

²⁶ Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the children of Israel

The words, "now they departed," refer to the completion of their trek into Canaan. Once the land and its inhabitants had been sized up and evaluated, they departed Canaan for the camp of Israel. Upon arrival, it appears that the first thing they did, even before going to their own tents, was to proceed directly to the east end of the sanctuary where the tents of Moses and Aaron were situated. This would explain the words, "and came back to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation."

This spot is the last spot before actually entering the sanctuary, and it is representative of all of the congregation. It is amazing to consider that what lies ahead in these verses will occur directly in front of the sanctuary, above which was the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. In other words, the presence of the Lord is made perfectly manifest by the presence of the pillar. It makes the events ahead all the more egregious. The camp has, until their return, remained in the same location as when they left, which is...

26 (con't) in the Wilderness of Paran,

This is where they are said to have arrived after departing from Sinai. They left Sinai, had a few interim stops, and this is the next main encampment, presumably the last, before entering into Canaan. It is the same location as was mentioned in verse 13:3 when the spies set out forty days earlier. Paran means "Glorious." However, the location is also, for the first time in the narrative, given another name...

26 (con't) at Kadesh;

The name Kadesh signifies "Sacred," or "Holy." It is the same location later called Kadesh Barnea. That name would fit with what will transpire among Israel due to the punishment coming upon them. Kadesh Barnea would mean "Sacred Desert of Wandering," or maybe in the active sense, "Holy Purifying Wanderings."

26 (con't) they brought back word to them and to all the congregation,

In arriving at the tents of Moses and Aaron, there would be an immediate stir of the people. The leaders would probably have ran to this spot to see what the report was in order to then pass it onto the people. After being in the same spot for more than a month, the anticipation would be high, and the change from daily routine would be welcomed. Along with bringing word of the land, it then says...

26 (con't) and showed them the fruit of the land.

This would have been a marvelous joy for those who had been in the wilderness now for over a year. Though there may have been desert cactus and a few other types of fruit in the wilderness, the quantities would have been extremely limited, and not nearly as delightful to the senses as the products of cultivated fruits from a well-watered land. One would think that at the mere sight of this, the matter would have been settled. What was anticipated was right there, within reach, and ready to be grasped. And even more...

27 Then they told him,

The Hebrew word for “told” here is *saphar*. It means “to recount.” This is the only time it is used in the book of Numbers. It is not an unusual word in and of itself, but it relays more than just “said,” or “spoke.” They went to the land, searched it out, and now they are *recounting* the details of the journey, as if a step by step record of what transpired. In *recounting*, the spies are carefully and methodically explaining themselves to Moses, Aaron, and anyone else who has come to hear their words. They catalogued what occurred, and now that minute detail is repeated. In essence, “This is what we saw, these are the roads we took, these are the cities we searched out, this is what the food was like, and so on. And why is this important? It is because what they saw, and what they carefully chronicled, is what was promised from the mouth of the Lord, exactly as He said...

27 (con’t) and said: “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey,

The description of the land, as promised by the Lord, has not failed. The term, “land of milk and honey,” was introduced in Exodus 3:8. It was stated four times in Exodus and once in Leviticus, all speaking of the promised land of Canaan. Now, what the Lord had said is confirmed by the spies. The term is used a total of twenty times, always, but once, in relation to the land of Canaan.

A land flowing with milk and honey implies richness and fertility. Milk comes from cows and so it means that the spies saw abundant pasture lands. Honey comes from bees which pollinate flowers and so it implies all sorts of fruit trees, herbs, and flowers. And more, for Israel the term “a land flowing with milk and honey” should then possess a spiritual connotation. For them, it doesn’t just speak of the physical abundance but also of spiritual abundance because of the Lord, and because they are the Lord’s people, through whom the word of God comes.

The word of God is said to be sweeter than honey. It is also equated with milk which nourishes. Thus, this is a reference to that as well. The land literally flowed with milk and honey for sustaining Israel’s physical lives. It should then, logically, also flow with milk and honey for sustaining their spiritual lives once they arrived. It is a certainty that if the promise of the Lord’s word concerning the abundance of the land is true, so should the abundance of His blessing upon them also be true. In hopefulness that this is so, the spies confirm the news about the land with the words...

27 (con't) **and this is its fruit.**

The cluster of grapes, the pomegranates, and the figs were a token of guarantee that the word of the Lord concerning Canaan was true. They had them laid out, they could be held, they could be smelled, they could be tasted, and yet the physical reality set before them was not enough for the spies to make the connection between the physical assurances of plenty and the spiritual assurances that what God had said would actually come true.

They considered the abundance their eyes had seen, they looked around at the camps which surrounded them and the people of whom they were comprised, but they failed to simply look up and behold the pillar above the sanctuary. In their failure, they next contrast the land and its abundance with the inhabitants who dwelt in that land...

28 **Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land *are* strong;**

ephes ki, “only, indeed.” It is a new word in Scripture, *ephes*. It signifies a ceasing. In other words, “We have given you the good news, but here comes the bad.” By giving them the good news, showing them the fruit, telling them that the word of the Lord concerning the land was true, then they would more readily be believed in what they would now pass on.

They have confirmed the words of the Lord concerning the land, but they then dispute the word of the Lord concerning the people of the land. In them, a complete disconnect is made between His word of knowledge and His word of capability. They imply that the Lord knows the good, but He cannot deliver that same good.

One can almost hear the debate as they left Canaan and trudged back to the camp, “I ain’t going up there in battle.” “Oh come on, we can do it.” “No way! Didn’t you see the people, the cities, the fortifications!” It would have gone back and forth, and the weaker of the group would naturally follow the strongest of the weak. “If he thinks the people in the land are too strong, I’m with him.” The opposing view would be drowned out by the insecurities of the majority. This, then, is the position agreed upon by the majority, and this is what is now reported.

The people are described as *az* – mighty, fierce, and powerful. The last time the word was used was concerning the “strong east wind” which divided the waters of the Red Sea for Israel to pass through. It is not coincidence that this was its last use. In the eyes of the spies, the *az* of the Lord is being challenged by the *az* of the inhabitants. In

their eyes, the Canaanites have already prevailed. And the words of the spies must be considered in relation to who they are as was stated in verse 13:2. There, the Lord told Moses to take men from each tribe, “every one a leader among them.” The best of Israel now stands before Moses and whines about the daunting challenge of facing the enemies in Canaan.

28 (con’t) the cities are fortified and very large;

The land is good, sure, but the people are fierce. And more, they are fierce in defended cities which are massive in size. If the cities are large, the number of people in them is also large. The case is built, one superlative upon the other. The marvel of causing an entire sea to divide for Israel, and which then swallowed up the great army of Pharaoh, is a long distant memory. They forgot the great deeds of the Lord, and they cower in their minds over something not nearly as impossible to overcome.

28 (con’t) moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.

Like verse 22, it says, “the Anak.” It is a clan of people known for their unusual necks, or the adornments on their necks. In stating the name, it shows that their reputation went ahead of them. There was no need for further explanation. The name itself drew fear from those who heard it spoken. In this, their reputation is elevated to a position greater than even that of the giant, fortified cities already described.

As they were seen to be associated with the Egyptians in the previous sermon, they then present a fearful challenge to Israel. They had left Egypt and the Egyptians behind, but these people are a force allied with Egypt through their ancestry, and they will be eager to destroy the people who had destroyed their families at the Red Sea. But the spies have more bad news to reveal than this...

29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South;

It is the same group of people whom Israel fought in Exodus 17. The battle was fierce and the lines changed according to the raising of the rod of Moses. As his strength failed, the Amalekites would begin to prevail. However, it is this same group – not a war party – but the entire clan, who dwelt in the South, right where Israel would have to enter. The battle of the previous year would be fresh on Amalek’s mind, and he would be in a defensive, fortified position. If the battle lines changed in a war away from their territory... oh my! It would be an utter slaughter in a land they defended. And yet, there is more...

²⁹ (con't) **the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains;**

“Hittite” comes from a word meaning, “terror.” Jebusite comes from a word meaning “to tread down, or “to trample.” “Amorite” comes from the word *amar*, or “to speak.” The connection may be that they were noted people, thus “Renowned.” The names themselves give a sense of foreboding. If their names fit their character, and they dwelt in the mountains, meaning the southeast part of the land. One could not enter that way without encountering them. And in encountering them, there would be great difficulty in overcoming them because of the advantage of their holding the high ground. As bad as this is, hold on to your hats. There is more...

²⁹ (con't) **and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.”**

The term Canaanite here is a general term. The sea referred to is debated. Some say it is the Dead Sea, or even the Sea of Galilee, but that doesn't seem to be the intent. It is referring to the Mediterranean on the west, which is then contrasted to the Jordan on the east. In other words, descendants of Canaan filled both sides of the land. This is actually confirmed by Joshua 11:3, which says that the Canaanites dwelt in both the east and the west.

Thus, the entrance would be guarded on both sides by a united people as they were all clans of their father Canaan. If one attempted to attack on the west, those on the east would come to their aid. And if they attacked on the east, those on the west would do the same. This is the intent of the words being conveyed. It is a hopeless situation for people such as Israel. They would be swallowed up by foes no matter where they entered and no matter where they went. That is, at least, the majority position. It is one lacking faith in the Lord, and it is one of peevish cowardice. However, not all the spies were peevish cowards...

³⁰ **Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses,**

Here is a new word, *has*, or “Hush!” It is an onomatopoeic interjection which will be seen just eight times. Caleb, or “dog,” who, being a Kenizzite, is probably not even a native Israelite, is brave enough to stand against the ten faithless spies right in front of Moses. If he were alive today, he probably would have said, “Why don't you all shut up.” What has happened is that the spies have given their report, and Moses *has*, in fact, responded. Though not recorded here, it is seen in Deuteronomy 1 –

“Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. ³⁰The Lord your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.’ ³²Yet, for all that, you did not believe the Lord your God, ³³who went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day.”

-Deuteronomy 1:29-33

After this, the people rejected what Moses said, and so Caleb has come out in defense of Moses’ words and in opposition to the words spoken against Moses. Once they were quieted...

³⁰ (con’t) **and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”**

His words carry two repetitions. First, he says, *aloh na-aleh*, or “arising, let us arise.” It is an adamant statement that they should get up off their duffs and go forward in order to take possession of the land. He then next says, *yakol nukal*, or “overcoming, we will overcome.” Again, there isn’t the slightest hint of indecision in him. He firmly states that the land is theirs, and all they have to do is act in order for that to come about. By saying, “take possession” of the land, rather than, “conquer” the land, he is showing absolute confidence in the fact that the land is theirs already. It is a certain confidence in what the Lord has spoken.

Although it will be many years later, this confidence of Caleb will be seen realized in him when he enters into Canaan with Joshua and together they engage in, and win, battle after battle against the enemies. In fact, Caleb is given the credit for taking out those of Anak already described in verse 22 of this chapter –

“Now to Caleb the son of Jephunneh he gave a share among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, *namely*, Kirjath Arba, which *is* Hebron (*Arba was the father of Anak*). ¹⁴Caleb drove out the three sons of Anak from there: Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak. ¹⁵Then he went up from there to the inhabitants of Debir (formerly the name of Debir *was* Kirjath Sepher).” Joshua 15:13-15

In the next chapter, it will be seen that Joshua sided with this minority view. However, Joshua, being Moses’ personal assistant, probably deferred to Caleb in the initial

response. Caleb would appear as an impartial witness to the congregation. If Joshua spoke first, they could ignore his words as simply a mirror of what Moses would expect him to say.

Together, Joshua and Caleb will bear anguish at the attitude of the people. But their imploring words will be wasted on the cowardly spies of Israel. They feared for their lives more than they trusted the Lord, and their weakness became an impenetrable wall against the words of Moses, Joshua, and Caleb...

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we.”

They completely reject Caleb’s support of Moses, speaking directly to him as if he had been sleeping during the entire expedition. In this, they specifically say *ki khazaq hu mimenu* – “for mighty they than we.” In a sense, this is an obviously true statement, *if* it was merely referring to Israel the people. Their numbers were smaller, they were unskilled in battle, and they would be going into a defended land.

However, the statement is absolutely false, because they are Israel the people. And as such, they belonged to, and were led by, the One who is all-powerful. The statement of these cowardly men in this verse is a total rejection of the Lord in their lives – both His presence, and His ability to keep His promises. In today’s lingo, we would say of these spies, “Epic fail.” And in their failure, they decide to share the misery beyond the tent of Moses...

³² And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying,

The only other time a *divah*, or bad report, has been noted is when Joseph brought a bad report about his brothers back to his father. Now, it is used of spies giving out a bad report of the land. What makes their words here worse is that they have already acknowledged to Moses that it is a land of milk and honey, confirming the Lord’s word. However, they cannot relay this to the people without having them divided, just as the spies were divided. And so instead of telling them of its positives, they now give a bad report of the land, implying the Lord’s word was untruthful...

³² (con’t) “The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants,

This is a statement which is to be taken metaphorically. However, in doing so, they implicitly state how good the land actually is. In saying that the land “devours its inhabitants,” it implies that the land is so good that the inhabitants are willing to destroy one another over its possession. Ironically, this is a phrase used in Leviticus 26 concerning what would happen to Israel when they were disobedient to the Lord. The focus for them here is not on the beauty and fruitfulness of the land, but on what that beauty and fruitfulness leads to. This is exactly what is happening in that same land today. Since Israel returned, the land has blossomed, and the surrounding peoples intend to devour its inhabitants over that which they have not produced, and to which they have no right.

32 (con’t) and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature.

This isn’t just an exaggeration, it is an outright lie. First, the term in Hebrew is *anshey midot* – men of measures. It is a way of saying they are twice as tall as normal men. And even if it is true that there were men of great size living in the land, they are implying that this is the state of all of them. Such is not the case. The people were just like any others, with but certain exceptions. However, in their cowardice, they magnified the lie in order to stop the heart of even the most trusting soul in regards to the word of the Lord.

33 There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants);

The words of this clause say, “and there we saw the Nephilim, sons of Anak, from the Nephilim.” The word “giants” is assumed from the next clause. The word *nephilim*, most likely comes from the word *naphal*, meaning “to fall.” Thus they are known as “Fallen Ones.” However, what that means is debated. It could merely be fallen in the sense of prostrating oneself for prayer.

The reason for the spies using this term though is obvious. Moses had received the book of Genesis, and it – along with any verbal traditions – would have been known to the people. By stating that these were *nephilim*, they were claiming that their origins predated the flood, and thus they must be supernatural beings. This is because the flood narrative very clearly said that the Lord would destroy all flesh in which was the breath of life.

If such a race of people existed in Canaan, they would be impossible to defeat. But the Bible doesn’t make this claim, only the spies do. It is they who are speaking to the people, and their words are gross exaggerations of the situation. There were large

people there, just as there are a number of large people in any given society at any given time. But they were the exception, not the standard.

³³ (fin) **and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”**

The words here are absolute hyperbole. In an attempt to terrify the people, and to keep them from any desire of aligning with Moses, these cowardly men have gone to great lengths in order to steer the people away from the otherwise sure and reliable word of the Lord.

*A land of milk and honey lies ahead of you
Just a short trip and it shall be yours to possess
I shall go before you; the way is paved, it is true
Enter the land, and there, you I shall certainly bless*

*We cannot go up against those people. No way!
They are stronger than we are; we will be wiped out for sure
We aren't going up, not now or on any other day
We will return to Egypt where we can be secure*

*O Israel, how long until you accept Me at My word?
When will you pay heed to what I have already for you done?
In believing in My past faithfulness, you can know I am the Lord
And in that you can then, finally, believe in Jesus My Son*

*Believe My word, that which is written to you
And there you will find Jesus My Son – My word to you is true*

II. The Symbolism of the Journey; Pictures of Christ

The passage found in Numbers 13 follows immediately after the account of Aaron and Miriam's rebellion against Moses and which resulted in Miriam's leprosy. As we saw, that was a picture of the unclean state of Israel in her time of punishment and exclusion from the camp of the Lord. This story follows after that and it reveals the work of the Lord which brought that about. In other words, it explains Israel's failure to enter the kingdom.

Spies were selected in order to search out Canaan, emblematic of the kingdom of God. Before someone flips out, this is not speaking of the literal kingdom which is ahead for

Israel after the Tribulation. It is what Paul refers to a dozen times in his epistles as the kingdom of God for believers. It is our inheritance because of Christ. How this came about is explained in the journeys listed in this chapter.

They left from the Wilderness of Zin, meaning “Thorn.” That would be, like Sinai, a picture of Christ’s cross – the Thorn. From there, forty days of travels provide almost no details at all, only a mere handful of verses. It says they left the Wilderness of Zin, just as Christ left the cross. It then says they went as far as Rehob, or “Wide Space.” That pictures Christ passing through the veil of death and into heaven, pictured by Rehob or “Wide Space,” there to present His blood, as is described in Hebrews. Thus, we have the narrow path which is Christ, who is the Veil, leading to heaven, the wide place. Rehob is said to be “near the entrance of Hamath. Hamath means Citadel, it would be reflective of the dwelling of God, His place of authority and rule.

From there, they went through the South and to Hebron. First, the South signifies intelligence which comes about by means of knowledge. It is the place of light leading to truth. This is why the menorah was placed on the south side of the holy place. In this, they came to Hebron. That signifies a conjunction, or joining. That is the joining of Jew and Gentile into one kingdom, as Paul explains in Ephesians 2:14-18 –

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

While in Hebron, the odd introduction of Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi, sons of the Anak, are noted. Those names are given to explain the position of those who are a part of this joining together. Ahiman means, “My Brother is a Gift.” That is the relationship of the believer to Christ. Christ is the Gift. Sheshai, or Whitish, looks to the purification of the believer because of Christ. Talmi, or Plowman, looks to the one who puts his hand to the plow and doesn’t look back. In other words, a believer in Christ.

Anak requires more explanation. It means neck, or necklace, but that comes from the word *anaq* which means being fitted out with supplies, and thus furnished liberally, just as a necklace is made up of many pieces. Thus, being a son of Anak signifies the believer

is one who is furnished liberally by God for every necessary work to which he is appointed.

As far as why the enigmatic statement about Hebron being built before Zoan is included, I can only speculate on this, but Psalm 78 equates Zoan with the plagues of Egypt. As those plagues actually look forward to the tribulation period in typology, it appears that this is a statement saying that the work of Christ in joining Jew and Gentile in the church age precedes the tribulation. It is a big speculation, but if that is why this verse is here, as a parenthetical thought, it is a subtle hint of a pre-tribulation rapture.

After this, they then proceeded to the Valley of Eshcol. As we saw, this isn't a valley in the modern sense. The word is *nakhal*, and it signifies a wadi where water would flow through during the seasons of rain. That comes from *nakhal* meaning, "to take possession," or "inherit."

Eshcol means "cluster," and that, in turn, comes from the word *eshkek*, meaning testicle. This is a picture of Christ's work. Once having been accepted, He took possession of that which proceeds from the spot where man is generated from. In other words, it is a picture of the overriding of original sin in man. Sin transfers from father to child. The semen, which is generated in man, is what transfers that sin. Christ has, through His work, taken possession of that in all who move from Adam to Him. It is the realization of the kingdom for His people through this act.

After that, we are told that there in Eshcol, they cut down a branch of one *eshcol*, or cluster, of grapes. Christ is the Vine, we are the branches. The single cluster is a sample of the fruit of the kingdom of Christ. The Bible reveals grapes as providing a sense of cultural expression. The grapes of the kingdom, though many, are a single cultural expression.

This pole, or *mot*, is the same word as used for carrying the menorah and the golden altar of incense. That it is carried by two spears of the Old and New Testaments being united as one. The beam signifies the work of the Spirit. There is one Spirit working, and thus the cluster of grapes, signifying the fruits of the Spirit in a cultural expression, is transported in this manner. Therefore, the one cultural expression is that of those in the kingdom, both Jew and Gentile. They are one in Christ.

Along with that were *rimmon*, or pomegranates, which signify mental maturity, and calling to remembrance. They picture exactly this, calling to remembrance the work of

the Lord, and thus mental maturity in Christ. The figs, or *te-elah*, signify connection to God because of the work of Christ. This is the sum of the travels of the spies.

At this point, it notes that the journey took forty days. As we saw last week, the number forty is defined as a period of probation, trial, and chastisement, but not judgment. It is a time of testing to determine an outcome. It is the product of 5 and 8, and points to the action of grace (5), leading to and ending in revival and renewal (8). This is actually realized in those who accept Christ, receive His grace, and which leads to their regeneration in the Spirit.

From there, they are said to have returned to the Wilderness of Paran, or Glorious, and to a name never mentioned before, Kadesh, or Holy. It is a picture of access into the glorious kingdom of God because of the work of Christ, by which we are made holy. It is a process – from the cross, through the heavenlies at the entrance to the Citadel of God, and then that which then stems from that work. The joining of Jew and Gentile, the movement of man from Adam to Christ in the new birth and the adoption as sons, the work of the Spirit, and the restored connection to God because of it.

Now, in understanding the symbolism of these words which, in very skimpy detail, explain their forty days in Canaan, we can see the correlation between the events, and what lies ahead in the rejection of Israel concerning entering Canaan.

Israel had seen all of this in the coming of Christ, and yet a bad report was made concerning His work. The nation refused to enter, and their punishment came upon them for it. This will be seen in the coming chapter. However, Caleb, a mere dog by name, and a Gentile, at least by genealogy, spoke well of what he saw, he received the inheritance, and he, along with Joshua, were the only ones who would cross over Jordan and into the Land of Promise. For Israel as a whole, the generation who rejected the Lord was rejected by the Lord. For them, only a later generation would be brought in to the land He promised to their fathers.

It is with great gratitude to the Lord, and the prayers of several friends that I emailed about the complexity of this chapter, that it has been explained to you today. I read the passage again and again over the weeks it was being prepared, and I only half slept as I tried to figure out what the Lord was saying. But there is no doubt in my mind that what has been presented is what the Lord intends for us to see. Once again, God is asking us to consider our relationship with Him, and He is doing it in relation to the work of Christ. A rejection of Jesus is to reject the only way to be restored to God once again. Sadly, Israel has been in that position as a people for 2000 years. Individually, this is not true

for all, but as a body, it is their state. For you, God has also given you the same choice. Will you come to Christ and be reconciled to God through Him? Choose wisely. God is gracious, and He longs to bestow His grace upon you. May today be the day you receive it.

Closing Verse: *“Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the Lord your God; ²⁷ and you complained in your tents, and said, ‘Because the Lord hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.’” Deuteronomy 1:26, 27*

Next Week: Numbers 14:1-10 They will march until their years of punishment are done... (A Year for Each Day, Part I) (25th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Taste of the Land of Promise

Now they departed and came back to Moses and Aaron
And all the congregation of the children of Israel
In the Wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word
— — —-to them and to all the congregation
And showed them the fruit of the land as well

Then they told him, and said:
“We went to where you sent us in the land
It truly flows with milk and honey
And this is its fruit – look and see how grand!

Nevertheless the people who dwell
In the land are strong, we had to beware
The cities are fortified and very large
Moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South
The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites
— — —-in the mountains dwell

And the Canaanites dwell by the sea
And along the banks of the Jordan as well

Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said
“Let us go up at once and take possession now
For we are well able to overcome it
We can whoop up on them folks, and how

But the men who had gone up with him said quite unfaithfully
“We are not able to go up against the people
———-for they are stronger than we

And they gave the children of Israel a bad report
Of the land which they had spied out, saying
“The land through which we have gone as spies
Is a land that devours its inhabitants; bad new we are relaying

And all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature
There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak
———-came from the giants) isn't that right!
And we were in our own sight like grasshoppers
And so we were in their sight

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 14:1-10 (A YEAR FOR EACH DAY, PART I)

Chapter 14 of Numbers will take us a few sermons to get through, but that's ok. it is filled with all kinds of wonderful treasures. Today's verses will take us through some marvelous parallels to some rather profound New Testament doctrine. That is always a plus because we actually won't get to the New Testament for at least a few more years. Things will speed up after Deuteronomy, and the final 34 books of the Old Testament (minus Ruth, Esther, and Jonah – which we have already done), will be finished in a jiffy. But tying things in with the New Testament now will keep you on your toes in anticipation until we get there.

Chapter 14 also sets out a marvelous pattern for the Hebrew people which will be repeated several more times in their history, as is recorded in the Bible, and which has continued on even to their modern reestablishment. That will be seen in next week's sermon. It leads to some rather remarkable occurrences which simply cannot have come about by random chance. Rather, the Lord is there, behind the scenes, watching over every step of their history, ensuring that what is done through them testifies to who He is.

But that then testifies to us that what He has done for us is also sure and reliable. If God has spent so much time taking such meticulous care of Israel to prove that He is trustworthy and reliable, then why would we assume that when He speaks to us through the hand of Paul that His word would be any less trustworthy?

That's the marvelous thing about studying the Old Testament. It is a confidence builder. Without it, we wouldn't have the basis for our faith that we otherwise can possess. I'm just not sure how theologians that dismiss Israel as a permanently rejected people can feel any more confident about their own surety in salvation. To me, that is a huge disconnect. That is known as the crazy doctrine of "replacement theology," and it only reveals an unfaithful God who doesn't keep His covenant promises.

Text Verse: *"This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,³⁹ whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt."* Acts 7:38, 39

Though these words were speaking specifically about the incident of the golden calf, they also can be applied to Numbers 14. In both, the people rejected the Lord and turned their hearts back to Egypt. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, and into the New, the same faithless attitude is recorded about them. Even today, this is the state of almost the entire body of people we call Jews. The only service they pay to the Lord is lip service, and many of them don't even pay that. They just outright reject Him.

And yet, because of His covenant with them, He has remained completely faithful to them. They may not agree to this, claiming that the many persecutions, pogroms, and even the holocaust belie this, but those are self-inflicted wounds. What they have received is far less than what could have been. If the Lord had not been faithfully tending to them, the name Israel would have been utterly wiped from memory. The Lord has been faithful, to a T, to the promises He made to them – both for good and for bad.

In Chapter 14 of Numbers, we have an example of national rebellion against Him. The few that stood with Him could have lived out their lives under His care, and then He could have ended the great plan... except for the guarantee of His word. Because He has spoken, Israel would stand. And because of His promise, Israel will stand. When you feel like the Lord's promises to you have failed, or might be subject to failure, just look to Israel and the people who comprise that nation. We are dealing with a God of everlasting guarantees. When He speaks, it is done. Be confident of this. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Let Us Return to Egypt (verses 1-5)

¹So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried,

The final words of Chapter 13, which we ended with last week, said –

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they *are* stronger than we." ³² And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. ³³ There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." Numbers 13:31-33

It is these words which are the basis for the congregation's crying out. They have been given a bad report, they have accepted it as authoritative, and that bad report then spread throughout *kal ha'edah*, or "all the congregation." One can see it. The story would pass from leader to leader down the various divisions. It would go from the tribal leader to the leader of thousands.

From there, a little embellishing of the situation would be passed on to the leaders of hundreds. From them, it would continue to the leaders of tens. And from there, the individual men would embellish a bit for their wives and children to consider. The moans would grow louder, and the entire camp would be set in a tizzy.

¹ (con't) **and the people wept that night.**

Remembering that in biblical reckoning a day goes from evening to evening, it is of note that this is recorded. Instead of being grateful for a new day and a new hope, the people mourn over the new day they have been given. Instead of a night of sound sleep, they moan and weep in anxiety and distrust. Their outlook is of despair, not confidence, and it is one which shows both a great ingratitude to the Lord, as well as one which lacks any confidence in Him at all.

² **And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron,**

It was noted in the sermon of Numbers 9:15-23 that a challenge to Moses was implicitly a challenge to the Lord Himself. Moses is the one through whom the Lord spoke to the people. Here, the people complain against Moses, and so their complaint is an implicit complaint against the Lord. However, they also add in Aaron, the high priest and mediator, to complain against. This then adds fuel to an already burning fire. As Aaron is the designated intercessor, their complaining against him brings about another major problem for the people. This problem is one noted by the high priest Eli who rebuked his sons in 1 Samuel 2 –

"If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" 1 Samuel 2:25

To complain against Aaron is to cut off the only intercessor for their sins. Aaron stands as the Lord's representative for this, and as such, they again implicitly complain against the Lord. Of this, Matthew Henry rightly says, "They wish rather to die criminals under God's justice, than to live conquerors in his favour."

² (con't) **and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt!**

The sentiment has been stated by the people before. First in Exodus 14, just before having the waters of the Red Sea parted, and again in Exodus 16, at the time of the giving of the manna, the people had turned their hearts to Egypt. However, those were both before the giving of the law, a law which they had agreed to. Now, their words are of open rebellion against the Lord, but they are under the law which stands as authority over them as well.

Despite that fact, their words are a remarkable statement of acrimony towards the Lord. They had cried out in their bondage, and He delivered them from it. Now, they imply that their plight here is worse than their state there. It is as if He is to blame for having answered their cries in Egypt in the first place. Ignoring all of the marvelous things He had done for them, and ignoring the fact that they will be getting up and gathering manna in just a few hours which will sustain them, they mourn for the bondage that they had been delivered from. Either that...

² (con't) **Or if only we had died in this wilderness!**

Like the previous words, what they say now is a rather stupid statement to make. If they had died in the wilderness, meaning at Taberah where the Lord's anger burned, they wouldn't be alive to even complain about their plight. Further, they are in the wilderness. If they didn't want to go up to Canaan, and if death in the wilderness was preferable, they could simply have a suicide party and be done with it. But their words are mentally confused and without any cohesion to reality. As Solomon says –

“But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.” Ecclesiastes 9:4

However, and looking ahead to the response of the Lord, the very words they now state become their sentence. They are no longer in Egypt, and they will not be returned there by the Lord. His act of redemption has been completed. However, His act of judgment, based on the covenant made between them, is forthcoming. The sentence itself will be based on the words they now speak. Though getting ahead in the narrative, this was referred to by the author of Hebrews about fifteen hundred years later –

“Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?” Hebrews 3:17

And again, Jude, speaking in more general terms about all of the incidents which occurred during these forty years, said –

“But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe.” Jude -5

What we have recorded here is a total lack of belief in the Lord – meaning in His word, in the integrity of that word, and also in His ability to perform in fulfillment of that word when required.

³ Why has the Lord brought us to this land

Like the KJV, the translation here is incorrect. The words are speaking of Canaan, not where they are. It should say in the future tense, “Why is the Lord bringing us into this land.”

^{3 (con't)} to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims?

Two thoughts are stated here. First, there is death for the men who would face the enemies in Canaan, and secondly, there is a sad fate of becoming plunder for the wives and children. The word is a new noun, *baz*, meaning spoil or booty. The fate for them might be considered worse than for those lost in battle. In this, they use the word *taph*, meaning little ones. That comes from *taphaph* which signifies to trip, or to take little steps, and thus a small child. Their words imply that the Lord is lacking compassion on those who are the most helpless. It is the type of false moaning accusation one constantly hears from the liberal left today as they continuously accuse others of wanting to harm the children.

^{3 (con't)} Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”

The words are obvious, and they are said in both stubborn rebellion and in faithless condemnation of the Lord’s power to save and keep on saving; to provide and to keep on providing. As Adam Clarke says about this notion of returning to Egypt –

“Great evils, when once some time past, affect the mind less than present ills, though much inferior. They had partly forgot their Egyptian bondage, and now smart under a little discouragement, having totally lost sight of their high calling, and of the power and goodness of God.” Adam Clarke

Surely we know this, and we can see it, but let's stop here and remember what Egypt pictures. It consistently has pictured one's previous life before coming to Christ and being redeemed by Him. We were in bondage to sin, and the devil was our master. In understanding this, do the words here not fit you, or someone you are dealing with?

Who is the faithless Christian who has been redeemed, and who constantly moans that the Lord isn't taking care of them, meeting their needs, and understanding their wants, hopes, and desires? This is the very person who is seen in faithless Israel – and the church is filled with them. It is anyone of us at any given time as well. When we call out to God in an accusatory manner that He just cannot fill our needs, hopes, wants, and desires, or when we question His ability to carry us through our ordeals, we are what faithless Israel pictured. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? Is that what you want? Were you happier in your addiction? Were you happier in your misery? Has the divorce that you had before with one wife now turned into another divorce you are again contemplating? For some, the answer is, "Yes." I would rather wallow in the land I came from...

⁴So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt."

This is actually as great of a sin, if not greater, than everything they have yet said. The Lord is their Head. Moses is their designated leader, the covenant has been made by the Lord and through him. It is thus a double rejection. It is a rejection of their designated leadership, and it is a rejection of the agreement they made with and between that leadership. In appointing another leader, they would be outside of the Lord's favor, and they would be outside of His grace. Of these words, Matthew Henry logically states –

"Could they expect that God's cloud would lead them, or his manna attend them? Suppose the difficulties of conquering Canaan were as they imagined, those of returning to Egypt were much greater." Matthew Henry

The one to guide them would have the same large burdens and difficulties that Moses has already faced, but there would be the added burden of no food or water. The manna would cease, and the water which came at the Lord's direction would not flow forth. But even more, the Lord would become their enemy on the path. And in a return to Egypt, their bondage would be increased far beyond what they had faced before.

Their willful departure, and the innumerable deaths which had occurred in Egypt because of it, would be an obvious reason for the Egyptians to come forth, not in open arms, but in total suppression and bondage towards them, or even in total destruction.

So brazen is this act of rebellion that it was remembered by Nehemiah after his own time of captivity –

“You gave them bread from heaven for their hunger,
And brought them water out of the rock for their thirst,
And told them to go in to possess the land
Which You had sworn to give them.

¹⁶ “But they and our fathers acted proudly,
Hardened their necks,
And did not heed Your commandments.

¹⁷ They refused to obey,
And they were not mindful of Your wonders
That You did among them.

But they hardened their necks,
And in their rebellion
They appointed a leader
To return to their bondage.

But You *are* God,
Ready to pardon,
Gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger,
Abundant in kindness,
And did not forsake them.”Nehemiah 9:15-17

In this, Nehemiah was correct. They did appoint a leader. Though the text says nothing of that here in Numbers, it is understood. In rejecting the Lord, they appointed a new lord. Even if no human was decided upon, the ruler of this world became their hope once again. They had appointed the same leader on this day that Adam had appointed over himself 2515 years earlier.

But, in their rebellion, which resulted in punishment, Nehemiah says that the Lord did not forsake them. His corrective measures are intended to lead people back to Him, not utterly destroy them. Understanding this, another point of theology must be brought up. Who is it that redeemed us today? Jesus. What did He redeem us from? Yes, He redeemed us from the bondage of sin. But the answer is more involved than that. What did He redeem us from? The answer is “From sin and from the curse of the law” (Gal 3:13).

Paul tells us in Romans that “by the law *is* the knowledge of sin” (3:20). Without law, sin cannot be imputed (5:13). But when law is made, sin results from a violation of the law. If there is no law that says, “You cannot carry a gun into a bar,” then you can carry a gun into a bar without being charged as an offender. But once the law is made, you will be held accountable for breaking that law.

So what is our point of theology in this regard? It is that of returning to the Law of Moses which is comparable to Israel now selecting a leader and desiring to return to Egypt. If Christ Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law, as Galatians clearly says He did, and if sin is imputed where law exists, as Romans clearly says, then a return to the law, which Christ Jesus redeemed us from, is exactly what is being pictured here.

Paul calls the law “a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1). Jesus said to the people that He offered a different yoke in Matthew 11 –

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:29, 30

Though spoken to Israel, while under the law, His words are saying that what He would do for them would free them. This is why Paul calls the law a yoke of bondage, and why he said to not again be entangled with it. To return to works under the law, as countless teachers and denominations teach to do in one degree or another, is first to reject Christ as Lord, and it is to call for another leader, Satan. Secondly, it is to return to where you had been redeemed from, meaning bondage to sin and the curse of the law. This is why Paul says, using circumcision as a benchmark of pursuing the law –

“Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.” Galatians 5:2

Everything that the Lord had done for Israel was washed away in their desire to return to Egypt. Everything that Christ died for is washed away in a return to the Law of Moses. When you are told to tithe, to worship on a Saturday, to not eat pork, or to follow any other precept of the Mosaic Law, you are directed by your bearded pastor, under the authority of the Word of God, to refuse to comply.

In Egypt, there is death. In Egypt, there is a harsh taskmaster. In Egypt, there is suffering and loss. In Egypt, there are the sad and inevitable consequences for sin.

You are not to return to Egypt, but you are to follow Christ wherever He leads, even if it seems that the giants of Canaan will swallow you up in the process. Such shall never be. There is freedom in Christ, there is safety in Christ, and there is no imputation of sin for those who are in Christ. Stand firm in the truth which is found only in the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Having said that, for the redeemed of the Lord, there may be an actual return to Egypt, but positionally you are still redeemed. If you have come to Christ, the penalties of sin in this life will come upon you, but your redemption is not in question. Israel, in the verses ahead, will suffer the penalties for their rebellion, but they will remain Israel and under the Lord's care. That is why Nehemiah said that despite their conduct, the Lord did not forsake them.

The same truth holds for those in Christ. Paul reveals it several times and in several ways, but for the sake of absolute clarity, he says of one who had gone back to his own Egypt to, "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Such is the faithfulness of the Lord. Let us not test Him despite that faithfulness. The destruction of the flesh is not a happy place to be as we walk in this unforgiving world with its harsh and unforgiving ruler.

⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

This is an act of great humility. The people have just determined to select another leader and return to Egypt. In falling on their faces, they are making an emotional appeal to the people. This is surely not, as most scholars say, a petition to the Lord on behalf of the people. Rather, it is an appeal directly to them concerning their unclear choice. It is probable that this act is tied into the words of Deuteronomy 1. While there, prostrated before the people in humility, Moses speaks words of resolute surety for them to consider –

"Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified, or afraid of them. ³⁰ The Lord your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹ and in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.'" Deuteronomy 1:29-31

After the people's pity party, Moses humbly tried to reason with them. It shows the character of the man that he would so abase himself in this way. He intended the best

for them, and he knew that following the Lord in obedient trust was that best. And it should be the same earnest attitude that any decent pastor has for a church which is considering compromising their doctrine in order to increase numbers. It should be the same heartfelt attitude that any Christian parent has towards a child who is considering a bad life decision. And it should be the same display of concern that any Christian has when seeing a friend heading down a bad path.

Someone has to at least try to bring reason back to the mind of those who are erring in their attitude about the Lord, or who are backsliding in their devotion to the faith they previously professed.

*The Land of Promise lies just ahead
It is within our grasp if we will just pay heed
We can set our sights on it, or instead
We can turn back to Egypt like the faithless breed*

*The Lord has promised and our home is assured
Nothing can hinder us from entering into glory
It was for this that the cross He endured
And it is the final step for us in the gospel story*

*Will we by faith call out and receive?
Will we trust the Lord and His promise of the gospel story?
All He asks is that we by faith believe
And in that simple act, He guarantees our entrance into glory*

*Thank You, O God, for this marvelous promise to us
Thank You, O God, for the surety which is found in Jesus!*

II. Only Do Not Rebel Against the Lord (verses 6-10)

⁶But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes;

What is implied in this is that the petition of Moses was ineffective. To tear one's clothes is a sign of great distress. When Reuben found that Joseph was no longer in the pit he had been thrown in, he tore his clothes. When Jacob heard that his son Joseph was dead, he did likewise. And when Benjamin was accused of stealing Joseph's cup, and was destined to a life of servitude, his brothers tore their clothes.

This same level of great distress is now seen again in Joshua and Caleb. The people have rejected Moses and, in turn, they have rejected the Lord. Nothing more inconceivable could have happened than the small spark of discontent turning into a raging fire of rebellion. But that is what has happened. The only remedy is to stand in the breach and attempt to repair it before it can no longer be fixed.

What is seen here is that Joshua and Caleb are found faithful, and it is what is explicitly stated about them in Numbers 32 –

“Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, ¹² except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the Lord.”
-Numbers 32:11, 12

As we have seen, Caleb is noted as a Kenizzite, a Gentile people, and yet he is reckoned as the representative within Judah who spied out the land of Canaan. We have also seen that Caleb means “dog,” a term associated with Gentiles. And so we have here a picture of those faithful Jews (seen in Joshua) and also faithful Gentiles (as seen in Caleb) who trust in the Lord regardless of the obstacles that otherwise would seem insurmountable. I am not saying Caleb is a Gentile, but in picture, this is what is clearly conveyed.

Joshua and Caleb are faithful toward His word, and they are concerned about His honor which is now being blasphemed by the people. As witnesses of what they had seen, and for the sake of the Lord’s name and the safety and honor of Moses and Aaron, they now present their own words concerning what they saw...

⁷ and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed through to spy out *is* an exceedingly good land.

They begin their words with the land itself, saying, *tovah ha’arets meod meod* – good the land, very, very. Their words express the Hebrew way of stating a superlative. The land isn’t just great. Rather, it is exceedingly so. They had left Egypt, and that could not be considered an exceedingly great land.

Other than the area where the Nile flowed through, or where it flooded the plains, it was a barren desert. The land where they stood now was empty wilderness. None of them had ever experienced land such as was now ahead of them. It is the strongest of enticements to have them stand and listen to the rest of their argument.

And this is the same way that one should be inclined to speak about the promises of the Lord in Christ. We don't just have a better land ahead, but one which is *tov meod meod* – “good very very.” There is, in fact, nothing that can be compared to it. The word has been spoken, the land has been described, and it is waiting for the redeemed to come in and enjoy.

Again, why would we turn back to Egypt, or why would we put our hopes in the place we now are – in a wilderness between Egypt and glory? We can't stay here, and so we can only strive forward or turn back. Every day is a new day with the same decision to make. Let us stand on the promises of the Lord, and let us set our feet toward that heavenly home to which we are sure to come to when our days here are done. For those who are willing to trust the Lord, the Lord will delight in them. And to them, the reward awaits...

⁸ If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us,

The words here are meant to bolster the confidence of the people. The Lord has already delighted in them by choosing them first in Abraham, and then in the successive generations since him. He has delighted in them by bringing them out of Egypt. He has delighted in them by giving them manna. He has delighted in them in giving them His law. On and on, there is no reason to assume that past performance of delighting in them will suddenly cease two steps outside of their promised inheritance. In fact, the past is the highest indication that the future is set, and that they will, in fact, be brought into the land to occupy it, and it is...

^{8 (con't)} ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’

The one point of agreement between their words and the words of the other ten spies are these now. In verse 13:27, this is the same term used by them to describe the land. And so now, there is a uniting of the claims concerning Canaan to prove that what they are saying is true. It is now the seventh of twenty times that the term will be used, and it is always, but once, used in connection with the land of Israel. The land is rich and abundant in all that the term implies.

⁹ Only do not rebel against the Lord,

akh ba'Yehoval al timrodu – “Only against Yehovah not do rebel. The people have already rebelled against the Lord, but they are imploring them to cease and desist from it, and to instead align themselves with Him once again. Such rebellion is considered a vile

sin to the Lord, as Samuel explained to King Saul when he had been rebellious towards the word of the Lord –

“Has the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
He also has rejected you from *being* king.” 1 Samuel 15:22, 23

The Lord had proven Himself faithful toward Israel, and so the only ruin that can come upon them is because they have brought it on themselves. It is their rebellion, not His inability to save, that will bring destruction. What they should fear is being out of favor with the Lord. They are being implored to not rebel in this way...

^{9 (con't)} **nor fear the people of the land,**

The Lord has already named all of the inhabitants of Canaan many times. Twice, it was in connection with the term, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” And several times He has stated that He would cut the people off and drive them out. With the assurances given, the only element needed to make this come about is faith. There is, literally, nothing between them and possessing the land, but their own lack of faith. As for the people of the land, Joshua and Caleb now explain their state, even now, because of the Lord’s guarantee...

^{9 (con't)} **for they *are* our bread;**

It is an idiom that first means they will be swallowed up as easily as if eating a meal. David uses the same term in the 14th Psalm –

“Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge,
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And do not call on the Lord?” Psalm 14:4

A second, underlying, meaning of the words is that the people would be as a provision of bread to them by supplying them with all they needed. There were cities already built, there were fields already available for cultivation, there were vineyards on the hills

and cisterns dug in the ground. The people would be swallowed up as bread, and they would provide the necessities of life as does bread.

^{9 (con't)} **their protection has departed from them,**

sar tsilam m'alehem – “has departed their shadow from them.” The *tseI*, or shadow, is a metaphor for protection. In the Mideast, the sun is hot, and the east winds blow with scorching heat. Thus, to have a covering shadow is a protection from this. This was seen in the book of Jonah when the prophet sat in the shade of the plant prepared by God. At other times, the Lord is said to be a shadow of protection for His people. For the inhabitants of Canaan, their protection is gone because the Lord has turned against them. Their iniquity is full, and the time of His judgment upon them has come. Israel is chosen to be the instrument of that destruction. However, in their rebellion, there will be a delay. But it is only that, a delay. In Joshua 2, Rahab the harlot will tell the spies that the hearts of the people have melted in fear of Israel’s coming. Their shade will have departed and the heat of God’s judgment will come upon them.

^{9 (con't)} **and the Lord is with us.**

Not only is the Lord against them, having withdrawn any protection they might have had, but the Lord is actively with Israel. He will be the devouring fire against their foes, while being the defending protection for them. The battle is already won, if only Israel will heed. The words of courage have been spoken, and so with one final thought, they cease their discourse...

^{9 (con't)} **Do not fear them.”**

It is their fear of the enemy, and only this, which stands between them and victory. In fearing the enemy, they will not have faith in the Lord. In their lack of faith in the Lord, they stand in rebellion against Him. There can be only one acceptable path to follow. Joshua and Caleb have demonstrated faith and they will receive their reward for it. But what will Israel choose? As is normally the case throughout their history, they choose the wrong path...

¹⁰ **And all the congregation said to stone them with stones.**

What is seen here is that all who heard the words were excited to a state of complete agitation. They already disbelieved, and now their lack of faith is turned into animosity towards those who kept their faith. Nothing has changed in the world – either religious

or political – since. Those who are faithful and confident are often the object of hate by those who lack faith. Today, the divide is just as obvious both within the church, and within the political spectrum, as it could be. Those who stand against the Lord will inevitably come against the people of the Lord. This was also the case with David many years later –

“Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.” 1 Samuel 30:6

David strengthened himself in the Lord, and was saved from the disaster threatened against him. The same Lord also interceded for Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb many centuries earlier...

^{10 (fin)} **Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.**

The wording is not precise. The Hebrew says, *u-kevod Yehovah nirah b'ohel moed* – “and glory Yehovah appeared in *the* tent of meeting.” The Lord’s presence was above the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. That is kept in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle is covered by the tent of meeting. What we get here is the sense that the radiance of the Lord actually streamed out of the tabernacle, filling the tent, and radiated out of the tent itself.

The picture here is that of Christ when His deity shone forth, as in the transfiguration. It has only occurred a few times, and now it does so again. The glory of the Lord is calling for attention upon Himself for the people to realize that He alone is their Hope.

There is little doubt that this glorious sight stopped the hands of those about to stone His faithful, and it probably filled the entire congregation with abject fear. There could be no doubt to them that the anger of the Lord was aroused. And its effect will be seen in the weeks ahead. It is a marvelous spot to end the verses today, leaving us in anticipation of what is yet to come. And yet, it also leaves us with the surety that the Lord is listening, He is carefully watching, and He is attentive to what occurs in regards to His faithful. This is something we should find the greatest of comfort in. When we are persecuted for our faithfulness, when a missionary is killed for his efforts, when we see evil running amok and the faithless only growing in their animosity and enmity towards the Lord’s people, He is there. He is faithfully and carefully tending to things so that they will come out as they should. Let us be assured of this, and let us be confident in the fact

that our faith – though thoroughly tested, will be rewarded by the Lord. Let us be confident in this.

Closing Verse: *“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”*

-1 Peter 1:6-9

Next Week: Numbers 14:11-25 Their penalty is well deserved, it is true... (A Year for Each Day, Part II) (26th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Year for Each Day

So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried
And the people wept that night, the Lord’s power they denied

And all the children of Israel complained
Against Moses and Aaron, as if they had been jipped
And the whole congregation said to them
“If only we had died in the land of Egypt!

Or if only we had died in this wilderness!
But now our lives are just one big mess

Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword
That should become victims, our wives and children?
Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”
Let’s turn back to there once again

So they said to one another, having fully flipped
“Let us select a leader and return to Egypt

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces
Before all the assembly
Of the congregation of the children of Israel
As if begging them to hear their plea

But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh
Who were among those who had spied out the land
Tore their clothes
This belligerent attitude they could not understand

And they spoke to all the congregation
Of the children of Israel, saying:
“The land we passed through to spy out
Is an exceedingly good land; hear the words we are to you relaying

If the Lord delights in us
Then He will bring us into this land and give it to us
‘A land which flows with milk and honey
Just stop tempting Him and making such a fuss

Only do not rebel against the Lord
Nor fear the people of the land
For they are our bread
Their protection has departed from them; their downfall is at hand

And the Lord is with us
Do not fear them; do not make such a fuss

And all the congregation said to stone them with stones
Now the glory of the Lord appeared as the account does tell
In the tabernacle of meeting
Before all the children of Israel

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land

May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 14:11-25 (A YEAR FOR EACH DAY, PART II)

While going through the book of Numbers in our Sunday sermons, we are also going through 1 Corinthians in our weekly Bible studies on Thursday nights. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul speaks of the punishment of the Israelites as, he says, *“their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”*

That is something that will actually first be hinted at in today’s verses. Along with the Bible studies, for those who are brave enough, we are also going through a daily, verse by verse, commentary on the book of Hebrews. There in Hebrews, it speaks of exactly what is referred to in today’s verses as well.

When reading the New Testament, the writers refer to these passages, the verses simply state what the Old Testament says as a matter of fact, but without any extra context for the reader to understand what is being referred to.

And so, unless one either knows the Old Testament, and what is being referred to, or unless the reader simply takes the statements at face value and under the assumption that there is no need to know more, then there is actually a void in understanding what is presented by the writers in the New.

That doesn’t mean a void in understanding the theology presented, but rather a void in grasping how the Lord got us to the theology. That is why it is so wonderful to go through these Old Testament passages. Again and again, the person who understands Jesus’ work from the New Testament can suddenly say, *“Aha! I get it. I see why the Lord picked that story or chose that particular word.”*

It really is marvelous to be able to tie it all together without any gaps in our knowledge – either from the New while reading the Old, or from the Old while reading the New.

Text Verse: *“Today, if you will hear His voice:*

⁸ *“Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion,
As in the day of trial in the wilderness,*

⁹ *When your fathers tested Me;*

They tried Me, though they saw My work.

¹⁰ *For forty years I was grieved with that generation,
And said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts,*

And they do not know My ways.'

¹¹ *So I swore in My wrath,*

'They shall not enter My rest.'" Psalm 95:8-11

The thing about this text verse is that it never explicitly says "They shall not enter My rest" in the books of Moses, that David states in the psalm. That is something that David said, under inspiration, and which then looks forward to an amazingly complex set of verses in the book of Hebrews. And so knowing just the original account in Numbers, and the explanation of it in Hebrews, is not enough. One has to know what the psalms say about the matter as well.

Further, for the person who is stuck in the Torah, meaning the five books of Moses, unless they know what David says, and what he means in what he says in the psalm, then they are completely deficient in what is being portrayed in these Numbers verses. Because of this, and as I say time and again during the Thursday night Bible studies, learning theology is hard work. It is mentally taxing, it is complicated, and it is easily misinterpreted by those who are not fully trained in the word of God.

Hence, we continue on today in the book of Numbers. In our passage, we will once again find pictures – yes marvelous pictures – of the work of Jesus Christ. Such great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Let the Power of My Lord Be Great (verses 11-19)

To put this passage into perspective, we need to remember what occurred before it. In Chapter 13, the land of Canaan was spied out, and the report was brought back to the people. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the report was a negative one. This was passed on to the congregation who then complained to Moses and Aaron concerning the situation.

They determined to select another leader and head back to Egypt. They also said to stone them with stones. It was at that time, and in the rescuing hand of the Lord, that we read the final words before this passage today, "Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel." The glory has appeared, and that doesn't bode too well for the congregation...

¹¹ **Then the Lord said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me?"**

What we are not told here is whether the voice of the Lord came out audibly for the people, or if the appearing of the Lord before all the people prompted Moses to go in and commune with the Lord. Either way, the people would have been fully aware of the fact that the Lord had appeared just when they were about to stone Moses and those with him. That alone should be clue enough that the Lord was displeased with the events. And so it is. The Lord's words to Moses are *ad anah yenaatsuni ha'am hazeh* – "Until when does spurn me the people the this."

The Lord introduces a new word into Scripture with these words, *naats*, to spurn or treat with contempt. As an exception to the usual meaning, in Ecclesiastes, it is used to describe the blooming of the almond tree, and so one can almost get a sense that such spurning is something that blooms forth in abundance. The people's rejection of the Lord has literally flourished in His presence, and His question is, "How long will this continue?" Unfortunately, the question remains unanswered 3500 years later. But He proceeds...

11 (con't) And how long will they not believe Me,

v'ad anah lo yaaminu bi – "and until when not will they believe Me." The words complement and build upon the previous words. To not believe the Lord is to spurn Him. The concept is seen throughout Scripture. To believe the Lord is pleasing to Him, and to not believe Him is repugnant to Him because it is a rejection of Him. To believe the Lord is worthy of reward; to not believe Him is worthy of punishment.

To state that the Lord causes a person to believe, or to place the blame upon the Lord for unbelief, is a doctrine wholly unknown to Scripture. Such Calvinistic thinking is a cop out which denies the fundamental truth that we are accountable for our actions, including our beliefs, before the Lord. In the case of Israel, they were all the more culpable for their disbelief. They had actual, visible, and verbal proofs from the Lord...

11 (con't) with all the signs which I have performed among them?

Moses had come to Egypt and spoken to the elders of Israel. Eventually, the people had been alerted to what he was called to do, and that it was the Lord who would work out this calling. They had been told, in advance, of the coming plagues, including the final great plague.

They had observed the Passover and had been drummed out of Egypt. They came to the Red Sea, and they had seen the arm of the Lord accomplish their salvation. They had the

pillar of cloud and fire with them. They had defeated Amalek. They had been given quail when promised. They were given manna to sustain them. On and on and on, the people had been told – in advance – what would occur, and then it came about.

And yet, with a successive line of proofs that the Lord would deliver on His word, they failed to believe Him. When He had spoken out His words to them, they failed to take Him at His word. It is the sin of unbelief. In Hebrews 3:19, it is explicitly stated that what will come upon them in the verses ahead is solely based on their unbelief. The spurning of the Lord is based on their failure to believe Him.

Surprisingly, this doesn't mean that they didn't believe *in Him*. It was that they simply didn't believe Him, meaning His word, despite who He is. Israel today, and indeed much of the Christian world believes *in God*, even the God of the Bible, but they do not believe Him, meaning in His word. The disconnect between the two is a fatal mistake. For Israel in the wilderness, it was a temporal mistake which would result in temporal punishment of some sort...

¹² I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them,

Here we have a thought reflective of that spoken by the Lord in Exodus 32, at the time of the incident with the golden calf. Because of the people's actions, we read –

“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them.’” Exodus 32:9, 10

The difference here is that the pronouncement of the Lord is considerably stronger than before. First, he says that He will strike them *ba'deber* or “with the pestilence.” It is one of the curses promised upon the people in Leviticus 26:25. No sooner had they received the words of warning, than the Lord is already threatening to come against them as He promised, and they had not even yet entered into Canaan! And so great is the Lord's wrath at this point that He continues with *v'orishenu*, or “and disinherit them.”

Whatever was promised as their lot and inheritance, including Canaan itself, is threatened to be removed from their future. This is, in actuality, exactly what they had already threatened to do on their own. In selecting a leader to take them back to Egypt, they had, in essence, disinherited themselves. The Lord is, in principle, agreeing to their desires. With this threat standing, He then makes a promise to faithful Moses...

12 (con't) **and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."**

v'e-eseh otekha l'gow gadol v'asum mimenu – Again, the words are reflective of Exodus 32, but they are more strongly formed now than before –

"And I will make of you a great nation." Exodus 32:10

Before, he was promised to be a great nation. Now, using those same words but with addition, he is promised to be a nation greater and mightier than Israel. Moses, being the leader of the people, knew their size. He knew what they were now. He also knew what they were to become based on the Lord's promises to them. That would be less than what is now offered to Moses.

The first words, without the addition of becoming mightier than Israel, are almost an exact repeat of the words spoken to Abraham over 430 years earlier. There the Lord said to him, "And I will make you a great nation." The Lord is speaking these words as a test of Moses, just as he did at the incident with the golden calf. But He is making the promise greater than at that time.

What is the measure of the love of Moses for his people? What is the scope of his faithfulness to his duties? Is his desire for recognition and fame greater than his allegiance to his calling? And is it his honor, or the Lord's, which will most motivate him? Here, he is seen as a type of Christ who was tempted by the devil with greatness by bypassing the hard work.

Moses is not being tempted, but he is being tested. He has faced the difficulties of leadership, and he is now being offered a way out of them, at the expense of the people he leads. Jesus was offered the same. If He took the devil's offer, mankind would have been doomed, just as Israel is being offered up for destruction and disinheritance now.

The Lord's words of promised pestilence and disinheritance are merely an exercise in revealing *the character of Moses*. This is what occurred with Jacob when the Lord wrestled with him in Genesis 32:24-28 –

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. 25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. 26 And He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.'
But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me!'

27 So He said to him, 'What *is* your name?'

He said, 'Jacob.'

28 And He said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.'"

The Lord tested Jacob, not for the Lord's learning, but for Jacob's. Once again, and for a second time, the same thing is occurring with Moses. The Lord already knows what Moses will do, but He still needs Moses to know this as well, and there is a reason for it which will be seen later in the chapter. For now, Moses responds...

¹³ And Moses said to the Lord: "Then the Egyptians will hear *it*, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them,

Albert Barnes notes the unique structure of Moses' coming words. It is worth understanding this before we actually look at them –

"The syntax of these verses is singularly broken. As did Paul when deeply moved, so Moses presses his arguments one on the other without pausing to ascertain the grammatical finish of his expressions. He speaks here as if in momentary apprehension of an outbreak of God's wrath, unless he could perhaps arrest it by crowding in every topic of deprecation and intercession that he could mention on the instant." Albert Barnes

Moses' words of verses 13-19 are words of intercession. They are similar to what he spoke after the incident of the golden calf, but they are deeper and more heartfelt than even then. The motive behind them remains the same as before, even if it is expanded on here. And so, he begins by referring to the Egyptians. He could have started with any thought that came to his mind – one of a million things could have prompted him to speak, and yet he begins with where Israel came from, meaning being among Egypt. Egypt, as we have seen is, in type and picture, the place that we as believers have left, meaning our old life of bondage to sin. The Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and He brought us up from our bondage to sin. In both, it was by – as Moses says – "Your might." What is so important about this that Moses begins with it? And, what is so important about it that the Lord ensures it is recorded here? Moses next explains it with...

¹⁴ and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land.

The "inhabitants of this land" are not speaking merely of where they are in the Sinai, meaning the Arabians and others, nor merely of Canaan, but those surrounding Canaan

as well. They are referred to in the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 and include Philistia, Edom, and Moab. In his song of victory, Moses had said this –

“Who *is* like You, O Lord, among the gods?

Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness,

Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

¹² You stretched out Your right hand;

The earth swallowed them.

¹³ You in Your mercy have led forth

The people whom You have redeemed;

You have guided *them* in Your strength

To Your holy habitation.

¹⁴ “The people will hear *and* be afraid;

Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.

¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed;

The mighty men of Moab,

Trembling will take hold of them;

All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away.

¹⁶ Fear and dread will fall on them;

By the greatness of Your arm

They will be *as* still as a stone,

Till Your people pass over, O Lord,

Till the people pass over

Whom You have purchased.

¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant them

In the mountain of Your inheritance,

In the place, O Lord, *which* You have made

For Your own dwelling,

The sanctuary, O Lord, *which* Your hands have established.” Exodus 15:11-17

It appears that this song of victory is exactly what is on his mind as he now appeals to the Lord. It was about a year earlier that they had sung the words, and now Moses is recalling them before the Lord. Already the people had heard. They knew what had taken place, and there was now a doubt that those events would lead to ultimate victory. And so Moses speaks further...

¹⁴ (con’t) **They have heard that You, Lord, *are* among these people; that You, Lord, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.**

In these words is a rather unique expression. Rather than “face to face,” the Hebrew reads, “eye to eye.” The proximity of the Lord to the people is so close as He is among them, that it is as if they can see one another’s pupils. Further, Moses describes the three aspects of His visible presence – 1) the cloud which stood above them, shading them and protecting them; 2) The pillar of cloud that went before them by day, showing all that He was Israel’s Head; and 3) the pillar of fire that went before them by night, lighting the way, and providing illumination. The nations had heard of these things and could only watch in awe at the marvel of Him being among Israel. But what if that changed? Moses goes on...

¹⁵ Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying,

Moses is not asking for judgment to be withheld. He understands that it must come, however the Lord determines. But in order to ensure that the honor of the Lord in the sight of the nations is maintained, He notes that if they are killed as one man, it will bear negative consequences.

The exact opposite is true concerning what happened when Jerusalem was surrounded by the army of the King of Assyria at the time of King Hezekiah. He pleaded with the Lord for rescue stating, “Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the Lord God, You alone.”

And the Lord – for the sake of His name – responded to Hezekiah’s pleas. The account says, “And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when *people* arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.”

They were destroyed as one man and the Lord was glorified. Moses understood that such a display of power could only reflect negatively upon the name of the Lord should it be brought against His own redeemed people. As he says...

¹⁶ ‘Because the Lord was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.’

Of the scholars I have read, they are all in agreement that Moses is implying that the nations would think that the Lord simply wasn’t strong enough to continue the job He had begun, and sworn to complete. He was either exhausted from His great acts, or He knew

that the power which Israel was to face could not be overcome, and so He killed them. I disagree.

It isn't because the Lord isn't powerful enough to accomplish His words, but because the people were uncontrollable. In Genesis 6, the people of the world had become completely uncontrollable, and the Lord destroyed all but eight. At the tower of Babel, the people did not do what the Lord had instructed. Instead of spreading out, they united as one. And thus, the Lord had to divide their tongues. At the incident of the golden calf, it says "Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained..."

When the people of the Lord are uncontrollable, it is the Lord who is seen as incapable of accomplishing His word. And this is exactly what the people of the world think of the Lord when they see Christians who are unrestrained. In bringing discredit upon themselves, they bring discredit upon the Lord. It is His honor which is called into question by the actions of His people. Moses knew that if He killed the people as one man, the nations would say, "The Lord couldn't even control His own people! How then can He accomplish anything beyond what He promised them?"

Consider it. When a well-known evangelist is found to be completely unrestrained, the people who see him will inevitably question the promises of the Lord. We, as a species, look from the bottom up, not from the top down. The Lord already knew this, but he is drawing this out from Moses for his learning, and for our instruction. The Lord speaks out this same thought in Isaiah 48 –

"For My name's sake I will defer My anger,
And *for* My praise I will restrain it from you,
So that I do not cut you off.

¹⁰ Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

¹¹ For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do *it*;
For how should *My name* be profaned?
And I will not give My glory to another." Isaiah 48:9-11

¹⁷ **And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great,**

v'atah yigdal na koakh adonai – "and now let be great, I pray, *the power of Adonai.*" Moses uses a verb in the form of a declarative. "Let be great the power of Adonai." His appeal now is not based on what he has said, but on what he will next say. What is it that

will most marvelously display the power of Yehovah? Moses will recount the Lord's own words...

17 (con't) **just as You have spoken, saying,**

In Exodus 34, Moses went up Mount Sinai a second time, carrying the tablets of stone. There on the mountain it said –

“Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶ And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.’” Exodus 34:5-7

Moses reaches back to his time there and now substantially repeats the Lord's own proclamation of Himself...

18 **‘The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generation*.’**

Astonishingly, Moses sees the power of the Lord most fully demonstrated in His mercy and forgiveness. This is what the Lord had declared concerning Himself when He had most fully revealed who He is. Moses grasped onto this, knowing that the Lord is unchangeable in His being, and he appeals to that truth now.

Moses is considered Israel's great law-giver. A law demands justice leading to punishment for transgression. But Moses sees the strength of the Lord in withholding that, and in the granting of mercy. Does that not sound like God working in Christ? The greatest demonstration of all of God's power is found in the giving of His Son for sinful man. It is the very heart of the gospel, and the gospel is the very heart and purpose of all Scripture in regards to salvation. Paul says as much in Romans 1:16 –

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

The law and its penalties cannot compare to the mercies of the Lord. And the Dispensation of Law is but a *dark moment* in redemptive history as it led to the gloriously revealed light of the Dispensation of Grace. Moses, understanding this precept above all else, then speaks out his petition to the Lord...

¹⁹ Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy,

“How can you demonstrate Your greatness, O Adonai? You can do so through pardon.” In Exodus 34:9, just after the Lord proclaimed His name, Moses asked for *salakh* or pardon. It was the first of 47 times that the term is used. It was next seen ten times in Leviticus concerning the sacrificial system of the law, in the granting of pardon for offenses.

Throughout the rest of its uses, it is *always* ascribed to the pardon of the Lord. Moses had seen the Lord’s compassion in His spoken word before, and He appealed to it then. As the word of the Lord is the revelation of Himself, Moses knew that He is, by nature, compassionate. And so, as he petitioned the Lord for mercy in the instance of the golden calf, he again asks for it now. It is that which He knows the Lord possesses in unlimited abundance...

¹⁹ (con’t) just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”

“From Egypt even until now” is all-inclusive. The people were rebellious even before they set out after the Passover. They called into question the Lord’s goodness at every stop they made. They continued to doubt Him throughout their time at Sinai, and there was no reason to assume that the attitude should suddenly change on their trek to Canaan.

Understanding this, pardon of their offenses is the only option apart from showing that He is simply incapable of restraining Israel any more than He is incapable of restraining the world at large. That is, apart from simply destroying them all. Free will in man is on prominent display in these verses. And it is the free will, displayed through the receiving of pardon, which is most radiantly highlighted.

Moses got this, and in his getting, the Lord has once again revealed who He really is, and what He really will continue to do as history progresses. He will magnify His own glory through the pardon of His people. That is seen in the Lord’s response...

*The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious
Longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth*

*Keeping mercy for thousands, mercy so spacious
His forgiveness to us is surely the proof*

*He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin
But the guilty He will not clear, they will see a bad end
He will visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children
This is the warning which His word to us does send*

*But His word also shows us where His pardon to find
In the giving of Christ, He has granted it to us
Be sober in thought and of a reasonable mind
Search out His goodness in the face of Jesus*

II. Corporate Pardon; Individual Punishment (Verses 20-25)

²⁰ Then the Lord said: “I have pardoned,

salakhti kidbareka – “I have pardoned.” As Moses has petitioned, so the Lord has granted. Pardon here, then, is inclusive of Moses’ own words. In verse 15, Moses said, “Now *if* You kill these people as one man.” The pardon then wasn’t asking for no punishment upon them, but that they would not be destroyed all at once. That would have two effects. First, it would immediately destroy the people, but secondly, it would destroy the seed of the people. Moses wanted neither, as it says...

²⁰ (con’t) according to your word;

Moses spoke, and the Lord granted. The lesson was for Moses to understand the Lord more fully, but Moses’ lesson is our lesson. The Lord pardons according to His nature, and that is the greatest display of His greatness. However, the Lord does this so that He will be glorified...

²¹ but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord—

There is an “and” missing in this translation. It says, “but truly as I live, **and** shall be filled with the glory of Yehovah all the earth.” In other words, what He will next say concerning the punishment of the people is actually *a point upon which the glory of the Lord fills the earth*. Well, how can that be?

First, in not immediately exterminating them as they deserve, the Lord's glory is made manifest. Secondly, by allowing their seed to continue, the Lord's glory is made manifest as is seen throughout the rest of Scripture, and especially in the coming of Christ through them. And thirdly, what is this account picturing?

The people have been promised rest in Canaan. They rejected the Lord, and they were denied that rest. Instead, they will wander for forty years in the wilderness. Each of these things has been seen in Israel's rejection of *Christ*. In type and picture and step by step, we have been led to this point.

When they rejected Christ, the curse of the covenant came upon Israel. The curses of Leviticus 26 have been played out in them for 2000 years. And yet, the glory of the Lord is revealed in *His keeping His covenant to them*. By keeping them alive, meaning as a people, and now in the calling of them back to the land of Israel, as His word said He would do, the glory of the Lord has literally filled all the earth.

They were scattered everywhere that man lives, they were kept as a people in their dispersion, and they have been regathered from every point where they were scattered. *This* is what is being pictured since the departure from Sinai, and it will continue until the crossing of the Jordan in Joshua 4. *This* is what the book of Hebrews so meticulously details concerning the rest offered to the people of Israel. It is in Christ that they will find their rest. Not entering Canaan (their promised rest), is pictured in their not coming to Christ (their true promised Rest).

²² because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness,

The people saw the glory of the Lord on Mount Sinai. They saw it in His other visible manifestations of Himself, and they saw it in the things He accomplished. They also saw the signs of the Lord, both in Egypt and in the wilderness. The words here are speaking of what Yehovah did for and among Israel, but they anticipate what Christ would do for and among Israel. The same words are used when speaking of Israel's interactions with Christ. The people are said to have seen His glory. They also saw His signs while living in their own Egypt, their own bondage to sin, and in the wilderness of their lives apart from Christ. Both are spoken of in John 12 –

“But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

'Lord, who has believed our report?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?'
³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:
⁴⁰ 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,
Lest they should see with *their* eyes,
Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.'
⁴¹ These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him."

-John 12:37-41

In Israel under Yehovah, and in Israel when Christ was among them, they failed to heed.
But there is more...

²² (con't) **and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice,**

The term "ten times" is a Hebrew idiom meaning, "Various times, and often." Ten is used this way in both Testaments of the Bible. It is a certain number given for an uncertain. It signifies a completeness of an entire round of a given subject. Jesus uses it, for example, in Revelation 2 where the saints are said to be tested for ten days. The people continuously tested the Lord, and they failed to heed His voice. It is, again, reflective of the time of Christ's coming. In Deuteronomy, the Lord said –

"I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. ¹⁹ And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him." Deuteronomy 18:18, 19

The gospels confirm the continuous testing of Christ by the people, and their failing to heed His voice. Yehovah warned; Christ was rejected; the people did not enter into God's rest, typified by Canaan and realized in the salvation He provides, as is next seen...

²³ **they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it.**

The punishment is named. Those who, *naats*, or rejected the Lord, those saw His glory, and those who failed to heed His voice, were excluded from entry into the land of promise, meaning the "rest" of the Lord as described by the psalmist. The same punishment

came upon Israel again at the time of Christ. Those who rejected Him, and those who failed to heed His voice, were excluded from the true Rest found in Christ.

In Scripture, one must be able to discern the larger pictures. Israel is a corporate body to whom everlasting promises are made. God will never take away the salvation of Israel. However, individually they are not all saved. Individual Christians are like Israel in that everlasting promises are made to them. God will never take away the salvation of an individual. But only those individuals who come to Christ are saved. This is pictured in His next words to Moses...

²⁴ But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him

Though Joshua will enter into Canaan, the Lord singles out Caleb, the Dog, who is of Gentile descent. He is specifically noted as having a different spirit. He is excluded from the punishment levied upon Israel, showing that it is faith in the Lord and His promises which secure salvation.

²⁴ (con') and has followed Me fully,

The Hebrew says, “and has fully followed after me.” Caleb pursued the Lord, and the Lord’s ways, step by step, in faith. He simply trusted the Lord’s promise and defended his position by saying, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it” (13:30).

Caleb is singled out because he fills the typology of what would come during the Gentile-led church age. It is those who the Jews consider “dogs,” meaning Gentiles, that would inherit the lead role in this dispensation. While Israel was under punishment for not heeding the Lord, Caleb obtained the promise.

²⁴ (con') I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.

Caleb is promised entry into Canaan; Christians are promised entrance into heaven. The Hebrew reads, “and his seed shall inherit it.” Caleb is given as a type of Abraham here. Abraham was given an incredible promise, but by simple faith God counted it to him for righteousness. From there, those who follow Abraham in faith are counted as his seed. The same thought is given here in Caleb. Those who are his seed will inherit the land. It must be remembered that Caleb also remained in the wilderness for the forty years, but his time was one of promise leading to entry into Canaan. Israel collectively was as

well. But Israel individually was not. Individuals were cursed, leading to death. Understanding the typology leads to understanding the times in which we live.

We are in a wilderness, and we are seemingly wandering aimlessly – all of us. But some bear the promise and some do not. For those who do, our time here is simply in anticipation of entering what God promised since the fall of man. Caleb possesses that promise; all who trust in Christ do so as well.

²⁵ Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.”

Though seemingly misplaced, the words here are given in anticipation of the final seven verses of the chapter. There, a battle between disobedient Israel and the Amalekites and the Canaanites will take place. At this time, the narrative anticipates that, telling the people that these adversaries are abiding in the valley. With the Lord, they could easily be defeated. Without Him, their own defeat was certain. Because of this, the people are instructed to turn away from them by the way of the Red Sea.

As there are fingers of the Red Sea on both sides of Sinai, it could mean either direction, if west is meant, it would then be ironic that they were heading in the general direction they had wanted to go when they rebelled, but they will rebel against that and turn to fight these enemies, once again in disobedience to the Lord.

Another hint of irony is found in what occurred after the rebellion of Israel with the golden calf, and what occurs after this rebellion of Israel now. After the incident of the calf, Moses went up Mount Sinai and asked for pardon for the people. At that time, he spent 40 days on the mountain a second time (Deuteronomy 9:18). Now, after the incident of rejecting entry into Canaan, Moses again petitions for pardon for Israel, and they will spend a full forty years in the wilderness.

In both, they are periods of grace, leading to revival and renewal. For Moses' time, it was a period of grace, leading to a renewal of the covenant. For Israel, it is a period of grace, leading to renewal in the land of promise. In both, they picture the work of Christ on Israel's behalf, despite Israel's disobedience. Christ rose and forty days later ascended. This was followed by the confirmation of the covenant, the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. But Israel rejected that. They went into an extended time of punishment, but that is promised to lead to a time of revival and renewal.

During that time, the covenant promises belong to any who will come to Christ by faith, but it is a time of being led by the Gentile church. The patterns laid down here in Numbers are, literally, being lived out in our lifetime. At some point, the church will be removed and the focus will be back on Israel as the Lord completes His plans for them and fulfills His promises to them.

Until that time, we are given the lesson to follow after the Lord just as Caleb is said to have done. We are to have a different spirit in us, one of faith in the promises of the Lord. If we are willing to, by faith, put our trust in the promises of God found in Christ, we will be considered in the same light as Caleb was here in Numbers. It all centers on obedience to the Lord, and that all centers on faith in Him and in His word. And how do we appropriate that? By calling out to Christ.

Closing Verse: *“For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? ¹⁷ Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Hebrews 3:16-19*

Next Week: Numbers 14:26-45 The time in the wilderness seemed to go on endlessly... (A Year for Each Day, Part III) (27th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Year for Each Day

Then the Lord said to Moses:

“How long will these people reject Me?

And how long will they not believe Me?

With all the signs which I have performed among them

— — — how can they act so stubbornly?

I will strike them with the pestilence

And disinherit them too

And I will make of you a nation

Greater and mightier than they; so shall I do

And Moses said to the Lord:

“Then the Egyptians will hear it, so they will understand
For by Your might You brought these people up from among them
And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land

They have heard that You, Lord, are among these people
That You, Lord, are seen face to face; Your glorious sight
And Your cloud stands above them
And You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day
———-and in a pillar of fire by night

Now if You kill these people as one man
Then the nations which have heard of Your fame
Will speak, saying
Words that will bring disgrace to Your name

‘Because the Lord was not able
To bring this people to the land as He did address
Which He swore to give them
Therefore He killed them in the wilderness

And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great
Just as You have spoken, saying as You did do
‘The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy
Forgiving iniquity and transgression too

But He by no means clears the guilty
Visiting the iniquity of the fathers as He swore to do
On the children to the third and fourth generation
So it shall be the judgment from You

Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray
According to the greatness of Your mercy
Just as You have forgiven this people
From Egypt even until now, may it still be

Then the Lord said:

“I have pardoned, according to your word
But truly, as I live

All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord

Because all these men who have seen My glory
And the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness
And have put Me to the test now these ten times
And have not heeded My voice, and my solemn address

They certainly shall not see the land
Not even a little bit
Of which I swore to their fathers
Nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it

But My servant Caleb
Because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully
I will bring into the land where he went
And his descendants shall inherit it, so shall it be

Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites
Dwell in the valley
Tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness
By the Way of the Red Sea

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 14:26-45 (A YEAR FOR EACH DAY, PART III)

In the passage today, we should once again be reminded of the context. The people are in the wilderness, even the wilderness of Paran, or Glorious. They had seen the marvels of the Lord all the way to Sinai, they had seen the marvels of the Lord at Sinai, they had been given the law, they had been ensured they would receive the Land of Promise, and they had been given manna, every single day, since shortly after leaving Egypt.

In fact, in today's passage, they will see a true miracle in the striking of ten of the twelve spies who went into Canaan. And all of this time, they continued to eat manna. In fact, verse 40 shows us that the people rose early in the morning in order to be disobedient to the Lord once again. And yet there is no doubt that they first sat down to a meal of... manna.

Despite being in the wilderness with a population larger than most cities, they had enough water to sustain them, and they had enough manna to feed them for three meals, every day, seven days a week. The utter stupidity of people who would be so well cared for, and who would then distrust the very Source of their daily sustenance is almost too incredible to imagine. But we, meaning the world in general, are no different. Not in the least.

Text Verse: *“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.” 1 Corinthians 10:1-5*

The world at large loves to deny there is a God, or they attempt to deify the creation so that we don't need a God who is transcendent. But both of those are logically inconsistent. If the universe is God, then the universe would have no beginning. If there was no beginning, we could not be right here, right now. There would always be an infinite regress to time, and there could be no “right now.” If the universe had a beginning, then it is a contingent being, meaning it is dependent on its existence for both being here and continuing to be here. In other words, it needs a Sustainer, just like the one who sustained Israel with manna every morning.

The people were sustained, and yet they failed to believe their Sustainer. We are, logically and inescapably, being sustained, and yet we fail to believe in our Sustainer. No, we are no different than Israel. We mock them because of their failure to believe, and yet we fail to believe in varying degrees ourselves.

If we accept evolution, then we deny creation. If we accept creation, but we deny the account as given in His word, then we don't believe His word. Or, we pretend we do by making excuses about what it actually says. But an excuse is merely an attempt to hide disbelief. If we say we believe in eternal life because of Christ, but we then fear death, we are failing to truly and wholly believe in eternal life. This isn't a maybe, it is a fact. At what point does our faith begin to falter?

Faith is what we will be rewarded for. Even our deeds have to be done in faith, or they are faithless deeds – no reward for you! One thing is certain, the more we hold to the word, the more we cherish the Person and work of Christ, and the more we simply exist in Him, forgetting about the other things which weigh us down, and the more our faith will grow. Everyone is on a different level, but everyone should be going up in their faith level from day to day.

The surest way to do this is to get “self” out of the way. Any time self gets introduced into the equation, faith is excluded. Let us keep our eyes on Jesus who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. These things are revealed, once again, in today's passage. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Your Carcasses Shall Fall in the Wilderness (verses 26-38)

²⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

In verse 14:2, the whole congregation is said to have spoken against Moses and Aaron. In 14:5, it said that Moses and Aaron fell on their faces. In verse 14:11, the Lord spoke to Moses directly, and in verse 14:13, Moses responded to the Lord with His petition. After that, the Lord responded to Moses' petition in verse 14:22. With that behind them, it now says that the Lord spoke to both Moses and Aaron. It appears from this that all of the verses have occurred right in front of the congregation. Either Moses and Aaron were there on their faces, or Moses went into the tabernacle to hear the Lord while Aaron remained humbled before the Lord.

In other words, the glory of the Lord appearing in the tent of meeting, the Lord's anger at the people, and Moses' petition on behalf of the people, have been accomplished in the sight and in the hearing of the people. That is why both Moses and Aaron are addressed here. Whether the people heard the voice of the Lord or not, they have seen the events unfold. The Lord speaks to both, because both are in leadership positions. His words to them are...

²⁷ “How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me?”

The Hebrew is deliberately broken, showing the anger of the Lord. It reads, “How long for congregation the evil the this...” It thus forms an aposiopesis where the intent has to be inferred. And the inference is, “How long shall I put up with this?” And the reason is that it is Me they are complaining against.

^{27 (con't)} I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me.

In one verse, the word *alay*, or “against Me,” is stated twice. It was Moses and Aaron who were about to be stoned in verse 10. In that same verse, the Lord appeared. The Lord is tying the actions of the people against Moses and Aaron directly into an attack against Him. This is why the question is asked of them. In essence, He is asking this not only on His behalf, but on theirs.

He also uses the word *tlunah*, meaning to mumble or murmur. It is used nine times in Scripture, all in Exodus and Numbers, and all are concerning the murmuring of the Israelites. Each time, it is an offense against the Lord in which the murmuring occurs. As Moses and Aaron in position picture Christ – the Lawgiver, Prophet, and High Priest of the Covenant – we can see how speaking against Christ is to be treated as a direct attack against God. He represents the Godhead, just as Moses and Aaron represent the Lord.

²⁸ Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord,

Because of the people's words and actions against Moses and Aaron, which are considered a direct attack against the Lord Himself, He now speaks out words of prophecy. The Hebrew says, *khai ani neum Yehovah* – “Live I, utters Yehovah.” It is a word used just once so far in the Bible, *neum*. In Genesis 22:16, after Abraham had proven his faithfulness to the Lord, He made a solemn utterance of promise. The word comes from *naam*, a prophecy. Thus, an oracle from the Lord is now forthcoming...

^{28 (con't)} ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you:

The Hebrew actually carries a negative particle which makes the words more exciting than whatever version you are reading. Literally, it reads “if not, just as you have spoken in My hearing, so will I do to you.” The obvious question is, “What have the people spoken in His hearing?” The answer is that of verse 2 –

“If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!” Numbers 14:2

The Lord had redeemed them from Egypt, and there was no way He was going to unredeem them. But He would also not let them go into the land they were unwilling to enter through their faithlessness. And so, He grants them the one request that is suitable to their evil speaking against Him. Of all of the translations of this verse, the one that most closely reflects the sense of the Hebrew is given by Robert Young –

“say unto them, I live — an affirmation of Jehovah — if, as ye have spoken in Mine ears — so I do not to you;” YLT

The Hebrew of verses 27 and 28 contain exciting literary devices intended to convey emotion to the ears and minds of those who hear them, including us. Next, to explain His words of what He intends to do, the Lord says...

²⁹ The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above.

The sentence is pronounced, and it applies – as it says – to all who were numbered in the wilderness. It then further defines them as those “from twenty years old and above.” Because of this, scholars go to extremes certainly not intended by the text. They say that because the Levites were not mentioned in that census, they are not included in this counting. They say this is certain because Eleazar, Aaron’s son, is specifically mentioned as having entered into Canaan. Such conclusions are wholly unnecessary. First, none of the women were counted in the census. And yet, in verse 14:1, it says that the whole congregation lifted up their voices and wept. Unless it is speaking of a congregation full of sissy men who wept, and hardy women who didn’t, then the sentence falls upon the women as well as the men.

Secondly, the term, “the generation of the men of war,” is stated in Deuteronomy 2:14, and again in Joshua 5:4. It is simply an all-inclusive statement of those who are twenty

and above. This is certain, because the tribe of Levi is counted in the second census of Numbers 26. After their counting, it says –

“But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. ⁶⁵ For the Lord had said of them, ‘They shall surely die in the wilderness.’” So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.” Numbers 26:64, 65

And thirdly, there is no reason to assume that Eleazar was over twenty. His two older brothers were dead, and he and Ithamar could well have been under twenty. The tenor of everything written beyond this implies that the sentence was pronounced upon everyone twenty and above except Joshua and Caleb. There is no reason to assume that it is not an all-inclusive statement. Nothing is lost either way though.

³⁰ Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.

The exception of both Caleb and Joshua is explicitly stated now. And more, just as it is probable that the Levites and wives were included in the previous statement, it is just as likely that if these men were married, their wives would be granted the same promise as they. These things can only be assumed, and there is no reason to get overly dogmatic about them. But these seem like logical assumptions. The land of Canaan is the promised inheritance and rest. In type then, it is where those of faith go. As Caleb and Joshua are singled out, it seems obvious that they are being used here as types of those who would enter that place of rest.

Caleb would be those Gentiles who are of faith and who receive the promise. Joshua would picture those Jews who are of faith and who receive the promise. This is just typology. The promise is made, and it reflects the notion of entering into the inheritance based on one’s faith in the promise of the Lord. As for Canaan, the next words would then retreat back to the promise to Israel in the flesh, not a type of those who are saved through age or innocence...

³¹ But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.

Once again, the words of the people are repeated from verse 14:3. However, there it said, “Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives

and children should become victims?’ There it mentioned the wives, but now it only mentions the *taph*, or little ones. It is another indication that **all** those twenty and above are included in the judgment, women as well as men.

And so likewise, the term *taph*, or “little ones” is extended to all who are nineteen and below. As we saw, that comes from *taphaph* which signifies to trip, or to take little steps, and thus a small child. Whereas the people were implying that the Lord was lacking compassion on those who were most helpless, the Lord is showing abundant mercy on those who are even close to full maturity by extending the promise to those up to nineteen. For the rest...

³² But *as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.*

u-pigrekhem atem – “And your carcasses; you.” The stress is lost in most translations. The idea is, “Dead bodies will litter the land, and they will be *you*.” After speaking out His exceptions who will enter, the utterance of verse 29 is again spoken. The wilderness will consume all those who are twenty and above. They would fall, and there they would lie. Exactly as they had spoken in verse 2.

³³ And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years,

The period of forty years is inclusive of the time already spent in the wilderness. Joshua 5:10 says –

“Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. ¹¹ And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.”

That was the forty-first year, and the same week as they entered Canaan. Thus, it was forty years, to the day, from the first Passover until they ate of the produce of the land of Canaan. It is during all of this time that the sons of the faithless generation would feed their flocks in the wilderness. And again, the term “sons” is used as an inclusive term to indicate all those nineteen and below – both male and female. As before, there is no reason to assume any exceptions were made for those twenty and above beyond Caleb and Joshua and maybe wives if they had them.

³³ (con’t) and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.

The word here is a new one, *zenuth*. It is a noun which will be seen nine times. It indicates harlotry or whoredom. The people were unfaithful to the Lord, just as a harlot is to her husband. And their actions lead to a truth that escapes many people which is that the children will bear the brunt of their parent's actions.

People ask if it is fair that the children suffer for the parent's actions. The answer is, "Yes." It is not the Lord who punishes the children. It is that the children, by virtue of being a part of the family, receive the burden of the parent's actions. A simple example would be a person who kills someone else. He is caught, tried, and convicted of murder. If he had children, they will receive the brunt of the parent's actions. They will be fatherless, maybe poor, etc. To say it is unfair would mean that the father could not be punished at all. But that would be unjust to the society, and to the family who lost their own loved one.

People ask if it is unfair concerning all that has come upon Israel for rejecting Christ Jesus. It is exactly the same premise as we see here. There is nothing unfair about it, and any Jew who wants to not be a part of that collective punishment needs to simply call out to Jesus and receive Him. But the parents have taught the children, for 2000 years, that Jesus is bad. The punishment has been a self-inflicted one, and it has been one that has been passed on to the children through the parents. It is not God's fault, but theirs. Another point we learn here is that it is obvious, from what we have seen, that Caleb and Joshua are used as types of those who enter God's promised rest by faith, but that these children, when they enter Canaan, are not. Rather, they are carrying on the story and history of Israel of the flesh. The reason we know this comes from the New Testament. In the book of Hebrews, it says –

"For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. ¹⁰For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His."

-Hebrews 4:8-10

Joshua did bring Israel – those nineteen and younger at this time – into Canaan. However, the author of Hebrews notes that he did not give those who entered with him rest. Rest, meaning God's promised rest, is obtained by faith in the Lord. Caleb and Joshua demonstrated faith and are typical of those who have trusted in the Lord. But Israel did not enter their rest, of which Canaan is typical, because they did not believe. Therefore, those who do enter Canaan in forty years are simply Israel of the flesh, living out their history.

The reason this is important to understand is so that we do not err in making a theological point about salvation of people of a certain age based on these verses here; something which is rather common for people to do. It is the punishment upon the faithless, and the bearing of the burden of the children during these forty years, which are typical of Israel's punishment for rejecting Christ Jesus.

³⁴ According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, *namely* forty years,

A day for a year is given. The spies were in Canaan forty days, and the punishment will be upon Israel for forty years. This will be repeated in Ezekiel 4 where a punishment will be a day for a year. It will also be the time allotted by Christ as the sign of Jonah to Israel. Jonah proclaimed, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" Jesus said that would be a sign to Israel of their own coming punishment. Forty years after His ministry began, the Romans destroyed the temple and exiled Israel.

³⁴ (con't) and you shall know My rejection.

Here is a word found only twice in the Bible, *tenuah*. It is derived from *nu* which signifies to hinder or frustrate. Thus, it is a turning away of the Lord from the people; a rejection, or even an active working against them. What is being said here is, "You have rejected Me. I know what it is like. And now it's time for you to find out what it's like when I reject you." Here we can see, once again, Israel in their dispersion. The Lord rejected them, and He even worked against them, exactly as He promised in Leviticus 26.

³⁵ I the Lord have spoken this.

ani Yehovah dibarti – "I, Yehovah, have spoken." There is no chance of the words failing. What He has uttered in an oracle will surely come to pass.

³⁵ (con't) I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die."

The people are called an evil congregation once again. They had complained against Moses and Aaron, and thus they had complained against the Lord. They were to be cut off, be finished off, and die in the wilderness. The sentence is pronounced, and the judgment will be rendered. The Lord, Yehovah, has spoken. As a note of surety that this is picturing a reject of Jesus, Peter says the same thing to Israel in Acts 2:40 – "Be saved from this perverse (CEV 'evil') generation."

³⁶ Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land,

The ten men of the company who went into Canaan are now singled out. They had gone under orders to give a report on the state of the land, not to give a report on whether the land could be subdued or not. The Lord had already told them that He would go before them. Their bad report of the land was based on the greatness of the inhabitants in relation to the people of Israel. But because the Lord is their Leader, it was a bad report against the greatness of the Lord. In order to prove to the people that what He had said to them about their coming to an end was true, He would make these ten men an object lesson...

³⁷ those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the Lord.

The word is *magephah*. It was used by the Lord when He spoke to Pharaoh through Moses in Exodus 9:14. A sudden striking of the men by plague came upon them. Had this actually been because of something they caught or ate in Canaan? No...

³⁸ But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land.

The truly remarkable aspect is not that the ten spies had died, but that it did not happen to Caleb and Joshua. In other words, if they all died, it could be interpreted that they all picked up a disease in Canaan which killed them all. Thus, it would mean staying out of Canaan was a great idea. However, in the death of ten miscreants, and the health of the two faithful, it was a true sign that their punishment was of the Lord. It was then a further sign to Israel that they would, in fact, die in the wilderness.

In his commentary of this verse, Adam Clarke – whether intentionally or unintentionally – ties the taking of Canaan in to the gospel. He says, “Let preachers of God’s word take heed how they straiten the way of salvation, or render, by unjust description, that way perplexed and difficult which God has made plain and easy.”

In other words, Canaan was to be God’s place of rest for the people. Jesus is God’s place of rest for us. We have a hugely simple gospel message. It is *so simple* that Paul actually calls it a stumblingblock because people trip right over it. God made the path to Canaan plain and easy – “Follow Me, and you will enter your rest.” God has made the gospel

equally easy. "Follow Me, and you will enter your Rest." Woe to the one who gives a false report about the simplicity and surety of what God has offered.

As a side point in this verse, Joshua is named first before Caleb. However, in verse 30 Caleb was named first. And, in verse 24, Caleb was the only one named. If Caleb is representing Gentiles here, as I would suggest, it is a clue to the primary belief of Gentiles in Christ in verse 24 and 30, but that the original faith in Christ went to the Jew first as is seen in this verse. That may not be the intent at all, but it does match the pattern in history.

*Choose life, this is what I ask of you
Trust in the Lord and place Him as Your highest delight
Have faith in Him, and to His word be true
And all things will work out well; everything will be alright*

*Don't complain against the Lord when trials come
Trust that He already knew they would come your way
Be blinded to the trials; to them, let your mind be numb
Simply trust the Lord, and every word He does say*

*Choose life, this is what I ask of you
Give God the glory and pursue Him all of your days
Have faith in Him; and to His word be true
And be sure to give Him His due; give to Him all of your praise*

II. Up to the Mountaintop (verses 39-45)

³⁹ Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly.

There is a sorrow for sin, and there is a sorrow for the punishment of sin. The two are not the same, and the latter does not always correct the former. The people were greatly sorrowed when Moses told them the Lord's verdict upon them, but they were not sorrowful for what they had done. This is painfully evident in the rest of the account. A person can have an affair outside their marriage and get caught. The verdict is divorce and a loss of a ton of money and possessions. The person can be sorrowful over that, and still not care about the reason for it. A person can kill someone else and be convicted for it for with forty years in the pokey. He can be sorrowful about the loss of freedom, but not care a bit about the person he killed.

Until our sorrow over our sins meets up with the punishment we receive from those sins, we will never have a desire to be truly obedient to the Lord. Such is the case with the congregation now...

⁴⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, “Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!”

Here it shows their eagerness to not be punished. They had mourned over the verdict which was pronounced, and they probably thought that their mourning was sufficient to appease the Lord’s wrath and get Him back into forward motion. And so it says they went up to the top of the mountain. What is probably the case here is that verse 40 actually follows chronologically after verse 44. This is because they are told to not go up in verse 42, and they actually went up in verse 44. This is seen in the words of Deuteronomy 1 –

““Then you answered and said to me, ‘We have sinned against the Lord; we will go up and fight, just as the Lord our God commanded us.’ And when everyone of you had girded on his weapons of war, you were ready to go up into the mountain.
⁴² “And the Lord said to me, ‘Tell them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I *am* not among you; lest you be defeated before your enemies.” ’ ⁴³ So I spoke to you; yet you would not listen, but rebelled against the command of the Lord, and presumptuously went up into the mountain.”” Deuteronomy 1:41-43

Here in Numbers, in order to show their utter stupidity, verse 40 is given now. First, they bring in the Lord again with the words, “to the place which the Lord has promised.” That promise remains, but not for them. They have a new promise. They rejected the first; He will not reject the second. The ironic words, “for we have sinned,” shows the lack of clarity in their thinking. They sinned at first, and now they are sinning again, as is revealed to them in the words...

⁴¹ And Moses said, “Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed.

The Hebrew says, “Why this you pass by *the* mouth of Yehovah.” The Lord first gave a command to Moses in verse 25 that on this very morning they were to turn and move out into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea.

In connection with this command, He has spoken out a sentence upon the people, but they were not willing to accept that punishment. They are simply passing it by, ignoring it and determining their own path. However, Moses tells them that such a path will not be successful. What is said should be sufficient to end the matter, but to ensure they understand, he continues...

⁴² Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you.

Verse 25 noted that the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley. Once the people came down from the mountain, they would face these foes. If the Lord was among them, their victory in battle would be guaranteed. Without Him, their own defeat was certain. Moses implores them to follow the word of the Lord, again warning them...

⁴³ For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword;

This tells what has already been seen in verse 25. It was an ominous warning that danger laid ahead, and the only acceptable choice was to turn away into the wilderness, following the Lord's command. If they chose otherwise, death was certain. This was...

^{43 (con't)} because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you."

Before, the Lord was with them, and they thought they could do nothing. Now the Lord is not with them, but they are intending to accomplish all things without Him. This is certain because Moses tells them that if they go, they will go alone...

⁴⁴ But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop.

Here is another new and rare word, *aphal*. It signifies, "to swell." And thus it indicates pride. It is only seen again in Habakkuk 2:4 where it says –

"Behold the **proud**,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk 2:4

That is cited by Paul in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11. This word reveals the intent of the entire passage we are looking at.

This verse now is where verse 41 follows chronologically. The word “presumed” is expanded on by the words, “Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned.” They acknowledged their sin of unbelief but replaced it with the sin of presumption of entering into the Promise by their own effort. However, entry is not by the will, nor by the work of man. Rather, it is by faith in the Lord...

44 (con’t) Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp.

Here, for the second and last time in Numbers, it is called the ark of the covenant of Yehovah. This is because of its purpose and intent for the people of Israel. It is the Lord who goes before His people in covenant faithfulness which is in accord with the covenant between them. In this, He goes forth first, or He does not go at all. The ark signifies the presence of the Lord in covenant relationship with them. That no longer exists.

But, even before the ark was made, the people went into battle and were victorious when Moses held up the rod of God. That was in Exodus 17. It was a picture of Christ. Moses is mentioned in this verse as not departing to specifically show that Christ is not among those who went. He was not in covenant relationship with them, nor was He visibly among them, any longer.

45 (fin) Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah.

Here, what was said was going to happen is exactly what came about. The foes who dwelt there came down and struck them. The final words say, *v’yaketum ad ha’kharema* – “and crushed them as far as the Khormah.” Khormah comes from the word *kharam*, it means to make accursed, or utterly destroy. Thus, “the Khormah” is that which is devoted to destruction. This is the only time that the term *ha’kharema*, or “The Destruction,” with the article, is mentioned in Scripture.

The passage is obvious. The people had failed to accept the Lord at His word and they were given their sentence because of it; they were to die in the wilderness. That is what happened to Israel after rejecting the Lord Jesus.

However, there is a group of people who rejected the Lord, but who presumed to take action into their own hands. They went from the sin of disbelief to the sin of presump-

tion. It is a sin which continues on to this day in certain circles. The first part of the passage, from verse 26-38, dealt with the entire group – Israel having failed to come to Christ. The second part, from verses 39-45, dealt with that portion of people who acknowledged they had erred, but instead of accepting the word of the Lord as it is given, added in the sin of pride, only compounding their guilt.

This is reflected in the two people groups who are mentioned, the Amalekites and the Canaanites. Amalek has consistently be seen as picturing the Judaizers. They are those who wring off the head from the body. To brush up on that, go back and watch the sermon on Exodus 17:8-16. The Canaanites are those who bring into subjection. Both Amalek and Canaan then are those who pull others away from the gospel of Christ.

The passage here is what the book of Galatians is specifically written about, but which is revealed in many parts of Paul's writings. It speaks of the Judaizers – those who say they were wrong about the Lord, but who continue to reject that same Lord by reinserting the Law of Moses as a means of climbing the mountain to its peak. False teachers seen in the Amalekites come in and take those who would otherwise follow the Lord, and they pull them away to destruction. Said otherwise, they attempt to ascend to God through their own efforts. It is they who Paul speaks of in Galatians 1:6-9 –

“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”

These people had rejected the truth of the gospel, and they then came with another gospel, a false one. As Paul says, such are accursed. The word Paul uses there is *anathema*. Guess what! It carries the exact same meaning as *kharam* – a thing accursed and thus devoted to destruction. The second group, the Canaanites, would be the Jews of Israel who formed the Talmud, bringing their people into subjection. Thus the place here is called *ha'kharema*, or “the Destruction.” The pattern is established; Paul filled in the blanks fifteen hundred years later.

The Jews rejected Christ, but some seemingly accepted Him after that. However, it was under false pretenses. They came, not to exalt God, but themselves through works of the law; their own effort. That continues on today in the Hebrew Roots Movement, and

many messianic churches which teach adherence to the law. And yet, neither the New Covenant which is found in Christ, nor Christ Himself is among them. They are accursed because they pursue a false message of personal works leading to salvation.

And this is true in countless other churches as well. Anytime someone promotes the law, circumcision, the Sabbath, the Feasts of the Lord, or adherence to any other type or shadow from the Old Covenant, they pervert the gospel of Christ. Indeed, they shall be crushed and the ban shall remain on them unto destruction. This is the continuing message of Scripture – God has given us a way which is plain and easy. He has done the work, and He has invited us to follow in His grace. No other way is acceptable. Come to Jesus, be saved by His grace, and follow in His steps to the Land of Promise which lies at the top of the mountain where God dwells.

Closing Verse: *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”*
Galatians 5:1-4

Next Week: Numbers 15:1-21 *Pictures of Christ that are really quite grand...*(When You Have Come Into the Land) (28th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Year for Each Day

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying
These words to them He was then relaying

“How long shall I bear with this evil congregation
Who incessantly complain against Me?
I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel
Make against Me constantly

Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord; My word is true

'Just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you
The carcasses of you who have complained
Against Me shall fall in this wilderness
All of you who were numbered, according to your entire number
From twenty years old and above I make this address

Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh
And Joshua the son of Nun
You shall by no means enter the land which I swore
I would make you dwell in; such hopes for you are quashed and done

But your little ones, whom you said would be victims
So you had apprised
I will bring in, and they shall know the land
Which you have despised

But as for you, so to you I now address
Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness
And your sons shall be shepherds
In the wilderness forty years, certainly no less

And bear the brunt of your infidelity
Until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness

According to the number of the days
In which you spied out the land, forty days
— — — I will hear no objection
For each day you shall bear your guilt one year
Namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection

I the Lord have spoken this
I will surely do so to all this evil congregation, by and by
Who are gathered together against Me
In this wilderness they shall be consumed
— — — and there they shall die

Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land
Who returned and made all the congregation
Complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land

Which then spread throughout the nation
Those very men who brought the evil report about the land
Died by the plague before the Lord
— — —-yes, by the Lord's own hand

But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh
— — —-as we so understand
Remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land

Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel
And the people mourned greatly
— — —-for them things weren't going so well

And they rose early in the morning
And went up to the top of the mountain, saying
"Here we are, and we will go up to the place
— — —-which the Lord has promised
For we have sinned, but now our debt we are repaying

And Moses said, "Now why do you transgress
The command of the Lord?
For this will not succeed
It is contrary to His word

Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, I say
For the Lord is not among you
— — —-and you will be defeated this very day

For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you
And you shall fall by the sword, it is true
Because you have turned away from the Lord
The Lord will not be with you

But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop
Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord
Nor Moses departed from the camp
They disobeyed His spoken word

Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites

Who dwelt in that mountain came down
And attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah
Yes, they were beaten all the way to destruction town

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 15:1-21 (WHEN YOU HAVE COME INTO THE LAND)

In their commentary on the two short sections we will look at today, the Pulpit Commentary says, “The two enactments have the same supplemental and (humanly speaking) trivial character.” In other words, they simply fill in supplementary information from other passages already given, mostly from Leviticus. They then mention their “trivial character,” but qualify that with their parenthetical and otherwise unexplained words, “humanly speaking.” Are the words trivial?

Before beginning, would anyone like to present their thoughts on what we’ve just read and will next analyze? Unless you cheated by reading the sermon in advance, the verses do seem repetitive in nature. We’ve seen these concepts introduced elsewhere, and we have probably forgotten most of what we learned. That’s ok. Our minds were molded to know that it was of value in those passages, and we can go back and review anytime we wish.

But for now, we can simply consider what the book of Hebrews says about the things of the law. In Hebrews 9:9, the author says, of the topic of the first tabernacle and its associated rites and rituals, that, “It was symbolic for the present time.”

There the word he uses which is translated as “symbolic” is *parabole*. It is the same word translated as “parable” in the gospels. The author is saying that the things of the Old Covenant – such as the layout, structure, and materials of the sanctuary, all of the rites associated with that sanctuary, and even the days associated with those rites (such as the Day of Atonement) were teaching aids and living lessons which only figuratively pointed to what Christ would do. The people of Israel were living out a 1500 year long parable every time they interacted with these priestly things.

Well, if we hold fast to, seek to understand, and repeat the parables Jesus spoke, and the parables that He lived out, doesn’t it make sense that we should seek to understand the parables that point to that same wonderful Lord?

Text Verse: *“All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, ³⁵ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying:*

‘I will open My mouth in parables;

I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.’” Matthew 13:34, 35

Of the verses of our first section today, Adam Clarke – someone I respect immensely and quote from time to time, but who is often overly legalistic – says the following about the requirement of the offerings and sacrifices to be made by the Israelites –

“All strangers – all that came to sojourn in the land, were required to conform to it; and it was right that those who did conform to it should have equal rights and privileges with the Hebrews themselves, which we find was the case. But under the Christian dispensation, as no particular form of worship is prescribed, the types and ceremonies of the Mosaic institution being all fulfilled, unlimited toleration should be allowed; and while the sacred writings are made the basis of the worship offered to God, every man should be allowed to worship according to his own conscience, for in this respect every one is ‘Lord of himself, accountable to none
But to his conscience and his God alone.’” Adam Clarke

It was hard for me to imagine he said these things. He often puts worship, and worshipers, in boxes that are very restrictive. But here, he casts that aside and shows that all of the rigidity of the law is set aside, and we can worship in spirit and in truth. And indeed, if you go to a hundred cultures, there will be a hundred individual ways that they work their culture into their style of worship. As long as it doesn't violate Scripture, it is acceptable. And why not!

The parables of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Christ. This will be seen again in our verses today. If they are fulfilled, and they are, then they are obsolete, just as Hebrews says of them. We are not bound to conduct our affairs in the church except in honor of the One who accomplished all these things for us. Today's passage is one which pointed to Christ as a parable. He – in His person and in His life – fulfilled the meaning and purpose of these shadows, or parables.

Let us give Him glory in the way that we feel is our very best way to do so. Such freedom for us is revealed as a marvelous part of His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. One Law and One Custom (verses 1-16)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

It is completely uncertain when these words were spoken to Moses, and the dating of them by scholars goes from just after the departure from Sinai all the way through until

just before entrance into Canaan. Some liberal scholars say that only parts of the coming words were given by Moses, and that some of what is stated here is actually amended from after the time of Ezekiel. The stupidity of that thinking isn't worth contemplating. It says, "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying," and there is nothing to support anything, but a literal reception of these words directly from the Lord to Moses.

As to why they are placed here, regardless of when they were received by Moses, the words of verse 2 help to explain the matter. They begin with...

² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:

The words are "to the children of Israel." It does not say, "speak to all the congregation," as if the people needed to know them and apply them to their lives at that moment. Rather, they are for all of Israel, at any time, but not necessarily for the congregation alive at that time. In other words, if a principal said, "Speak to the students in your classes," the teachers would know it was something for the students at the school at that time. However, if the principal said, "Speak to the Riverview Rams," it would be something that applied to all students at all times. This is the idea here. That this is certain is because the Lord continues with...

^{2 (con't)} 'When you have come into the land you are to inhabit,

What just occurred in the previous chapter? It was a rebellion against the Lord, and a pronouncement of judgment upon the people. There the Lord said –

"The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. ³⁰ Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. ³¹ But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. ³² But *as for you*, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. ³³ And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness." Numbers 14:29-33

The Lord judged, the Lord convicted, and the Lord sentenced. The generation of those twenty and above would not come into the land of Canaan. However, those 19 and below, along with Caleb and Joshua, would enter according to the promise of the Lord. It is

a certainty that Israel is not wholly rejected, and the words are here to provide assurance that what is to be mandated will be possible. The things mandated require possession and cultivation of the land.

They cannot be accomplished while dwelling in the wilderness, and so there is an assurance that entry and possession is coming. An important point is to be considered as stated by the scholar Baumgarten. He said, "...the fighting men of Israel had fallen under the judgment of Jehovah, and the sacred history, therefore, was no longer concerned with them; whilst the youth, in whom the life and hope of Israel were preserved, had as yet no history at all."

Whereas those who left Egypt had a history which they looked back on and whined about, a newer generation would have only their time in the wilderness as a point of reference. Only a limited number of people, probably from about mid-teens to nineteen, would have any real memory of Egypt at all. Thus, the words here are a great hope for those born and raised in the wilderness. Someday they will receive a land. And the guarantee of that is...

^{2 (con't)} **which I am giving to you,**

The children of Israel are being given the land previously promised. No, not those under sentence of death in the wilderness, but Israel will still be given the land. The promise has not been revoked, nor would it ever be. Leviticus 26 states this with certainty. The land is the Lord's, He has given it to Israel, and they may dwell in it when obedient, and they may not when they are disobedient. As a part of this surety, the words ahead are stated...

³ **and you make an offering by fire to the Lord,**

The implication here, based on the words of the previous verse, is that these offerings were not conducted in the wilderness. Indeed, they could not be as will be seen in the verses ahead. An offering made by fire signifies any offering that is burnt in part or in whole upon the altar. Leviticus, in particular, went into great detail concerning each of them. These continue to be defined by saying...

^{3 (con't)} **a burnt offering or a sacrifice,**

These sacrifices and offerings were carefully detailed in Leviticus. However, there are now provisions which will be added to them. What is being referred to here does not include sin offerings or trespass offerings, but only to the two classes of 1) burnt-offerings, and 2) peace offerings. These are further defined first as...

3 (con't) to fulfill a vow

When making a vow to the Lord. This would be a votive offering. A vow was made, and the offering is presented in fulfillment of that. Such a vow was normally made in times of need, such as, "O God, if you get me out of this, I will present an offering to you."

3 (con't) or as a freewill offering

Such an offering would be made in times of prosperity, or in gratitude to the Lord for His provision.

3 (con't) or in your appointed feasts,

Feasts, such as the Feast of Firstfruits, required products of the land which had been cultivated to be presented before the Lord. This was not possible in the wilderness. Whether Israel celebrated any of these feasts or not can only be speculated on. Did those who came out of Egypt who were circumcised still observe the Passover?

That was discussed in a previous sermon, but in the end, certain things, including some entire feasts, could not be observed due to the requirements of the feast. It is absolutely certain that the Sabbath, which is a feast, continued to be observed throughout the time in the wilderness. Burnt offerings and sacrifices were offered during these feasts. All of these mentioned were for a specific purpose which was...

3 (con't) to make a sweet aroma to the Lord, from the herd or the flock,

The idea of a sweet aroma is that which is pleasing. In the case of such offerings, they were from the herd or from the flock. They were clean animals, each of which pictures Christ in one way or another, as has been seen, and as will be partially re-described as we go along in this passage.

4 then he who presents his offering to the Lord shall bring a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil;

Various animal offerings are going to be described. Before actually naming the first, the grain offering that is to accompany it is specified. In this case, it is to be one-tenth of an *ephah* of fine flour. The flour is *solet*, or “fine flour.” This comes from an unused root meaning “to strip.” Thus it is fine flour, indicating purity.

It is, as previously seen, reflective of the purity of Christ. This was to be mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil. The ephah is a dry measure. The hin is a liquid measure. The mixing of the oil in the grain pictures the complete intermingling of the Spirit into Christ.

⁵ and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb.

Along with the grain offering, there is to also be a drink offering of one-fourth of a hin of wine. The *nesek*, or drink offering, comes from a word meaning “cover.” The idea is that when the drink offering is poured out, it will cover that onto which it is poured.

The drink offering is of *yayin*, or wine. As a review, in the Bible, wine symbolizes the merging together of cultural expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine. In the drink offering, it signifies rest and celebration. A drink offering is only offered after entry into the Land of Promise, a land of defeated enemies. Thus it is a land of rest. Only when rest is provided, would the Lord accept the wine libations. And so, during the time in the wilderness, they were not offered. Further, a drink offering is poured out in its entirety to the Lord. No part of it was drunk by the priests or people. This signifies that the people were partially excluded from the full blessings of the Lord while still under the Law of Moses. This is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew –

“Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Matthew 9:17

Jesus was speaking of the law and grace. The new wine is the new dispensation of grace to come. The old wine was the dispensation of the law. If one were to introduce the new concept into the old, it would not work because the two were incompatible. Only if one put the new wine into the new wineskins, and received the new wine, would the mind be changed. Only in Christ does man truly enter into God’s victory and rest. This is why Paul could say in Philippians 2 –

“Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Philippians 2:17, 18

Paul’s labors in the vineyard anticipated his victory and rest in Christ. This is made all the more evident in his words to Timothy –

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Finally, in this verse, it specifies these for a lamb. The word is *kebes*, and it means to dominate. It pictures Christ who dominated over sin and the law for His people.

⁶ Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil;

Next is specified an *ayil*, or ram. *Ayil* indicates strength. It pictures that Christ’s strength was expended in the accomplishment of His work. It reflects His total commitment when He offered all of His natural strength to His Father. He is fully sufficient to redeem. The grain offering is larger now because the animal is also larger. There is a proportional increase with each larger animal. Instead of one-tenth and a fourth, it is now two-tenths and a third, and...

⁷ and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the Lord.

Instead of one-fourth, it is now one-third. Once again, there is an increase in offering based on an increase in size of the animal. The wording here could be better. By saying, “as a sweet aroma to the Lord,” it seems as if the wine is the sweet aroma. Rather, it is the entire offering of verses 6 & 7. A period instead of a comma would help, or a short paraphrase explaining this could also be of help. Next is an even larger and more expensive animal...

⁸ And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, or as a peace offering to the Lord,

The third animal specified is *ben baqar*, or “son of an ox.” The word is from the verb *baqar* which means to inquire or seek out. Christ seeks out those He redeems, just as the Lord is said to seek out His sheep in Ezekiel 34. In this verse, the Lord re-specifies the purposes – as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, or as a peace offering to the Lord. In such cases...

⁹ then shall be offered with the young bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil;

With this larger animal another increase is made, three-tenths for a grain offering, and a half hin of oil mixed into it, also...

¹⁰ and you shall bring as the drink offering half a hin of wine as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

Like the first two instances, the size of the drink offering is the same as the amount of oil added to the grain offering. This one goes from one-third for the ram to one-half for the bull. Also, the same issue of verse 7 is repeated here. The sweet aroma to the Lord is the entire offering, not just the drink offering of this verse. Clarification is needed to avoid confusion. However, the really important point is to see Christ in each of the three animals, in the grain offering mixed with oil, and in the drink offering.

Regardless as to the wealth of the owner, or the intent of the offerer, the same picture is seen in these additions to each offering, although the aspect of the work of Christ differs in each animal.

As a curiosity for those who like such things, and which is missed in many translations, verse 8 says, “when you prepare,” in the second person singular. Verse 9 then says, “then he shall offer” in the third person, singular. And then verse 10 says, “and you shall bring,” in the second person, singular again.

Of this, Keil notes it “is certainly striking and unusual, but not so offensive as to render it necessary to alter it.” He says it as if it were any weirder, one would be compelled to change the text to help things out. The Pulpit Commentary says –

“The rapid interchange of the second and third persons in these verses is awkward and perplexing. No doubt it is due to some sufficiently simple cause in the inditing of the original record, but we are not in a position even to guess at its nature. Meanwhile the

broken construction remains as a witness to the faithfulness with which the record has been handed down.”

Nobody else that I found even commented on it, but it doesn't seem perplexing at all. There are things the priest does, and there are things expected of the offerer in the process. If one looks at these things in light of Christ, God prepares a body in Christ (Hebrews 10:5), Christ offers Himself to God (Hebrews 10:7), and God brings about the intended effect in Christ (Hebrews 2:17). The Lord is simply instructing as if He were showing Moses and Israel what would occur in Christ. It is treasure tucked away in the detail.

¹¹ 'Thus it shall be done for each young bull, for each ram, or for each lamb or young goat.

Although this is an explanatory verse concerning the offerings, that each type of animal is to be accompanied with the corresponding size of grain and drink offering, the verse adds in the *ez*, or “young goat,” not previously mentioned. That would be in place of the lamb mentioned in verse 5. The word *ez* comes from *azaz*, meaning to prevail. It again looks to the work of Christ who prevailed in His ministry, accomplishing all that was set before Him to redeem man.

¹² According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do with everyone according to their number.

This verse is similar to 11, but it is dealing with the number of offerings, not the types. In other words, if one gives ten young bulls, then for every animal offered, a corresponding offering of grain and drink offerings were to be made according to that type of individual animal. One could not offer ten bulls and give just one grain and drink offering for all ten. No way, Jose.

¹³ All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

kal ha'ezrakh – all the natives. The word comes from *zarakh*, signifying to irradiate, or shoot forth beams, from a source. Thus, it is referring to any who are native Israelites. If they made such offerings, they were required when presenting these offerings to ensure that they brought the specified grain and drink offerings. Only together were they then truly considered a sweet aroma to the Lord. The typology of Christ, and of what God would do in Christ, was to be maintained at all times.

But, this went beyond Israel, to those who would join themselves to Israel in these sacrifices and offerings...

¹⁴ And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so shall he do.

Two classes of people are mentioned here. One is the *ger*, or sojourner who is sojourning among the Israelites. The word comes from a root signifying “to turn aside from the road” as in for lodging or any other purpose. It is a person who has come among the people and stayed.

The other is “whoever.” If he happens to be among the Israelites, it applies to him. It is basically an all-inclusive statement concerning any and all who desired to make an offering to the Lord. None were forbidden, and all were required to do as Israel did.

It demonstrates an exclusivity before God who can only be approached or pleased through one means in these things, but at the same time any and all – whether Jew or Gentile – could, in fact, approach through that means. As long as the typology of Christ is maintained, all who desired to come could come. It bears the same spirit as the words of Revelation 22:17 –

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17

Yes, all could offer, but there is only one proper and acceptable way to do so. That is again reflected in the next words...

¹⁵ One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you,

ha’qahal khuqah akhat – “The assembly ordinance one.” That’s it. The Lord says it pertains to Israel, and it pertains to the sojourner who is sojourning among them as a single assembly ordinance. There is an inclusivity, and there is an exclusivity working out at the same time. It is exactly what the New Testament reveals concerning our relationship with God. There is no sacrifice or offering acceptable to God apart from Christ – by either Jew or Gentile. And there is no person – either Jew or Gentile – whose offering is not accepted by God when that offering is Christ. And this will never change...

¹⁵ (con't) **an ordinance forever throughout your generations;**

khuqat olam l'dorotekem – “ordinance forever throughout your generations.” First is the reality of the covenant being spoken of. The word *olam*, or forever, signifies “to the vanishing point.” In this case, when the covenant is fulfilled in Christ, the shadows of these rituals are ended in Christ. The law has reached its vanishing point. However, the precept is forever as it is fulfilled in Christ. What the shadows prefigured is now realized in Him. And so the truth of the substance is forever. God accepts only one, in Christ, in this regard, and no one is accepted apart from Christ – forever. As it says...

¹⁵ (con't) **as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord.**

Thank God for Christ Jesus who allows us to come near God in thanks, in praise, and in our offerings of those things. God accepts those things from us because of Christ.

¹⁶ **One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.”**

The Hebrew follows a logical progression that is not followed in any English translation. English translations say, “one law and one custom,” “one law and one rule,” “one law and one ordinance,” “one law and one regulation,” and so on. It makes the responsibility and burden solely that of the offeror.

However, that does not appear to be what is going on. In the previous verse, it said, “ordinance forever throughout your generations.” That is the *khuqat*, or main body of what has been said. It applies to all – native and foreigner. Here it says *torah akhat u-mishpat echad*, literally, “instruction one and judgment one.”

The *torah*, or instruction, is for the responsibility and burden of the people. The *mishpat*, or judgment, is the response of the Lord based on the people’s adherence to the instruction. There is one instruction for the conduct of these sacrifices and offerings, and there is one judgment in their being offered. The instruction is applied equally to both the native and the stranger, and the judgment is applied by the Lord equally upon the native and the stranger. It is an obvious and clear reference to all coming solely through Christ, and God judging all solely on their adherence to Christ. It is... Christ, all Christ, and only Christ – for all.

For the first time in this chapter, one scholar, John Gill – who lived in the 1700s – also sees a hint of Christ here. When I read his words, I had to say out loud, “Good job, John.” The entire passage has looked to Him, and I’m glad he began to recognize this. He said –

It is "...for Israelites and proselytes; which is said to invite and encourage the latter, and may have a distant view to the calling of the Gentiles in Gospel times, when there should be no difference between Jews and Gentiles called by grace in matters of religion, but would be one in Christ, Galatians 3:28."

What he cited is exactly what this passage is intended to show –

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

The very size of the animals, and the proportions of grain and drink offerings prescribed reveal this as well. Paul's writings show that there are no distinctions in Christ. One can be rich or poor, slave or free, male or female, Jew or Gentile, strong or weak, or any other such distinction, and yet be found to have no difference in value when in Christ.

*An offering to God; an offering for peace
One which signifies fellowship so sweet
It stems from our daily trod, and in Christ it shall never cease
Because in Him our fellowship is complete*

*Cleanse us in our inward parts; lead us in Your peace
May we join together with You, O precious Lord
Purify our minds and hearts; may this joy never cease
Through Christ, may we always be in one accord*

*Thank You for the cross from whence atonement came
Upon that offering, we can now add an offering of peace
Together they point to the same great Name
Both look to Jesus where joyous fellowship will never, never cease*

II. A Heave Offering to the Lord (verses 17-21)

¹⁷ Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The often stated, friendly, and familiar words of introducing a new section into this precious word is again given – *v'daber Yehovah el Moshe lemor*, "And spoke Yehovah to Moses saying." The NKJV chose to say, "Again, the Lord spoke," but the Hebrew simply says, "And." Something different is to be detailed, which is...

¹⁸ “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land to which I bring you,

The words begin the same way as verse 2, but then what Moses is told to say differs. In verse 2, it said, “When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you.” Now it says, “When you come into the land to which I bring you.” It is a note of confirmation that *the Lord* will be the One to ensure they attain what He has promised. There is a land they will inhabit, that land is promised to them, and the Lord is the One who will bring them into that land. What a picture of the promises of Christ for humanity.

These two verses, separated by many verses, show us the promise of God in Christ. Paradise was lost, but it is a land intended for man to dwell in. A return to it is promised. And, it is the Lord who makes that possible. He is the One to bring us again to that land. For now, once the people are brought into Canaan...

¹⁹ then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the Lord.

This is again addressed only to those who will actually enter. Those who are under sentence of death in the desert are not included in these words, whenever they were spoken. It is the others who are being given this surety. To eat the bread of the land implies that they will be in the land. To offer this offering every year implies that they will possess the land. For those who were born in the wilderness, this would be a great delight to anticipate. They would have never tasted bread, and they had never worked their own fields. This is a promise and a guarantee that it will come about.

The previous section dealt with offerings and sacrifices which covered three main categories – 1) to fulfill a vow, 2) as a freewill offering, and 3) in your appointed feasts. Here we have what is also a part of a three-fold harvest offering. The first was seen in that of the first sheaf offered in Leviticus 23:11 during the Feast of Firstfruits. The second is the one detailed now. It is a dough offering. The third is that of the bread offering, offered in Leviticus 23:17 during the Feast of Weeks.

The one now, the dough offering, is instructed first to be offered up as a *terumah*, or a heave offering to the Lord. *Terumah* comes from *rum*, meaning high, exalted, or to rise. It is to be presented before the Lord and lifted up. For Israel, it says...

²⁰ You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering;

Here we have a new and rare word, *arisah*. It comes from a root which means to grind up, pulverize, etc. Thus, it is translated as ground meal. It is found only here and the next verse, and in Nehemiah 10:37 and Ezekiel 44:30. It is always prefixed by the word *reshit*, or first. It is the first in time, place, order, rank, etc.

Thus, it is considered the best. Again, it repeats that they shall offer it up as a heave offering, but in the form of *khalah* or a cake. That comes from the word *khalal* or “to pierce.” Thus, it is a punctured cake of the first ground-up dough. It is...

20 (con't) as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up.

The *goren*, or threshing floor, is a smooth, even, and hard surface where sheaves were brought and then crushed in one of various ways, such as having animals tread over it to crack the scaly chaff which surrounds the grain. The grain would come out and then all of this would be picked up by winnowing forks and cast into the air. The wind would blow all the chaff away, leaving only grain.

The threshing floor, in both testaments, signifies judgment. John the Baptist spoke of Christ who would come to separate sinners from believers. The believers would be gathered as the precious grain for their place in heaven, and the sinners, meaning the chaff, would be burned in the fires of hell. The people are said to take the first of the pulverized grain and offer it up as a heave offering to the Lord. This is again stated in our final verse of the day...

21 (fin) Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the Lord a heave offering throughout your generations.

m'reshit arisotekem titenu l'Yehovah terumah l'dorotekem – “of the first of your pulverized grain you shall give to Yehovah an offering of raising up throughout your generations.” *The entire thought points to Christ.*

It is the first, and thus considered the best of the grain harvest. Christ is the called Firstborn among many brethren according to Romans 8:29. The grain is crushed; Christ is said, in Isaiah 53:5, to have been crushed for our iniquities. It is a cake of *khalah*, or bread which is pierced. Christ, our Bread of Life, is said to have been pierced in Psalm 22:16 and Zechariah 12:10, and which is confirmed in John 19:31.

He is given to Yehovah as such, and He was *rum*, or lifted up, as an offering for us in that capacity, first on the cross of Calvary, as is stated in Isaiah 52:13, and then He is raised up

and esteemed among those He has redeemed. He becomes our *terumah*, or heave offering, in our acceptance of Him. And this is an offering of the threshing floor, the place of judgment where sinners are separated from those who believe.

As I mentioned in our introduction, the Pulpit Commentary said of the two sections of these 21 verses, “The two enactments have the same supplemental and (humanly speaking) trivial character.” It is so very good that they qualified their thought with the words, “humanly speaking.” There is nothing trivial at all in the verses we have read. On the surface, they seem as such, and they are held in low esteem by most – read maybe once and then never again. Or, they are quickly passed over by those who read them each time they go through the Bible.

But there is nothing trivial about them. In one sermon, of 21 verses, there have been several dozen, if not more, pictures of Christ. We have been given secrets in living parables of those who for 1500 years made their offerings to the Lord in anticipation of the coming of the Lord, who would then be the very fulfillment of what these offerings pictured. Trivial? Not in the slightest. Without the fulfillment of what these things picture, there would be only a certain anticipation of death, followed by eternal separation from God. As He is the Source of all that is good, it means an eternity of nothing which is good.

What a great and marvelous Creator who has so lovingly fashioned redemptive history, that we can find His Son in a thousand ways before we even get to the story of His coming. This, so that we can be as assured that His coming was the very thing that would bring about what the pictures were meant for us to see – grace, mercy, restoration, future hope, and certain glorification.

Going through today’s verses would have been a ton easier on me if I had simply spent an hour typing up a fun life-application about something irrelevant to the text. You would have gone home uplifted, encouraged, and not the least bit edified about the surety you need when times get rough. But in knowing the details about Christ, tucked away in every word and thought, the promises which are given after Christ’s coming are all the more certain to us. Be confident of this, and be confident that Your reliance on the grace of Jesus Christ for your hope of future glory is absolutely assured.

Closing Verse: *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Romans 8:31, 32*

Next Week: Numbers 15:22-41 To these things, you should be conforming... (Remembering and Performing) (29th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

When You Have Come Into the Land

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words He was to him then relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:
‘When you have come into the land
You are to inhabit, which I am giving to you
Please then, you are to understand

And you make an offering by fire to the Lord
A burnt offering or a sacrifice
To fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering
One that will in these suffice

Or in your appointed feasts
To make a sweet aroma to the Lord
From the herd or the flock
According to this word

Then he who presents his offering to the Lord
Shall bring a grain offering
Of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour
Mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil
———such shall be with his proffering

And one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering
You shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice
For each lamb
Such will then suffice

Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering
Two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, so you shall do
Mixed with one-third of a hin of oil
As I am now instructing you

And as a drink offering you shall offer according to this word
One-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the Lord

And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering
Or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow
Or as a peace offering to the Lord
As I am instructing you now

Then shall be offered with the young bull
A grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour
———mixed with half a hin of oil, according to this word
And you shall bring as the drink offering
Half a hin of wine as an offering made by fire
———a sweet aroma to the Lord

Thus it shall be done for each young bull, please take note
For each ram, or for each lamb or young goat

According to the number that you prepare, so shall it be
So you shall do with everyone according to their number
———as is now instructed by Me

All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner
And according to this word
In presenting an offering made by fire
A sweet aroma to the Lord

And if a stranger dwells with you
Or whoever is among you throughout your generations
———as I am instructing you
And would present an offering made by fire
A sweet aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so shall he do
One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly
And for the stranger who dwells with you, according to this word

An ordinance forever throughout your generations
As you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord

One law and one custom shall be for you
And for the stranger who dwells with you too
Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These continued words He was to him relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:
‘When you come into the land to which I bring you
———according to this word
Then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land
That you shall offer up a heave offering to the Lord

You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal
As a heave offering; so you shall do
As a heave offering of the threshing floor
So shall you offer it up, as I am instructing you

Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the Lord
A heave offering throughout your generations
———according to this word

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 15:22-41 (REMEMBERING AND PERFORMING)

The passage today is divided up into four separate sections, but none of them are disconnected from one another, nor are they disconnected from the first half of the chapter. Today, we see the Lord's laws concerning unintentional sin, but that seems to be a repeat of Chapter 4 of Leviticus. It is not, as will be explained.

After that comes the law concerning the committing of presumptuous sins. What does that mean, really? Would any of you call getting someone drunk a presumptuous sin? Maybe, maybe not. I guess it depends on who you are and what you think about such things. Would you call wasting governmental resources a presumptuous sin? As common as that is in the US, we might ignore that as one, but it is definitely against the law. How about committing adultery. Is that a presumptuous sin? How about murder? Would any of you call murder a presumptuous sin?

Text Verse: *“Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.
¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.
¹⁶ For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it;
You do not delight in burnt offering.
¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise.” Psalm 51:14-17*

David wrote these words of the 51st Psalm after doing all of the things we just questioned. He got a guy drunk in order to bring about deception. He wasted the resources of his army while they were engaged in battle to do the same. And those things were because he had already committed adultery. And after those things didn't work, he had his loyal soldier killed to cover up what he had done. You've read the passage. It says that a person who sins presumptuously is to be cut off from among His people. And yet, after he had been caught doing these things, Nathan the prophet said, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” How did what was obviously intentional sin turn into unintentional sin? How was a certain death sentence commuted by the Lord?

It is because of just what David said in the psalm. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit. They are a broken and a contrite heart. God will not despise such things. A sin is presumptuous when it fails to take God into account at any point before, during, or after it is committed. There is no remedy for such an act. There is an example of what happens in such a case in today's verses, and then there is the Lord's word that the people are to take action to avoid sinning against Him at all, either unintentionally, or intentionally.

And all of these things – yes, every section, verse, and word points to a greater truth. They point to the coming of Messiah, and the granting of a new and better covenant which will come through Him. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Sins of Omission and High-handed Sins (verses 22-31)

²² **'If you sin unintentionally,**

v'ki tishgu – “and if you are going astray.” Here we have a word which sets up the theme of the coming verses, *shagah*. It has only been seen thus far in Leviticus 4:13. It signifies, “to go astray.” It is a moral transgression which may occur through something like intoxication or being enraptured by the enticements of life. Although not specifically used when speaking of David and Bathsheba, the thought is certainly borne out in his being enticed to sin by being enraptured by her beauty. He went astray, and wandered down a very bad course. In the case of the verse we are looking at, the verb is plural. It is speaking to the whole congregation concerning the actions of people. What is surprising concerning the words here is that they are not introduced with the regular formula which introduces main sections of thought – “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying.” Instead, they follow after the seemingly unrelated words of verses 17-21 which dealt with the ceremonial law of offering up a heave offering to the Lord.

But, when considering the first use of the word *shagah* in Leviticus 4, the placement here makes more sense. There, the word was used for acts of commission in violations of the law. Here, it deals with acts of omission. The Lord has been expressing the law to the people in regards to their entrance and occupation of Canaan.

These obligations upon them are binding, but if they fail to adhere to them, then it is a national *shagah*, a national going astray. Verses 17-21 gave instructions which pointed directly to Christ and His work. When they failed to comply with that, or any such thing

which pointed to His fulfillment of the law, it was considered a national error. That continues with the next words...

22 (con't) and do not observe all these commandments which the Lord has spoken to Moses—

The Lord takes a failure to adhere to His commandments in the same light as actually violating one of His commandments. Here, the people are told, exactly, that the commandments which Moses has relayed to them were spoken directly to him by the Lord. They are His word, and they reflect His will. That process of revelation is then further explained with the next words...

23 all that the Lord has commanded you by the hand of Moses,

Here it says, *b'yad Mosheh*, or “by the hand of Moses.” Moses didn’t just hear what the Lord said and then come out and speak the words to the people, leaving the possibility of error. Rather, the Lord spoke to Moses, and Moses recorded – with his own hand – everything that the Lord spoke. Thus, the command to the people is *b'yad Mosheh*, or “by the hand of Moses.” This was...

23 (con't) from the day the Lord gave commandment and onward throughout your generations—

There is the thought of introduction and continuation here. The Lord spoke, the word continues to speak through Moses’ hand, and that then follows in that same written word, as it says, *va'haleah l'dorotekem*, or “and onward throughout your generations.” It is a rather amazing thing to consider. The word is spoken, and it continues to speak.

It is not a temporary, changeable, or uncertain word. It is a set word which continues in an unaltered form. Obviously, however, if a New Covenant is introduced, the Old is made obsolete. But even in its obsolescence, it is unchanging. Thus, the Law of Moses, which is the word of the Lord, remains unchanged, even if it is no longer in force. When we study this law, it is the same law – once and forever delivered.

Understanding this, we look to the law, not for enforcement of its precepts upon us, but as a memorial that we have been freed from something so heavy and burdensome, that the grace we have received in Christ should be understood as exactly as it has been described throughout the years, amazing grace.

²⁴ then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation,

Now, a noun is used, *shegagah*. That was seen five times in Leviticus 5 & 6. It is unintentional sin. What this means is that something in the Law of Moses is not adhered to (an act of omission) that the congregation simply doesn't realize is occurring. It cannot be speaking of a rejection of the Law, where the people willingly reject what is stated, but that they are living out their lives in observance of the law and they, through time or carelessness, begin to let a part of the law slip from their national conscience so that it is no longer being observed. This could be a moral precept, a judicial precept, or a ceremonial one. Whatever they simply overlook as a command, they become guilty. If this happens...

^{24 (con't)} that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the Lord,

In these words, we have a testimony to the pardonable nature of the act of omission. The first offering mentioned is a burnt offering, not a sin offering. Further, the burnt offering is larger than the sin offering – it being a bull, whereas the sin offering is only a goat. The burnt offering looks to Christ whose life was wholly given to God in the fulfillment of the law on behalf of the people. Though the people may stray, Christ did not. The bull represents this on their behalf. It is, as it says, “a sweet aroma to the Lord,” just as Christ's life was said to be offered up in this way by Paul –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1, 2

Where the people failed, Christ prevailed. This is symbolized in this offering. They first offer the burnt offering in acknowledgment of Christ's perfect obedience to the law.

^{24 (con't)} with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance,

Both the grain and drink offerings have been carefully explained in their typology in regards to Christ. If you don't remember that, shame on you. Five demerits for each forgotten offering, and you should go back and watch the pertinent sermons to brush up.

^{24 (con't)} and one kid of the goats as a sin offering.

Only after the burnt offering is the sin offering mentioned. It is a *sayir izzim*, or a hairy goat; hair signifying awareness. In this case, it is awareness of sin. The people are aware of their sin and seek its atonement. It is the same offering made on the Day of Atonement for the sins of the people, and it represents the human life of Jesus, taking on our nature, but without sin, and yet then taking on our sin in His crucifixion. It is seen in Paul's words to the Corinthians –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

²⁵ So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional;

The sacrifice of the sin offering is one which atones, or covers, the sins of the congregation concerning their unintentional sins. This sacrifice is actually typical of that which is revealed by Christ as He was being crucified. In Luke 23 we read –

“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’” Luke 23:33, 34

The very act of crucifying the Lord, which was done in ignorance by the people, is the very thing which could actually bring about the atonement for all of Israel's sins, and for all of mankind's sins as well. What was pictured in the hairy goat offering for Israel, is fulfilled for the world in the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord.

²⁵ (con't) they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their unintended sin.

Again, the offerings are noted first for the burnt offering, and then for the sin offering, demonstrating the state of the people's unintentional sin before the Lord. In following these prescriptions of the law, there is then release from the penalty of the sin...

²⁶ It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel

In the acknowledgment of the wrongdoing, and in the act of making these offerings which anticipate Christ, the entire congregation is cumulatively forgiven for their transgression. Although there is no record, anywhere in the Old Testament, of this being

done, there were plenty of times it was necessary. Example after example of such national failings are recorded.

Ironically, the one time such a petition is made, it is by the One being offered, and who is also the One who acknowledges that the offering is necessary. And even more ironically, it isn't until they acknowledge that He is that Offering that their sin will be atoned for. Zechariah 12 shows that they will eventually look upon the One whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him in the realization of what He did for them, and what they did to Him. In Zechariah 13, it then says, "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." The words of this verse we are now looking at, anticipate what has been kept from Israel for 2000 years because of their sin of national ignorance. However, such is not the case with all who required this cleansing...

²⁶ (con't) **and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people *did it unintentionally*.**

These words anticipate the cleansing, not just of Israel, but of all who are among them. As the Gentiles have been grafted into the commonwealth of Israel (Ephesians 2:12), when we acknowledge our guilt before the Lord, we are cleansed. His atonement is sufficient for all, just as is explained in Romans 4 and elsewhere.

²⁷ **'And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering.**

The instructions now move from unintentional collective sin to unintentional individual sin. When individual sin is unintentional, but it is realized to have been committed, the one who went astray was required to bring an *ets bat shnata*, or "a goat daughter of first year." The *ets* is a female goat which comes from a word signifying to be strong, as in able to prevail.

The *ets* is used elliptically in Hebrew to signify hair from the goat, and so we have the same picture, hair, signifying awareness, and the goat as an offering for sin. The offering is strong, as in capable, of atoning for the sin. Being a daughter of the first year implies innocence. All of the offering pictures Christ.

²⁸ **So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the Lord, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.**

Again, the priest is mentioned in the process. A person cannot conduct their own petitions before God. Rather, he needs a mediator. And a person cannot work off his sins. Rather, there needs to be a sacrifice to atone for them. And more, a person's sin is not ignored because it was unintentional. Rather, when it is realized as such, it must be acknowledged. And the forgiveness doesn't just come because the person has acknowledged it as such.

Rather, a person may say, "Yes, I did wrong," but that in and of itself does not bring forgiveness. An act of faith in the offering, which is then mediated by the priest in connection with the death of the substitute, is required. In all, the gospel is reflected in what is presented right here in this verse. A person sins, a Substitute dies for that sin, the sin is acknowledged, and the Sacrifice is received by faith. And that reception is offered through the Mediator to God. That gospel message is continued to be seen next...

²⁹ You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them.

Though the precept in verse 26 was speaking of those who are joined to Israel in a national way, and which will be dealt with in reality in the future, we now see that the atonement of Christ, typified in these offerings, extends to individuals who are strangers, meaning Gentiles, among Israel as well.

Christ's atonement is sufficient, as we have already noted, for the sin of the whole world. The forgiveness found in Christ is for any and all who will acknowledge Him and receive it by faith. Here it says *torah akhat*, law one. That equates directly to what Paul speaks of concerning there being one gospel, and only one.

³⁰ 'But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger,

The words translated as "presumptuously," are *b'yad ramah*. Literally, "hurled by hand." It is a self-willed act of defiance or presumptuous sin, and it is one which can be committed by either a native-born or a stranger. The only comparable sin which this equates to in the New Testament is found in the gospels, and which is known as blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Such blasphemy is misunderstood or misapplied, especially among charismatics, far too often in the church, and it results in ruined lives of those who are misled by such teachings. In short, for a person today, such blasphemy is limited to a life-long rejection of Christ, and thus dying apart from Christ's all-sufficient atonement.

³⁰ (con't) **that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from among his people.**

Here we have a new word, *gadaph*, which will be seen just seven times in Scripture. It signifies to revile or blaspheme, coming from a root which means to hack. Thus, it is as if hacking by word. In the Hebrew, the name Yehovah, or Lord, is in the emphatic position, revealing the scope of the crime. And thus, the sentence for such a crime is to be cut off from among his people.

³¹ **Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt *shall be* upon him."**

We have here a word only seen once so far, *bazah*, or to despise. This is what Esau did with his birthright, and now it is what is said to be done concerning the word of the Lord. There is contempt for the Lord's word, and thus there is contempt for the Lord. This can be equated with the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit which Israel's leaders were guilty of.

They had the word of God which spoke concerning the coming Messiah. Jesus stood there, the incarnate Word of God, as witnessed to by the word which came by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They attributed the work of Jesus to the devil, and thus they rejected the word which pointed to Jesus, and thus they despised that word, blaspheming the Holy Spirit in the process.

In this, they were, in fact, cut off and their guilt remained upon them. This is the idea which is presented now to Israel. In despising the word, and in breaking that commandment, they were to receive the punishment for their actions. As it says, *hikaret tikaret* – "completely cut off, he shall be cut off," and his guilt remained unatoned for.

*Help me to remember to do what is right, O God
To You I make my address; may I remember my duty to You
Grant me wisdom on this path that I trod
That I will act always in holiness; in my life being true*

*May I hold fast to Your word always
When I am silent or when I speak
May I never depart from it, not for all of my days
Strengthen me, O God, in the times when I am weak*

*I know that I can do all things; yes, I know that it is true
Through Christ who strengthens me; in Him I am strong
And so I will trust in my Lord; all my days, this I will do
In my heart I will carry Him – Christ, my Strength and my Song*

II. The Weight and Memory of the Law (verses 32-36)

³² Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.

The account now is companion to the account of the blasphemer which was seen in Leviticus 24. Placed side by side, this is evident. It goes directly from explaining high-handed sin to a demonstration of the penalty for such sin. Scripture gives no clue as to when this offense took place, but the placement of it here is to solidify the words which were just spoken concerning high-handed sin.

There really was no excuse for doing what he did. They were in the wilderness where there was nothing else to do on any given day, and so preparing for a Sabbath would be no chore on any other day. It is in defiance of a divinely established law, the reason for which was explained. It is something that was inconsistent with his identification with Israel. And it was done in the open, thus it was an open challenge to the Lord concerning a law that He had given.

³³ And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation.

One can almost see the attitude. If he was collecting sticks and someone said, “Hey, it’s the Sabbath...” The guy might have said, “Oh no, I completely forgot.” But here, he is brought before the leaders. Although the account doesn’t say it, you can see him saying, “So what. I’m cold and I need sticks.” The sin has gone from a sin of going astray, to one which is high-handed.

Thus, we have here an account which takes us through both of the previous sections, and what is to be done because of it. In this, he is brought to Moses, the prophet and

lawgiver, Aaron, the established high priest and thus mediator, and to all the congregation, meaning the leaders who represent them, and the ones to relay congregational matters to those below them. From there, it is unknown exactly what should be done...

³⁴ They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him.

Like the parallel account of the blasphemer of Leviticus 24, the person is placed in custody because they were unaware of what should be done. The word “explained” here is the same word, *parash*, that was used in Leviticus 24:12. It signifies to disperse, or separate, thus it is figuratively used to specify. By separating, one can then determine one thing from another.

The penalty of death for violating the Sabbath has already been given in Exodus 31:14, 15, and again in Exodus 35:2. And so, it may be that they wanted to be sure that gathering sticks was sufficiently considered as work, and if so, what type of death should be executed upon him. And so they await the answer...

³⁵ Then the Lord said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.”

The God of justice demands justice be served. For this Sabbath-breaker, it is time for lights out and a permanent nap in the sands of the desert. His bed would be the ground, and his blanket would be a heap of stones covered with his own blood. If even a small portion of the total number of people in the camp threw a stone, he would be so covered that the pile would be very large over him. The Lord has spoken, and His word is to be obeyed.

³⁶ So, as the Lord commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

As was commanded, so it was done. He was taken outside the camp so as not to defile it, and they stoned him with stones, not even touching him in his death, but casting the implements of his execution from a distance. One major difference between this account and that of Leviticus 24 is that it says there they stoned him with a stone. Here it says they stoned him with stones. The reason for that subtle but important difference was explained then. If you’ve forgotten the reason, that’s 2 demerits and a five yard penalty. Time to brush up by reviewing that sermon this afternoon.

As the Sabbath was said to be given in Exodus 20 because the Lord created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh, it was thus an implicit denial of God being the Creator. If one didn't accept the creation account, then they would be denying the account of the Creator. Whether they believed the earth was eternal, or whether they believed it came about by a big-bang followed by evolution, such ideas are ultimately a denial of God.

To deny His word is to deny Him. This individual wanted to gather sticks more than he wanted to acknowledge the Creator, and he received the penalty for his errant ways. Other Sabbath-breakers are identified elsewhere in Scripture, and they do not receive what is commanded here. Such is seen, for example, in Nehemiah 13. They did not receive the same penalty for their conduct as this offender despite having committed like offenses.

However, the law is noted for punishing such first offenses. To not punish the first offense, but to then punish a later one would show an arbitrary nature of God's judgment. But to punish a first offense, and to not punish a later one would show that even under the heavy weight of the requirements of the law, mercy could be found.

Further, there is every reason to believe, especially because of the surrounding context, that he didn't just die because of what he did, but because of the presumptuous nature of how he did it. Unfortunately for this doer, no leniency, as is later seen in examples such as in Nehemiah, was available. He died as an example of the heavy weight which is the Law of Moses. And, as a way of reminding the people of that weight, and thus of the penalty for violating that weight, we come to our final section of the day...

*Tassels for the four corners of the garments we wear
With a blue thread in them as well
Sewn by hands with tender care
Because surely they have a story to tell*

*Tassels to remind us of our law
Tassels with a blue thread in them as the Lord did tell
One hurting soul reached for Jesus' tassel, this I saw
And when she touched it she was healed and made well*

*Surely He has come with healing in His wings
And in Him is healing in every possible way*

*In knowing the meaning of the tassels my heart sings
And to God I am thankful forever, starting from today*

III. The Tzitzith (verses 37-41)

³⁷ Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The words are not correct. It says, *v'yomer Yehovah el mosheh lemor*. “**And** the Lord **said** to Moses saying.” The normal address is *daber*, or spoke. Here, as in several other passages, it is *amar*, or said. The idea then is that in the coming verses, there will be a complexity to the task which will require a partnership and people working together. The Lord next **says** to Moses...

³⁸ “Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations,

The Lord instructs Moses to further instruct the children of Israel. They are to make *tzitzith*, or tassels for the corners of their garments. These *tzitzith* are now introduced, and they will be seen only four times. Three will be in this chapter, and once in Ezekiel 8:3 when speaking of a lock of hair of the prophet’s head.

The word comes from *tsiyts*, which is a widely translated word signifying glistening. Just as something glistens when the light shines off of it, so a *tzitzith* will extend out from the edge of a garment and adorn it like a flower. They appear to be the same as what are called *gedilim* in Deuteronomy 22:12.

These are to be placed on the *kanaph*, or corners. The word literally means wing, or an extremity. The traditional garment would be a four-cornered cloth with a hole in the middle. Thus, two corners would be on the front and two on the back. On each of these corners, or wings, a tassel was to be attached. Along with that...

³⁸ (con’t) and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.

Within the tassels was to be a thread, or cord, of blue. The word is *tekeleth*. It is the same blue used in the materials of the sanctuary. The dye comes from the cerulean mussel. It is a deep blue. As was seen in the Exodus sermons, and in earlier Numbers sermons where this color was used, blue signifies the law. That is derived from what is explicitly stated next...

³⁹ And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them,

The tassel was to be a reminder concerning the commandments of the Lord. Just as we might tie a string around our finger to remind us to do something, so Israel was to have these tassels as a constant reminder of their need to remember the Lord's commandments and to observe them. Thus, like the priests, the entire congregation of Israel had garments which bore a symbolical meaning. It set the entire nation apart in this manner. The reminder to remember and do the commands of the Lord is then contrasted with...

^{39 (con't)} and that you *may* not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,

The circumcision of the flesh was to be a reminder to them that they were God's people. Thus, they should use their bodies in a physically holy manner. The *tzitzith* were for their garments to remind them of acting in spiritual holiness. There is harlotry of the body, and there is harlotry of the heart. Their eyes would incline them to both.

For the tassels, they were to help them as a constant reminder to focus on God's law, and not on pursuing pagan and idolatrous practices. Unfortunately, these very ends of their garments became a source of personal idolatry. Jesus rebuked the leaders of Israel for this in Matthew 23 –

“Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, ² saying: ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³ Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. ⁴ For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay *them* on men’s shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. ⁵ But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments.’” Matthew 23:1-5

The enlarging of the borders of their garments is speaking of this practice. It was a way of pretending to be more pious than others, by showing off their desire to follow and do the Lord's commands, more than anyone else. It is like the guy that brings the most expensive Bible to church, but it is never opened and remains unread. Outward acts of piety rarely match the state of the heart.

⁴⁰ and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

The first clause repeats what was just said, showing that the purpose of these was set. It was not to be a snazzy adornment that would change with fashion and custom, nor was it one to be used as the Pharisees used them, demonstrating superiority of self over that of others. Rather, it was for the purpose of remembering and doing the Lord's commandments, as well as...

⁴⁰ (con't) **and be holy for your God.**

Not in having the tassels, but in doing and keeping the Lord's commandments, they would be holy for their God. The tassels were simply an external reminder intended to ensure spiritual truths were realized in the people. And this is because...

⁴¹ **I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord your God."**

This is a close repeat of what was last stated in Leviticus 26:45 –

“But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God:
I am the Lord.”

There towards the end of the chapter, the Lord spoke of His covenant promises, first to Jacob, Issac, and Abraham. Then He spoke of the covenant with people's ancestors who were brought out the land of Egypt. In other words, the Lord referred to both the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. It is the Mosaic Covenant which is detailed now, and which is to be remembered by the wearing of these tassels.

The same Lord who has proclaimed that He will always remember this covenant with these people until they are brought into the New Covenant, is telling them to remember this same covenant as well. In fact, he closes out the Old Testament with this thought –

“Remember the Law of Moses, My servant,
Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel,
With the statutes and judgments.

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

⁶ And he will turn
The hearts of the fathers to the children,

And the hearts of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” Malachi 4:4-6

The thing about the covenant with Moses is that it promises another Prophet, like Moses, whom they were to hear. It also, during the time of Jeremiah, promises a New Covenant with Israel. Thus, in asking Israel to “Remember the Law of Moses,” it is asking the people to remember that the Law of Moses has an end, and that it only pointed to something greater.

The tassels on their garments, then, actually ask the people to remember... Messiah. They are to remember that He is coming, and that they must hear Him when He speaks. Therefore, the tassels are given as a picture of the coming Christ, just as everything else is. The blue cord contained within them is a reminder not of their fulfillment of the law, but of His. He is the fulfillment of this beautiful blue cord in the tassel. Hints of this are actually seen in His ministry. This is what it says in Matthew –

“And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. ²¹ For she said to herself, ‘If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.’ ²² But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, ‘Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.’ And the woman was made well from that hour.” Matthew 9: 20-22

“When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. ³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, ³⁶ and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched *it* were made perfectly well.” Matthew 14:34-36

It is the tassel that they reached for, understanding that He was to be the fulfillment of the law which they were reminded of with the wearing of their own tassels. One was to come who would heal the people, but not just physically. Christ’s mission was to heal the people spiritually as well. This is why this marvelous passage of Numbers ends as it does. It looks forward to the great and glorious Lord who came and walked among us in order to redeem us from the curse of the law.

In the end, everything about this law points to Christ. He is our Sacrifice for sin. Curse removed. He is the One who frees us from the penalty of our presumptuous acts of sin by granting mercy through faith. Curse removed. Though the law demanded death for Sabbath violations, Christ is now our Sabbath rest! Curse removed.

And this is all because He is our Healer – both physically and spiritually. In Him is the fulfillment of the law, and so when we look to Him in faith we can gladly say, “Thank God! Curse removed!” Let us trust in Christ, rest in Christ, and honor our heavenly Father through the Lord Jesus Christ all of our days. Yes, may it be so.

Closing Verse: *“But to you who fear My name
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise
With healing in His wings;
And you shall go out
And grow fat like stall-fed calves.” Malachi 4:2*

Next Week: Numbers 16:1-15 Choose wisely, because unless on the Lord you call... (Set up for a Fall) (30th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Remembering and Performing

If you sin unintentionally
And do not observe all these commandments as instructed to do
Which the Lord has spoken to Moses—
All that the Lord has commanded you

By the hand of Moses
From the day the Lord gave commandment and onward
Throughout your generations—
|Then it will be, according to this word

If it is unintentionally committed
Without the knowledge of the congregation
— — —-this violation of His word
That the whole congregation shall offer one young bull
As a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the Lord

With its grain offering and its drink offering
According to the ordinance, so it shall be

And one kid of the goats as a sin offering
As instructed by Me

So the priest shall make atonement
For the whole congregation of the children of Israel
And it shall be forgiven them
For it was unintentional, for them it shall go well

They shall bring their offering
An offering made by fire to the Lord
And their sin offering before the Lord
For their unintended sin, according to this word

It shall be forgiven the whole congregation
Of the children of Israel, so shall it be
And the stranger who dwells among them
Because all the people did it unintentionally

And if a person sins unintentionally
Then he shall bring a female goat
In its first year as a sin offering
Of this, please make careful note

So the priest shall make atonement for the person
Who sins unintentionally, in his sin
When he sins unintentionally before the Lord
To make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him

You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally
For him who is native-born among the children of Israel
And for the stranger who dwells among them
As to you I now instruct and tell

But the person who does anything presumptuously
Whether he is native-born or a stranger, so to you I say
That one brings reproach on the Lord
And he shall be cut off from among his people
———so it shall be this way

Because he has despised the word of the Lord
And has broken His commandment, in his sin
That person shall be completely cut off
His guilt shall be upon him

Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness
They found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day
And those who found him gathering sticks
Brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation
———-to see what the Lord would say

They put him under guard, which means things were looking grim
Because it had not been explained what should be done to him

Then the Lord said to Moses
“The man must be put to death, surely
All the congregation shall stone him with stones
Outside the camp, so shall it be

So, as the Lord commanded Moses
Yes, as the Lord did decide
All the congregation brought him outside the camp
And stoned him with stones, and he died

Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These words to him He was then relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel:
| Tell them to make tassels on the corners, so they shall do
Of their garments throughout their generations
And to put in the tassels of the corners a thread of blue

And you shall have the tassel
That you may look upon it
And remember all the commandments of the Lord
And do them, so to you I this law submit

And that you may not follow the harlotry
To which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined

— — —-in this life as you trod
And that you may remember and do all My commandments
And be holy for your God

I am the Lord your God
|Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God
I am the Lord your God
So circumspectly you must always trod

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 16:1-15 (SET UP FOR A FALL)

While reading the verses of Numbers, a few things need to be remembered. With each turn of the page, and with each act of rebellion, moaning, distrust, or faithless conduct, we need to remind ourselves that everything, from the plagues upon Egypt until the turning of the people away from Canaan in punishment, fell into a period of about two years.

During that time, they saw the plagues, they saw – and continued to see – the pillar of cloud and fire. They saw the sea opened up, and they passed through it on dry ground. They gathered manna each day, and they drank from the rock when no other source of water was available.

Those same people, who had seen and experienced all of that, were the same who have done nothing but moan, distrust, and rebel against the Lord. Now, in their punishment, which is a result of their own faithless conduct, they continue to act in the same way. It is the constant story of Israel in her history as well. Through judges, kings, and even in the coming of their Messiah, they rejected the Lord, shook their fist in His face, and they have suffered the consequences for it. These things are given to us to warn us against the same things popping up in our own lives.

Jude reaches back to this account in Numbers 16, along with a few other references to their history, to do exactly that... to warn us.

Text Verse: *“Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. ⁹ Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” ¹⁰ But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. ¹¹ Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.” Jude – 8-11*

Jude is one last sobering reminder of the need to hold fast to the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Let us contend earnestly for that faith, and let us be strong in the Lord. The way to do that is to know what the Lord expects, and to learn those lessons which have been given to us as examples.

This chapter is memorable simply because of the effects that are given in it concerning God's judgments. What we read, and then picture in our minds as we are reading, is more vibrant than the best Hollywood effects studio can whip up. But these things actually happened. The people really rebelled, and the judgment of God really came upon them.

Let's remember this as we read, and let us be warned as we go. For those in Christ, we are secure, but the judgments of God will come upon those who reject Him. The warning to us then is to be prepared to share the message of Christ to those who will otherwise face their own time of meeting the Lord in judgment. Hear the word, process it in your mind, and then be prepared to tell others about it, while there is time. This is a lesson we can learn from passages like Numbers 16. It is a memorable part of His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Korah's Rebellion (verses 1-3)

¹Now Korah

The Hebrew here is extremely complicated and translations vary widely. The analysis of this first verse took over two hours, and certainly not all of what is to be drawn out from it is included here. So much is tied up in it, that one could probably use it as the basis for a Master's thesis.

The verse actually begins with the word *v'yiqah qorakh*, or "And took Korah." It is a masculine singular verb indicating that Korah is the one who "took," and thus he is the leader of the entire affair. After that, one must figure out what Korah took. The NKJV ends with, "took men."

That would mean all of the names mentioned are chief perpetrators, and they then took the 250 men mentioned in verse 2 along in their conspiracy. Some say that Korah took Dathan and the others then mentioned in this verse, meaning as in a conspiracy of just these men. No matter which is correct, it is Korah who initiates the taking – *v'yiqah qorakh*, "And took Korah..."

In Israel's time of biblical history, there are several infamous names. Korah, or *Korakh*, is one of them. His name comes from one of two seemingly unrelated roots. First, there is *qarakh*, meaning "to make bald." The second is *qerekh*, meaning "frost," or "ice."

However, the two ideas probably meet in the bald appearance of mountains when covered in ice. His name probably means, “baldy.” Maybe when he was born, he was completely bald and they chose the name based on that.

The important aspect of this context-wise is that the law of presumptuous sin was just given in the previous chapter. It even had an example of punishment upon a Sabbath-breaker to show the severity of the law. After that, the note concerning the tassels on the garments was given. That was to be as a reminder concerning the commandments of the law. All of that is thrown to the wind in the turn of a single page with the words *v’yiqah qorakh*, or “And took Korah.” He is...

¹ (con’t) **the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi,**

Korah is the son of Izhar. The name signifies “double light” and thus “noon,” may be referring to the time of day he was born. Izhar is then noted as the son of Kohath, and he the son of Levi. This genealogy of Korah has already been referred to in Exodus 6, but now it is reintroduced, highlighting this individual who will be the leader in a severe attack against Moses and his authority.

This is all the more poignant because Moses and Korah are cousins. Moses’ father, Amram, is the older brother of Izhar, Korah’s father. But more, Izhar is the second son of Kohath, and yet Korah was not made the chief of the tribe of Kohath as recorded in Numbers 3. Instead, that title was granted to the son of Uzziel, the fourth son of Kohath. Therefore, once again, Moses is faced with a challenge to his authority right from his own family by a bitter, jealous relative. Like Aaron and Miriam who came against him in Chapter 12, his cousin has arisen against him. He now comes...

¹ (con’t) **with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab,**

The name Dathan is rather difficult to pin down because the root is not Hebrew. It is probably either a Persian word meaning “law” or an Aramaic word meaning “fountain.” In Deuteronomy 33:2 it uses the term *esh dath*, translated by some as “fiery law” –

“The Lord came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came with ten thousands of saints;
From His right hand
Came a fiery law for them.” Deuteronomy 33:2

Considering what happens to Dathan in the coming verses, it may be that, regardless of what the parents were thinking when they named him, the Lord wants us to consider his name from the perspective of meaning “Their Law.” Abiram means Exalted Father, or My Father is Exalted. Eliab means My God is Father.

¹ (con’t) **and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took *men*;**

On means something like Vigor or Strength. Peleth means Swiftness. They are the sons of Reuben. However, Peleth is never mentioned anywhere else as a son of Reuben. In Numbers 26, there is a son, Pallu, who may be the same person. Peleth, then, may be a nickname, or he may be a person simply never named again. If it is the same person, then On is the uncle of Dathan and Abiram. It is, honestly, a very difficult verse to tie down.

The connection between the Levites of Korah and these sons of Reuben is in their placement around the sanctuary. In Numbers 2, it was noted that the tribe of Reuben was located on the south, or right, side. In Numbers 3, it was seen that the Kohathites of Levi were also stationed on the south, or right side. Thus, an alliance between the two was probably forged due to their close proximity.

One can almost sense the jealousy which arose in the conversations of these men. Both Reuben as a tribe, and Kohath as a family of Levi, are stationed together on the south. Reuben was the firstborn, but lost his right to that generations ago. Now Judah is the lead tribe. The priestly class comes from Kohath, but only through Aaron. All of the rest of the Kohathites are simply Levites, subordinate to the Aaronic priests.

Together, they might feel that they should have a right to those honors which they have not been granted by the Lord through Moses, or to that which was taken from them by their ancestor Jacob. While they are talking, Korah moans and complains and Dathan and Abiram moan and complain. Together, they form a band called the Moaners, and they set out to rock the order of things. At least, that is how I imagine it...

² **and they rose up before Moses**

The words, “and they rose up before Moses,” do not mean a literal rising up and standing before him at this point. It means that they have initiated a rebellious coup against him, and they intend to carry it through to their sanctification. It is done openly and thus is a challenge to his authority in front of the whole congregation.

² (con't) **with some of the children of Israel,**

It is inferred from Numbers 27:3 that this rebellion included people of any given tribe within the congregation. There it says, "Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the Lord, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons." Because this person was from Manasseh, it is assumed that a general group of people came forward.

² (con't) **two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown.**

These words appear to indicate that it is a general coup from leaders throughout the congregation. The term *nasiy* is used. It signifies one who is lifted up, and thus a chief, prince, leader, and so on. It is the same term used to indicate the overall leaders of the tribes that were named earlier in Numbers.

³ **They gathered together against Moses and Aaron,**

This shows that there is no doubt that this is a seditious rebellion wrought out of jealousy. Moses is the leader, and Aaron is the high priest. These miscreants are disturbed by the hierarchy that has been fashioned. That is evidenced with the next words...

³ (con't) **and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves,**

The words are simple and direct, *rav lakem* – "much for you." How to translate it, however, is more complicated, and so translations vary widely, guessing what the intent of the words mean. The later words in this same verse, however, give a good indication as to what is being relayed.

In essence, they accuse Moses and Aaron of some type of tyrannical rule, and that rule has gone on long enough. But it is Moses who, just five chapters earlier, asked the Lord to take the burden of his alone carrying all of the people off of him. He already had leaders of thousands, hundreds, and tens based on the recommendation of Jethro.

He also had seventy selected men who then were endowed with the Spirit that was on him to further help with the administration of the congregation. If anything, Moses wanted *less* responsibility, not more. But he also faithfully carried the load placed upon him according to the Lord's directives.

³ (con't) **for all the congregation is holy, every one of them,**

The statement is true in one way, but it is not true in another. In Leviticus 20:26, it said, “And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord *am* holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.” Thus, there is a state of holiness because of their separation to the Lord. However, Leviticus 11:44 says –

“For I *am* the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I *am* holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

Just because someone is set apart as holy, it does not mean they are holy. A person in Christ is said to be sanctified, past tense, by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:2 and elsewhere. And yet, Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4 that it is God’s will that we become sanctified through proper living. And so there is a positional holiness, and there is a state of holiness which can and should be maintained. The two are not the same.

³ (con't) **and the Lord is among them.**

Again, the statement is true, but it is not necessarily true in the same way at all times. The Lord is among them, dwelling in the tabernacle in their midst. However, He is not among them in the sense of unlimited access. If any approached Him, they had to come with an offering, and they could only bring it to a certain point and no further, from there, the priests – acting as mediators – would continue the rituals laid out by the Lord. Even the priests were limited in their access to the Lord, as was made clear in the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. However, the rebellion is one of attempting to usurp the positions of Moses and Aaron, and thus it is an attempt to enter into a direct relationship with the Lord without mediatorial assistance.

In essence, it is an attempt to return to paradise, meaning direct fellowship with the Lord, based on self, and not on the Lord’s redemptive design. This is evident from the next words...

³ (con't) **Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?”**

Two different words are used in this verse – *edah*, or congregation, and *qahal*, or assembly. One is the natural organization of Israel. The other is the assembly which is divinely called as set apart. Korah has, in essence, said that the natural organization is holy, and thus they are all equal within the divinely called assembly. He is making what is known

as a category mistake by applying one truth, in one context, to another which falls under a different context. This is a chronic problem which continues on in the church today. If everyone in the church is holy, then it must logically follow that everyone in the church is entitled to leadership within the church. That is a fallacy in thought which has led to true disaster because it fails to consider the context of what words mean.

Paul says in Galatians 3:28 that, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The amount of poor theology which has arisen from taking that single verse out of its intended context is astonishing. The amount of damage to the church because of it is no less astounding.

This is what Korah is doing, and the same failure to properly contextualize the Lord's words remains alive 3500 years later. He has accused Moses and Aaron of exalting themselves above others, but their positions and duties were not their choice. Rather, they were the Lord's choice. If there is exaltation of either man, it is because the Lord has so exalted him. Moses sees the danger in what lies ahead and he reacts accordingly...

*Holy and set apart to the Lord as such
And yet we have our own part, it is true
Yes, we are holy to the Lord, but in ourselves how much?
There are things we are also expected to do*

*God has set us apart because of faith in Jesus
But we must set ourselves apart as well
This is what God expects of each one of us
And only in our conduct can anybody tell*

*Are we set apart by God and yet living in the flesh?
Or have we truly set ourselves apart as holy?
Let us live our lives in Christ, anew and afresh
Let us live our lives before Him in pure sanctity*

II. The Put-up Job (verses 4-11)

⁴So when Moses heard *it*, he fell on his face;

There may be one or several reasons for this action. First, he is certainly acting in humility by placing himself in a lower position as a man, despite being in the greater position

of authority. In essence, “How can I be exalting myself if I am willing to humble myself?” Thus, it is an act of petition for reason from Korah.

Further, he may be making an act of petition to the Lord, who he knows is watching, that He not suddenly strike out in wrath. Thus, it is an act of petition for mercy from the Lord. And third – based on the first two – it may be that in accord with the Lord’s wisdom, he is asking the Lord to vindicate him before the people. There, on his face before God and man, he responds...

⁵ and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, “Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause *him* to come near to Him.

Moses responds first with one word, *boqer* – “morning.” It is the morning light that will reveal the truth or falsity of the claim Korah has made. In that revealing, he then says that it is the Lord who will be behind it. If it is true that the whole congregation is holy, and it must be because the Lord has already said as much, then there must be varying degrees of holiness within it. Or, it must be true that Korah has a valid complaint against Moses. The Lord will reveal, and He will do so in the morning.

Paul, writing to his young protege Timothy, cites the substance behind this verse when giving him advice concerning two apostates, Hymenaeus and Philetus. After relaying those words, he then told Timothy, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.” Indeed, Korah has failed to see that a distinction exists between the Lord’s calling of a people as holy, and the people’s varied states of holiness within that calling. Moses relays to Korah, without directly stating it, that there is a reality within the congregation which he has failed to observe. The Lord will reveal that when...

^{5 (con’t)} That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.

The words indicate honor. The person who is chosen as holy will be recognized as such by drawing him near to Him. However, the words also ring an ominous tone. If one is chosen, then another will not be chosen. If one is to draw near to Him, then the other will be separated from Him. The words of James, coming a bit less than 1500 years later, would have been wisdom for Korah to consider before going any further –

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your

laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” James 4:7-10

Unfortunately for Korah, that wisdom was many centuries late in arriving, but the words are still not heeded by most in the world, another two millennia later. Korah failed to submit to God, he failed to resist the devil, he did not draw near to God, and God did not draw near to him. His hands were dirty, his heart was impure, and his thoughts about himself, and his relationship with the Lord were confused. Instead of being lifted up by the Lord, he will fall in the opposite direction.

⁶ Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company;

Censers, although only cited in Scripture in relation to religious observances, appear to be found in every home. For Moses to direct over 250 people to take censers means that they were obviously common implements at the time. Moses is, with these words, in essence saying, “Ok, you want to be the priests, then go get your censers and you can be priests if the Lord accepts you.” And let’s be sure to not just bring your censers, but be sure to...

⁷ put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow,

The rebels are instructed to put fire in them, meaning burning coals. They were to then put incense on those coals as an offering before the Lord. This is actually an order which is in complete violation of the law itself, and thus it stands in Moses’ mind that the law itself is already broken, and the honor of the Lord has already been violated. Thus, there is only one remedy that he sees as fitting to the circumstances, I would call it a put-up job.

Miriam-Webster defines a put-up job as “something that is secretly arranged or decided at an earlier time in order to trick or deceive someone.” Well, I would never accuse Moses of attempting to deceive anyone, but he is in the process of arranging, in advance, a known outcome with an unsuspecting group of people who have no idea it is coming. The only deception, however, is found in Korah’s inability to access his short term memory combined with his own lack of understanding of the law. Moses is to be counting on that.

The errors which these men will commit before the Lord are several. First, they are not priests. Only Aaron and his sons could function as priests. Secondly, because they were

not of the line of Aaron, they were also not consecrated to conduct priestly duties. Both the lineage and the consecration were necessary.

Next, each took a censer. These were censers not fashioned for use in the sanctuary, and which had not been part of the consecration process. The word for censer in Hebrew is *makhtah*. It comes from a root which means terror, ruin, or destruction. It is a fitting concept in regards to what occurs. Fourth, they are instructed to come together to offer incense. Offering incense was a duty which was only to be conducted by one attending priest at a time.

Fifth, incense offered in a censer is only specified as being done by the high priest. According to the law, it is never noted as an offering made by anyone but him. The incense offered by the other priests was burnt in the golden altar in the holy place, or along with offerings on the brazen altar, but never in censers.

Sixth, they are bringing their own incense which is not according to what the Lord has prescribed to be burnt before Him. We know this because the incense for the Lord was forbidden to anyone else. Should they make it, they were to be cut off from their people. Whatever incense they offered, then, was considered profane.

Seventh, if they brought their own censer, then they also brought their own fire. Thus, their fire is also profane. According to Leviticus 16:12, the high priest was to take the fire for the incense from the brazen altar which had been sanctified by the Lord's fire. It is the same fire which had been ignited by the Lord at the time of the ordination offering. This is the fire that was to never be extinguished from that first time it was lit. It is a celestial fire, having been sanctified by Yehovah himself.

Instead of using this fire, sanctified by the Lord, they will bring their own, profane, fire. The law was written, every infraction is to receive its punishment, and high handed sins were considered as capital crimes. Moses knows this. There can only be one outcome from his words, if in fact he is correct concerning the matter. The Lord will reveal the truth of it in the morning. As he says...

^{7 (con't)} **and it shall be *that* the man whom the Lord chooses *is* the holy one.**

If one is chosen, one is not. Nadab and Abihu were chosen, and yet through improper conduct of their duties, they died before the Lord. Korah and his men have not, as of yet,

been chosen. If in fact the Lord doesn't accept them, they should expect no less. However, in their folly, they presumptuously think that being called as a part of a holy congregation determines that they are, in fact, holy.

As I said earlier, it is a category mistake which, unfortunately, permeates the church. For example, people who are specifically forbidden from teaching and preaching presumptuously ignore God's word, they ignore the context within God's word, and they chase their folly to their own shame. Though we are not under law, but under grace, we still have a future judgment lying ahead of us. That will be for reward and loss. One thing is certain, the Lord will never grant a reward for a deed done in disobedience. The end never justifies the means. How much more when one is under law!

⁷ (con't) ***You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!***

rav lakem bene levi – “Much for you, sons of Levi!” Moses turns Korah's exact words back on him. “Much for me? Ha! Much for you.” You think I've taken on too much, wait till you see what's coming, Cheese-wizz.” Here, he addresses all through Korah. He is the chief instigator. He is the Levite who wants to be high priest, and he is the one who is presumptuous against the Lord.

Everyone else is included in the address, but it is Korah who stands for them, and it is Korah who also stands for all of Levi who might, in the future, presume to assume what he has now assumed. Moses hints that apparently Levi has had enough authority already, and too much. They have, through this display, proven themselves unworthy of the honor that has been bestowed upon them in their special appointment before the Lord...

⁸ **Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi:**

A second address to Korah begins, but it is as before, one address to all of Levi, of whom Moses is also counted. It is a petition for reason among his own brothers. The wording requires attention though. Moses first speaks to Korah and all of Levi. The verbs are plural in verse 9. However, the address goes to Korah only and the verbs will change to the singular in verse 10...

⁹ ***Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to serve them;***

Moses has identified with Levi because they are his tribe. However, more than that, they are the Lord's tribe. Here he emphatically calls the Lord, the God of Israel, to remind them that it was deity, not his humanity, which called them to their station. It was in Numbers 8 that Levi was set apart to the service of the Lord and as a gift to the priesthood of Aaron.

Here he uses a term not seen before, *mishkan Yehovah*, or "tabernacle of the Lord." It is His dwelling, and He has called Levi into a special relationship at that dwelling. They were to minister and serve between the priests and the congregation. Moses now substantially repeats what the Lord said back then in Numbers 8.

¹⁰ and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you?

As I said, the previous verse was addressed in the plural. These words now are in the singular. They are directly leveled at Korah, and only at Korah. It is he who is standing there, and it is he who is the instigator of the rebellion. And so Moses reminds him that he is rebelling not against him, but against the Lord. He brought Korah near when He brought his tribe of Levi near.

Thus, Moses is exposing the contradiction in Korah's thinking. He had said *rav lakem* to Moses and Aaron, as if he was looking out for everyone in a universal priesthood. But rather, he was looking out for himself in possessing the station of high priest. The Lord who granted Aaron his position is the same Lord who also gave the Levites their position. If Korah wanted more, it could only mean that Korah wanted to be high priest. But, to usurp the priesthood of Aaron is to usurp the Lord who gave the priesthood to Aaron...

^{10 (con't)} And are you seeking the priesthood also?

Moses perfectly understood what was going on. There were bitter people who were joined together to refashion the structure of the camp contrary to the Lord's design. Reuben would demand the position of the firstborn, Korah would demand the office of high priest, and so on. The power struggles would continue until no remnant of what the Lord had designed was left. It is almost a microcosm of the world at large. Deuteronomy 32:8 says –

“When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,
When He separated the sons of Adam,

He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.”

It is the Lord who has ordained the place and station of all nations, but the people of the world, in this very day in which we live, are uniting against the Lord to undo what the Lord has carefully arranged. With fewer exceptions each day, there is an attempt to usurp the Lord’s designs now in the same manner that Korah had tried to usurp them in the wilderness.

11 Therefore you and all your company *are* gathered together against the Lord.

Moses now makes explicit what he has stated implicitly all along. Still speaking only to Korah as the representative of those gathered together, he tells him that it is the Lord, not him, who they are challenging. Therefore...

11 (con’) And what *is* Aaron that you complain against him?”

It was the Lord, in Exodus 28:1, who called for Aaron and his sons to serve as priests. The people had made the garments, the ordination had taken place, and the duties were being conducted before the Lord. And all of it was at the Lord’s direction. Aaron did not ask for the job, and he lost his two oldest sons because of the calling along the way. To complain against Aaron was a wholly misdirected complaint.

*Bring your censers tomorrow with fire and incense
Prepare to meet your God as you do
He will reveal to you His purposes and intents
Be prepared is what I am instructing you*

*Stand before Him and see whom He chooses
But before you come, you might first check with His word
The one whom He rejects, that soul really loses
You are dealing with the Holy One, Yehovah the Lord*

*Think on your actions and walk humbly before your God
He will only put up with so much from you
The law is written, and it will reveal you as a fraud
Be careful before Him, this is what I would ask you to do*

III. The Reuben Faction (verses 12-16)

¹² And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, “We will not come up!

Korah was the main instigator of this rebellion, but his rebellion was self-centered on obtaining the priesthood. A second faction, that of the Reubenites, had its own agenda. With the priesthood secure through Korah, Dathan and Abiram could reclaim for Reuben the status as the tribe of the firstborn and gain a kingship over the people.

Moses had grasped the intention of this coalition. With the matter of the priesthood set to be decided upon in the morning, he now directs his attention to this second issue by calling them to come. Their answer... “We will not come up.” It is understood in the Bible that the sanctuary is the center of the people, and thus it is symbolically elevated. It is the place of judgment.

The same is true with Jerusalem. To travel to Jerusalem, from any point on the compass, and from any elevation, one still is said to travel up. Dathan and Abiram understand this, and thus implicitly slap both Moses and the Lord in the face with their refusal. They then go further in their words against both of them...

¹³ *Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness,*

The words of these men are more than delusional. They had personally been in Egypt. They had suffered at the hands of the Egyptians, and they had seen the Lord, through Moses, defeat them. They willingly participated in the Passover, they willingly departed in the Exodus, and they willingly passed through the Red Sea. They further had vowed themselves to the Lord’s authority twice. First at the giving of the Ten Commandments, and then again after the incident of the golden calf.

It was they, not Moses who had peevishly refused to enter Canaan, and it was the Lord who determined that they would die in the wilderness. Their accusations are wickedly directed at the Lord, but yet they are too cowardly to admit it, and so they blame the Lord’s messenger. And finally, this is the only incidence in the Bible where Egypt is called “a land flowing with milk and honey.”

It is a description the Lord gave concerning Canaan, and it is a description borne out by the twelve spies who went there, but they have rejected His grant, and have completely turned their hearts back to what pictures a life of sin, perversely and ironically calling *it* the land of milk and honey. That can only lead to one outcome for them, because –

after all – the wages of sin is death. They have said that Moses brought them out to kill them in the wilderness. The Lord hears, and the Lord will act. Their words are as if a spoken prophecy of their certain demise. But they go on...

13 (con't) that you should keep acting like a prince over us?

Here is a new word, *sarar*. It is a verb meaning to rule like a lord or a prince. They say *ki tistarar alenu gam histarer*. They repeat the word and add in the conjunction “also” to intensify what they are saying. Literally, they say, “That you keep acting like a prince over us – also – acting as a prince.” But it is not Moses who asked for the job, nor is it Moses who leads. Rather, it is the Lord who selected Moses, and it is the Lord who directs Moses who then responds to the word of the Lord. They know this, and their challenge is a purposeful attack against Him.

14 Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards.

No! It wasn't that he or the Lord failed to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. Rather, it was that they *refused* to go in and receive what the Lord had offered. *They* stood at the door to their promised inheritance, and *they* willingly closed it and turned away from it. To blame Moses for this is to say that he alone should have gone in, subdued the land, and then rolled out a red carpet for Israel to walk on instead of over the clods of blood and sweat that had poured from his body as he prepared for them what they would not receive.

One can see the Jews' rejection of Christ's offer in this. His sweat and blood did mingle with the dirt of that same land in order for them to receive paradise, but they closed that door as well, and they walked away from it. Moses is being accused of not doing for them what Jesus actually did. And yet, even being offered by Christ what they asked for here, they rejected it.

14 (con't) Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!”

The words are a metaphor as if he had cast dust into their eyes, or bored their eyes out, in order to deceive them. And once they were deceived, he would continue to lead them expecting blind obedience and acceptance of whatever he demanded. With this, they again state their refusal to come up to the place of judgment. They have rejected Moses, and thus they have rejected the Lord who is the authority for Moses' judgment.

¹⁵ Then Moses was very angry, and said to the Lord, “Do not respect their offering.

Moses is probably looking all the way back to Cain and Abel here. The word he uses is *minkhah*, a tribute or a gift offering. In Genesis 4, it is said that the Lord respected Abel’s *minkhah*, but he did not respect Cain’s. Moses is equating these two men to Cain and saying, “Treat them like Cain. They are accursed.” And then he explains why...

^{15 (fin)} I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them.”

The donkey is a beast of burden. Not only did he not ever burden these men, he didn’t even give their lowly donkey any burden by taking it from them for himself. If he needed to carry a load, he used his own donkey, or he carried it himself. He never required a thing from them, nor did he in any way harm them. If he were a tyrannical ruler, as they accuse him, he could have weighed them down with any great load he chose, just as Pharaoh did to them before they were freed. But Moses never burdened or harmed these men, nor anyone else. Because of this, it is his desire that they not receive the Lord’s favor in their offering, and surely no mercy in their judgment. Of this verse, John Lange says, “...they wished to set up a priesthood and a sacrificial system of their own; and God never has blessed, and never can bless, any scheme of salvation which is not of his own appointment. Man is ever supposing that he can mend his Maker’s work, or that he can make one of his own that will do in its place.”

These people had rejected Moses and Aaron, and thus they rejected the One who appointed them for their duties. They assumed that they could simply appoint themselves in their place and the Lord would accept that. But they failed to consider the nature of God and the nature of their own fallen state before God.

Korah means “baldy.” Hair, as we have seen numerous times already, signifies awareness. Korah is lacking awareness in numerous ways, thus fitting his name perfectly. He thinks that he can march into the presence of the Lord and work his own way back to paradise, but his stupidity and lack of awareness will only lead to his own ruin.

The world looks to God and has devised a thousand times a thousand ways of mending their relationship with Him, but it doesn’t work that way. We cannot initiate what belongs to the Lord alone. We can either accept His plan and walk on His path, or we are cut off from any hope of remedy to our state.

God has initiated the plan, He has sent His Son, and Christ has done the work. There is nothing that can be added to that, and there is nothing that can be taken from it. It is an

all or nothing deal for mankind. And each man must make his own choice to receive it or reject it. I would hope and pray that you would be wise enough to consider this, and then do what is right. Accept His offer, trust in His plan, and come to Christ. These ancient pictures are given for exactly that reason. The sad state of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram lies ahead for any who fail to follow the instruction manual as it has been written.

Closing Verse: *“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’” 2 Timothy 2:19*

Next Week: Numbers 16:16:35 *The way he’s checking out, he won’t even need an undertaker...* (Korah Meets His Maker) (31st Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Set up for a Fall

Now Korah the son of Izhar
The son of Kohath, the son of Levi, in the wilderness is when
With Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab
And On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men

And they rose up before Moses
With some of the children of Israel, who were having a meltdown
Two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation
Representatives of the congregation, men of renown

They gathered together against Moses and Aaron
And said to them, most assuredly
“You take too much upon yourselves
For all the congregation is holy

Every one of them, and the Lord is among them
Won’t you please hear my word?
Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly
Yes, the assembly of the Lord?”

So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face
And he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying
“Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His
— — —-and who is holy
And will cause him to come near to Him
— — —-So Moses was to Korah relaying

That one whom He chooses, and not by just a whim
He will cause to come near to Him

Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company
Put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow
— — —-and here is why
And it shall be that the man whom the Lord chooses is the holy one
You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!”

Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi:
Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel
Has separated you from the congregation of Israel
To bring you near to Himself as well

To do the work of the tabernacle of the Lord
And to stand before the congregation to serve them too
And that He has brought you near to Himself
You and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you

And are you seeking the priesthood also?
Therefore you and all your company
Are gathered together against the Lord
And what is Aaron that you complain against him? Kindly tell me

And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram
The sons of Eliab, but they said
“We will not come up!
We will stay out here instead

Is it a small thing that you have brought us up
Out of a land flowing with milk and honey
To kill us in the wilderness

That you should keep acting like a prince over us?
— — —-none of us think this is funny

Moreover you have not brought us into a land
Flowing with milk and honey; we haven't seen a cup
Nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards
Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!"

Then Moses was very angry, and said to the Lord
"Do not respect their offering, please hear me
I have not taken one donkey from them
Nor have I hurt one of them, as all can plainly see

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 16:16-35 (KORAH MEETS HIS MAKER)

Well, if nothing else, today's passage is simply cool for the mental images it provides. It's like watching Raiders of the Lost Ark when the ark itself is opened and the main bad guys are melted and the rest of the offenders are burnt up with fire.

We can try to imagine what the actual events of the earth opening up looked like, and we can insert the faces of folks who we may not be so fond of on the offenders standing at their tents, and then what it must be like to watch them drop right out of sight once and for all.

Moses promised something new from the Lord, and the Lord delivered. Although the act of creation itself was a one-time thing, and nothing new is physically created since then, the Lord still creates new things out of what has been created. This is to demonstrate His character, His glory, and to continue to reveal His plan of redemption for mankind. One step at a time, the Lord brings out new things as He carefully unfolds His beautifully prepared tapestry of wonder...

Text Verse: *"I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the Lord, do all these things." Isaiah 45:7*

As I said, while reading this passage, we can try to imagine what it must have been like to actually see. Although he is to be taken with a grain of salt on many matters, Flavius Josephus also has many insights into things which the Bible, and which later history, speaks of. As far as the passage today, he wrote about what the event looked like, adding in what is left unstated in Scripture. As I said, he is to be taken with a grain of salt, but I thought I'd share his words with you –

When Moses had said this, with tears in his eyes, the ground was moved on a sudden; and the agitation that set it in motion was like that which the wind produces in waves of the sea. The people were all affrighted; and the ground that was about their tents sunk down at the great noise, with a terrible sound, and carried whatsoever was dear to the seditious into itself, who so entirely perished, that there was not the least appearance that any man had ever been seen there, the earth that had opened itself about them, closing again, and becoming entire as it was before, insomuch that such as saw it afterward did not perceive that any such accident had happened to it. Thus did these men

perish, and become a demonstration of the power of God.” Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book IV. Chapter 3:3

And so, if you ever decide to make a movie about Korah, that would be a nice additional help in describing the scene for your certain blockbuster adventure. Whether what Josephus handed down is actually accurate or not, the story is a marvelous part of the life and times of Moses, and the people of Israel, as they lived out the punishment of rejecting the Lord’s offer of Canaan.

Instead of going in and taking over the land, they spent their lives in the wilderness, meeting their end there as well. With the noted exceptions of Joshua and Caleb, all twenty and over met their end. Some just met it in a more memorable and dramatic way, but none more dramatic than that of those in here in Numbers 16. It really is an unforgettable part of His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Glory of the Lord Appeared (verses 16-22)

¹⁶ And Moses said to Korah, “Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the Lord—you and they, as well as Aaron.

Moses now gives a repetition of the instruction that he has already directed, mirroring what he said in verses 6 and 7. His words are directly to Korah which clearly set him apart as the leader of the insurrection. He initiated it, and therefore, he is instructed to lead the men by informing them of the time – tomorrow – and the place – before the Lord – that they are to have their challenge settled. He also reminds him of who is being challenged, Aaron.

As a refresher, Moses means, “He who draws out.” He is in the process of drawing out the will of the Lord concerning the priesthood. And, as was explained in the last sermon, Korah, or *Korakh*, probably means, “Baldy.” The idea of baldness is the opposite of hair. In Scripture, hair signifies an awareness. Being bald then would signify being either naive, or even empty headed. The thought fits Korah rather well.

Korah has no awareness of the danger he is in, and he is naive about the will and purposes of the Lord. Moses is not, and he is not only drawing out the Lord’s will, but he is drawing out the Lord’s judgment upon the rather empty-headed Korah.

17 Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the Lord, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each *with* his censer."

Again, the words continue to follow closely to verses 6 & 7. Moses is directing that the challengers be ready for the challenge. There are two hundred and fifty men, thus there is expected to be two hundred and fifty censers brought forward. That is then set in contrast to Aaron's single censer. Will the smoke of the two hundred and fifty be found more pleasing than that of the one? This is what is to be decided.

Because Moses already knows the outcome of what is going to happen, his appeal for every challenger to ensure he brings his own incense is a pre-appointed death sentence. As a review from last week, it is appropriate that the errors which these men will commit before the Lord be restated.

First, they are not priests. Only Aaron and his sons could function as priests. Presenting incense before the Lord is considered a priestly function. Death is the anticipated outcome for such a violation of the law. If something less is received, such as will later be the case at the time of King Uzziah, that is an act of mercy.

Secondly, because they were not of the line of Aaron, these men are not consecrated to conduct priestly duties. Both the lineage and the consecration were necessary. A person who was otherwise acceptable, but not consecrated, could still expect the Lord's wrath for their violation.

Next, each took a censer. These were censers not fashioned for use in the sanctuary, and which had not been part of the consecration process. The word for censer is *makhtah*. It comes from a root which means terror, ruin, or destruction. It is a fitting concept in regards to what can be expected for such a violation.

Fourth, they are instructed to come together to offer incense. Offering incense was a duty which was only to be conducted by one attending priest at a time. Aaron is a priest, he is consecrated to offer, and thus there will be two hundred and fifty superfluous offerers who will need to be taught a lesson concerning presumption.

Fifth, incense offered in a censer is only specified as being done by the high priest. In the law, it is never noted as an offering made by anyone but him. The incense offered by the other priests was burnt in the golden altar in the holy place, or along with offerings on the brazen altar, but never in censers. Again, these men have not been consecrated for

high priestly duties, and they should expect that their actions will be found inappropriate.

Sixth, they are bringing their own incense which is not according to what the Lord has prescribed to be burnt before Him. The incense for the Lord was forbidden to anyone else. Should they make it, they were to be cut off from their people. Whatever incense they offered, then, was considered profane. Therefore, no matter how sweet the smell of the incense to man's nose, to the Lord, it would be considered an abomination.

As Aaron pictures Christ in performing mediatorial duties, and as incense pictures prayers to God, then the symbolism is that of profane prayers being offered to the Lord through unqualified mediators. What is presented will not be pleasing, but odious. Seventh, if they brought their own censer, then they also brought their own fire. Thus, their fire is also profane. The law shows that the high priest was to take the fire for the incense from the brazen altar which had been sanctified by the Lord's fire. It is the same fire which had been ignited by the Lord at the time of the ordination offering. This is the fire that was to never be extinguished from that first time it was lit. It is a celestial fire, having been sanctified by Yehovah himself.

Instead of using this fire, sanctified by the Lord, they will bring their own, profane, fire. The law was written, every infraction is to receive its just punishment, and high handed sins were considered as capital crimes. As stated last week, Moses knows all of this. There can only be one outcome if the word of the Lord is a reflection of the will of the Lord.

Bad times lay ahead for these dudes, and as if to avoid any unnecessary delay in getting to the point, the account next jumps from one day to the next day without any further commentary. Whether there were excited, sleepless nights, or a party to celebrate the victory ahead, or sacrifices to false gods in hopes of gaining a favorable advantage over the situation, nothing is stated. One day has become the next and...

¹⁸ So every man took his censer,

One in accord with the law, two hundred and fifty violations of the law, if presented as anticipated.

¹⁸ (con't) put fire in it,

One in accord with the law, two hundred and fifty violations of the law, if presented as anticipated.

18 (con't) laid incense on it,

One in accord with the law, two hundred and fifty violations of the law, if presented as anticipated. Like two hundred and fifty sheep being led to the slaughter, the account goes through each step that was taken in disobedience to the law to show that these men truly deserved what was coming to them. Up until this point, they have done nothing wrong in their actions. People own censers, people had incense, people made fires. And, people combined the three into delightful times of enjoyment in their own dwellings. However, these men now take what they have prepared, stepped out of their comfortable dwellings, and have carried their arrogant offerings to the midst of the camp...

18 (con't) and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron.

Once their feet arrived at this place, with the offerings that are in their hands, there can be only one outcome which will glorify the Lord, establish the authority of Moses, and the priesthood of Aaron, and properly punish the offenders. They have, by stepping before the Lord, signed their own death sentence.

However, not realizing the danger of the situation, and certainly hopeful of his soon-to-be exalted position, Mr. Baldy even more arrogantly calls together an audience to witness the spectacle which will exalt him to the office of the priesthood...

19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Korah is so naive about what lies ahead that he let out a general notice to the congregation that they should all come and watch the spectacle unfold. Obviously, the entire congregation couldn't fit in the area outside of the tent of meeting, but the leaders would be close enough to peer in and see what transpired.

Any other curious onlookers could have the word passed on to them. And if there were any hills near to the camp, people could climb up on them and watch. It was going to be spectacle, and Mr. Baldy wanted everyone to see him rise up and prevail over Moses and Aaron.

It is reminiscent of the crowd who gathered on Mount Carmel many years later as is recorded in 1 Kings 18. A challenge was made, the people were gathered, and the question was asked, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him."

Now, the question is, "If Moses and Aaron are the leaders, follow them. If Mr. Baldy is leader, follow him." The anticipation was high at both times, and in both, the true man of the Lord was vindicated through the action of the Lord. In this encounter, before the Lord acts, He first makes His presence known...

¹⁹ (con't) **Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation.**

It is similar to what happened in Numbers 14. There it said, "Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel." That meant bad news for the congregation, especially for the spies who brought back a bad report. The appearance of the Lord this time will be no less so for those who have come against Him. This is because those who come against His chosen leaders actually oppose Him. The words, "all the congregation," give an advanced hint of what the Lord means when we get to verse 21.

²⁰ And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

The matter is all but resolved with these words. It is to Moses and to Aaron that the Lord speaks. Whether the voice is audible and addressed to them for all to hear, or whether the voice is only heard by them, any doubt about the Lord's intent for the continuance of these two in their positions is settled with His speaking directly to them. And the words are ominous...

²¹ **"Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."**

In Leviticus 9, at the time when the priestly ministry of Aaron began, it says that all the congregation drew near before the Lord (v. 5) for the presentation of offerings. Later, Aaron lifted his hands and blessed the people (v. 22), at which time the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people (v. 23). At that time, fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar (v.24). The Lord had approved Aaron's ministry, and He had accepted the people's offering as presented through him. Thus, he approved of the people because of the mediator.

That was representative of God's acceptance of us because of Christ's mediation on our behalf. However, the people have rejected Aaron and his mediation, and in type, they have thus rejected Christ. In this, the Lord's anger is highly aroused, and His words reflect exactly what He intended to do. Instead of consuming an offering mediated through His high priest, He intended to consume the people who presumed to back another priest, not chosen by Him. People who think they have access to God apart from Jesus, God's chosen Mediator, are wholly deluded.

22 Then they fell on their faces,

In Leviticus 9, after the fire came out from the Lord and consumed the offering of the people, the chapter ended with, "When all the people saw *it*, they shouted and fell on their faces." It is as if that passage and this were written with one thought in mind – the acceptance of Aaron means the acceptance of the people, and thus the rejection of Aaron means the rejection of the people.

Now, instead of the people shouting and falling on their faces in acknowledgment of Aaron's ordination and the establishment of the priesthood, it is Moses and Aaron falling on their faces and petitioning the Lord for the people who have rejected Aaron's mediation. And yet, they still determine to intercede and mediate for them...

22 (con't) and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?"

It is obvious that more than one man sinned, but there is one main instigator of that sin, who then encouraged it in others and in various levels. Moses and Aaron, understanding that the masses are easily swayed by a few, petition for leniency from the Lord. Though under different circumstances, specifically sin by the leader of Israel, the petition here is reflective of the words of David towards the Lord when His judgment came upon the people –

"Then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, 'Surely I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand, I pray, be against me and against my father's house.'" 2 Samuel 24:17

In both instances, the men understood that the Lord is the Creator of man, and the one who endows men with a spirit and with life. To destroy the people is to destroy His own work. Matthew Henry says of this incident –

“See how dangerous it is to have fellowship with sinners, and to partake with them. Though the people had treacherously deserted them, yet Moses and Aaron approved themselves faithful shepherds of Israel. If others fail in their duty to us, that does not take away the obligations we are under to seek their welfare. Their prayer was a pleading prayer, and it proved a prevailing one.”

*I will dwell in them and walk among them too
I will be their God, and My people they shall be
This is the thing that I promise I will do
Together we shall fellowship in the eternal sanctuary*

*Therefore, come out from among them, I say
And be separate, says the Lord your God
Do not touch what is unclean, from such you shall stay
And be holy as I am holy in this walk that you trod*

*And I will receive you, and give you eternal waters
I will be a Father to you, now and always
And you shall be My sons and you shall be My daughters
Says the Lord Almighty; says the Ancient of Days*

II. If the Lord Creates a New Thing (verses 23-35)

²³ So the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

In verse 20, the Lord spoke to both Moses and Aaron. It was with the intent of destroying the people. The fact that He now only speaks to Moses shows us that this is no longer the case. The people are safe from destruction. Well, most of them...

²⁴ “Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’”

In verse 21, the Lord told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from among the congregation. Now, having accepted Moses’ petition, He pronounces His judgment. Instead of consuming them all, there is an implicit warning for them to not be consumed. If there are perpetrators who led them astray, then only they will be punished. And so by name, He identifies them.

In doing so, a rather remarkable term, *mishkan*, or tabernacle, is used, and it is in the singular. The words literally read that the congregation is to, “Get away from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.” This will be repeated in verse 27, again in the singular. However, it will also mention their *ahole*, or tents, in the plural in verses 26 & 27. To this point, the term *mishkan* has only been used when speaking of the tabernacle of the Lord which is inside of the tent of meeting. It literally means a dwelling place. And so what is probably being relayed here is that the three, despite one being a Levite and the other two being from Reuben, had set apart a space for themselves as one dwelling place with their three individual tents.

The Lord is thus contrasting their tabernacle with His. They have set themselves in their own tabernacle with their own hoped-for high priest. Last week, the name Dathan was explained to indicate “Their law,” and Abiram as “My Father is Exalted.” In this, one can see these men naively or stupidly (Korah) following their own law (Dathan) and thus serving their father, the devil (Abiram).

It certainly appears this is what the Lord is indicating in His words to Moses. And, it is born out by the words of Jesus from John 8 –

“You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.” John 8:44

If this is so, and it certainly appears that way, I would say this then is picturing the synagogue of the Jews which set their own laws, rules, and customs in the Talmud in contrast to the revelation of God found in Christ. Thus, it is called by Jesus in Revelation, a synagogue of Satan. They are the tabernacle of rebellion.

This verse also seems to imply that the word of the Lord to Moses is probably not audible, but rather is an internal word directed to him alone. This is because Korah is not next mentioned...

²⁵ Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

If the Lord’s words to Moses were audible, Korah probably would have started running, and he would still be running today, in order to get away from the Lord. However, we are told that Moses went to Dathan and Abiram, and elders followed him. These may or may

not be the seventy elders who received the Spirit which was on Moses. There is no definite article in the Hebrew saying, “the elders.” It simply says, “... and elders of Israel followed him.”

From this point on, the account does not specifically say what happens to Korah, whether he is destroyed with these two, or if he dies with the 250. However, in Numbers 26:10, it does say that Korah was, in fact, swallowed up with Dathan and Abiram. What probably happened then, is that Moses had the elders grab Korah and bring him along with them. However, this is again debated by other verses which will be stated later.

²⁶ And he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men!

Here the word tents is used when speaking of their individual tents as property. The congregation is told to remove themselves from them, indicating that they are now unclean and thus devoted to destruction. This is made explicit with the words...

²⁶ (con’t) Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.”

In being rendered unclean and thus set for destruction, nobody was to touch anything that belonged to them. This is what occurred in Joshua 7 at the destruction of Jericho. The city was declared *kherem*, or under a curse, and was to be completely destroyed. However, Achan took what was under the ban and thus brought himself, his family, and his possessions under the ban. They were subsequently burned with fire after they were stoned to death.

The men were condemned because of idolatry, the idolatry of self. They set themselves in opposition to the Lord’s chosen leaders, and thus in opposition to the Lord. In this, the Lord uses a different word than verse 21 which is also translated as “consumed” here. It means to be swept away. In touching their unclean possessions, any others would be swept away together with the offenders.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul’s words concerning keeping away from idols practically mirror what is occurring in this account –

“Therefore
‘Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you.’
¹⁸ ‘I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.’” 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

Dathan and Abiram were said in verse 1 to be sons of Eliab. That name means “My God is Father.” for these two, this was not the case. The Lord says that if we depart from such things, He will be our Father. Lesson: Do not touch what is unclean, and the Lord will, in fact, receive you.

²⁷ So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

Here, in one verse, both words, *mishkan*, or tabernacle and *ahole*, or tents, are used and are, unfortunately, both translated as “tents.” What is being said is that the tents of these three was one dwelling place of iniquity set in opposition to the dwelling place of the Lord. Everything in the Lord’s tabernacle was most holy; everything here is wholly unclean.

When it says that Dathan and Abiram came out, this doesn’t mean Korah isn’t there, he is already outside of his tent, probably having been brought with Moses. The commotion of Moses arrival and his warning to those around them has obviously brought those inside the tents outside to see the events surrounding them unfold. This includes everyone, even to the little children. Such is the curse upon them for what has transpired. However, it is noted in verse 26:11 that the sons of Korah did not die in this event. All that tells us is that they were old enough to have their own tents and lived their own lives apart from their wayward father. Despite being one of the infamous scoundrels of Israel, the prophet Samuel, and Heman the singer, both descended from him. Further, “the sons of Korah,” meaning old Baldy here, are mentioned in the titles of eleven psalms. Despite having success in later generations, Korah himself did not end well...

²⁸ And Moses said: “By this you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will.

The words here are often extended beyond what the context of the passage is speaking of. When Moses says “all these works,” most scholars include everything from the Exodus to the receiving of the law, to the establishment of the priesthood, and so on, in what is said here. The disputed matter is that of the selection of Aaron and his sons to

the priesthood, the authority of the priesthood, the relegation of the Levites to service of the priesthood, and the like.

It is obvious the Lord led Israel out of Egypt, and that He spoke out the Ten Commandments from Sinai, and so on. What is supposedly not obvious to the people are the laws which Moses kept bringing out of the tent of meeting concerning all of the other things. But this is faulty thinking on several levels. First, the people asked that the Lord not speak to them again as He did from Sinai, lest they die. Then, on several occasions, they agreed to do whatever the Lord said through Moses. And finally, the Lord showed His approval of the priesthood of Aaron when He consumed the offerings made through him upon his consecration as high priest.

In reality, the only ones to blame for the situation they were in, are the people themselves. Moses has no true need to defend himself again, except in the sight of the forgetful people whom he led. And so, once again, he will demonstrate that it is the Lord, and not he himself, who set Moses in the position of authority. And he will do so at the expense of the lives of those who have challenged him...

²⁹ If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, *then* the Lord has not sent me.

Moses gives two possibilities concerning the death of these men. The first is that of a natural death, like any man could expect. It might be by having a heart attack, or maybe by choking on a durian seed, or maybe by simply dying in one's sleep.

The second is that of a visitation by which men are visited. That might be by a stray arrow running through them, or contracting the plague, or maybe by being run over by a donkey. In these, nobody would say, "Well, that it was really out of the ordinary." The circumstance may be unusual, but not really beyond what one would expect in normal life.

In either case, if such was to happen to these guys, then Moses says, you can be sure that the Lord hasn't sent me. What is certain is that these men are going to die, but the way in which it happens will either leave a doubt about Moses, or it will leave no doubt at all. And so, in order to make it absolutely sure that there is no doubt about it, he not only says they are going to die in a completely unique way, but he tells how it will come about, and he tells it in advance of it happening...

³⁰ But if the Lord creates a new thing,

v'im beriah yivra Yehovah – “and if creation creates Yehovah.” Here is a most astounding statement. The word *beriah*, or “creation,” is only found here in the Bible. It is a created thing, and thus something novel or new. It is something that never existed before. The word *bara*, or “to create,” is also rather rare. It was used in the early Genesis account, and then once in Exodus 34:10 –

“And He said: ‘Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as **have not been done** in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you *are* shall see the work of the Lord. For it *is* an awesome thing that I will do with you.’”

The Lord created and then He finished His creation, but He promised Moses while on the mountain that He would create new things in and among Israel. Moses now promises one of those new things is coming in the destruction of these men. This is the type of marvel that the Lord said He would create. The people’s eyes would behold marvels never before conceived of, such as...

³⁰ (con’t) **and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit,**

The idea here is as if the earth itself comes alive. First, there is the word *patsah*; open. That was only seen in Genesis 4 when the earth opened its mouth to receive the blood of Abel. Next, is the word *peh*, or mouth. It is as if the earth is alive and opening to devour. And then is the word *balq*, or swallow down. This is what is said to have happened to Pharaoh and his armies in the Red Sea.

Moses combines these thoughts into one graphic statement of their anticipated fate. They and all that they possessed would go down alive into Sheol, the place of the dead, sometimes translated as the pit, hell, or the grave, depending on the context. And there was a purpose for this...

³⁰ (con’t) **then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord.”**

Moses doesn’t say, “that these men have rejected me.” He says, “that these men have rejected the Lord.” Again, as has been evident with each calamity that has befallen them, the rejection of Moses is a rejection of the Lord.

Taking that to its logical conclusion, the rejection of the law, which came through Moses, is a rejection of the Lord. The wonders which have been seen in and through Israel, both

positive and negative, have come about because of the promise of the Lord, made to Moses, on Mount Sinai. What is seen in the swallowing up of these men, directly into hell, and with their possessions and families accompanying them, is simply a warning to all of Israel.

And as Moses spoke of One to come who would usher in a New Covenant, then to reject Him and His greater covenant is to reject His Messiah. The wounds of Israel, even since Moses until today, are self-inflicted. Such is certainly the case with what now occurs...

³¹ Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,

The words indicate that Moses had spoken, and at that very moment the ground beneath them split open. It wasn't something anyone could predict apart from the Lord, and yet it was prophesied in advance. Thus, it must have been of the Lord. There was no time for apology or appeal, there was no time for shouting out a word of rebellion or a word of remorse. And there were no extended goodbyes. The matter was spoken, the sentence pronounced, and justice was served...

³² and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods.

There is, again, confusion as to whether Korah is included here or not. In Deuteronomy 11 and Psalm 106, only Dathan and Abiram are mentioned as being swallowed up. It appears to be purposeful that there is this mystery surrounding how he died. Was it directly into the pit, or was it by the fire which will be seen in a few verses?

It could be that the Lord left this ambiguous for a reason. The fate of Korah is the fate of both of the camps aligned with Korah. In this one, it includes "all the men with Korah." This would include any alliances that were not at the sanctuary swinging their censers, trying to please the Lord through fire. For this first half, their final fate is given marvelous detail...

³³ So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.

The earth opened, the earth gulped, and the pit of the earth received. Everything and every person associated with them was *kherem*, and was thus destroyed, forever to languish in the darkest of darkness, and in the pit of corruption.

³⁴ Then all Israel who *were* around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up *also!*”

Depending on how deep the esophagus of the earth was before they arrived at the pit, and depending on the acoustics on the way down, this could have been a rather terrifying thing to hear. No matter the details, the text itself says that the voices of the people as they went down were enough to cause those within earshot to get up and flee. So horrifying was it that they did not want to share in their fate if the ground under them started to give way as well. Moses had promised a new thing, and the people saw something new. Meanwhile, back at the sanctuary...

³⁵ And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.

The power of the Lord is not constrained to one event at a time. Rather, He opened the earth to swallow the rebels in the camp, and He sent forth fire to destroy the rebels at the sanctuary. In one there is the sending of a heavenly fire to destroy those who came against the priesthood, a mediatorial duty between earth and heaven. And, in the other, he opened the earth to swallow the rebels who stood against the Lord’s earthly ruler, swallowing them up alive. In each, there is a just punishment from the Judge of all mankind, proportionate to the offense brought against Him.

And at the same time, there was mercy on those who were merely led astray by the offenders. In this double judgment, and as I have said already, the actual fate of Korah is not mentioned. Only inferences which seem to support both judgments can be made from other parts of Scripture. And so, as I said a minute ago, it could be that the Lord left this uncertain for a reason.

The fate of Korah is the fate of *both* of the camps aligned with Korah. And that fate then comprises both fire and of being cast alive into condemnation simultaneously. There is only one place in Scripture where this is actually seen to occur. Towards the end of the book of Revelation, and at the end of the tribulation period, which is coming soon to a terrifying calamity on earth near you, we read this from Revelation 19 –

“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of

fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.” Revelation 19:20, 21

Korah stood against Moses and Aaron. Jesus is the fulfillment of both of their positions under the New Covenant. He is the Son over the house, and He is the High Priest mediating for His people. The beast and the false prophet will both come against Christ Jesus, and they will receive the just penalty for their offense when they are cast alive into the lake of fire. Those with them will be destroyed as well, and the Lord will usher in a glorious time on earth where such things will be but past memories.

For now, the fantastic details of today’s passage are not a story of fiction made up as a lesson to scare us into obedience. Rather, the events are said to actually have occurred, and then the fact that they did are repeated, even during the life of Moses to the generation who would enter Canaan. If the story wasn’t true, that generation would have known it to be false and would have spoken against it.

The reliability of the word is seen in its internal confirmations, and it is seen in innumerable extra-biblical confirmations as well. Of all of the events of Scripture though, the surest of them all is that of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is testified to in so many ways within the Bible, both before and after His coming, that from a Scriptural standpoint, no other option than the story of Him being true is possible.

He is further testified to extra-biblically as well, sometimes by hostile witnesses. Such testimony then is all the more reliable, because nobody would testify negatively about someone that wasn’t actually real. And so, as stories such as today’s point us to the Person and work of Jesus Christ, it is incumbent upon us to respond to the call to receive Him. This is what I would implore you to do today. Don’t let the day go by without making the decision to follow Christ. The Bible does not promise us tomorrow. Instead, the word is given –

“‘In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’
Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.”

-2 Corinthians 6:2

Closing Verse: *“When they envied Moses in the camp,
And Aaron the saint of the Lord,
¹⁷ The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan,*

And covered the faction of Abiram.

¹⁸ A fire was kindled in their company;

The flame burned up the wicked.” Psalm 106:16-18

Next Week: Numbers 16:36-50 There is only One; just one I say again... (The Mediator Between God and Men) (32nd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Korah Meets His Maker

And Moses said to Korah

“Tomorrow, you and all your company

Be present before the Lord—

You and they, as well as Aaron... then we shall see

Let each take his censer and put incense in it

And each of you bring his censer before the Lord

Two hundred and fifty censers

Both you and Aaron, each with his censer, according to this word

So every man took his censer, put fire in it

Laid incense on it, and stood at the door

Of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron

To see what would be the score

And Korah gathered all the congregation

Against them at the door, of the tabernacle of meeting

Then the glory of the Lord appeared to all the congregation

Expecting a warm and gracious greeting

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying

“Separate yourselves from among this congregation

That I may consume them in a moment

Yes! This entire disobedient nation

Then they fell on their faces, and said
“O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, including this nation
Shall one man sin
And You be angry with all the congregation?”

So the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“Speak to the congregation, saying
‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram
Ominous words He was then relaying

Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram
And the elders of Israel followed him, there and then
And he spoke to the congregation, saying
“Depart now from the tents of these wicked men!

Touch nothing of theirs, surely to you I say
Lest you be consumed in all their sins this very day

So they got away from around the tents
Of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; these wicked men
And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood
———-at the door of their tents
With their wives, their sons, and their little children

And Moses said: “By this you shall know
That the Lord has sent me to do all these works
For I have not done them of my own will
You’re acting like spoiled little... next rhyme please

If these men die naturally like all men
Or if they are visited by all men’s common fate
Then the Lord has not sent me
Then the record will be made straight

But if the Lord creates a new thing
And the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up
———-with all that belongs to them according to this word
And they go down alive into the pit
Then you will understand that these men have rejected the Lord

Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking
All these words, that the ground split apart under them
———time to bid these folks adieu
And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up
With their households and all the men with Korah
———with all their goods too

So they and all those with them
Went down alive into the pit; screaming in anguish certainly
The earth closed over them
And they perished from among the assembly

Then all Israel who were around them
Fled at their cry
For they said
“Lest the earth swallow us up also! Lest we also die!”

And a fire came out from the Lord, for a little more recompense
And consumed the two hundred and fifty men
———who were offering incense

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 16:36-50 (THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN)

Israel was chosen from among the nations to be God's own special people and to receive His favor. All other nations went their own way, and they lived and died apart from God. Only Israel was set apart to bring in Messiah, and until He came, only they received the atonement necessary to cover their sins in a temporary manner.

It has already been demonstrated that there was to be but one high priest, and until his death prevented him from continuing on, it was his responsibility to mediate between God and man, and to intercede on behalf of his people.

That was challenged by Korah, and the challenge failed. And it wasn't by human effort that it failed. It was because the Lord personally acted and destroyed him and his followers. It set the example for Israel, and Israel sets the typology for Christ to come.

Because God rejected any but Aaron, or his replacement from his line, then it is a message that the Lord was sending to us – "I will accept mediation for your sins, but I will only do so through one Person, My designated High Priest." That is then explicitly repeated in the New Testament. First by Jesus Himself in John 14:6, and then by Paul in 1 Timothy 2, our text verse of the day...

Text Verse: *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."*

-1 Timothy 2:5, 6

When Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me," He was indicating exactly this. That means in this life and for all eternity. He is our access point to the unseen Father. At this time, it is for reconciliation to Him, and for our continued need for mediation from Him. In the future, He will be the One through whom the glory of God will radiate for all eternity. He is our One and only access point in this regard. When Paul says that Christ is our one Mediator, he calls Him "*the Man Christ Jesus.*" It is His humanity which makes this possible. And Paul goes on. He says that He gave Himself a ransom for all." If you pay heed to the coming sermon, you will see that repeated in picture, right from our verses today.

In fact, you will see the Person of Christ revealed in almost a dozen different ways today. But each one of them keeps demonstrating the simple truth that He is the One and only

way to be restored to a propitious relationship with God. The theme repeats again and again, as it has throughout the books of Moses so far, and as will continue to be seen right through until the final page of Scripture.

So, if you are asking yourself today if it's OK for you to go to a palm reader, a psychic, a Hindu priest, a Buddhist shaman, or an Islamic Imam, you should understand that God, the God of the Bible, has rejected these things. This world, filled with such spirituality, is a world that is at enmity with God. He has entered into His creation, and it is through this Man alone that we find restoration with God.

Be careful who you believe, even in supposed Christian churches. There is a straight path, and there are many which quickly wind off to destruction. This is the warning we should pay heed to. It is this lesson which is found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Sign to Israel (verses 36-40)

It was in the final verses of our passage last week that the ground swallowed up the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, along with all those who dwelt there. After that, fire came out from the Lord at the sanctuary and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense there. The rebellion which had arisen against the Lord was ended by Him in the destruction of the offenders. With that accomplished, the narrative continues on with the results of that event. The fire from the Lord has gone out in judgment, but judgment also results in purification. As this is so, something more is required before the matter is settled. Thus...

³⁶ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The Lord now speaks to Moses directly. We can assume that it is from the pillar of cloud which had just sent out the fire against the rebels. Aaron and Moses had been present at the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, but they have now returned to the area of the sanctuary and have seen the destruction wrought by the Lord. A cleanup of the bodies and articles is needed to cleanse the camp, but the Lord has specific directions for some of what laid scattered upon the ground. Those instructions are next given...

³⁷ "Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers

Whatever was left of the bodies of the men, if anything, nothing is said concerning their disposal. The matter is left unstated because it is irrelevant to the purposes of the Lord. The bodies would be unclean, and Eleazar could not touch them. Almost all commentators say that Aaron was not selected for this purpose because he might have become defiled by the corpses, and so Eleazar was chosen.

That makes no sense. Eleazar is also a priest, and he would also become defiled. If any bodies laid there, which remains unstated, then he would just not be the one to assist in the disposal. Picking up censers was simply not a task which the high priest would be expected to accomplish. However, being a priest, it was incumbent on his son Eleazar “to pick up the censers” because they were holy.

³⁷ (con’t) **out of the blaze,**

mi-ben ha’serephah – out of the burning. It is the same word used to describe the burning of the Lord which came upon Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s two eldest. This doesn’t mean that the burning was still hot, it is merely a description of what had occurred. There was a burning, and the censers were to be picked up out of it...

³⁷ (con’t) **for they are holy,**

Out of the midst of whatever was left that was unclean, there was something that had been purified and even made holy. Although under different circumstances, the idea of what occurs in Numbers 31 partially explains why this is so –

“Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, ²³ everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification. But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water.” Numbers 31:22, 23

Fire itself has a cleansing effect on metals. How much more when it is the fire of the Lord’s judgment. And this then translates into what is said in the New Testament concerning purification –

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, *you are* God’s building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that

which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." 1 Corinthians 3:9-15

The fire of the Lord is one of judgment, but in judgment, there is also purification for those things which can withstand the judgment. All that which is defiled will be burned up, but that which endures will be purified and made holy.

³⁷ (con't) **and scatter the fire some distance away.**

As noted in the previous sermon, the coals and incense were not that which was approved by the Lord for use in the sanctuary. The men brought fire which was not first sanctified through the Lord, and they added incense which was not approved for service of the Lord. Thus, these things failed to anticipate Christ in their makeup, and were unacceptable to be offered to the Lord.

Because of this, they were to be taken from the sanctuary and scattered out at a suitable distance to indicate the rejection of the offerings of these wicked men who had not been consecrated to serve before the Lord, and yet who arrogantly assumed that they could do so.

They failed to see that everything associated with the tabernacle, even to the finest detail, wasn't simply for show, but it was given to prefigure the coming Messiah – His redemptive work, and our position in Him – because of what He has done.

Unfortunately, the world at large, the Jews to this day, and a large swath of what is considered Christendom continues to fail to see this. Holiness does not come through dopish hats, solemn rituals, repetitive prayers, or showy offerings.

Instead, holiness comes through Christ Jesus, and it is only reflected in His people when they conform to His standards as given in this dispensation, known as grace. Being under grace does not negate the need to be holy. In fact, it highlights it, as Paul makes clear in 2 Corinthians –

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

‘I will dwell in them

And walk among *them*.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people.’

¹⁷ Therefore

‘Come out from among them

And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you.’

¹⁸ ‘I will be a Father to you,

And you shall be My sons and daughters,

Says the Lord Almighty.” 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

As we have already seen, those things which we do that are unholy will be burnt, and we will suffer loss. Our position in Christ demands holiness no less than it was demanded under law. In fact, it demands it even more so.

³⁸ **The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls,**

The Lord is as a Husband to Israel, but He is also as a King to them. Thus, the proverb is fitting to what occurred here –

“The wrath of a king *is* like the roaring of a lion;

Whoever provokes him to anger sins *against* his own life.” Proverbs 20:2

This is what happened to these men. They had sinned against their own souls, and thus they died before the Lord. One cannot help but see the comparison here with these men, to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira which is recorded in Acts. They had sinned against their souls by lying to the Holy Spirit, and they both died before the Lord. The judgment upon these men, and the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira both served a purpose though. In the case of these men’s censers, the Lord gives specific instructions...

³⁸ (con’t) **let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar.**

Rather than an adjective and two nouns, the Hebrew has three nouns to describe what is made. The first is a unique word in Scripture, *riqqa*, or “an expansion.” It comes from the verb *raqa* which means to beat out, or to spread out. And that, in turn, comes from

a primitive root signifying to pound the earth, as if a sign of passion. One can think of a person laying with his face to the ground in misery at the death of a brother, pounding the ground and wailing.

The second noun is *pakhim*, or plates. That comes from the verb *pakhah*, meaning “to ensnare.” The third is the *tsippui*, or covering. It is a lot of detail to make a single point. And so, the Lord must be asking us to consider the picture being made here. One can almost taste the idea in how each of us treats our own state before the Lord.

We are sanctified as holy, but do we mourn over the things we do which the Lord finds unacceptable and in which we are ensnared? Sin is like a trap set for us, and when we allow it to catch us, it is what defines us. It is like a covering which is then viewable to all. We will be presented before the Lord, but only so much as endures the fire of judgment will be brought forth. Are we beating the ground in passion over our misdeeds, honestly endeavoring to correct them? Or are we continuing to carry with us those things which the Lord finds impure and defiled?

Only that which is purified and which remains will be put on display. For the one whose life was defined more by sin than by holiness, there will not be much left after the judgment. This is the picture we are being given, and thus, the censers of these men were to be so on display as a covering for the altar...

38 (con't) Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy;

This is all that is left of these men’s time before the Lord. Nothing is said of bodies remaining, even if they did. The only thing left of them is a bit of brass which they had carried with them. It is this, and nothing else, which others will see in order to be reminded of them. And that, only because the fire of the Lord had purified it. The connection to our lives in Christ is... rather astonishing. These men’s censers were not acceptable as censers, and so they were re-formed according to the word of the Lord for a set purpose...

38 (con't) and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel.”

The word is *oth*, a sign. A sign stands representative of something else. This doesn’t say a memorial, as if they were to merely remember the occasion, but they were to look at it as representative of what happened. That word, *zikaron*, or memorial is coming in verse 40. But now we are told that it is to be a sign. As a sign, it thus conveys a message. That message is implicitly conveyed in the next words...

³⁹ So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers,

Censers are mentioned 10 times in this chapter; eight of those times it is referring to these 250 censers. However, only this once are they described as *nekhosheth*, or bronze. In the Bible, bronze mainly signifies judgment, but also endurance.

The judgment can be negative, such as in the case of bronze fetters being worn by those who have been sentenced for a crime, but it can also be one of purification and justification, such as in the cleansing of the people through the offerings made upon this altar. These censers are first described here in this verse as a sign. They are to alert the people to God's judgment. It will be carried out in the people for offense, or it will be carried out on this altar in place of their offense. It is also as a sign to alert the people to their need for endurance in staying the course set out for them in the law which is highlighted through the sacrificial system. The sign of judgment and endurance is to be remembered in these censers...

³⁹ (con't) which those who were burned up had presented,

The sign is the brass in the form in which it is presented. It is an expansion of brass, as a sign of pounding the earth in passion. It is a plate of brass as a sign that man is easily ensnared in sin. And it is a sign in the covering of brass which tells man that his walk before the Lord is covered in His judgment, be it positive or negative. All of this is reflected in the next words once again...

³⁹ (con't) and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar,

There was in the fabrication of this covering a purposeful, passionate, and intentional hammering of the bronze. It was then placed as a covering on the altar which was already overlaid with bronze. It is the brazen altar, not the golden altar, to which this was applied. The golden altar, standing in the Holy Place, would not be seen by the people. However, the brazen altar would be, and so it was covered by this magnificent sign to the people, and...

⁴⁰ to be a memorial to the children of Israel

Here the word *zikaron*, or memorial, is used. The brass is a sign, but it is to be a memorial. This is something which brings to remembrance. And that which is to be called to memory is...

40 (con't) that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord,

Korah was a Levite, but he was not a priest because he did not descend from Aaron. That was made explicit in the law, and yet he presumptuously came forward, along with the other rebels, and tried to usurp the priesthood. The sign of the bronze covering was to be used as a memorial to bring to mind the consequences of violating the law of the priesthood. This was so...

40 (con't) that he might not become like Korah and his companions,

In the Hebrew, there is the understanding – in an absolute sense – that if someone were to do what Korah did, they would share in the same fate as befell him and his companions. Some might argue that this is not the case though. King Uzziah did exactly this in 2 Chronicles 26, and there it is said that leprosy broke out on his forehead. How can that be compared to Korah?

It is because it goes on to say that, “King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord” (v.21). Having leprosy meant that King Uzziah was as if dead to the throne, to the people, and to the house of the Lord.

In fact, the account then says that his son Jotham was over the king’s house and it was he who judged the people of the land. Other than physical death, the same outcome rested on Uzziah as on these rebels.

And it may be considered that Uzziah’s punishment was worse than that of Korah in one way, and comparable in another. He was trapped in a body of death while still living, whereas Korah was trapped in a living body in death – having been swallowed up alive by the pit. Uzziah failed to heed the warning, and he – in fact – became like those who offended the Lord in this way before Him.

40 (con't) just as the Lord had said to him through Moses.

This is the word of law. It was Aaron, and those who issued from him and who served as priests, that were authorized to offer incense before the Lord. Korah knew the law; Korah violated the law, the Lord determined the sentence, and the judgment of the Lord was rendered upon Korah.

*I will dwell in them, even as their breath of life
And walk among them, so I shall do
I will be their God, between us no strife
And they shall be My people, to them I will be true*

*Therefore, Come out from among them, I say
And be separate, says the Lord
Do not touch what is unclean; from it turn away
And I will receive you, according to My word*

*I will be a Father to you, and you My children
Yes, you shall be My sons and daughters, it is true
Says the Lord Almighty, and so I say again
Come out from among them, so you shall do*

II. The Very Next Day (verses 41-50)

⁴¹ On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the Lord.”

It wasn't weeks or months later, but the very next day that the entire congregation complained against Moses and Aaron. The word translated as complained is *lun*. It means to remain overnight, such as in lodging. The idea is that their minds remained unconverted by what happened, and thus they simply continued down the same path, grumbling against Moses and Aaron.

In this, they go even further by accusing them of killing the people of the Lord. Because the two hundred and fifty men were leaders of the congregation, it was as if they represented all of the people, even though Moses and Aaron had specifically prayed that the whole congregation not be destroyed. All they could see was that it was Moses who told the people to bring their incense before the Lord, and thus they have deduced that it was Moses' fault that they died. And it is true that Moses, believing the words of the law, knew the assured outcome, but this does not mean that he was responsible for their actions any more than he was responsible for King Uzziah's many centuries later. The people wrongfully accuse Moses and Aaron of murder, but once again, an attack against them for something that the Lord did is actually an attack against the Lord. Thus, this cannot go well for the people...

⁴² 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 the Lord appeared.

There was enough force behind the moaning that the people came in a united way against Moses and Aaron, probably to their tents which stood just before the entrance to the sanctuary. While standing there accusing them, they turned to see some aspect change in the cloud.

It always remained above the tent of meeting, but what probably happened is that it completely enshrouded it. In doing so, the glory of the Lord, which was between the cherubim above the mercy seat radiated out through the cloud, just as it did on the day when the tabernacle was first raised up. The cloud then, at the same time revealed and also concealed the Lord's glory.

⁴³ Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.

Here it says they came *el pene ohel moed*, or "to the face of the tent of meeting." This is explained in verse 50 as being its door. As the glory of the Lord radiated out of it, they could not enter, just as they could not on the first day it was erected. Instead, it is at the door of the tent where they received the word...

⁴⁴ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

It is obvious that the presence of the Lord in this manner was a summons to come to Him, and to receive instruction from Him. It was also obvious, based on past experience, that this could only mean disaster for those who had challenged them. And so it is...

⁴⁵ "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment."

Here is a word not yet seen in Scripture, *ramam*. It means to rise up above, or even to exalt. The words of this clause are identical to the words of verse 21, with this one exception. In verse 21, they were told to *badal*, or separate themselves from the congregation. Now they are told to *ramam*, or rise up from the congregation.

The intent of the change seems obvious. They were wallowing with those who were beneath them in dignity. The Lord is indicating that they are not just miscreants who should be separated from and then destroyed, but they are lowly refuse who should be

risen above and destroyed. And so the Lord says to them, *he-romu mitok ha'edah ha'zot* – “You get up from this congregation.”

⁴⁵ (con't) **And they fell on their faces.**

It is the same reaction from them that was seen in verse 22. A second time the mediators of the Lord had been rejected by the people, and a second time they again refuse the admonition to remove themselves from them, but instead immediately move to mediate on their behalf. The immense love of Moses and Aaron for the people is seen in their continued care of them, despite their ill treatment from them.

⁴⁶ **So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation**

Korah felt that he was deemed holy to the point that he could perform the duties of the priests. It was his violation of the law of presenting incense before the Lord which proved that this was not so. However, the people have rejected that, and thus they have rejected the Lord's decision concerning Aaron's priesthood.

That means that they stand as a people without a mediator. Aaron must rectify this by responding as their mediator and making atonement for them.

The way he is to do this is by taking *ha'makhtah*, or “the censer.” It is not just any censer, but Aaron's censer used for high priestly duties which is now set in contrast to the 250 censers of the rebellion. *Makhtah* comes from a root meaning destruction or ruin. Thus, *ha'makhtah*, picturing the sole mediation of Christ, is to be used in the sense of removal.

Into that, he was to put fire. This would be from the brazen altar, the fire first lit by the Lord, and which signifies Christ's fire of purification. On that, he was to put *qetoreth*, or incense. The priestly incense was described in Exodus 30, every ingredient of which pointed to Christ and His work as revealed in Scripture. It truly was an astonishing study.

⁴⁶ (con't) **and make atonement for them;**

Atonement is normally made through a blood sacrifice, but the idea here is that in the burning of the incense upon the holy fire, there would be removal and purification. As incense pictures prayer, it is thus picturing the prayers of Christ the Man on behalf of His people, and the purification of the people by God through Christ.

As the ingredients of the incense picture Him, they are considered a sufficient offering of His life to God. If Aaron were to not make this offering, all the congregation would be lost. Moses knows this and proclaims...

⁴⁶ (con't) **for wrath has gone out from the Lord.**

The word *qetseph*, or wrath, has only been used in Numbers 1:53 –

“but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no **wrath** on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.”

That charge of the tabernacle failed. Korah was a Levite, and he failed to adhere to his assigned duties. The people, in turn, rejected the Lord’s rejection of this, thus *ha’qetseph* or, “**the wrath**” which was promised had gone out, and because of this...

⁴⁶ (con't) **The plague has begun.”**

This word, *negeph*, or plague, is only used seven times in the Bible and all are in relation to the people of Israel. The first was in relation to the blood of the Passover lamb saving the firstborn. The second was in relation to the redemption money for the firstborn. The third was used in relation to the Levites in place of the firstborn. That was seen in Numbers 8 –

“And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no **plague** among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary.” Numbers 8:19

The Levites had replaced the firstborn and were considered purified for the tasks of service. If the people approached unlawfully or incorrectly, the plague would result. It was the Levites who had the responsibility to ensure this would not occur, and yet, it was Korah, a Levite, who had violated this. He received his penalty for what he did, but the people have claimed that what happened to him was unjust. Therefore, they are now considered to have approached the Lord unlawfully. Thus, Moses knows the plague must come.

The final time *negeph* is used is in Isaiah 8 where it is ascribed directly to the Lord in relation to the people of Israel –

“He will be as a sanctuary,
But a stone of **stumbling** and a rock of offense
To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Isaiah 8:14

That verse from Isaiah is then used by Paul when speaking of Christ in Romans 9, and by Peter – also speaking of Christ – in 1 Peter 2. In essence, Christ became the very plague upon Israel that the blood of the lamb, the ransom money, and the Levite was to protect them from. In their rejection of Him, they rejected what these types and shadows only pictured.

He is the Passover, He is the Ransom Payment, and He is the Firstborn. Israel’s rejection of these figures equates to Israel’s later rejection of Christ. Thus, He is *ha’negeph*, or “**the plague**.” Unless Christ personally mediated for them in prayer, which He did on Calvary’s cross, they would have been utterly consumed.

However, in their rejection of Him, they have suffered **the plague**, meaning Christ, these past two thousand years. He has become *ha’negeph* upon them, just as **the plague** came upon the congregation...

⁴⁷ Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people.

In rejection of the order of the Levitical priesthood, meaning Aaron and then the Levites below him fulfilling the place of the firstborn, they had rejected what these types pictured – Christ’s more perfect priesthood (Hebrews 2:17), and His standing as the Firstborn of God (Hebrews 1:6). In picture, it is Israel’s ongoing rejection of Him. The plague began, but Aaron ran into the midst of the assembly to stop it before it could totally consume them.

⁴⁷ (con’t) So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people.

The offering of incense in this manner is never prescribed under the law, but Moses knew that even though the law did not prescribe it, it was not prohibited either. In the case of the plague, it was the only possible expediency to make atonement, and in fact, it is this act which pictures what it says in Hebrews 7, that Christ, “always lives to make

intercession” for His people. The incense, picturing Christ and His redemptive work, is sufficient for this purpose.

48 And he stood between the dead and the living;

These words are set in contrast to the two hundred and fifty who offered their incense and were struck dead for their actions. The offering of Aaron is accepted because he was the qualified representative, with the proper censer, the proper coals, and the proper incense. Christ stands, even now, between the dead and the living for His people.

This, however, brings forward the concept of Christ, as displayed through the apostles, in a remarkable way. The message of the apostles, meaning Christ’s Person and ministry, is that which brings life. Further, a rejection of it brings death. Aaron stood between the living and the dead bearing his incense, and this then appears to be what Paul was referring to in 2 Corinthians –

“Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?”

-2 Corinthians 2:14-16

For Israel of today, it is the aroma of Korah and of death leading to death. However, someday the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ will be realized for them in life, leading to life...

48 (con’t) so the plague was stopped.

The word for “plague” here, and in the next two verses, is not the same as the previous two. This is *magephah*, a slaughter. In the act of providing atonement, the slaughter of the people ended. The idea here is beautifully stated by Matthew Henry –

“Observe especially, that Aaron was a type of Christ. There is an infection of sin in the world, which only the cross and intercession of Jesus Christ can stay and remove. He enters the defiled and dying camp. He stands between the dead and the living; between the eternal Judge and the souls under condemnation. We must have redemption through His blood, even the remission of sins. We admire the ready devotion of Aaron: shall we not bless and praise the unspeakable grace and love which filled the Saviour’s

heart, when he placed himself in our stead, and bought us with his life? Greatly indeed hath God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Matthew Henry

⁴⁹ Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident.

The specific number here is an interesting addition. The speculation on what its spiritual significance is could probably go on and on. Suffice it to say that seven is the number of spiritual perfection. The number here is a multiple of 7×2100 . Along with those who died in the Korah incident, you would be up to somewhere around 15,000 people.

This shows that a large number died there in the wilderness due to the arrogance and folly of one main perpetrator, and a few followers with him who were then excited into a larger crowd of miscreants. From there, the entire congregation was set to be destroyed. Jude specifically warns about false teachers and that those who hear the word should earnestly contend for the faith which has been once delivered to the saints. The consequences for failing to do so can lead to a huge number being misled and ultimately destroyed. Such is the case with those who follow Ellen G. White, Charles Tazz Russel, Joseph Smith, and countless others who have come in and drawn away large numbers who now face the consequences for following in their footsteps.

The mediation of Aaron was successful, the plague was stopped, and with that it says...

⁵⁰ So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

It seems like an anticlimactic ending for such a marvelous chapter, but it really isn't. Aaron is a type of Christ, the High Priest. Moses is typical of Christ, the Lawgiver. The Tent of Meeting pictures Christ's humanity which covers His deity inside. The door is actually two-fold.

When an animal is said to be presented at the door of the tent of meeting, it is actually presented at the brazen altar which prefigures Christ's sacrifice. It is that which then symbolically allows access through the door of the tent itself. Thus, we have a picture which is developed here.

At one point is the High Priest, the Lawgiver, the Sacrifice, and the Door to God's paradise. All of that is seen in the Person of Jesus. It is He who has stopped the plague upon

fallen man, and it is He who will stop that plague which still comes after and destroys Israel. The slaughter continues, but someday, He will stand in their midst and His offering will be the dividing line between the dead and the living. For them, it will finally be the diffusing of the fragrance of Life, leading to life. May that day be soon.

Closing Verse: *“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”*

-Hebrews 8:6

Next Week: Numbers 17:1-13 Filled again with life’s breath... (Life from Death)
(33rd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Mediator Between God and Men

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words He was to them then relaying

“Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest
To pick up the censers out of the blaze, as I now say
For they are holy
And scatter the fire some distance away

The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls
Let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar
———as to you I now tell
Because they presented them before the Lord
Therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign
———to the children of Israel

So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers
Which those who were burned up had presented
And they were hammered out as a covering on the altar
To be a memorial to the children of Israel
———and this is what it represented

That no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron
Should come near to offer incense before the Lord
That he might not become like Korah and his companions
Just as the Lord had said to him through Moses
———according to that word

On the next day all the congregation
Of the children of Israel, that great horde
Complained against Moses and Aaron, saying
“You have killed the people of the Lord

Now it happened, when the congregation
Had gathered against Moses and Aaron
———towards mayhem they seemed geared
That they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting
And suddenly the cloud covered it
———and the glory of the Lord appeared

Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting
And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“Get away from among this congregation
That I may consume them in a moment
———as to you I am now relaying

And they fell on their faces
So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer
———and put fire in it from the altar
Put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation
And make atonement for them; in this you must not falter

For wrath has gone out from the Lord
The plague has begun; that great and terrible sword

Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded
And ran into the midst of the assembly, there he went
And already the plague had begun among the people
So he put in the incense and for the people made atonement

And he stood between the dead and the living

So the plague was stopped
Now those who died in the plague were
— — —-fourteen thousand seven hundred
That's how many of them dropped

Besides those who died in the Korah incident
So Aaron returned to Moses at the door
Of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped
It had ceased and the plague was no more

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 17:1-13 (LIFE FROM DEATH)

There are certain things in Scripture which are taken as an axiom. One of them is creation. In Hebrews 11, the author actually speaks about creation, and he takes the whole sh'bang of the Genesis account at face value. Things seen were not created from things visible. One could argue that to a point, but the word "visible" truly encompasses all matter, even if we can't see it with our naked eyes. If it is matter, it is – at some point – visible.

He speaks about Cain and Abel as if the story about them is really true. And the fact that there is a Cain and an Abel, by default, means they came from someone else, meaning an Adam and an Eve. He speaks about Enoch being translated and not seeing death, and he says it as if there is no question of the reliability of that.

The story of Noah and the flood... yep, like Jesus, he accepted the narrative as written. I could go on, but you get the point. Jesus repeatedly spoke about the absolute truth of Scripture, even arguing with Israel's leader about single words which had the most significant of importance to theology.

And those who authored the New Testament write about the Old with the same absolute assurance that the stories there are true and reliable, even down to some of the most incredible stories of all...

Text Verse: *Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. ²For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; ³and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, ⁴which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; ⁵and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. Hebrews 9:1-5*

In just those five verses, the author indicates that the sanctuary written about by Moses was real. If one part of that detail is true, then the rest surely must be as well, and he later speaks quite a bit more about it. He also says that those things on earth were copies and shadows of the things in heaven, meaning there really is a heaven, and what that is like is represented by those earthly things.

And then he goes on to say that those earthly things actually prefigure Christ. Thus the heavenly man is the anticipation of the earthly pictures. The author then speaks about the golden pot with the manna in it, confirming the account of manna in the wilderness. Yes, it really happened. Even Jesus spoke of that in John 6.

And more, he also writes in these verses about Aaron's rod that budded. Well, isn't that the cat's meow. A lifeless rod of wood actually comes to life. And it doesn't happen by being grafted into a living branch. And more, it doesn't just come to life, but it literally flourishes overnight. Is this story to be believed? Well, the author of Hebrews seemed to believe it.

As you read Scripture, it is time to ask yourself, "What do you believe?" Is God making up stories which are allegorical, or does He expect us to accept His word as true? The author of Hebrews, probably the apostle Paul, certainly believed these stories were not only true, but that they are the very words of God and thus wholly reliable.

Whether you can stomach it or not, I believe in a literal creation that literally came about in six days. I believe Enoch got translated to heaven without dying (as did Elijah the prophet), I believe that the Flood of Noah swept away all life on the earth except eight people, I believe that Aaron's rod budded, and I believe – without any doubt at all – that Jesus Christ died for my sins, was buried, and was raised to life by the power of God. And, I believe He did it even for me. Such wonderful and truthful stories are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Rods Before the Lord (verses 1-7)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The chapter starts with the standard address, most often used to begin a new thought. The context should be remembered, however. The previous chapter involved the incident with Korah in his rebellion and attempt to usurp the priesthood. That was dealt with magnificently by the Lord as He swallowed up the tents of some of the offenders, and as He sent out His fire to burn up others.

After that, the people of the congregation came forward and accused Moses and Aaron of having "killed the people of the Lord." That began a plague which then needed Aa-

ron's intercession in order to stop it. And it was stopped completely. Where death prevailed, the mediator's intercession arrested it. What a picture of Christ's perfect intercession for His people.

With those details recalled, the Lord has words to convey which will demonstrate that what occurred was from Him, and that Aaron is, in fact, chosen to mediate between the Lord and the people...

²“Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father's house,

What appears simple to follow brings in numerous questions. First, a *matteh*, or rod, is used as the symbol of a household. This was seen, for example, in Genesis 38 where the authority of Judah's house was assumed by Tamar. This was taken in pledge and included his signet, cord, and staff (rod).

Thus, when the term *matteh* is used, it speaks of a literal rod, but it is also a metonym. It speaks of the tribe itself just as “Hollywood” means a place, but it also stands for the movie industry. But the rod also is used figuratively as a support of life, such as bread. Here, the children of Israel are to provide a rod from “each father's house.” The “house” then would be the main tribe, such as Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and so on. One would assume that this is the staff of an individual who is to represent his clan, but it is argued by some that it isn't an old staff, but rather all are freshly cut staffs from the same tree and then designated to represent the house. The Hebrew is not specific, but I have always assumed it to be an old rod, already designated. However, being dogmatic is simply to bark into the wind. Another complication lies in the next words...

² (con't) all their leaders according to their fathers' houses—twelve rods.

The “leaders according to their father's houses” are probably the individuals named in Chapter 1. The term is *nasiy*, or prince, and it was also used of the twelve spies who went to search out Canaan, and so the term can mean any type of leader, but these are probably those most distinguished during the census. But, it then says, “twelve rods.” This brings in the question as to whether this is inclusive of Aaron's rod, as noted in verse 3, and that Ephraim and Manasseh are joined together in one rod. Or, are there twelve rods presented along with Aaron's thirteenth? At times, the two tribes under Joseph are listed as one people, such as in Deuteronomy 27:12. Again, being dogmatic would be a “ruff” position to cling to.

I would personally go with twelve plus one. This would eliminate any doubt that could later arise that one sub-tribe was purposely left out when it should not have been. Jacob specifically adopted these two, and his name was upon them. Deuteronomy 27 is a completely different situation which does not call for the same precision and care as this.

² (con't) **Write each man's name on his rod.**

The word is *kathav*, and it indicates to write, but that writing can be with a pen on the surface, or with a knife as an engraving. The Lord is said to have written out the Ten Commandments on the tablets of stone with His finger. Whatever way the inscription is made, it would be in a way which could not later be erased or leave any doubt about the authenticity of the particular rod. The name of the man, in this case, is representative of the tribe...

³ **And you shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi.**

al matteh levi – “on rod Levi.” As you can see, there is the difficulty of whether this is one of twelve, or if it is in addition to the twelve. No matter what, Aaron is designated by the Lord as the head of the tribe of Levi. He is Moses' older brother, and the family of Kohath has been designated as the main tribe, apart from birth order, in order to represent Levi. It then will set aside any future dispute in regards to all of Levi's positions within the tribe.

In writing Aaron's name, it is specifying that within Levi there is a separating of the classes of those who descend from him – priestly Levites and non-priestly Levites. The specificity here is similar to that of Ezekiel 37 –

“As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: ‘For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.’ Then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel, his companions.’ ¹⁷ Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.” Ezekiel 37:16, 17

Here in Numbers, there are not to be three staffs of the subgroups of Levi, nor merely one staff for all of Levi without distinction, but rather one staff for Levi, and Aaron represents the entire tribe. It is an act of grace, then, to have been bestowed this distinction. As Aaron was from Kohath, the second son of Levi, the choice of his placement was of the Lord, and not of natural descent.

As the claim had been made that the entire congregation was holy, the Lord determined to show who was, in fact, holy for the priesthood. The burning of the two hundred and fifty offenders still left a doubt in the people's minds, and so the Lord is preparing to settle this matter once and forever.

³ (con't) **For there shall be one rod for the head of *each* father's house.**

This statement is given to confirm that Aaron's staff stood representative of the entire house of Levi, along with the single staff of the rods of the other heads of the father's house, meaning the main tribes.

⁴ **Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you.**

Although a simple verse to understand, the words here actually give us insights into another question that has arisen elsewhere. That is whether Moses actually went into the Most Holy Place, or not. Here he is told to place them into the tent of meeting, but more specifically, he is told to put them "before the Testimony." That is the Ark of the Covenant into which the Tablets of the Testimony were placed. That means, in the Most Holy Place.

And so we can see that the restriction of entering this place, only once a year and only with blood, did not apply to Moses. He was given access to the Lord anytime. This is then confirmed with the words, "where I meet with you."

Moses went in to seek the Lord's counsel at his own will, and also at the call of the Lord. As the Lord says this is where He met with Moses, we don't need to speculate if it is outside of the veil or not. Moses was granted a special dispensation to come before the Lord, unlike any other, including Israel's high priest.

⁵ **And it shall be *that* the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom;**

Here the word is *parakh*. It speaks of the blossoming of a flower, the breaking forth or spreading of leprosy, and so on. It gives the sense of flourishing, and is often translated in that manner, such as when a righteous man flourishes. What is promised is a miracle of no small significance.

Whether the rod was cut and used for many years, or whether it was freshly cut to stand with a dozen other freshly cut rods, the impossibility of what will occur, other than by

divine intervention, is certain. It is to be a miracle in its truest sense, and like all other miracles, it is to serve a purpose beyond the event itself...

^{5 (con't)} **thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel,**

Here is a word not seen since the time of the Flood of Noah, *shakak*. It means to abate, just as the waters of the flood abated when God made the wind to pass over the earth. It comes from a root meaning to weave a trap, laying it up secretly. Thus, through that, the Lord is saying He will cause the complaints of the people to abate in such a way that they will never rise again, just as the waters of the flood were promised to never rise in that manner again. The complaints of the people will be secreted away...

^{5 (con't)} **which they make against you."**

The word "you" is plural. The Lord has said that He would get the complaints of the children of Israel from off of Him, but they are complaints which were directed to both Moses and Aaron. That was seen in the last section of the previous chapter –

"On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the Lord." Numbers 16:41

This then reveals the purpose of what is directed. The authority of Moses and the word he transmits to the people, and which included Aaron's priestly authority, was to be forever solidified through this act. And these two things were certain even almost fifteen hundred years later. The authority of both of them was regarded as absolute at the time of Christ. For Moses, it is seen in words such as –

"When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. ² And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.'

³ Then Jesus put out *His* hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

⁴ And Jesus said to him, 'See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'"

-Matthew 8:1-4

And for Aaron, it is seen in the following words –

““Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” ² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?” ⁴ And those who stood by said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?” ⁵ Then Paul said, “I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, ‘You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.’”” Acts 23:1-5

Despite seemingly contradictory, though the Law of Moses was often forgotten or disobeyed, the authority of the law and of its designated appointees was not forgotten. This is actually not uncommon though. We have laws which are forgotten or simply broken in our nation, but the authority of the law itself, and the authority of those who sit in positions of authority within the law, are still recognized as such. Here, the Lord is settling the matter of this authority henceforward, just as the civil war of the US settled it for those who thought to break themselves apart from it.

⁶ So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece,

Again, the account isn’t specific if these were tribal rods which had been maintained by the people, or if they were freshly cut rods then designated for each tribe by affixing the name of the leader. Either way though, each would be distinct enough to recognize by one and by all. There would be no way that Moses could manufacture a false miracle in this matter. Each rod was...

^{6 (con’t)} for each leader according to their fathers’ houses, twelve rods;

The words follow closely with those of verse two. They show an obedience to what was directed, but again, it is not known if there are eleven now, plus one, or if there are twelve rods which will then be added to by Aaron to make thirteen. The Latin Vulgate specifically said twelve plus one, but that is not made perfectly evident in the Hebrew, and it is not confirmed or denied in the next words either...

^{6 (con’t)} and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.

If this had simply said, “And the rod of Aaron,” it would indicate thirteen, but it says, “And the rod of Aaron was among their rods.” The word is *betok*, and it signifies, “in the midst of.” Twelve or thirteen. And so, if we get dogmatic, we might get bit later.

⁷ And Moses placed the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness.

The words follow closely after verse 4, and they show that what was directed was also followed through with. The NKJV, following after the KJV, incorrectly translates this and the next verse by calling it the tabernacle of witness. Rather, it is the tent of the Testimony. It is the same word, *eduth*, used in verses 4 and 10 which are translated as “Testimony.” In a lack of consistent translation, it is extremely hard to follow the narrative properly.

The reason for calling it the tent of the Testimony, instead of the more common tent of meeting, is because it is the Testimony which establishes both the Law of Moses and the Aaronic priesthood, which are on trial here. Moses is not conducting meetings with Lord at this time. Rather, the Lord is making a defense for the law which Israel agreed to, and for the authority of those as revealed in that law. The specificity of wording clues us in to what is on the mind of the Lord, and how He is dealing with affairs which arise.

*Life from death, how can it be?
Nothing such as this has been seen before
And yet our eyes haven't failed; we really did see
It is as if heaven has opened a brand new Door*

*What does it mean, that life has come from death?
And that One who was dead is now seen alive again?
Into His crucified body, has returned life's breath
What does this mean for the sons of men?*

*O God, we know that what we have seen is certainly true
And in Christ, death's door has been swung open wide
In the giving of Jesus Your Son, great things You did do
And because of Him, we shall with You eternally abide!*

II. A Sign Against the Rebels (verses 8-13)

⁸ Now it came to pass on the next day

These were *matteh*, or rods, used as tribal insignia. Regardless as to their age, they would be single rods, stripped bare and without root or branch on them. And yet, the words here say, *v'hi mimakhorat*, “and it came to pass on the next day.” It only means

this, and it cannot mean anything except the day following that mentioned in the preceding verse. And so what will now be described is truly miraculous...

8 (con't) that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness,

As with the preceding verse, the Hebrew says, “tent of the Testimony.” It is the Testimony which is being highlighted in this passage, being mentioned four times in just 13 verses. After this, the term will be used once in the next Chapter in regards to the duties of the Levites in relation to Aaron, and then not again until the book of Joshua.

8 (con't) and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted

Out of death has come life. As noted earlier, the *matteh*, or rod is at times used figuratively as indicating a support of life such as bread. Here the rod of Aaron is emblematic of Christ from whom life comes because of His death. Aaron’s priesthood is confirmed through the life which came from that which was dead.

Likewise, Christ’s priesthood came about when He proved His right to the position of High Priest through the fulfillment of the Law and the introduction of the New Covenant in His shed blood. From His death, life springs forth. It is His priestly duties, and His alone, that provides life to man.

The implication of the words that Levi’s rod had sprouted is that this is a unique occurrence not seen in the other rods. Only through the rod of Aaron, which looks forward to Christ, can life come. All other rods remained as dead as when they were severed from the tree. As far as the sprouting, it is the same word, *parakh*, that the Lord said would occur in verse 5. The rod had gone from a clean staff of wood, to that which had broken forth and flourished. But there is more...

8 (con't) and put forth buds,

v’yotse perakh, “and brought out buds.” This definitively shows that there is a Force behind the event. One might dismiss a rod sprouting, as if there was enough life in it to put out a sprout, but nothing further could be expected. This rod had sprouted and put forth buds...

8 (con't) had produced blossoms

v'yatsets tsiyts – “**and** had blossomed blossoms.” One can feel the excitement in the words, as if the marvel is more than words can adequately express, but which must be mentally visualized by the reader. But there is yet more...

⁸ (con't) **and yielded ripe almonds.**

v'yigmol sheqedim – the word *gamal* comes from a root signifying to treat another person well or ill. It is used to describe the weaning of a child, or a just reward, such as when the psalmist says, “The Lord **has rewarded** me according to my righteousness.” It is an end result based on events which led to it.

Thus, when an almond tree has fruit, it is a reward of the time of production necessary for the fruit to come forth. If an almond tree could speak, it might say, “The fruit are the reward of my time and labors.” There is the sense, then, of the Lord dealing bountifully with the rod of Aaron in putting forth *shaqed*, or almonds.

That word comes from *shaqad*, meaning to watch over, or be on the lookout. The reason the almond is so named is because of its unusually long cycle from bud to fruit which encompasses the entire harvest season in Israel.

The bud develops from November to February. The blossom period goes from February to March – the earliest of all the trees. From March to June the almond transforms from blossom to hull. The harvest season then goes from August to October. At that time, the cycle begins again. Thus, the almond *watches over* the entire year, from beginning to end.

And yet, the miracle of the rod of Aaron is that the entire cycle was accomplished in a single night. It signifies that the Lord was watching over the rod of Aaron, and thus over the Aaronic priesthood. And in turn, it is a witness to Aaron that his priesthood was to be in constant watch over their duties, day unto day, and throughout the year.

In Ecclesiastes, the blossoming of the almond tree is said to reflect the aged condition of man. The almond blossoms are white just as an aged person's hair is white. Following on with that, white hair is reflective of honor in Leviticus 19. And in the book of Jeremiah, we read Scripture's last use of the almond –

“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘What do you see, Jeremiah?’
‘I see the branch of an almond tree,’ I replied.

¹² The Lord said to me, ‘You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.’” Jeremiah 1:11, 12 (NIV)

The miracle here is similar to that of the making of wine from water by Jesus. An entire process was brought from conception to full maturity in an instant, as if creation itself had taken place. To deny the Genesis creation account is no less egregious of an error than it is to deny the giving forth of fruit by the rod of Aaron, or bringing forth wine from the water jars of Cana by the same Lord. But the symbolism, for now, is revealed in Christ. Not only did He come forth from death, but He is the One who initiates, and who sees through until its completion, the entire span of the covenant which He has introduced. The Lord began the covenant of Moses, which included the priesthood of Aaron, and He saw it through to its bearing of fruit on the cross of Calvary, thus ending that covenant.

He further then introduced the New Covenant, and He will see it through until its end. However, as His covenant is said to be eternal, then there is no end to be anticipated. His priesthood is eternal, and His people have the promise of an eternal walk before God with Him watching over them during the entire, endless expanse of time.

This is actually spoken of by David in the 110th Psalm where he first uses the term, *matteh*, or rod, of Lord’s strength out of Zion. He then says that this will lead to the priesthood of Christ being on the order of Melchizedek which is then explained by the author of Hebrews as being an eternal priesthood. Here are David’s words –

““The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

² The Lord shall send the **rod** of Your strength out of Zion. (**matteh**)

Rule in the midst of Your enemies!

³ Your people *shall be* volunteers

In the day of Your power;

In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,

You have the dew of Your youth.

⁴ The Lord has sworn

And will not relent,

“You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.””” Psalm 110:1-4

David, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke forth words which looked back to Melchizedek, which are sprinkled with hints of Christ's priesthood from here in Numbers, and which then look forward to that eternal position described in Hebrews and which will be realized forever and ever.

Adam Clarke poetically looks to the budding, blossoming, and fruit-bearing of the rod as representing a believer's life in Christ now –

“The buds of good desires, the blossoms of holy resolutions and promising professions, and the ripe fruit of faith, love, and obedience, all spring from the priesthood of the Lord Jesus.” Adam Clarke

And this is true. Because of Christ's ministry, our lives in Christ are made possible.

⁹ Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord to all the children of Israel;

The same word, *v'yotse*, or “and brought out” from the previous verse is used again. The Lord, through the rod, brought out buds which produced blossoms and almonds. Moses has now brought out the rods from before the Lord, after His miraculous work, and revealed what He did to all the people. The Lord accomplishes the miracle, and Moses reveals the miracle to the people.

It is reflective of Christ the Man who, through the power of the Lord, revealed the work of the Lord to the people of Israel. He filled both roles, being the God/Man; the Lord incarnate.

^{9 (con't)} and they looked, and each man took his rod.

“And they” is referring to “all the children of Israel.” Whoever was present, be it only the leaders as representatives, or anyone who desired to see, the proof of the miracle was made manifest to Israel.

Nobody could doubt that an amazingly marvelous miracle had been revealed, and nobody could doubt its significance. The Lord was watching from moment to moment over the position of Moses and Aaron, and in regards to the authority they possessed.

¹⁰ And the Lord said to Moses, “Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony,

The rod of Aaron is not mentioned again in the Old Testament. What happened to it is unknown except as is mentioned in extra-biblical writings. However, it is mentioned in Hebrews 9:4 where the author states that the rod, along with the gold pot with manna, and the tablets of the covenant, were all kept in the Ark.

In this, we have several pictures of Christ in one. He is the Giver of the Law, seen in the Tablets of the Testimony. He is the Embodiment of the law, seen in the Ark. He is the Manna, which was said to be rested in the Ark. When we come to Christ we are thus rested in Christ and our status before God changes –

“For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Colossians 3:3

And in the rod of Aaron, Christ is the One who watches over and accomplishes the entire process of priestly duties for His people, from the beginning to its completion.

We can only speculate on what happened to the rod. As Hebrews tells us it was placed within the Ark, and as 1 Kings 8:9 says that there was nothing in the Ark except the two tablets at the time of Solomon, then this rod and the jar of manna may have been removed and lost when the Ark was captured by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 5. But that is only speculation. To be dogmatic would be to pointlessly wag one’s tail. What matters in Scripture is the account at hand. For the time being, it was to be brought back before the Testimony, specifically...

10 (con’t) to be kept as a sign against the rebels,

la’mishmereth l’oth livne meri – “for a charge, for a sign to the sons of rebellion.” A charge is something to be maintained as a guard watching over his patrol. An *oth*, or a sign, is something that stands as representative of something else. Thus, the rod of Aaron was to be kept as a guard and to be brought forth as a sign against the sons of *meri*, or rebellion, if needed.

That is a new word, coming from *marah*, meaning contentious or rebellious. Should they come forth in this manner again, the rod could be brought forth as a sign of the Lord’s approval of Moses and Aaron and against the rebellious faction. No record of that being needed is ever recorded. Further, this is hinted at next...

10 (con’t) that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.”

The word *tlunah*, or grumbling, was introduced at the time of the giving of the manna in Exodus 16 when the people grumbled about their hunger. It was seen six times in that chapter, once in Numbers 14 when the people complained about not entering Canaan after the bad report of the spies, and it was used twice in today's passage. This is its last use in Scripture.

In verse 5, the Lord said He would rid Himself of the complaints of the people which they made against Aaron and Moses. So it is. With the departure of this word, so the Lord rid Himself of what the word signifies. The Lord said this was to keep the people from dying, and at least in this manner, it came about. There are plenty of other ways to needle the Lord, and Israel, in its continued history would seek out new ways to do so. But the complaints against His established lawgiver and high priest are ended.

¹¹ Thus did Moses; just as the Lord had commanded him, so he did.

Just as Moses is later recorded as a faithful servant in all of God's house, so he accomplished this task as directed by the Lord. The rod would remain before the Lord and before the Testimony of the Lord as a charge and a sign.

¹² So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely we die, we perish, we all perish!"

khen gavaenu abadnu kulanu abadnu – "Behold! We have expired, we have perished, all of us, we have perished." The words are quickly stated without any connecting words, and reveal utter desperation at the situation. The word translated as "perish," is *gava*. It gives the sense of breathing out one's last.

Though self-inflicted, there has been one catastrophe after another. The people continue to fail to understand that the law is written and it is binding upon them. They keep going around looking for an exit to it, as if it is something that is more of a hindrance to be cast off than a permanent and burdensome yoke which is forever tied to them. But this is exactly what the apostles called the law in Acts 15. Paul calls it a bondage of slavery in Galatians. The Pulpit Commentary rightly states –

"These are the last wailings of the great storm which had raged against Moses and Aaron, which had roared so loudly and angrily at its height, which was now sobbing itself out in the petulant despair of defeated and disheartened men, cowed indeed, but not convinced, fearful to offend, yet not loving to obey." Pulpit Commentary

They are right in saying that they will all expire and perish. Leviticus has told them that the man who does the things of the law will live by them. They have tried to get away from the law, and they have been destroyed. They will try to live out the law in the many generations to come, and they will all die under the law. But the law also provides avenues to obtain mercy, such as the Day of Atonement. Israel is being schooled on their need for Christ, and we are being schooled through Israel to stay away from the law and head directly to Christ.

¹³ Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die.

Kol ha'qarev ha'qarev – “all the approaching, the approaching.” The words are in the typical Hebrew way of providing emphasis. They are exclaiming that without fail, coming near means death.

And here the term is *mishkan Yehovah*, or tabernacle of Yehovah. It has only been used once so far, in verse 16:9, when Moses spoke to Korah about his disobedience towards the Lord. Here, the people moan that “whoever” comes near it must die. This is untrue in one sense. It is only if a person approached the Lord’s tabernacle who was not a priest, who was to die.

However, it is true in another sense. Because the tabernacle of the Lord extends to cover all the people of Israel due to their nearness to Him in covenant relationship, if they were defiled through sin, they would, in fact, die. This was true anywhere within the camp of the Lord, and that will be dealt with in Chapter 19. For now, though, their thoughts stem directly from the disobedience of Korah’s rebellion.

For any but those designated to come near the tabernacle of the Lord, it is an absolutely true statement. It is not true, though, for the priests or the Levites in the proper performance of their duties. And it is exactly those duties which will be laid out in the coming verses of Chapter 18, including the restrictions and penalties for those who come near but who are not authorized.

^{13 (fin)} Shall we all utterly die?”

ha-im tamnu ligvoa. The exact meaning of these words is debated, and so one should not be overly dogmatic and snarl at others about it. But, the word *tamam* means to finish or to complete, and so the intent may be, “Shall we ever finish expiring?” The question is asked in relation to coming near the tabernacle of the Lord. The tabernacle of the Lord is His dwelling. It is the place of access to Him, and is thus representative of heaven.

Only certain people were allowed to come near, and only under certain conditions of purity, and at set times according to law. The people had attempted to go around Aaron and access the Lord without him, and that proved fatal.

But the people's question now signifies a desire to still come near the tabernacle of the Lord nonetheless. It is the constant condition of man, to want to draw near to God. This is what religion is, an attempt to draw near to Him. And there are lots of religions out there, claiming that their way makes it possible.

However, God – not man – determines what access to Him will be like. It is not by our will, but by Christ. And so, to bring an answer to the question, "Shall we ever finish expiring?", Christ came. We saw in Exodus, again in Leviticus, and so far it has continued in Numbers, that the *mishkan Yehovah*, or tabernacle of Yehovah, intricately and absolutely pictures Christ in every detail.

And that is why in John 1:14 it says that He came and tabernacled among us. Because the people could not draw near to the tabernacle of Yehovah, the tabernacle of Yehovah came near to them. It is His life which brings about the access that man has, in every culture and in every age desired and attempted to make possible through their own efforts and means. But the impossibility of that is found in one three letter word, sin.

Our sin has separated us from the Creator. But our Creator took care of that in the giving of His Son, who became sin, meaning our sin, so that we could become the righteousness of God in Him. Imagine that! Access is restored, we have a Mediator who makes that possible, and it is granted to any who will just believe. When we opened today, I told you that I believed the words of the Bible. That is because in it is found the cure to our defect. In it is found JESUS.

Closing Verse: *"For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God."* Hebrews 7:18, 19

Next Week: Numbers 18:1-19 *The Lord willing, we will continue the chapter until it is done. But next week is...* (The Levitical Priesthood, Part I) (34th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is

there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Life From Death

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words He was to him then relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel
And get from them from each father’s house a rod
All their leaders according to their fathers’ houses—twelve rods
Write each man’s name on his rod, even if his name is Todd

And you shall write Aaron’s name on the rod of Levi
For there shall be one rod for the head of each father’s house by and by

Then you shall place them
In the tabernacle of meeting, so you shall do
Before the Testimony
Where I meet with you

And it shall be that the rod of the man
Whom I choose will blossom, so it shall do
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 apiece as told to do
For each leader according to their fathers’ houses, twelve rods
And the rod of Aaron was among their rods too

And Moses placed the rods before the Lord
In the tabernacle of witness, according to His word

Now it came to pass on the next day
That Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, so he did do
And behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi
Had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms
— — —and yielded ripe almonds too

Then Moses brought out all the rods
From before the Lord, after he had a look
To all the children of Israel
And they looked, and each man his rod took

And the Lord said to Moses
“Bring Aaron’s rod back before the Testimony, and here is why
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 had commanded him the Lord
So he did according to His word

So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying
“Surely we die, we perish, we all perish!”, was their cry
Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die
Shall we all utterly die?”

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 18:1-19 **(THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD, PART I)**

The term “Levitical priesthood” is only actually found in the New Testament, in Hebrews 7. However, it is used to describe the priesthood of Israel because all of the priesthood, and those who served under it, whether priest or not, were Levites.

In Chapter 18 of Numbers, there is quite a bit of repetition from Exodus, Leviticus, and what has already been said in Numbers. And from this chapter, there will be more repetition and further clarification in both Numbers and Deuteronomy. Each step is a logical progression of thought based on the circumstances of what has been presented, and what needs to be both newly addressed, or readdressed to clear up, or expand on, what has been said.

This is obviously so, because even since the giving of the instructions for what has already been presented, there have been blatant violations of those laws. Deaths have resulted, and people have moaned and complained. With each such incident, the Lord must further expand upon His word.

As Chapter 17 ended, and in a verse which we will cite in the sermon today, the people were left in a mental state of confused hopelessness. This wasn't the Lord's fault, but rather it was theirs for not paying heed to Him. But to address and correct future thoughts such as they had, the Lord now continues to explain the responsibilities and the rights of both the priests and the Levites. Why is this? It is to lead us to a greater understanding of Christ. From Charles Ellicott's commentary on Numbers 17, he says –

The special manifestations of Divine power which the Israelites had witnessed excited within them salutary emotions of awe and of anxious apprehension, but do not seem to have awakened within them any corresponding sense of gratitude either for their deliverance from the plague, or for the privileges which they enjoyed by reason of the Divine presence amongst them. The true answer to their inquiry whether they were doomed utterly to perish is contained in the following chapter, in which the priesthood of Christ is typically set forth as bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary, and thus making reconciliation for the sins and securing the acceptance of the imperfect service of His people. Charles Ellicott

Text Verse: *“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”*

-Hebrews 9:11-15

Our text verse took about eight typed pages to explain in my Hebrews commentary, but it shows that these things being presented in the Old Testament merely pointed to what Christ would do in order to bring about true restoration for His faithful, and what that means in regards to our standing before God now. Some of that is seen in our first seven verses today.

After that the last twenty-five deal with what is given to the priests, and also the Levites from the children of Israel. Of these things, the Lord will say, “I have given,” several times. One only gives what one possesses. Thus, these things rightfully belong to Him. As they include offerings, parts of offerings, tithes, and so on, then these things – given to the priests and Levites as the best of all that Israel possesses – are given as types of Christ.

The priests, represented by Aaron, picture Christ. The Levites, representing the firstborn, picture Christ, the sacrifices and offerings – in whole or in part – picture Christ. He is the First and Best of all of these things, and God has given them, in Christ, as a Gift to the world.

Coming to repetitive verses like this, we need to keep remembering this. The finest that God has to offer, He did so in the giving of His Son. And before that, He gave types and pictures of the imperfect services of His imperfect people. Remember, as it is all about Jesus, these things are so much easier to listen to and to assimilate. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Holiness of God (verses 1-7)

¹Then the Lord said to Aaron:

In what is a highly unusual introduction, only Aaron is addressed. In fact, it is only seen five times that the Lord speaks only to Aaron without Moses even being mentioned in the words. The first was in Exodus 4:27 when the Lord said to Aaron to go into the wilderness to meet Moses.

The Lord then spoke to Aaron alone in Leviticus 10:8 after the death of his two sons, and in relation to priestly responsibilities. Now, the Lord says these words to Aaron. He will speak words to him in verse 18:8, and He will have more words to say to him in verse 18:20.

Further, here it uses the word *amar*, said, not *daber*, spoke. Thus, instead of it being a directive simply to be acted upon, it indicates that the task requires a partnership and people working together. The context of what is now presented is that the words follow immediately after the account of Aaron's rod which budded, blossomed, and bore fruit, confirming his position as the high priest of Israel. The priesthood was to him, and to his sons after him. As the chapter closed, the last words said –

“So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! ¹³Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die. Shall we all utterly die?’” Numbers 17:12, 13

Death is the result of sin, and sin is imputed through the giving of law. If no law exists, then sin is not imputed. God gave Adam a law, just one, and it was in the negative, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16, 17).

The law concerning the priesthood has been given, the law concerning the sanctuary has been given, the law concerning the atonement of sin has been given. If no transgressions of the law are made, then no sin will be imputed, but that is not the nature of things. Thus, there is a need for the bearing of iniquity by someone in order to handle what will assuredly come about.

That responsibility, and what accompanies it has been explained, but now it is to be reexplained, consolidated, and what goes with it will next be expanded upon as well. It is this which is to be presented, and it is to Aaron alone that the words are spoken...

1 (con't) **“You**

It is second person singular. The words are being said directly to Aaron alone to be acted upon by him, but also...

1 (con't) **and your sons**

The directive includes action by his sons. What is implied here from the context of the passage is that this means his descendants after him, and not merely his two living sons. All of his sons born after him during the time of the covenant are included.

1 (con't) **and your father’s house with you**

u-beit abikha – “and house your father.” Aaron is from the tribe of Levi, and of the house of Kohath. It is the Kohathites that were given the responsibility of service concerning the most holy things related to the sanctuary. This is seen in the words that they...

1 (con't) **shall bear the iniquity *related to the sanctuary,***

The word is *ha'miqdash*, or “the sanctuary.” It is a general term normally used to describe the entire sanctuary, but here – because the priests and Kohathites have been singled out – it is speaking of the most holy things. Only the priests could see or touch them, and only the Kohathites could bear them for transportation.

To bear the iniquity of these means that they were responsible for the guilt of the offenses committed by the people against the holiness of God. In Aaron’s case, he was ultimately responsible for this. He would perform the rituals for atonement for sin for himself and on behalf of the people, such as on the Day of Atonement.

Further, he would bear the iniquity which came from imperfection found in the service of the priests and Levites, and from the offerings brought forth by the people. This was explicitly seen in Exodus 28:36-38 –

“You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, *like* the engraving of a signet:

HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

³⁷ And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. ³⁸ So it shall be on Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy

gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.”

^{1 (con't)} **and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity *associated with your* priesthood.**

The iniquity of those things pertaining to the priesthood alone was to be borne solely by the priesthood. When pollution or defilement came, it was their duty to perform the necessary purifications, demanded by the law, in order to expunge the defilement.

² **Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi,**

u-gam eth akhekha matteh levi – “And also your brothers of the rod of Levi.” That the previous verse was speaking only of the Kohathites and not of all the Levites is confirmed in the use of the term “house,” and also that only now are those of the extended rod, or tribe, of Levi mentioned. That is further described as...

^{2 (con't)} **the tribe of your father,**

shevet avikha – “scepter of your father.” It is a different word, again used to describe those who branch off from Levi, and thus the entire tribe. They are designated so...

^{2 (con't)} **that they may be joined with you**

v'yilavu alekha – “and that they may be attached to you.” It is as much of a pun as anything else. The word *lavah* is the basis for the name Levi. It is what Leah called out when she conceived him –

“She conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now this time my husband will become **attached** to me, because I have borne him three sons.’ Therefore his name was called Levi.” Genesis 29:34

The entire tribe of “Attached” is to be attached to Aaron, and this was for a specific reason...

^{2 (con't)} **and serve you while you and your sons *are* with you**

It was the responsibility of the tribe of Levi to serve Aaron and his sons. They were, as stated earlier in Numbers 3, given to them for this purpose –

“Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. ⁷ And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. ⁸ Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle. ⁹ And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they *are* given entirely to him from among the children of Israel.” Numbers 3:6-9

² (con’t) **before the tabernacle of witness.**

The translation is not accurate. It says, *liphne ohel ha’edut* – “before *the* tent of the Testimony.” It is referring to the tent where the tablets of the Testimony are kept. It is thus speaking of the sacred nature of the law and thus the need for holiness before the law. The words are given to confirm what was said in verse 1 about bearing the iniquity related to the sanctuary and the priesthood. Sin is imputed where there is law. The law is recorded on the tablets.

³ **They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle;**

With a lack of precision in translation, error in doctrine is inevitable. The word, again, says “tent,” not “tabernacle.” With the exception of the family of Kohath, during the conduct of specific duties, only the priests served within the tabernacle. The Levites served outside of the tent, attending to the needs of Aaron. That is then exactly explained in the next clause...

³ (con’t) **but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar,**

And again, the translation is wrong. It is not “the articles of the sanctuary,” but rather the holy articles, meaning those things that were set apart as holy and which the priests alone could touch, and which included the brazen altar. They could minister for the priests at the altar, but they were never to touch it...

³ (con’t) **lest they die—they and you also.**

This was explained in verses such as Numbers 4:15 –

“And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them*; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.”

The words, “and you also” are plural. It is speaking of any priest who would be so careless as to not protect the charge which had been entrusted to him. The Lord would hold him accountable for such lax or inattentive care towards his responsibilities.

⁴They shall be joined with you

v’nilvu alekha – “and shall be attached with you.” The “you” is singular. The Lord is speaking directly to Aaron as the designated high priest, and thus who has the overall responsibility for all priestly matters. Again, the Lord uses the word *lavah*, or “attached.” It is the last time that this type of pun will be used with the word where it is tied into the name Levi.

^{4 (con’t)} and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle;

In both instances, it says, “tent,” not “tabernacle.” Aaron is being granted full rights to the service of the Levites. There is to be no question as to his right to determine their individual duties in accord with the overall guidelines which have been specified for the Levites. This allowance is for, and only for, the Levites...

^{4 (con’t)} but an outsider shall not come near you.

The “you” here is now plural. No one other than a Levite is to come near any priest or Levite to accomplish any duty which is reserved for them alone. It is the Levites who are to minister for the priests and to the congregation in place of the firstborn. This was first stated in Numbers 1 –

“The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies; ⁵³ but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.” Numbers 1:52, 53

This was then further explained in Numbers 3:7 –

“And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle.”

There is a double-pronged purpose for the service of the Levites. One prong points inward to the charge of the sanctuary and the service of the priests; the other points outward to the needs of the whole congregation.

⁵ And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar,

Again, the translation is wrong. It says, *ha'qodesh*, "the holy," not "the sanctuary." It is referring to that which is holy and not acceptable for any but the priests to attend to (the "you" in these words is plural). This included the charge of the brazen altar which is set apart as most holy. Unfortunately, the NKJV, which follows after the KJV, is literally riddled with error. Without precision in translation, contradictions arise elsewhere. The entire purpose of these exacting and meticulous instructions is...

^{5 (con't)} that there *may* be no more wrath on the children of Israel.

The words are given to remind all of the death which has already surrounded the care of these things. Nadab and Abihu had been consumed. That was followed by those in Korah's rebellion. The Lord has spoken, the people have failed to heed, and the wrath of the Lord has been elicited. Now, He is speaking directly to Aaron as the high priest to ensure that "no more wrath would come out on the children of Israel," of whom he was included.

Before going on, it is the perfect time to remember what these things are all pointing to. The sanctuary, and everything associated with it points to Christ, the God/Man. Some things point to His deity, some to His humanity.

The priests, represented by Aaron, point to Christ as our Mediator between God and man. The Levites point to Christ as the Firstborn of God who serves before God and on behalf of the people. Again and again, there are admonitions and warnings that death will result for negligence in the conduct of the duties.

This is a sober warning that God is holy, and that none can approach Him apart from His representative. All others will be destroyed. It is Christ Jesus, and He alone, who can and does minister for us before God. Let us not forget this. There is one, and only one way of having a right relationship with God, and that is through the God/Man, who is our POC with God.

⁶ Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel;

The same sentiment is said in Numbers 3:12, but here the words, “your brethren the Levites” is added in. This is explained by the same term being used in verse 2 of this chapter. The Lord is keeping the sacred duties in one family to maintain cohesion within the service of the sanctuary, and thus in the service of Him. The Levites are attached to the priests, who are then attached to the Lord, just as Christ the Man is attached to Christ who is God and who serves His role within the Godhead.

⁶ (con't) **they are a gift to you, given by the Lord, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting.**

Here is the first use of *mattannah*, or gift, in Numbers. The Levites are said to be a gift to the priests (you is plural) by the Lord so that they could, in turn, perform their work without hindrance. As is next specified...

⁷ **Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve.**

The words “everything at the altar and behind the veil” are given as an all-encompassing term. The brazen altar stood outside the tent of meeting, the *paroket*, or veil, stood between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. From the daily regular duties of all the priests, to the once-annually conducted ritual on the Day of Atonement by the high priest, they were to attend to all aspects of their priesthood. Because they were freed from the regular duties given to the Levites. They were instructed to serve...

⁷ (con't) **I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service,**

The term *mattannah*, or gift, is again stated by the Lord. The very priesthood itself is given as a gift of service to Aaron. It is a beautiful picture of what is later stated about Christ Jesus in Hebrews 10 –

““Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin
You had no pleasure.

⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’”” Hebrews 10:5-7

Everything about these verses demonstrates the grace of God. The Levites are a gift, and thus a grace to the priests. The priesthood is given as a gift to the priests, and thus it too is a grace. And even the duties of the Levites, given to them instead of the firstborn of Israel, is a gift.

With this understanding, the coming verses show the greatness of these gifts to those who were granted them apart from merit. But, such is the case with any gift we possess, and which is used for the service of the Lord. Paul explains that in 1 Corinthians 4 –

“For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?” 1 Corinthians 4:7

⁷ (con’t) **but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”**

These are the exact same words of warning from Numbers 1:51. Again, the holiness of God demands that only he who has been specifically appointed to approach Him can live. For us, only Christ has been so appointed, and thus any outside of Christ remained condemned, and he shall die. God is approached on His terms, not ours.

*You shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary
Upon Your priesthood, it shall fall
Those who are unclean but who would come to Me
You shall bear it for one and for all*

*And You shall attend to the duties of the Sanctuary
And the duties of the altar, that terrible cross
That no wrath may come upon those who belong to Me
You shall bear it, and of them there shall be no loss*

*Behold, I have taken You from among all the firstborn
Only You are the First-begotten of Me
Your body shall be bruised and it shall be torn
But through it, You shall make holy those for my Sanctuary*

II. A Covenant of Salt Forever (verses 8-19)

⁸ **And the Lord spoke to Aaron:**

The words now say “spoke” instead of “said.” This indicates instruction without any need for a partnership or working together. The Lord is simply issuing forth directives.

8 (con’t) “Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever.

This is a confirmation of what was stated in Leviticus 7:34 & 35 and elsewhere. The heave offerings were considered as holy gifts. The use of the possessive pronoun, “My heave offerings,” shows that these actually belonged to the Lord, but were given to the priests as a consecrated portion in perpetuity.

9 This shall be yours of the most holy things reserved from the fire:

The idea here is that everything offered to the Lord was presented to Him through fire, burnt up as an offering to Him. In this, it was most holy. However, those things which symbolically fell from the first, being reserved for the priests, was considered as most holy...

9 (con’t) every offering of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they render to Me, shall be most holy for you and your sons.

Each of these has been previously described in Leviticus, including that which was reserved for the priests. These are considered most holy, and thus could only be eaten by the priests. The reason for the repetition here, and in the verses to come, is specifically because of the incident of the rebellions which had taken place. The deaths, and the fears of the people concerning further death, necessitated that the priestly and Levitical duties be described. And these now explain the benefits afforded to them based on their duties.

10 In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.

The words are not indicating the place where these were to be eaten, but that they are to be eaten as most holy items. This, in turn, means both the location and those who are allowed to eat them.

¹¹ “This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

Again, these things have been detailed in Leviticus. These, not being most holy, could be eaten by anyone in the priest’s house, be it family or permanently bonded servant, but not hired hand. But, anyone unclean could not partake of them.

¹² “All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord, I have given them to you.

Here is a new word, *yits-har*, or oil. It is related to the word *tsohar*, or double light, meaning noontime, and thus it is fresh, new, glistening oil. Along with that is *tirosh*, or fresh, sweet wine, and *dagan*, or grain. For the priest, they were all to be the *khelev*, or “fat,” meaning the best of them. Of these came the *reshitam*, or firstfruits, which were offered by the people to the Lord. All of these were set apart for the priests. But there is more...

¹³ Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

This would be the first of any other fruits of the land. It might include figs, durian, pomegranates, apples, dates, pears, etc. The presentation of these is explained in Deuteronomy 26:1-11. All brought to the Lord were to become the property of the priests, and any clean person in the house could partake of them. And also...

¹⁴ “Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.

The word is *kherem*. It signifies anything which is set apart to God, such as by vow or dedicated, including certain land affected by the Year of Jubilee as noted in Leviticus 27. And also...

¹⁵ “Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.

These things have been mandated already. All males that open the womb are noted in Exodus 13:2 and they are given to the priests. However, it emphatically states, “redeeming, you shall redeem the firstborn of man.” That was accomplished through a five

shekel payment as will be next noted. The firstborn of unclean animals could be redeemed, but if they were not, Exodus 13 and Leviticus 27 have already been given to explain how to deal with them.

¹⁶ And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

This is specifically speaking of the redemption of a firstborn male person. This was done when the child was one month old, and it was for five shekels of silver. Five being the number of grace, and silver picturing redemption. This is then defined as twenty *gerahs* according to the sanctuary shekel, which was the standard. The number twenty in Scripture signifies “expectancy.” There was to be the expectancy that the shekel used was appropriate to the standard.

¹⁷ But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem; they *are* holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat *as* an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord.

These particular clean animals were set apart to God and could not be redeemed. They were considered holy and thus they were to be sacrificed, and their blood splashed – not sprinkled – on the altar. After this, their fat was to be burned up as prescribed elsewhere. The entire process, from type of animal to what is done with it, pictures the Person and work of Christ.

In Numbers 3:41, the firstborn of the livestock of the Levites was taken instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel. Now it says that these cannot be redeemed from among the children of Israel, and that they had to be sacrificed. There is no contradiction though.

Here, the firstborn are to be sacrificed as the Lord’s. Whereas in Chapter 3, it was speaking of all of the animals which were alive at the time of the census. The Lord took them instead of the firstborn of the animals which belonged to Israel. After that, all later firstborn still belong to the Lord and must be sacrificed, have their blood splashed, and their fat portions burned...

¹⁸ And their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours.

This must be clarified. Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 15 all state that the owner of the firstborn is to eat his own firstborn. He cannot use it for any other purposes, but he is instead to eat it. Therefore, the second clause of this verse explains the first.

The wave breast and the right thigh, being sacred portions of the firstborn animal, are always reserved for the priests. This is explained in the words of the next verse, saying they are a part of the heave offerings.

The rest of the animal is taken by the family for their own consumption. Only in the third year is the entire animal, along with all of the third-year tithes, to be given over entirely. That is recorded in Deuteronomy 14. The subject of tithes, and how they are to be handled under the law, will be discussed in detail in next week's sermon – whoo hooo, popcorn will be served.

¹⁹ “All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever;

The term “heave offerings” is an all-encompassing term which was first stated in verse 8. It was then further defined in verse 11 to include the wave offerings of the children of Israel. Thus, everything mentioned since verse 8 is set apart as holy offerings to the Lord. They have then been given, as grace, to Aaron and his sons and daughters, with the noted exceptions stated in these verses, for the entire duration of the Levitical priesthood. Here, the word “forever” is *olam*, and it signifies, “to the vanishing point,” not forever in the ultimate sense. When the covenant ended in Christ, so did this ordinance.

^{19 (con't)} it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord with you and your descendants with you.”

This is the first time the term, “a covenant of salt” is referred to in Scripture. However, it was alluded to in some measure in Leviticus 2, where it said –

“And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.” Leviticus 2:13

Salt produces and signifies incorruption. It strengthens the food in which it is, and also preserves it. Thus, it is a sign of faithfulness and covenant keeping. It goes so far as to indicate the perpetual nature of the covenant. It will never be broken as long as it is in

force. In regards to this, then, it stayed in effect until Christ came and fulfilled the law, and annulled it through His shed blood.

But this then only looks forward to that greater and more perfect covenant which is found in Christ. Previous sermons have revealed that every detail of what is seen and repeated here looks forward, in type and picture, to the coming Christ. Those things which were newly introduced did as well in that they were the best of what God gave to His priests, just as He has given the best of what He has through Christ who then ministers between Him and His people.

And as the Mosaic Covenant only looked forward to the New Covenant in Christ, then the good things found in Him are given as a covenant of salt, truly forever. As our text verse said today, in Christ, there is an eternal inheritance. It is one which is perfect because it comes from God who is perfect. And it is one which is eternal, because God, who made the covenant in Christ, is eternal.

It is with the greatest joy that we can read these passages, see how God was faithful to keep His word through until the end, and then give something far better to those who have anticipated Him, even since the first moments of man's existence on this earth. Let us be grateful for this, and let us rejoice in what He has done for those who have been redeemed through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Closing Verse: *“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Hebrews 7:18, 19*

Next Week: Numbers 18:20-32 The subject matter of this next sermon gets me hot under the collar, it is true... (The Levitical Priesthood, Part II) (35th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Levitical Priesthood

Then the Lord said to Aaron:

“You and your sons and your father's house, so it shall be

With you shall bear the iniquity
Related to the sanctuary

And you and your sons with you, let this be understood
Shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood

Also bring with you your brethren
Of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, yes those ones
That they may be joined with you and serve you
While you and your sons...

Are with you before the tabernacle of witness
As to you I now address

They shall attend to your needs
And all the needs of the tabernacle; it shall be so
But they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary
And the altar, lest they die—they and you also

They shall be joined with you
And attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting too
For all the work of the tabernacle
But an outsider shall not come near you

And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary
And the duties of the altar, as to you as I now tell
That there may be no more wrath
On the children of Israel

Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren
The Levites from among the children of Israel
They are a gift to you, given by the Lord
To do the work of the tabernacle of meeting as to you I now tell

Therefore you and your sons with you
Shall attend to your priesthood
For everything at the altar and behind the veil
And you shall serve as it is understood

I give your priesthood as a gift for service to you
But the outsider who comes near shall be put to death
———so you shall do

And the Lord spoke to Aaron:

“Here, I Myself have also given you, as to you I now tell
Charge of My heave offerings
All the holy gifts of the children of Israel

I have given them as a portion to you and your sons
As an ordinance forever, my holy ones

This shall be yours of the most holy things
Reserved from the fire: such shall be the proffering
Every offering of theirs
Every grain offering and every sin offering

And every trespass offering which they render to Me
Shall be most holy for you and your sons, so shall it be

In a most holy place you shall eat it; so you shall do
Every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you

This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift
With all the wave offerings of the children of Israel
I have given them to you
And your sons and daughters with you, as to you I now tell

As an ordinance forever, so to you I submit
Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it

All the best of the oil
All the best of the new wine too
And the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord
I have given them to you

Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land
Which they bring to the Lord, yours shall be
Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it

Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours as directed by Me

Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh
Which they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast
———shall be yours too
Nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem
And the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem
———so shall you do

And those redeemed of the devoted things
You shall redeem when one month old as directed by Me
According to your valuation, for five shekels of silver
According to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is gerahs twenty

But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep
Or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem
———according to My word
They are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar
And burn their fat as an offering made by fire
———for a sweet aroma to the Lord

And their flesh shall be yours, by and by
Just as are yours the wave breast and the right thigh

“All the heave offerings of the holy things
Which the children of Israel offer to the Lord
I have given to you and your sons and daughters
With you as an ordinance forever; according to this word

It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord, it is true
With you and your descendants with you

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy

Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 18:20-32 (THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD, PART II)

The thirteen verses we will look over today mention a tithe five times. That's as many as have been seen in all of Genesis through Leviticus so far. The first two in Genesis predate the law and are not considered in what we will look at today, *except* in our final analysis of the subject. Until then, we will evaluate the verses as usual. When we get about half-way through the sermon, a full explanation of why mandatory tithing is simply not an acceptable practice in the church will be given, but evaluating the verses first is needed. The law's introduction of the tithe in Leviticus is now going to be expanded on here, but this is not the end of it. Before we finish the Law of Moses, we will see the tithe again in Deuteronomy also. Each time, what is said builds upon what has been said. It is what we would call "progressive revelation." God introduces a subject, and then He expands on it, clarifies it, or replaces it with another precept as redemptive history moves on.

As tithing is one of the most misunderstood precepts by congregants, and most abused by clergy, in the church, I am going through it in detail, again, today as I have done in the past. And yes, I will do so, again, when we get to Deuteronomy.

There are a few good reasons for this. First, we all forget and need reminders. Secondly, I want you perfectly trained on what it means to give within a Christian context. And third, I love that I can cut and paste things that I have already preached on, weaving the thoughts together in a new way, and yet save a couple of hours on sermon typing. It is like a donut with glaze and with sprinkles too.

Text Verse: *"Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil to the storehouse." Nehemiah 13:12*

Nehemiah notes that all of Judah brought in their tithes as commanded by the Law of Moses. Good job Judah!

Question: Are we Judah? Are we under the Law of Moses? The answer to both is, "No," but just in case you are not sure about that, we'll go over it a bit later in the sermon. John Lange knew the answer to that, but he makes an incorrect analogy concerning the verses we are looking at today. He says –

The tenth of the tenth a heave-offering for the priests. Thus the members of the church that are most alive are the best supporters of the official pastorate.

He here equates the Levites who gave the tithe of their tithe to the priests as “the most alive” of the members of the church and also “the best supporters of the official pastorate.” Is that correct? Is there a set category of Christians who are marked by how much they give, or if they give a certain percent of what they make?

And to think that through even more, are you mandated in the New Covenant to give a certain portion of what you make. If so, and if you are being compared to the Levites in doing so, then who is giving to you? I mean, Israel was told to give to the Lord for the Levites, and the Levites were told to give to the Lord from there. If you are “the most alive” and “the best supporters of the official pastorate,” then that must be because someone is giving a tithe to you so that you can then give on a tithe of that to the pastorate.

Do you see the problem with that analysis? What we need in our theology is clarity of thought. John Lange is one of my favorite scholars, but he, like most commentators I read week to week, though being very clear on most subjects, suddenly lose clarity of thought in his theology when it comes to... tithing.

If you want clarity of thought, stick to the word, in context. Marvels of clarity are to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I Am Your Portion and Your Inheritance (verses 20-24)

²⁰ Then the Lord said to Aaron:

Here again, as in verse 1, the word “said” is used instead of “spoke,” which was used in verse 8. In saying “said,” it implies that a task is required beyond simply receiving commands. So far, all three addresses have been to Aaron alone.

²⁰ (con’t) “You shall have no inheritance in their land,

The words are in the second person, singular. Aaron is singled out, and yet he will not enter into Canaan. But, as the high priest, he stands as representative over all of the Levitical priesthood. This doesn’t mean just the priests, but all of Levi, as has been seen, and as will continue to be explained.

Here the word *nakhal*, or inheritance, is used. It means “to take possession,” or “inherit.” When Israel enters into Canaan, Levi will not take possession of any land for themselves. When the land divisions are made among the tribes, there will be none

made for Levi. This is the first time it is explicitly said that there will be no inheritance for Levi, although it was alluded to in the instructions for the redemption of property in Leviticus 25.

²⁰ (con't) **nor shall you have any portion among them;**

Now the word *kheleq*, or portion, is used. It comes from *khalaq*, signifying to divide, and thus it would be an allotment. The normal order of land division and inheritance for the society would not be seen in the Levitical priesthood. But they were not left empty-handed...

²⁰ (con't) **I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.**

This explains what had been said concerning the sacrifices and offerings mentioned in the first nineteen verses, and it will continue to be explained in the collecting of tithes for the Levites and for the priests in the coming twelve verses. There was to be no landed property for Aaron, meaning the Levitical priesthood, because the Lord is both his portion and his inheritance.

Cities were to be set aside for the Levites, but they were not to be involved in agricultural pursuits as were the rest of the people of Israel. They were to be entirely devoted to the service of the Lord, and, therefore, they were not to be engaged in other types of manual labor and industry, nor in warfare.

In the dividing of the spoils of war, a portion of those spoils was taken out, not for Levi, but for the Lord. This then was given to Levi who “kept charge of the tabernacle of the Lord” (Numbers 31:47). That which belonged to the Lord would tend to their needs, and thus He would be both their portion and their inheritance. The thought presented here is such a great honor, that in the psalms, even non-Levites claimed that their portion was not truly of this world, but it was the Lord Himself, such as with David –

“I cried out to You, O Lord:
I said, ‘You *are* my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.’” Psalm 142:5

The author of Lamentations, believed to be Jeremiah, of the priests of Israel, called out in a similar manner. While the land around him was being destroyed by the invading army of Babylon, Jeremiah remembered what the Lord had promised here in Numbers –

Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.

²³ *They are* new every morning;

Great *is* Your faithfulness.

²⁴ "The Lord *is* my portion," says my soul,

"Therefore I hope in Him!" Lamentations 3:22-24

²¹ **"Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel**

Here is seen for the fifth time in Scripture the *maaser*, or tithe. It comes from *asar*, meaning "ten," and thus it is a "tenth." Please note that the Hebrew says, "all tithe," not "all the tithes." The word is singular and there is no article. Thus, that which is set apart as a tithe is meant here. If your Bible has "the" before "tithe," or an "s" on tithe, make a note of correction.

The Lord says that *all tithe* in Israel is given to the children of Levi, but no further explanation is given. The implication, then, is that the tenth portion, or tithe of Israel, belongs to the Lord. As it belongs to Him, He has the right to portion it out as He determines. This has already been explicitly seen in Leviticus 27 –

"And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the Lord's. It *is* holy to the Lord." Leviticus 27:30

That this is the Lord's, and it is His to determine what is done with it, is important to remember because what is described here in Numbers is not the end of the story concerning *the tithes*. If one were to use Numbers 18 alone as their explanation of what Israel did with *the tithes*, they would have a faulty view of the matter.

In his commentary on this verse, Charles Ellicott says, "The reference here is to the first tithe, or tenth of the whole of the produce of the land." He and various other scholars, state that this tithe is different than the tithe as recorded in Deuteronomy. This is wholly inaccurate. There is no such thing as a "first tithe" and a "second tithe." Man, not Scripture, has formed that terminology and the faulty doctrine which proceeds from it. As we do not want you to have a faulty view of *the tithes*, the whole matter will be explained, again, during this sermon.

²¹ (con't) **as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.**

The tithe, which belongs to the Lord, is its own *nakhalah*, or inheritance for Levi. This not only included agricultural products, but also of the livestock, as was also seen before in Leviticus 27 –

“And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord.” Leviticus 27:32

The Lord is Levi’s inheritance and portion; the tithe belongs to the Lord; the Lord gives *the tithe* as an inheritance. This is said to be *kheleph*, or “an exchange,” for the work they perform. It is a new noun which is only seen here and in verse 31. It comes from the verb *khalaph*, which means “to pass away or through.” The idea, then, is that the tithe passes through the Lord to Levi in return for their work at the tent of meeting. Therefore...

²² Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die.

The idea here is that Israel had fashioned all of the implements for the sanctuary, but once they were dedicated to the service of the Lord, they were no longer common. The sanctuary was where the people met with the Lord, but they were restricted entirely from the tent of meeting, which included the brazen altar. They could only bring forward their offerings, and from there, the Levites assisted the priests, but even the Levites had restrictions upon them. Should the non-Levitical Israelites come near the tent of meeting, they would incur, and thus bear, sin and die...

²³ But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity;

v’abad ha’levi hu – “and work the Levite he.” The masculine clearly shows that this is speaking of the individual male Levite. He shall perform the work of the tent of meeting, and bear the iniquity of the children of Israel. The purpose of Levi was to stand between Israel and the priests. This was seen in Numbers 8 –

“And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary.” Numbers 8:19

Thus, the intent of the words, “bear their iniquity,” is that Levi bore the iniquity of the people. They were set apart to accomplish these duties, and thus they could bear the people’s iniquity before the Lord, whereas the common people could not.

²³ (con’t) *it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*

Because what belonged to the Lord was given to them, making the Lord their inheritance, they were to have no inheritance in Canaan. This was to be “forever,” meaning until the ending of the Law of Moses. As the law is annulled in Christ, so is the statute.

²⁴ For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up *as* a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance;

The words here begin to explain the fault of what some call, “the second tithe,” as if two tithes were required of Israel. That which is offered to the Lord as a heave offering is given to the Levites as their inheritance. Not all of the tithes were offered up to the Lord in this way. Again, this verse says, “tithe” not “the tithes.” That which was not referred to here is dealt with separately as is described in Deuteronomy 14. Coming soon to an explanation near you.

²⁴ (con’t) therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’”

Because the tithe of Israel is to be reckoned as the Levites’ produce of the land, they shall have no inheritance. The very fact that they benefited off of the inheritance of Israel, in place of the firstborn of Israel, meant that they would have no inheritance of their own.

*Give a tithe, this is what you are instructed to do
Give that tithe, just as the preacher does say
Are you questioning the preacher? Who are you?
Give that tithe as you are told; be sure that you pay*

*How can you receive God’s grace if you don’t give?
You must not understand what grace means at all
Oh my goodness, is it by grace that you live?
If that’s what you think, you’re headed for a fall*

*Grace in this church means give, give, and give
Of course that's what it means, that's how you get grace!
What? Do you think it's a gift? Is that how you live?
You have misunderstood, and you will not finish this race!*

II. The Tithes of the Levites (verses 25-32)

²⁵ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

The address of the Lord now returns to Moses, and it is the word “spoke,” not “said.” It is simply commands which are to be passed on and acted upon, specifically for the Levites. As it might appear that the priests were attempting to gain unapproved advantage over the Levites, and as Moses is not a priest, it is appropriate that the Lord speaks this through him and not Aaron...

²⁶ “Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: ‘When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe.

The command is for the Levites to take a tenth from the tithe that they have received from their tithe (it is singular and there is no “the” before “tithe” – correct your Bible if necessary) of the children of Israel, which was considered their inheritance. They are then to offer that part up as Yehovah’s heave offering. It is not “to the Lord,” but the Hebrew says, “heave offering Yehovah.”

It is a tenth of a tithe. That this is again called a heave offering, in and of itself, shows that only that which is presented to the Lord is considered in these verses. Any other uses for the annual tithes, not presented as heave offerings, are dealt with separately.

²⁷ And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though *it were* the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress.

Just as Israel had the mandate of passing on a tithe to the Lord for the Levites, so they now have a mandate of passing their own tithe to the Lord. This would be deemed as if they had given of the produce of their own land, *if* they had been given an inheritance. Here, the *yeqev*, or wine vat, is seen for the first of sixteen times. It comes from an unused root meaning “to excavate.” Thus, it is a trough which has been dug out.

28 Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the Lord from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel,

This is the first of four times that the word “tithe” is plural. The other three are all referring to the tithes of the people as described in Deuteronomy 12:6 & 11, and Amos 4:4. The Levites were to make their own tithe Yehovah’s heave offering. Again, like verse 26, it is the Lord’s heave offering.

28 (con’t) and you shall give the Lord’s heave offering from it to Aaron the priest.

This tithe, called “the Lord’s heave offering,” becomes the property of Aaron the priest, meaning the priestly line which descends from him. Thus, because the Lord is their inheritance, and because this is the Lord’s heave offering, the offering itself is reckoned as a part of their inheritance.

29 Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the Lord, from all the best of them, the consecrated part of them.’

Not only were the Levites to take a tithe of their tithe and offer it up as a heave offering, but they were to also take the best portion of all of the gifts they received according to law – in addition to the tithe – and they were to offer those up as the Lord’s heave offering.

The term “best portion” in Hebrew says, the “fat of them.” Fat signifies the best. If you remember from Leviticus, the special fat portions of the sacrifices were always burnt on the altar to the Lord, because they pictured Christ. Here that fat portion is then called *miqdesho*, or the sacred, holy portion.

30 Therefore you shall say to them: ‘When you have lifted up the best of it, then *the rest* shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the produce of the winepress.

The meaning of this is that when the Levites had made a dedication of the fat, meaning the best, of what they had received – tithe and gifts – then the remaining portion belonged to them just as if they had worked in the fields, threshing floor, and winepress for it. They could do whatever they wished with it – eat it, sell it, store it up, or whatever. It was their property to dispense with as they chose.

³¹ You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting.

What the Levites received, and which was described in the previous verse, could be eaten anywhere, just as any Israelite could eat what they had earned. This was based on their work in the tent of meeting. Thus, the word “reward” here is not a good translation. It should say, “your wages.”

The word is *sakar*, and it signifies that which is earned. It is the basis for the name Issachar, which Leah claimed came through having *earned* another child through the giving of her maid to her husband.

The reason for this verse, is because the priests were often limited in where they could eat certain things, and also who could participate in those meals – such as only the males, or only those who were clean. No such restrictions were levied upon the Levites in the consumption of their earnings.

³² And you shall bear no sin because of it, when you have lifted up the best of it.

The implication is that by not offering up the best portion of the tithe and gifts they had received, they would – in fact – bear sin. The Lord had determined what was holy and sacred, and He had given commandments in regards to that. Thus, to ignore the commands was to ignore the Lord. This, in turn, was sin.

^{32 (fin)} But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the children of Israel, lest you die.”

The Lord had just called these tithes and offerings from the Levites “Yehovah’s heave offering” which then belonged to the priests. Verse 18:10 said of such things, “In a most holy *place* you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.” Therefore, if the Levites failed to make Yehovah’s heave offering, it would profane what they had received as “holy gifts of the children of Israel.” In this, they would incur guilt, and they are now told that in this, they would die.

*Lord, search me out in my desire to give
Help me to do so only with a cheerful heart
I know that it isn't by buying You off that I will live
And that You aren't checking my percent and making a chart*

*A clean heart You desire, that is sure
I know this is so; Your word says as much
I am saved by grace alone; only Jesus makes me pure
And You are not swayed by a monetary touch*

*We cannot buy off our sins; only Jesus paid that price
And so when we give, it must be with a grateful heart
Help us to be thankful once, and then thankful twice
Help us to hold fast to Your grace, and from it never to part*

III. Old Covenant Tithing; New Covenant Giving

Tithing is a Mosaic Covenant precept which is never mentioned in the New Covenant with the exception of Hebrews where the author shows how tithing makes a theological point about the superiority of Christ Jesus over the law. It in no way prescribes the practice.

As for the Old Testament, the first time giving a tenth is mentioned was in Genesis 14 after Abraham defeated the four kings of the east. At that time it said this –

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said:
‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’
And he gave him a tithe of all.” Genesis 14:18-20

After this, giving a tenth is mentioned by Jacob when he was in Bethel, ready to go to Padan Aram. After his vision in the night, he set up a pillar and made a vow that if God took care of him and brought him safely again to his father’s house, the Lord would be his God. After that he said –

“And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

In this, the Bible never says what, if anything, Jacob did with his tenth. Will he give a tenth for building and maintaining an altar? Will he throw a party for his family and rejoice in the Lord through songs and praise? It doesn't say. The promise is made and nothing else is stated.

Regardless of this, both of these accounts are *descriptive*. They prescribe nothing, and they cannot be used as a case for tithing. Some preachers, however, will point to those two passages and claim that because they precede the law, the tithe is an eternal standard for man. They further claim that it then falls under the "law of first mention," meaning that something mentioned for the first time is to be upheld after that.

Guess what? There is no such law in Scripture. If there were, then *all* first mentions would be, by default, an eternal standard, and thus, law. Bringing the firstborn of the flock to the Lord would be mandatory. The first mention of taking a second wife would become the precedent. We would have to marry our oldest daughters off before our younger ones could marry.

If our son died, we would be giving his widow to our next son to raise up children in the first son's name. One would have to be circumcised in order to be saved (something Paul argues directly against). Every time we made an agreement with someone, we would have to offer seven ewe lambs to the one we made the agreement with. We would also be paying dowry's for our wives, giving our firstborn a double portion of the inheritance, and observing the weekly Sabbath. Do the preachers who hold to the law of first mention observe a Saturday Sabbath? No! We would also be observing those pilgrim feasts mentioned in Exodus which predate the law. On and on and on it would go. There would be hundreds of such things we would be required to do. Also, if the law of first mention were true, Nehemiah would have referred to it in our text verse today.

The law of first mention was certainly made up by someone who knew what the law of tithing actually says, and didn't want to let go of the precept of *beating* ten percent out of his flock. The reason I say this is that what the Law of Moses says about tithes is wholly ignored by preachers. The first time it is mentioned in the law is in Leviticus 27 –

"And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the Lord's. It *is* holy to the Lord. ³¹ If a man wants at all to redeem *any* of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. ³² And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord."

-Leviticus 27:30-32

This says nothing of what to do with the tithe. It simply says that the tithe is holy to the Lord. The next time the tithe is mentioned is in the passage we have looked at today. As you have seen, translations of these verses are generally inaccurate, stating “the tithes” instead of “tithe,” and so on. In fact, in the KJV, of which I keep a running record of errors, I found 22 translational errors in today’s verses.

The terminology here is so specific because Moses will next clarify *the tithe* in the book of Deuteronomy where it is next mentioned. First, it is found in Chapter 12:5-17.

It is obvious in reading this that not all of the tithe of Israel was given to the Levites. Moses then clarifies why there is a seeming discrepancy between what we have seen here in Numbers and what it says in Deuteronomy 12. That is found in Deuteronomy 14:22-29. As you can see, those verses clarify the specificity of Numbers 18. The tithe is *holy* every year as stated in Leviticus 27, but it is only *given to the Levites* every third year. This cannot be speaking of a “second tithe.”

Obviously, if the first two years the Levite is mentioned as not being forsaken in verse 14:28, and then the tithe is to be brought out and stored as required by verse 14:29, then it can only be speaking of a single tithe each year, the third of which is to be collected by the Levites, and to be handled according to the precepts of Numbers 18.

The next time the tithe is mentioned is in Deuteronomy 26:12-15. This is it for the Law of Moses. Everything else in the Old Testament which mentions tithing is in relation to the law, given by Moses. The only instance worthy of special note is Amos 4:4 where it confirms Deuteronomy 14 –

“Enter ye Beth-El, and transgress, At Gilgal multiply transgression, And bring in every morning your sacrifices, Every third year your tithes.”

This particular verse can be translated as “every third year,” or “every third day.” Most translations incorrectly say “day.” As Amos is citing the law of Moses, it is to be rendered “year.”

As has now been presented, the Bible clearly shows that *the tithe* of Israel was every year, but *a tithe* was brought forward to the Levites only every third year alone. Despite this, it is almost never mentioned by anyone. Instead, preachers shame their congregation into giving – and that... from an Old Covenant principle which doesn’t even apply anymore. But the really despicable thing is that there are preachers who actually say

that the words about the third year is an *extra tithe* on top of a regular tithe. This is a flat out lie. It is a perfect example of preaching greed over grace.

Imagine the nerve of standing in the pulpit and saying this, knowing that not a person in the church would question his authority or even bother to go check. And you wonder why I tell you week after week to check things for yourself!

The real question to ask a preacher that insists on tithing would be, "If we are to tithe as you say the Bible says, then why aren't you telling us to do it the way the Bible shows, meaning once every third year?" Watch him have a heart attack over that one! Either that, or he might say, as I've heard said, "With the tithing verses, plus all the other required sacrifices, almost thirty percent of what an Israelite made would have been required."

Again, this is simply not true. That's why we noted those verses too. Many of the required sacrifices, as we saw, were eaten by the one who brought them after the removal of the sacred portion by the priests. These arguments have no basis in the truth. The tithing verses clearly show that the third year tithe alone was given away in its entirety and the other two years' tithes were enjoyed by the giver in the presence of the Lord with some being given to take care of the Levites.

In reality though, none of this matters from a *New Covenant perspective*. We are *not* under the Law of Moses. In fact, the New Covenant says often and explicitly that the law is set aside in Christ; it is obsolete, it is done, it is finished...

We cannot insert the Old Covenant law into New Covenant theology without inserting heresy. It is that simple. We are, as the Bible reveals, living in the dispensation of grace. Here are some verses to support this –

"For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John 1:17

"Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." Romans 5:20

"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Romans 6:14

“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” Galatians 2:21

“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” Galatians 5:4

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

-Colossians 2:14, 15

“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Hebrews 7:18, 19

“In that He says, ‘A new *covenant*,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” Hebrews 8:13

We could on and on, but the Bible is clear – in Jesus, the law is set aside. If we attempt to be justified by that law, meaning living by deeds of the law, to be justified before God, then we have fallen from the very grace that was bestowed on us in Christ.

Just as it should be, we are to hold to salvation by the grace of Jesus and His mercy through faith, not deeds of the law. This is what brings us salvation. And this is what decent preachers around the world, and throughout the church age, will tell you again and again... week after week.

And yet, when it comes to tithing, all of this *grace* is thrown to the wind and the law almost inevitably gets reintroduced. One of the most common Bible quotes that you will hear on the subject of tithes is from Malachi 3:8 –

“Will a man rob God?
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say,
‘In what way have we robbed You?’
In tithes and offerings.” Malachi 3:8

After hearing this, you then receive a boring, hour long, sermon on how you (you terrible Christian you) are stealing from God if you don't give ten percent just as the Bible says. And be sure to make it pre-tax because, of course, taxes don't count. You are made to feel guilty about it and shamed if you don't follow through with what they tell you. Never mind that Malachi was written when? Yes, under the law.

Having said this, tithing is not – in any way – a New Covenant principle. It was a practice mandated under the law which was given to the people of Israel, and to them alone. It is, like the rest of the law, set aside in Christ.

And so, having shown you what **the law** states and that it doesn't even apply anymore, what are we to do about giving? Is there a rule or a guide for us in the New Covenant? The answer is, "Yes." There are two actually. The first is found in 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 –

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ²On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

There you have the first of only two real directives given to any saint in the New Covenant – lay something aside weekly, storing up as you may prosper. But, even this is Paul speaking to those churches for a particular purpose and need that they had talked about and agreed upon. These words are not really prescriptive at all. However, if we apply them as such, we should ask, “What does ‘prosper’ mean?” It doesn't say. It is different for each individual. Have you been freed from an addiction like gambling, alcohol, or smoking?

The money you used to spend on that could be given away. Aren't you prospering because of the change? If you didn't need it for something else then, why do you need it now? Or, if you can give ten percent, then the Lord has prospered you to give ten percent. If you can't pay your own bills, should you be pressured into paying the bills for someone else? Is that what the Lord calls “prospering?” Well, maybe for the preacher, but not for you.

The second time, Paul mentions giving is in Galatians 6:6 –

“Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.” Galatians 6:6

That is a precept, and it is prescriptive, meaning he expects it to be done. But does he say a percent? Does he say a form of currency? Does he say anything about wages from your employment? No. He says to share in all good things with him who teaches.

What is a good thing to you? Are you blessed about having seen the sunrise? Isn't sharing that a good thing? Do you know how to make really good cookies? Isn't sharing that with your teacher a good thing? If you have a decent pay check, isn't sharing that a good thing? If your pastor loves durian, won't you share yours with him? Paul wasn't specific. He just said to "share in all good things with him who teaches." And don't forget the cookies.

In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul tells us about the spirit of giving and the reaping which results from it –

"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

-2 Corinthians 9:6, 7

We don't want to misapply these verses. One cannot expect that he will always put in and get more out. And so in this, we can see that there is more than just a material reaping at the harvest. There is also the satisfaction which accompanies the reaping.

Blessings are what come to us in that which we find satisfaction. A person may simply be blessed by working in the cool breeze under the blue sky. But unless one goes out to reap, this part of the blessing will be missed. However, the general principle here is a return on an investment by an increase of the same thing which was invested. Proverbs 11 follows this same broad thought –

"There is *one* who scatters, yet increases more;
And there is *one* who withholds more than is right,
But it *leads* to poverty.

²⁵ The generous soul will be made rich,
And he who waters will also be watered himself." Proverbs 11:24, 25

Without taking it to an unintended extreme, this is a *general* principle of increase. If a preacher promises that you will reap a hundred-fold if you send him \$100.00, don't waste your time. God is not a cosmic ATM. He tends to our needs, and He rewards each of us according to His wisdom, not our greed.

Further, it needs to be remembered that “sowing bountifully” is something that can only be determined by the individual in relation to what he already possesses. If a millionaire sows \$500.00, it really isn’t that much. In fact, it would be nothing compared to a cash-strapped blue collar worker who gave the same amount. Just because it is the same amount, the proportion is one which cannot truly be compared.

Paul has said that each should give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. If this is so, then being told that you must tithe is *a violation of Paul’s words, and thus a violation of Scripture.*

In preaching tithing, the preacher *violates*, not upholds, Scripture. *He* has purposed, not the giver. The giver must give – happily or grudgingly, and not of will but of necessity. And if of necessity, then it is not done cheerfully. Only a voluntary gift is a truly cheerful gift.

I would implore you to be knowledgeable in the Old Testament so that you will not be misguided by what someone says it says. I would challenge you to be firm in your convictions about what you will decide to do with your money in regards to the church, but I would beg you to only follow through with those firm convictions if you are able to do so, and to be able to do so cheerfully.

When I let you down, as I am certainly bound to do someday, you will then be able to say, “I gave willingly when I could and what I could, and what has happened now will not affect my attitude about what I gave in the past.” In the end, your gifts are a reflection of who you are before the Lord. If you are giving for any other purpose than voluntarily and cheerfully, you have given for the wrong reason.

Closing Verse: *“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.” Galatians 2:21*

Next Week: Numbers 19:1-10 The only word that rhymes with it is the word “zephyr” ... (The Red Heifer) (36th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Levitical Priesthood

Then the Lord said to Aaron:

“You shall have no inheritance in their land, as to you I tell
Nor shall you have any portion among them
I am your portion and your inheritance
— — —-among the children of Israel

Behold, I have given the children of Levi
All the tithes in Israel as an inheritance; no need for repeating
In return for the work which they perform
The work of the tabernacle of meeting

Hereafter the children of Israel, by and by
Shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting
— — —-Lest they bear sin and die

But the Levites shall perform the work
Of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity
It shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations
That among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance
— — —-thus shall it be

For the tithes of the children of Israel
Which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord
I have given to the Levites as an inheritance
According to My word

Therefore I have said to them; to them, I did tell
They shall have no inheritance among the children of Israel

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them:
— — —-(Maybe they will do a happy dance)
‘When you take from the children of Israel the tithes
Which I have given you from them as your inheritance

Then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord
A tenth of the tithe, according to My word

And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you
As though it were the grain of the threshing floor
And as the fullness of the winepress
Lots of grain and wine, and plenty more

Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the Lord
From all your tithes which you receive; the greatest to the least
From the children of Israel
And you shall give the Lord's heave offering
— — —-from it to Aaron the priest

Of all your gifts you shall offer up
Every heave offering due to the Lord
From all the best of them, the consecrated part of them
According to this word

Therefore you shall say to them:
'When you have lifted up the best of it; so I do address
Then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites
As the produce of the threshing floor
— — —-and as the produce of the winepress

You may eat it in any place
You and your households; is there any need for repeating?
For it is your reward for your work
In the tabernacle of meeting

And you shall bear no sin because of it
When you have lifted up the best of it
But you shall not profane the holy gifts
Of the children of Israel, lest you die as to you I now submit

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy

Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 19:1-10 (THE RED HEIFER)

For the past ten or fifteen years, it has become common for news articles, videos, and discussion boards to claim that the main Jewish religious figures in Israel have finally found the perfect red heifer for once again conducting the temple rites in Jerusalem. It is claimed that without this, temple worship can't begin again.

This, however, is flawed thinking. The red heifer is noted only now in Numbers. It is completely uncertain when this passage was written, but the fact that it is in Numbers, and the tabernacle was set up at the end of Exodus, clues us into the fact that the red heifer is not necessary for beginning the temple rites.

This is then seen after the first exile when the returnees built the altar of the God of Israel in Ezra 3 in order to offer burnt offerings on it. The red heifer is never mentioned there. They simply built the altar and offered offerings. The other aspects of the law would have been adhered to according to established need.

One can see from the passage that the red heifer is simply used for purification from sin, but the actual sin it purifies from will not be specified until next week's sermon. For now, it is only described how to get to that which is needed for the purification.

But this passage is only symbolic of what is coming in Christ. It could not actually accomplish what it was given for...

Text Verse: *"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." Hebrews 9:13-15*

The author of Hebrews says that what we are looking at today simply sanctified for the purifying of the flesh. Beyond that, it could do nothing to truly restore a person to God. The flesh is at war with God as is perfectly evident from the rest of Scripture.

Only in the coming of Christ is the promise of the eternal inheritance realized. This is what is such a huge shame about Christians who openly applaud, and even financially support, the process of building a new temple, identifying a supposedly perfect red heifer, and joining in with the rites and rituals that are being conducted each year in anticipation of the coming temple.

To them, it is as if this is what God wants, and that we should somehow support it. If that was so, then we would not have the book of Hebrews to cite. Nor would we have any of the other New Testament books to read and celebrate in. The four gospels, Acts, and all of the New Testament letters are given for the purpose of showing that Christ fulfilled these types and shadows, and in His final act in fulfillment of them, He died. At the same time, He initiated a New Covenant which replaces the Old.

It is true that it is exciting that another temple is coming. It is amazing to see the implements being constructed and the rituals being practiced, but instead of rejoicing with Israel over these things, we should mourn for them. In their coming, there is nothing more than a continued rejection of what they only anticipated.

This will, once again, like so many times before, be evident from an evaluation of this passage which is found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Red Heifer

¹Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,

Once again, as has been seen a few times, the usual address of the Lord speaking only to Moses is departed from in this verse by including Aaron. This has happened from time to time when there is a need for Aaron to be involved in whatever is occurring. Such is the case now.

The passage before us speaks of purification, specifically that of purification from defilement which comes from being physically near death. As death is the final result of sin, it is defiling to touch a dead person, or even be in the immediate presence of one who dies. Purification from this must be accomplished to maintain holiness.

It is not sure when this passage was received, but some speculate that it was actually at the time that the tabernacle was originally erected in Exodus 40. That occurred on the first day of the second month of the second year. In that same month, Numbers 9 says –

“Now there were *certain* men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron that day. ⁷ And those men said to him, ‘We *became* defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the Lord at its appointed time among the children of Israel?’” Numbers 9:6, 7

Because they were defiled by a corpse, it is assumed by some that this law, now presented in Numbers 19, was already received. That may be so, but it may more likely be that this is a new thought entirely, coming on the heels of the final words of Numbers 17–

“So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! ¹³ Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die. Shall we all utterly die?’” Numbers 17:12, 13

The people had rebelled several times, and many had died during these rebellions. Finally, at the time of Aaron’s rod which budded, the people realized that death was the inevitable result of their sinning against the Lord, and they were destined to die in the wilderness because of this.

In this, they had been promised that all, twenty and above would die in the wilderness until the generation of the disobedient were consumed. The number of deaths which could be expected on any given day would then be in the hundreds. It was already understood, even from Genesis 2, that death is the result of sin, and that purification from sin was necessary, or further defilement and death would be the natural result.

And so we have a logical progression of thought. There was a challenge to Aaron’s priesthood. That challenge was handled by the Lord in the destruction of the rebels as seen in Chapter 16. From there, Aaron’s authority was definitively established through the budding of his rod in Chapter 17.

After that, the care of the Levitical priesthood through the system of tithes and offerings was detailed in Chapter 18. There, the possibility of death was mentioned four times in

various ways. For example, only the priests could perform the duties in the tent of meeting. Anyone else would die. The Lord is instructing the people in holiness, His holiness, and what that means, including death for infractions against it.

Now, in response to terrified cries of the people that whoever comes near the tabernacle must die, the Lord is providing this passage concerning the cleansing of the people from the stain of sin related to death. They could, in fact, approach the sanctuary, but not the tabernacle. The boundaries had been set, but even those who came near the sanctuary to offer an offering must be pure.

Because the tabernacle of the Lord extends logically to cover the entire congregation, the people needed to maintain a state of purification from death. This then is the reason for the placement of the passage here. In Chapter 17, in the cries of the people's words, "Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die," a response is given now. In verse 13 of this chapter, we will read –

"Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord."

In both, the rare term, *mishkan Yehovah*, or "tabernacle of the Lord," is used. To be an Israelite, dwelling in the Lord's presence, and to not be purified from the stain of death, would defile the *mishkan Yehovah*. The problem of that is thus dealt with now...

² "This is the ordinance of the law

zot khuqat ha'torah – "this, enactment the law." It is a very rare phrase which combines two common words – *khuqat*, or "statute," and *torah*, meaning "law," or "instruction." The two words together in this manner are only seen here and in Numbers 31:21 where purification is again the subject, including the type of purification mentioned in this passage. For this combined form, John Lange provides a general meaning –

"We would read: an ordinance for securing the Torah. Without this expedient, for instance, the law of purification would have occasioned endless offences on the right hand and on the left." John Lange

In other words, the word *torah*, or "law," here is an all-encompassing statement concerning not any given law, but the Law of Moses itself. In order to secure the Law and keep it free from constant defilement in the people, this statute is now being enacted.

² (con't) **which the Lord has commanded, saying:**

Now the *khuqat ha'torah*, or “enactment of the law,” is said to be, *tsivah*, or commanded, by the Lord. There is a definite importance being ascribed to what will be presented. It is binding on all people because it is a part of the mutually agreed-to covenant between the Lord and His people. The Lord, speaking to Moses and Aaron concerning this guidance commanded by the Lord, tells them to...

² (con't) **‘Speak to the children of Israel,**

This is then surely in direct response to what they had said to Moses which included Aaron as the recognized high priest –

“So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, “Surely we die, we perish, we all perish!” Numbers 17:12

The children of Israel spoke to Moses in terror. The Lord will now speak to the children of Israel, through Moses and Aaron, concerning instruction on how to avoid that terror.

² (con't) **that they bring you**

The word “you,” is second person, singular. It thus explains the inclusion of Aaron more fully. What is to be brought is probably not to be brought to Moses. He is the lawgiver, and that job is a one-time position which will not be repeated during the period of the law. Rather, it is to be brought to the high priest, whoever he is, that fills the position. Aaron is representative of the position.

² (con't) **a red heifer without blemish,**

parah adumah temimah – “heifer red without blemish.” The obvious questions which arise from this are 1) Why a heifer? 2) Why red? And 3) Does “without blemish” qualify the color red, meaning “entirely red,” or is “without blemish” expanded upon by the coming words concerning no defect? The Hebrew could go either way.

Some scholars look to this as a symbolic rejection of the rites and rituals of Egypt. The heifer was sacred to the Egyptians, and so only bulls were sacrificed. Specifically, they sacrificed red bulls to their demon god Typhon. Thus, in using a red heifer, they were re-

jecting the rites and practices of Egypt. This is not sound. The Lord isn't asking His people to look back on and reject Egypt. He is – as always – giving types and pictures of Christ to come.

The specificity of the red color is the only time such a requirement is made in the sacrificial system. At all other times, the type and sex of the animal are specified, but never the color.

The color *adom*, or red, is given as a direct tie to Adam, or humanity. The name Adam, and the word “man,” or *adam*, come from the word *adom* – both the verb and noun signify “red.” It is either the state of being red, or the action of making red. Esau was called Edom because of the *adom*, or red, soup. That was the only time the noun has been used, until now. Remembering what that story pictured, connects us to this requirement now.

The verb form was used in the construction of the tabernacle with the “rams skins dyed red.” It is seen ten times, and it comes from the idea of being made red, or to show blood in the face. The use of those ram skins dyed red pictured Christ's covering of our sins. That is then explained by the use of the verb *adom* in Isaiah –

“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’
Says the Lord,
‘Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are **red** like crimson,
They shall be as wool.’” Isaiah 1:18

After this, Paul explains how this points to Christ in his second letter to the Corinthians –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

The red looks to Christ the Man, formed out of the earth, and thus it made possible His sacrificial work on our behalf. As for it being a heifer, meaning a female, The word *parah*, or heifer, is the feminine of *par*, a young bull or steer. That is associated with *parar*, meaning to break forth or frustrate, and thus to break, such as in a covenant, or to annul it.

As this is for the purification from sin, the idea of destroying its effect is an obvious connection to that. That it is a female looks to the initial cause of sin in man, not his actual sin, but what precipitated it –

“So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Genesis 3:6

That is then explained by Paul –

“And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” 1 Timothy 2:14

It is the woman who was deceived through her weak nature. Christ came born of a woman and bore the same weak nature that all humans possess. That is explained by the author of Hebrews –

“For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertain*ing to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness.” Hebrews 5:1, 2

That it is a heifer looks to Christ the Man who came subject to weakness, and His sacrificial work on our behalf.

Earlier, it was questioned concerning the word, *temimah*, or without blemish. Does the word qualify “red,” or is it qualified by “no defect?” In other words, does the word best translate as “without blemish,” meaning pure red, or does it best translate as “perfect,” meaning without defect?

First, all traditions hold that it qualifies “red,” and there is no obvious reason to go against that. Further, that there is no other sacrifice where the specific color is designated would certainly argue for the word qualifying “red.” Not only is it to be red, but wholly red. However, the word *mum*, or defect, in the next clause is used to qualify and explain the word *tamim*, or without blemish, elsewhere, such as in Leviticus 22:1 –

“And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, to fulfill *his* vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect (*tamim*) to be accepted; there shall be no defect (*mum*) in it.”

Without being dogmatic, because we are speaking of a heifer and not a dog, I would – after talking it over with Sergio – go with the latter. Red is specified, without any other word which could very easily have been translated as “wholly,” thus indicating totally red. The picture of Christ’s humanity is sufficiently described with the single word, *adom*, or red. It is not His humanity that takes away our sins, but rather His *perfect* humanity which does.

Because of the specificity of the perfection of the peace offering, and that it should be without defect as well, is sufficient for us to consider the same here. And that is then actually revealed as what is necessary to picture Christ in the New Testament –

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-1 Peter 1:18, 19

It is not any man that can take away sin, but a Man without blemish, meaning perfect, and without spot, and without defect or defilement. The huge number of traditions which have been heaped up by the Jews concerning single white or black hairs of this red heifer making it unacceptable as a sacrifice have not highlighted the obvious pictures of the coming Christ, but rather they have only diminished them. That it is without blemish looks to Christ the sinless Man, and His sacrificial work on our behalf.

² (con’t) **in which there is no defect**

ain bah mum – “not there *is* defect.” As we just saw, this certainly qualifies and further explains the words “without blemish.” Christ came in perfection, He lived in perfection, and He died... in perfection. That the red heifer had no defect looks to Christ the perfect Man, and His sacrificial work on our behalf.

² (con’t) **and on which a yoke has never come.**

lo alah aleha ol – “not which has gone up on *a* yoke.” The *ol*, or yoke, is a picture of bondage. It comes from a root meaning, “to affect thoroughly.” This perfect red heifer, without defect, was also to have never been yoked. The idea of a yoke on an animal is subjection. On a person, it then conveys the idea of degradation.

It would be unbecoming of the purpose of the rites, for which this heifer was to be used, for it to have been placed under a yoke. But more, this looks to Christ who, though born

under the yoke of the law was born sinless under that yoke. In other words, the law is a yoke *because* of sin. For one who is sinless, and who remains sinless, there is no yoke of bondage; there is no subjugation to sin. Thus, what will happen with this heifer for the people will look to what Christ does for His people –

“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

In addition to His state under the law, this not being yoked is certainly explained in Christ’s voluntary service before the Lord. As a yoke implies bondage and forced labor, an animal that has never been yoked has lived free from such constraints. Such was true with Christ, as the author of Hebrews explains it –

Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*” (which are offered according to the law), ⁹ then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰ By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. Hebrews 10:8-10

Christ voluntarily came to do God’s will, and He voluntarily placed himself under the law. His sacrifice replaced these very sacrifices which are mentioned under the law, because His covenant replaced the covenant through which they came. What could never actually bring God pleasure is replaced by that which pleased God the most.

That this red heifer was never yoked looks to Christ the sinless Man, and His sacrificial work on our behalf.

³ You shall give it to Eleazar the priest,

The name Eleazar essentially means “Whom God helps.” He is the third son of Aaron, but the oldest remaining son. The very use of His name looks to the work of Christ. Whom God helps, He helps through Christ.

The son, not Aaron, goes because there will be a resulting defilement from the performance of these duties as will be seen in verse 7. As Aaron was to never allow himself to become defiled in this manner, the rite is transferred to the son. It is again reflective of Christ as is recorded by Paul –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

The son became unclean through the rite; God’s Son took on our uncleanness through His work. For now in Numbers, it is this son who is to receive the heifer...

^{3 (con’t)} **that he may take it outside the camp,**

Outside of the camp is where defilement is. It is where those who are unclean are sent. It is where the world at large is. As this was to be for the cleansing from defilement caused by death, and as death is the result of sin, the animal and its death were not taken to the altar for sacrifice, but outside the camp – away from the presence of the Lord. The connection to Christ is obvious –

“For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”

-Hebrews 13:11, 12

The sanctification of the people was accomplished by the Lord as He hung outside the gate of Jerusalem. Every word so far has shouted out the magnificent wonder of what Jesus Christ did for His beloved people.

^{3 (con’t)} **and it shall be slaughtered before him;**

The subject in the clauses is indefinite, “that may take it outside,” and “shall be slaughtered.” This is because it was not the priest who slaughtered the animal, but rather, it was someone unspecified. The reason for this is that though man led Christ outside of the city, and though man crucified Christ, it was God who ordained that it should be so. The picture of Abraham, leading his son to be sacrificed on Mount Moriah, as being typical of God the Father and God the Son, once again comes to light here. But, the animal is slaughtered before the priest who then testifies to the death. This is seen in Matthew 27 where it is noted that the chief priests stood and witnessed the crucifixion of Christ.

⁴ **and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting.**

With the sacrifice of the animal complete, Eleazar was to take some of the blood of the heifer, and *nazah*, or sprinkle, it seven times directly toward the face of the Tent of

Meeting. He actually would do this from the place outside the camp, not in the sanctuary. As he is considered unclean, so he remains defiled until evening.

With this act, the blood of the heifer, meaning the death of the heifer, becomes an actual sacrificial offering to the Lord. Thus, Eleazar, or Whom God Helps, is representative of Christ who is equated to the Finger of God in Luke 11:20.

The word *finger*, or *etsbah*, comes from another word, *tsebah*, which indicates dyed material, and thus one gets the idea of grasping something. Therefore, the finger is that which accomplishes a task. The creation is said to be the work of the Lord's fingers in the 8th Psalm. But the Bible also records that the creation is accomplished through Christ. Thus, in this verse, the shed blood is Christ the innocent Substitute and Sacrifice. Eleazar is Christ the Priest. The finger is Christ who accomplishes the work of purification. The seven sprinklings are the perfection of Christ's blood presented before God as an acceptable purification from sin resulting from touching that which is dead.

⁵ Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned.

This is the same thing that was to be done to the sin offerings of the anointed priest, the sin offering for the entire congregation, the sin offering for the ordination of Aaron and his sons, and the sin offering on the Day of Atonement. This is not a picture of Christ's sufferings. The animal is already dead. This reflects something entirely different. Further, this is the only time that blood is said to be burnt as a part of the sacrifice.

The word used here for "burn" here is *saraph*. It is the word used, for example, when burning a leprous garment. It is never used in the sense of an offering. Rather, it more reflects the rejection of a thing, and a divine purification through incineration. It is a picture of the consequences of sin, the Lake of Fire. The body of Christ became an unclean thing before God in order to purify man from the stain of death. And so even this verse completely and wholly pictures Christ and His sacrifice for us. Next...

⁶ And the priest shall take cedar wood

Now the priest is instructed to take certain things. It is similar to that which was seen in a particular ritual in Leviticus 14. The first item is *ets eretz*, or wood cedar. The word *eretz* is derived from a root which means to be firm, or strong. It is the same word used to describe the cedars of Lebanon and even the cedars of God in Psalm 80. Thus they are large, magnificent, firmly fixed trees.

This part of the rite indicates permanence. It carries the strength of the process. It is symbolic of Christ who is the strength of God for salvation. As Paul says in Romans 5 –

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”
-Romans 5:6

⁶ (con't) **and hyssop**

v'ezov, or “and hyssop,” is taken as well. The word hyssop that we use today comes from the Hebrew through the Greek. In Greek, it is *hussopos*, a transliteration from the Hebrew *ezov*. You can hear the similarity *ezov/hyssopos/hyssop*. It is an herb native to the Middle East and elsewhere. It has antiseptic, cough-relieving, and expectorant properties.

Because of this, it is used as an aromatic herb and for medicine. It is a brightly colored shrub with dark green leaves. During the summer, it produces bunches of pink, blue, or, more rarely, white fragrant flowers. It is contrasted to the cedar in 1 Kings 4, showing its diminutive size –

“He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five. ³³ Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.” 1 Kings 4:32, 33

Whereas the cedar denoted firmness and strength, the hyssop denotes humility. Other than the one instance given by Solomon, it is always used in the Bible in conjunction with purification. Paul shows us how this humble plant, used in purification, looks forward to Christ –

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

⁶ (con't) **and scarlet,**

u-sh'ni tolaat, or “and scarlet (of the) crimson grub worm,” is to be brought. The implication is scarlet yarn. Two words here are used to describe the color. The first is *shani*,

which means “scarlet.” The second is *tola*. This is actually a worm known as the crimson-grub. However, it is used only in this manner concerning the color from it, and cloths dyed with it.

Taken together, they are translated as “scarlet,” but implying the scarlet which comes from the *tola* or grub worm. The scarlet, or red, in the Bible pictures and symbolizes war, blood, and/or judgment. In this case, it is judgment, as in judgment on sin. Thus, the *sh’ni tolaat*, or scarlet of the crimson grub worm, pictures Christ who is described by the same word, *tola*, in the 22nd Psalm, a psalm about the cross of Christ –

“But I *am* a **worm**, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.” Psalm 22:6

The judgment is what happened at the cross of Christ, and this is what the scarlet signifies here. As repeated from an earlier sermon a description of this crimson dye, which is obtained from the *tola* is given to us by Henry Morris –

“When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding his precious blood that he might ‘bring many sons unto glory.’ He died for us, that we might live through him!” Henry Morris

After this, the priest is instructed...

^{6 (con’t)} **and cast *them* into the midst of the fire burning the heifer.**

The body of the unblemished, and defect-free red heifer has all of these things, representing the attributes of Christ, cast into the fire with it. Think of it! The perfect, sinless Man, who died in weakness, is described by what these articles imply. The casting of them into the fire with the body is signifying exactly that.

His perfections are what are being consumed with His body so that purification for any who have come into contact with death may be purified from that. As all have sinned, all

have come into contact with death. But the purification of Christ is sufficient to cleanse any and all who will receive what He accomplished for them.

⁷ Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening.

This is now another note of uncleanness in the process. There was the taking of the animal outside the camp. There was the death of the animal, meaning its state in death. There was the burning of the animal in its entirety. Through these unclean things, the priest is made unclean.

Think of it, the process which is given to cleanse the people from the sin of death, in turn, makes the attending priest unclean, implying that touching the blood used in the rite of sprinkling, meaning the proof of death, has made him unclean. How can it be that purity can come out of that which is unclean?

Because of this, he was required to accomplish certain rites of purification already laid out in Leviticus. The washing of the garments, the bathing in water, and waiting until evening were all required.

The reason for the uncleanness lasting until evening is because the evening is the start of a new day. Thus, a picture of the work of Christ is made. Through the death of Christ, man enters into a new Day where all things are made new. It doesn't matter if a person is made unclean 20 minutes after evening, meaning he is unclean for 23 hours and 40 minutes, or if he is made unclean 15 minutes before evening. In Christ, one is cleansed for the new Day.

⁸ And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening.

As the priest is made unclean through the rite, so is the one who burns the heifer made unclean. He too must wash his garments, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening.

Think of it. The process which is given to cleanse the people from the sin of death, in turn makes the one who conducts the burning of the animal unclean. Implying that the burning of the animal causes uncleanness. How can it be that purity can come out of that which is unclean?

⁹ Then a man *who is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer,

Now a clean man is specifically called in to gather up the ashes of the heifer. The implication is that the other people who are unclean cannot conduct this part of the rite without somehow defiling the ashes. This is only the second time that *epher*, or ash, has been mentioned in the Bible. As normal in the Hebrew, the word is singular, ash. IT is what remains of a thing, and thus it reflects the whole thing.

Ash carries a couple of ideas. First, it reflects judgment, as when Abraham said, I am but dust and ashes. He was indicating that he was created from the dust, and all he deserved was being reduced to ashes in judgment. It also carries the idea of mourning, as when one puts ashes on the head to reflect the state in which they feel they exist. Thus, a clean person was to come and collect the ashes.

^{9 (con't)} and store *them* outside the camp in a clean place;

The ashes, which were collected by a clean person, are to be stored outside the camp, not inside the camp. However, they were to be in a clean place outside the camp. This implies that they would defile the camp if they were brought in. How can it be that purity can come out of that which is unclean?

^{9 (con't)} and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification;

Here the term is *l'me niddah*, or "for water of impurity." It signifies water by which impurity is removed. The ashes would be taken and mixed with water and then used to purify. This process will be described in the verses ahead. It is then further described as...

^{9 (con't)} it *is* for purifying from sin.

khathat hi, or "sin, it." Here the word "sin" signifies the offering for the sin. It is what takes the place of the sin, and thus it is called "sin." It is reflective, then, of Christ who became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God in Him.

¹⁰ And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening.

Like the attending priest, and like the one who burned the heifer, this person who was clean, and who then gathered up the ashes for cleansing of those who are defiled by the state of death, has become unclean, and will remain that way until evening.

Think of it, collecting the ashes of the heifer which is given to cleanse the people from the sin of death, in turn, makes the one who collects them unclean. Implying that the ashes carry uncleanness. How can it be that purity can come out of that which is unclean?

^{10 (fin)} **It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel and to the stranger who dwells among them.**

Here, it is acknowledged that this rite of purification applied to both the children of Israel, and to the stranger, meaning the foreigner, who dwelt among them. And it applied for the entire time of the Mosaic law. As long as the law existed, and until it was replaced by the New Covenant in Christ, it remained in effect. As the typology points to Christ, it indicates – even from the Mosaic Law – that cleansing from such impurity was intended for both Jew and Gentile.

The question has been asked several times. “How can something that defiles bring about cleansing?” Again and again, being physically in contact with each part of the rite brought about a state of uncleanness. And yet, it is the very substance produced in this process of death which then is given as the only thing to purify from contact with the dead. How is this possible?

The answer is, of course, found in Christ. In Christ’s death, He took upon Himself all of the sin of the world, becoming – as we have already heard twice – sin. His body became the very thing that could cleanse us of our sin. But because His body was dead, literally and truly, it was considered unclean under the Law of Moses.

Anyone who touched it would be rendered unclean, and yet, in the completion of His work, meaning being found sinless before the Father, He was raised to eternal life. In this, our sin which was imputed to Him was washed away, and His body, which had died and was deemed unclean, became the only true way of cleansing humanity from the defilement caused by death. As John Lange says, “...death was to be put to death by this death of the most perfect blooming life.”

As all humans have been born with sin, all have had contact with death, and therefore, only Christ can purify us from what this red heifer anticipated. Everything under the law

was external and shadowy. It could not actually cleanse from sin, nor could these things actually bring the unclean to a state of purity. They looked ahead to Him, and in Him is found the fulfillment of the many types, shadows, and pictures found in today's beautiful passage.

Closing Verse: *"Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. ⁴¹ Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby." John 19:40-42*

Next Week: Numbers 19:11-22 (The Water of Purification)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Red Heifer

Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying
These are the words He was to them then relaying

"This is the ordinance of the law as I am relaying
Which the Lord has commanded, saying:

'Speak to the children of Israel
That they bring you a red heifer without blemish
— — —-whether one or some
In which there is no defect
And on which a yoke has never come

You shall give it to Eleazar the priest
But this is just a prelim
That he may take it outside the camp
And it shall be slaughtered before him

And Eleazar the priest shall
Take some of its blood with his finger

— — — I know there is no need for repeating
And sprinkle some of its blood seven times
Directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting

Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight
— — — as you have now learned
Its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned

And the priest shall take cedar wood
And hyssop and scarlet too
And cast them into the midst
Of the fire burning the heifer
— — — so he shall do

Then the priest shall wash his clothes
He shall bathe in water as well
And afterward he shall come into the camp
The priest shall be unclean until evening
— — — as to you I now tell

And the one who burns it shall
Wash his clothes in water, so he shall do
Bathe in water also
And shall be unclean until evening too

Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer
And store them outside the camp in a clean place
And they shall be kept for the congregation
— — — of the children of Israel
For the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin
— — — so that of sin there will be no trace

And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer
Shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening too
It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel
And to the stranger who dwells among them
— — — as I am instructing you

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness

And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 19:11-22 (THE WATER OF PURIFICATION)

When considered, as we will do today, the verses here are highly confusing and hard to grasp. And so, to start us out, I'll give an example for us to think about. It is somewhat analogous to what we will look at.

Suppose we have to give someone a bath. He is really dirty, and he also can't bathe himself. Let's even suppose he is so dirty that if we don't wash him, he will die. Something on him really has to go. And so we get some soap, we fill a tub, we put him in, and rubadubdub. Are you with me so far?

Now, the bath is complete. What is clean? You just cleaned the person, so he must be clean? Right? What about the soap you used. Is that still clean? It was clean when you started, but not now? Would you separate it from the water and use it again? How about the water, is that clean? Would you use that again? Maybe for tea at noon? Why did you pull the plug? All that water down the drain. And that was a brand new tub and drain – never used before, but now they aren't clean anymore, are they?

What about you, are you clean? I mean, you just washed a person that was so dirty he would die if you didn't wash him. Now, you've given him a bath. Would you go have a meal before washing your hands again? Why not? Aren't they clean?

And is he really clean? Whatever you have on your hands is still on him, isn't it? Is his skin impervious to whatever you have on your hands that you need to go wash off? And what about the tub? What is that ring that's visible there on the tub?

Text Verse: *And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man." 1 Corinthians 15:45-49*

Christ bore the image of Adam, but he wasn't in Adam as we are. However, under the law, He was considered a man. What does that have to do with taking a bath? Well, how is it that someone is so dirty that he must have a bath, he is then given the bath to make

him clean, and yet afterward when he is considered “clean,” everything – including him – is actually still kind of unclean.

This is not a perfect analogy, but it conveys the point that needs to be conveyed for the passage. There is defilement, the defilement is removed, and yet there remains a state of uncleanness not only in the one who was cleansed, but in the person who did the cleansing, and in everything associated with that cleansing.

I bet \$50.00 that nobody here would go to that drain which was used only one time, take it apart, and use it for a straw to prove that I was wrong. In this passage, everything in the process of cleansing brings about its own stain. And yet, in the evening, meaning at the beginning of a new day, everything is declared “clean.”

Confused? Hold on to your seats and bear with my occasional stutters and other linguistic foibles and we will find out that it all has to do with the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Certainly, great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Law of Death (verses 11-16)

¹¹ ‘He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days.

The first ten verses of the chapter dealt with the obtaining of, and preparation of, the red heifer to be used for cleansing. Now, the specific details concerning what to do with the ashes of the red heifer are given in regards to purification of the people. As can be seen, the details concern defilement through death.

Death is the result of sin in one’s life. Contact with the dead then brings one into contact with the final result of sin, and thus it makes him unclean. There must be purification from this in order to be restored to a right relationship with God. Without it, the person remains defiled, and must be separated from the people of God, among whom is the sanctuary of God.

As the sanctuary is symbolic of the place of restored access to paradise and fellowship with God, we can then see that death – which results from sin – is something that will keep us separated from God. What is implicit here, because these things point to Christ’s purification, is that any person who dies apart from Christ is separated eternally from

God. Sin is the problem, death is the result, and separation is the consequence. But Jesus is the cure.

Keeping this in mind, we are told in this verse that one who touches the dead body of anyone else, is deemed unclean for seven days. The Hebrew says, *b'met l'kal nephesh adam* – “the dead of all body *adam*,” signifying “man.” What is important to grasp is that there is no distinction made between a man or a woman, an adult or a stillborn baby. The corruption exists in all, and it thus – once again – reveals the biblical truth of “inherited sin.”

Sin comes through man, and all are born of man. The human is conceived, and the sin is transferred in that conception. David wrote of that in the 51st Psalm, certainly understanding the truth from this very passage. Christ came to correct that state of corruption. Right here, one can look forward to the words of 1 Corinthians 15:42, “So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.” Like our text verse, these words deal with humanity in its corrupt state, and what Christ would come to do about it. The *adam* in us – meaning the man Adam, our humanity, is corrupt. Death is the result of that. But the cleansing power of Christ, as prefigured in the red heifer described in the last Numbers sermon, is given to correct that.

In Leviticus 11:24, and elsewhere, touching the carcass of an unclean animal only made a person unclean until evening. Here, however, touching a dead human brought about uncleanness for seven days. Thus, he is wholly unclean. Seven signifying “spiritual perfection,” indicates this to us.

To not be cleansed during this period would then indicate being perfectly defiled. In comparing a human corpse to that of even a vile, unclean animal, shows our utter corruption because of sin, and the vile nature of that before God. The wages of sin is death. One must get that corrected, or he is to be cut off, as will be seen...

¹² He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; *then* he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean.

This is how the Greek and the Latin Vulgate translates it, and it is also how verse 19 states it. However...

He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. (Darby)

This is how many translations state it. And so there is either one sprinkling on the third day which leads to cleansing on the seventh, or there are two sprinklings – on the third and seventh – which then fully cleanse. As the process is typical of Christ’s work, the correct answer must be found in an evaluation of that.

What becomes obvious here, either way, is that because the red heifer anticipates the purification found in Christ, the law could neither conquer death, nor purify from it. These are external rituals only, and they have no true power to cleanse. Were it so, one sprinkling would suffice for all time. Rather, as Hebrews says it –

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”
-Hebrews 10:1-4

Every time that death occurred, the people who touched that death became unclean. It was a constant reminder to them of the failure of the law to bring them to a state of holiness acceptable to God. Thus, the veil in the temple remained until Christ came to tear it open and restore us to God, purifying us from every trace of sin. This is seen in the next words...

¹³ Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord.

Here, an article is placed before the word *adam*. It says *b’nepshesh ha’adam asher yamut*, or “the body of the man which has died.” This is an obvious reference to “the Adam,” meaning “the man” who died in Genesis 3. Again, it looks to the transfer of original sin from Adam to all men. It is what Paul writes of in Romans 5 –

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12

As all are in Adam, all have touched the body of the man who has died. What man now needs is the touch of the Man who did not come through Adam's transfer of sin, and in whom is life.

Here, it is specifically said that the reason for the purification is because, to not be so purified, it then defiles *mishkan Yehovah*, or the "tabernacle of the Lord." The tabernacle of the Lord was seen to have pictured, in every single detail, the Person and work of the Lord. It is He who that edifice anticipated. In Revelation 21, the *mishkan elohim*, or tabernacle of God, is said to be among men –

"Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God."

-Revelation 21:3

It is Christ who provides the purification necessary to return to the presence of God. Without His purification, the tabernacle of the Lord is defiled by the presence of one who is unclean. Such cannot be in a restored paradise, and thus...

13 (con't) That person shall be cut off from Israel.

A person purified is acceptable and does not defile the tabernacle of the Lord. This state of uncleanness, however, for one who fails to be cleansed excludes that person from the rights and privileges of Israel. That is then seen in Revelation 21:7, 8 –

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. ⁸ But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

13 (con't) He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him.

There are only two states of man before God – unclean or clean. There is only one way to go from the first to the second, which is through the cleansing of Christ. That is it. Without this *me niddah*, or water of purification, which looks to the cleansing of Christ, the defilement of the death of Adam, meaning sin, remains. The word used here is not the normal word for sprinkling that is used four other times in this passage. Rather, the word is *zaraq*, a scattering. It is the scattering which is caused by a sprinkling. Further,

the word is passive, not active. If translated more literally, it would say something like “...because the water of purification was not received as a scattering on him.”

In this, it then looks directly to man’s responsibility to receive what Christ has done. Christ does the work, but it is received by us. Christ does the purification; we receive what He does. It is His work alone which accomplished the cleansing.

As it is passive, this doesn’t mean we don’t call on Christ. The man had to walk up to the one who would sprinkle. However, he stood there and received the sprinkling. We come to Christ, but we do nothing in the purification process. Rather, we receive what He did.

¹⁴ ‘This *is* the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who *are* in the tent shall be unclean seven days;

This settles the matter concerning when the instructions were received. It says *b’ohel*, or “in a tent.” A later writer would have certainly said *b’beit*, or “in a house.” However, the Israelites are now in tents in the wilderness. What is certain is that this would transfer to a house in the future.

Anyone who was in a tent, or entered a tent, where there was a dead body would be unclean for seven days. As touching a corpse has already been defined, this means that simply being in the tent, even without having touched the corpse, rendered a person unclean. Simply being in the presence of a corpse in an enclosed area brought defilement. Further...

¹⁵ and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, *is* unclean.

In this verse, there are actually two nouns, bracelet and cord. Most translations call the bracelet a cover, and then “cord” is used as a verb, such as “no cover fastened on it.” That is more of a paraphrase. The two are probably used in apposition, one identifying the other.

In this, it then would say, “and every open vessel, which has no covering, a cord on it, is unclean.” The idea is that of being sealed off from the very smell of death which would transmit to the inside of the container. In this is seen the reason for the question to the priests in Haggai 2 –

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Now, ask the priests *concerning the law*, saying, ¹² “If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches

bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?""

Then the priests answered and said, "No."

¹³ And Haggai said, "If *one who is* unclean *because of a dead body* touches any of these, will it be unclean?"

So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."

¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, "'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.'" Haggai 2:11-14

Holiness does not transfer to the common, making it holy. But the uncleanness of death does transfer to anything else, even that which is holy. If the contents of the vessel were exposed, the defilement transferred.

¹⁶ **Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died,**

The touching of a corpse is not limited to someone who dies naturally, meaning they died of something which corrupted them and finally took their life – be it age, disease, and so on. Nor was it limited to enclosed areas. Instead, it extended to anyone dead in an open field, and who was even killed in battle or died naturally. The effects remained the same. Of this, the Pulpit Commentary says –

"This would apply especially, it would seem, to the field of battle; but the law must certainly have been relaxed in the case of soldiers."

In other words, they are stating that the cleanup crew in a battle would be defiled when gathering and burying the dead, but the soldiers who did the killing, were probably exempt. Is this correct? We don't even need to leave the book of Numbers to find out –

"And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. ²⁰ Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' *hair*, and everything made of wood."

-Numbers 31:19, 20

The act of killing another, even while the life is leaving the body, brought about defilement. Death, in *all* its associated forms, and including during battle, brings about uncleanness. Also...

¹⁶ (con't) **or a bone of a man,**

A dead man's bone itself brought about defilement. This is alluded to in Ezekiel 39, after a whopping battle which is coming soon to a world near you –

“They will set apart men regularly employed, with the help of a search party, to pass through the land and bury those bodies remaining on the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. ¹⁵ The search party will pass through the land; and *when anyone* sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. ¹⁶ *The name of the city will also be Hamonah. Thus they shall cleanse the land.*”

-Ezekiel 39:14-16

But it must be remembered that bones eventually degrade, just as the rest of the body, even to the dust itself. Therefore, if thought through logically, the very dust of the earth which is picked up by the wind and blows about man must carry defilement. One could truly never know when they had come into contact with such a source of defilement, and thus the state of being unclean permeated everything about the people. If this is the standard, and it is, then a state of total uncleanness exists in man. Apart from Christ, there is nowhere we can go to be truly free from it.

¹⁶ (con't) **or a grave,**

There are marked graves, and there are unmarked graves. The law makes no distinction between the two. To tread on the grave of a man brought defilement. One could never know when they were actually in violation of this. And it is exactly this that Jesus was referring to in words found in Matthew and Luke –

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

-Matthew 23:27, 28

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over *them* are not aware of *them*.” Luke 11:44

The Pharisees looked to their own righteousness, and as examples to others of the way to obtaining righteousness. And yet, Jesus told them that they were both defiled, and the source of defilement. It was to be considered the highest insult of all to these self-righteous, arrogant men who shunned God and boasted in self. Unfortunately, because

of this, they were in a perpetual state of defilement. However, for the law, such transgressions meant they...

16 (con't) shall be unclean seven days.

Whether one was aware of his state because of defilement or not, he was defiled, but for those who knew they were, they were to be in a state of separation, and considered defiled, for seven days.

*The first man Adam became a living being
He was made alive by God on that day
The last Adam became a life-giving spirit, from death He is freeing
In Him is life, and the path to lead our way*

*However, the spiritual is not first, as we know
But the natural, and afterward the spiritual, so we understand
The first man was of the earth, out of dust He was made to grow
The second Man is the Lord from heaven, He is God's right hand*

*As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust
And as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly
And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, so we trust
That we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man, so shall it be*

II. The Water of Purification (verses 17-22)

17 'And for an unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin,

When a person was defiled through death in any of these ways, set procedures were to be followed by first getting some of the ashes. Here the word "heifer" is inserted. The Hebrew says, *seraphat ha'khatath*, or "of the burning of the sin." As in other areas, the word "sin," is used to describe its purpose.

We do this when we say that we skin an animal. We don't add skin, we remove it. The same is true here. The ashes of the burning of the sin means, "The ashes of that which was burned for purification from sin." As long as one keeps thinking about Jesus, and how He fits into the terminology, the words are understandable, and the pictures become obvious. This is true with the next words...

17 (con't) **and running water shall be put on them in a vessel.**

mayim khayim – “waters living,” or as we would say it, “living water.” As we saw last week, the ashes of the burning pictured Christ in every way. It was He who gave His life for us, but His death is not the end of the story. In Him is found the true living water which He spoke of in John 4 with the Samaritan woman at the well. And it is He, who in an obvious reference to this passage, said this to Israel –

“On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

-John 7:37-39

He reached back to the Old Testament symbolism in order to show us truths about Himself, and what He would do for those who came to Him. Christ had to die for our sins, be glorified through the resurrection and ascension, and then the living water has its effect. One can only drink from Christ if he is purified by Christ. In Him is found the true Living Water. What pictures that continues to be seen in the next verse...

18 A clean person shall take hyssop and dip *it* in the water, sprinkle *it* on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave.

Here it notes “a clean person.” A priest is not specified, but someone who is clean. Though seemingly a priestly duty, the rite of purification could be accomplished by whoever was clean. As this is looking to the application of Living Water, meaning the Holy Spirit, mixed with the Person and work of Christ, it is a beautiful picture concerning the priestly duty of sharing of the gospel. It can actually be accomplished by anyone who is cleansed by Christ.

As in verse 6, hyssop is specified. It, in picture, looks to the humbled humanity of Christ. As quoted in the previous sermon –

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of

men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.”

-Philippines 2:5-8

That is the heart of the gospel message, and it is what is being pictured here. Only hyssop is allowed, because only hyssop fits the typology necessary to see the humility displayed in Christ, and to transmit Christ to the unclean soul. Thus, the hyssop, ashes, and living water, are united to form a complete picture of Christ's work, death, resurrection, and the Spirit which proceeds from Him. It is sufficient to cleanse all things, just as the water of purification was used to cleanse all of what is again named in this verse, but previously described.

¹⁹ The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day;

This verse clarifies the ambiguous Hebrew of verse 12. The person is to be sprinkled on both the third and the seventh day. As I said earlier, because the process is typical of Christ's work, the reason for two sprinklings must be found in an evaluation of that. For Israel, if the sprinkling actually cleansed, then one sprinkling would suffice. And if it actually cleansed on the second sprinkling, there would be no need for another ever again. But it only cleansed until again defiled. Thus, the law anticipated Christ, and the law is insufficient without the coming of Christ.

In Christ, we are cleansed from all sin and unrighteousness by His work. But if that cleansing took effect in actuality upon our acceptance of Him, we would be immediately glorified. But such is not the case. We remain here, and we are still in defiled, corruptible bodies. Therefore, the two sprinklings look to what is actual but not realized, and that which is actual and realized.

Right now, any who are in Christ are actually forgiven, justified, sanctified, and glorified in God's sight. But until that is actual and realized, we are still awaiting the consummation of what we possess. Thus, one sprinkling is given as the assurance of cleansing, the second is given for realization of it. That is seen in the next words...

¹⁹ (con't) and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.

The question here is, “who is to wash his clothes and bathe in water?” The clean person who does the sprinkling becomes unclean in that act, as is seen in verse 21. And so it could be either person who is being spoken of. But probably it is the one being sprinkled

because, unlike verse 21, it mentions both washing the clothes and bathing. Thus, we have an allusion to Hebrews 10:22 –

“...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

-Hebrews 10:22

There is the sprinkling, and there is the washing. A clean person sprinkles another with the gospel, and the person who hears it responds in receiving the gospel; acting upon it through faith. We are not to rigidly look at the third and seventh days as specific time frames, but rather as specific events.

If a person hears the gospel and responds to it just one minute prior to the rapture, he has everything here occur in that one minute. He is sprinkled for salvation, sprinkled unto salvation, and washed clean, all in a moment. The evening in the Bible is the start of a new day. In this, it is the eighth day, the day of “new beginnings.” In Christ, we shall enter the new Day, that of “new beginnings,” cleansed and purified in reality.

²⁰ ‘But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly,

The words of this verse are reflective of what is said in Revelation 22:11 – “...he who is filthy, let him be filthy still.” Purification with the water was mandatory in that one must do it to be in right standing within Israel and with God. But it was still a choice one voluntarily made.

The very fact that it says, “But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself,” signifies that *free-will* is involved. The people didn’t tackle him and force the purification on him. Instead, he willfully rejected what was offered. In this, he was to be cut off...

²⁰ (con’t) because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.

Here it says *miqdash Yehovah* – “the sanctuary of Yehovah.” The tabernacle noted in verse 13 resides within the sanctuary. In defiling the tabernacle, the entire sanctuary is, by extension, defiled by the presence of such a person. And this is because...

²⁰ (con’t) The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he *is* unclean.

Again, as in verse 13, the verb is passive. It reads “The water of purification was not received as a scattering on him.” The individual was offered Christ, and he refused Christ. Christ’s purification was not imparted to him, and he remains unclean.

²¹ It shall be a perpetual statute for them.

l'khuqat olam – “for ordinance forever.” The word *olam*, or forever, signifies “to the vanishing point.” In this case, when the covenant is fulfilled in Christ, the shadows of these rituals are ended in Christ. The law has reached its vanishing point. However, the precept is forever as it is fulfilled in Christ. What the shadows prefigured is now realized in Him, forever. Included in this is...

^{21 (con't)} He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening.

Here in this verse, we see that the person who was clean and who sprinkled the person who was unclean in order to cleanse him has garments which have been rendered unclean. And the person who touched the water of purification – certainly he who prepared it, and he who sprinkled it – was rendered unclean until evening, even though that same water was used to purify the person who was unclean. But there is yet more...

^{22(fin)} Whatever the unclean *person* touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches *it* shall be unclean until evening.”

At this point, *all* involved with the process are unclean. The person who was clean and made the mixture became unclean by touching it while making it. The person who sprinkled the mixture must wash his clothes, implying he is unclean.

The person who had the water of purification sprinkled on him remains unclean until evening – both for his initial defilement and certainly because of the water of purification which makes everything it touches unclean.

As all are unclean, anything they touch becomes unclean. And then anyone who touches that which is unclean through their touch becomes unclean until evening.

Again, as in the first half of the passage, it needs to be asked, “How can something that cleanses make those who touch it unclean? And how can cleansing come out of that which renders those who touch it unclean, meaning that it must be unclean?”

Countless explanations have been put forth to answer this, but *none* goes far enough. What is it that purifies us? Christ. But how did that come about? Through His death. The entire passage is dealing with touching a dead body. If His body was dead, then according to the law, touching His body would defile.

But as He had no human father, sin did not transmit to Him. Thus He was sinless. The sin He bore, was for the people of the world. Every time that someone comes to Christ, it is through His death. That death defiles because sin was connected with it. But not His own sin. When we take the Lord's Supper, we remember His *death* until He comes.

When I tell someone about Christ and he receives that, I, in essence, sprinkle that person with Christ. In that, I am participating in the death of Christ. Thus, I am ceremonially unclean because of the sin which is transferred to Christ because of my witness. The person also is purified, but he remains unclean in reality, until he is actually glorified in Christ.

It appears that Paul had this rite of purification on his mind when he wrote his words found in 2 Corinthians 4. There he wrote about the sufferings of the apostles for the sake of sharing the message of Christ, something that those who share the gospel continue with to this day. Think of the water of purification when I read this. He said they were –

“...always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. ¹¹ For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So then death is working in us, but life in you.” 2 Corinthians 4:10-12

We carry about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Death brings uncleanness, and yet, we (meaning believers) are already clean because of Christ. But we carry this body of death in order to continue to bring life to others. So even though we are alive, death is working in us, but it is working life in those who come to Christ.

The clean person who did the sprinkling must have thought, “I am making this guy clean, but I am making myself unclean in the process.” Unless you understood the whole picture, you would say, “What a jip!” But in understanding that what he is doing is necessary for the life of the other, then it doesn't appear jippish at all.

It is Christ who cleanses from all unrighteousness, but uncleanness had to come from His dead body in order for that to come about. That is why there is no sprinkling with blood. That is accomplished in Christ's death. It is the death and the body of death which is

dealt with here. It is that which defiles. If you remember from the previous sermon, this is the only sacrifice which is burnt and which includes the fact that the blood is burnt with the body.

That is why the living water mixed with the death, meaning the ashes, is used. It furthers the picture. Christ didn't die and stay dead, He rose to provide living waters, but that can only be appropriated through His death, even though His dead body brought defilement under the law.

One cannot get to the Living Water until he is first cleansed by the blood, even though the death associated with that blood defiles. And so that confusing, but infinitely important message must be shared. Are you willing to carry about in your body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may be manifest in you? That is the lesson of the red heifer and the sin water. Without Christ becoming sin we could not become the righteousness of God in Him. It is an amazing thing that God has done in Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*
-Colossians 3:1-4

Next Week: Numbers 20:1-13 *Waters will come out of the Rock – and all the people said ooh and ahh...* (The Waters of Meribah) (38th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Water of Purification

'He who touches the dead body of anyone
Shall be unclean seven days, this is what I mean
He shall purify himself with the water on the third day
And on the seventh day; then he will be clean

But if he does not purify himself on the third day
And on the seventh day, he will not be clean, so to you I say

Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died
And does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord
That person shall be cut off from Israel
According to this word

He shall be unclean
Because the water of purification was not
Sprinkled on him
His uncleanness is still on him, like a defiling spot

'This is the law when a man dies in a tent:
All who come into the tent, as the Lord relays
And all who are in the tent
Shall be unclean seven days

And every open vessel, so I mean
Which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean

Whoever in the open field touches
One who is slain by a sword
Or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave
Shall be unclean seven days according to this word

'And for an unclean person
They shall take some of the ashes; the ashes like soot
Of the heifer burnt for purification from sin
And running water shall on them in a vessel be put

A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water
Sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels too
On the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone
The slain, the dead, or a grave, so he shall do

The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean
On the third day and on the seventh day; so do I mean
And on the seventh day he shall purify himself
Wash his clothes, and bathe in water
— — — and at evening he shall be clean

'But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself
That person shall be cut off from, according to this word
Among the assembly
Because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord

The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him
He is unclean
It shall be a perpetual statute for them
This is what I mean

He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes
And he who touches the water of purification
— — — shall until evening be unclean
Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean
And the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening
— — — at the sanctuary of the Lord, he shall not be seen

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 20:1-13 (THE WATERS OF MERIBAH)

Biblical theology is constantly argued over. There are countless doctrines which people cling to. Replacement theology says the church replaced Israel. Dispensationalism says this is incorrect and that Israel remains Israel, and the church is merely grafted into the commonwealth of Israel.

However, among dispensationalists, there are varying views as well. Hyper dispensationalism attempts to divide the church and Israel even further by saying that mysteries belong to the church, but prophecy belongs to Israel. As stupid as that sounds, people actually hold to that. They then go so far as to say that none of the letters to the churches in Revelation are for the church, baptism isn't mandated for Gentiles within the church, and etc.

How can one tell if replacement theology is correct, or if dispensationalism is? How can a traditional dispensationalist tell if hyper-dispensationalism is wrong or not? I mean, it is the same set of verses from the New Testament which are being argued over.

Admittedly, most people that argue their personal view actually have no idea what the New Testament says. Rather, they have read a book (meaning a book on the subject), they listened to the sermon, or they simply trust the pastor who tells them what is correct. But they really don't know the Bible all that well. And, surprisingly, many pastors don't either.

They are like the people that watch CNN and think they are getting the straight scoop, and so they go with it. But let's suppose two people are pretty well versed in the New Testament, and they still disagree on these basic doctrines. How can you tell which is correct? They both have decent sounding arguments.

Text Verse: *"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness."* 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Today's passage deals with exactly what Paul is speaking about here. In fact, unless you read the Old Testament, you wouldn't have any idea about what Paul is saying. You'd just nod your head and say, "OK." You'd have to agree with his words without having all the information. Fortunately, Paul's words are inspired by God, so we know what he says is correct.

The answer to the questions that I gave is... to study the Old Testament. If you disagree with someone on New Testament theology, guess what? The Old speaks of the things in the New in type and picture. But even then, one needs to be careful, or he may come up with an incorrect picture of what God is showing us.

One commentary I read on the parallel accounts of Exodus 17 and Numbers 20, both of which speak of water coming from the rock when it is struck by Moses, says that the two accounts picture Christ's first and second advents. This is incorrect. Surprisingly, they took the information and made an incorrect assumption about what is presented in the New Testament.

And so, in order to understand proper theology in the Old, you need to be properly versed in the New. But to understand proper theology in the New, you need to be properly versed in the Old. Together, they form one seamless message about what God is doing in Christ Jesus and for the people of the world.

If someone runs ahead in one Testament or the other, error will result. This is as sure as the nose on your face. As far as replacement theology, that is incorrect. The church has not replaced Israel. Though not a heresy, it is really crummy doctrine. As far as hyper-dispensationalism, that is incorrect as well, and it is actually worse theology than replacement theology. It can border heresy. Or, depending on how it is taught, it actually spews out heresy.

Know the Old to understand the New. And know the New to grasp the Old. Anything else will lead you down very strange paths of poor doctrine. But, guess what! You can be on the sound path if you simply follow the truths as they are laid out in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. No Water for the Congregation (verses 1-13)

Chapter 20 now introduces the fourth major section of the book of Numbers. Verses 1:1-10:10 were a wilderness section in Sinai. The next section was a road trip, a time of

travel which went from 10:11 until 12:16. That went from Sinai to the next wilderness section which was in the area of Paran. That was from 13:1 until 19:22. Now comes another road trip which comprises 20:1 until 21:35. After this second road trip will be a final wilderness section in Moab which will go from verses 22:1 through 36:13. For now, the road trip commences with the words of verse 1 ...

¹Then the children of Israel,

The Hebrew simply reads, “And the children of Israel.” Without careful study, there seems to be no sure way of determining where or when their last stop was, and so the word “and” should be translated exactly that way. But the point that is being focused on here is that of the collective group of people known as Israel. This is completely certain because of the next words...

^{1 (con't)} the whole congregation,

This is stated emphatically in the Hebrew, and it will be repeated in verse 22. It shows that the same group, in their entirety, who are condemned to endure a generation in the wilderness were together as one, from beginning to end. It resolves a rather difficult problem concerning the timing of events. For now, the entire congregation...

^{1 (con't)} came into the Wilderness of Zin

The Wilderness of Zin was named in Numbers 13:21. It said, “So they went up and spied out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath.” At that time, it said Israel was camped in the Wilderness of Paran and the spies went from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob. That makes it seem like the Wilderness of Paran and the Wilderness of Zin are different locations. Now, it says that the whole congregation has come to the Wilderness of Zin again, and a date is given...

^{1 (con't)} in the first month,

No year is given, and so scholars debate whether this is the first month of the 3rd year, or the first month of the 40th year. It could be the 3rd, because the last noted date was in Numbers 10:11&12 –

“Now it came to pass on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. ¹² And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran.”

However, one might think (as most scholars do) that it is the 40th year. Aaron’s death is recorded at the end of this chapter. That is said, in Numbers 33, to have occurred in the 40th year –

“Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the Lord, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first *day* of the fifth month.” Numbers 33:38

It is complicated, and it gets more so, because while Israel was in the Wilderness of Paran, and after disobeying the Lord, they were told in 14:25 to “turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.” It seems to indicate that they did not enter into the Wilderness of Zin. But, a complexity arises with the next words...

^{1 (con’t)} **and the people stayed in Kadesh;**

The reason why this is complicated, is because Kadesh was said in verse 13:26 to be in the Wilderness of Paran. Here, it is said to be in the Wilderness of Zin. And so, there are either two places named Kadesh in two different wildernesses, or the two names, “the Wilderness of Paran,” and “the Wilderness of Zin,” are synonymous, but are being used by the Lord to fit the typology and pictures of Christ to come. Is your head hurting yet? It should be noted that the Numbers accounts so far, and those to come, are not specifically chronological, but are placed according to a pattern in order to develop a theme. And it appears that all of the complexity found in this first verse centers on the next words...

^{1 (con’t)} **and Miriam died there and was buried there.**

The question to be asked then is, “Did Miriam die at the beginning of the time of the wilderness wandering, or towards the end of it?” Nothing explicit is stated, but the account today answers the question. It is prior to the sentencing of punishment upon them. In this, she dies many long years before her brothers. What is apparently important is that of the deaths of Miriam and Aaron bracket the chapter now set before us, one is at the beginning of the chapter, the other is at the end...

² Now there was no water for the congregation;

The name “Miriam” comes from two separate words – *marar* meaning “bitter” or “strong,” and *yam* which means “sea.” And so her name may mean “Bitter Waters,” or “Waters of Strength.” That, in itself, ties in with the account now presented, and is the reason for mentioning her death just prior to what is now stated.

Here, it is specifically noted that “there was no water for the congregation.” This then is an internal clue that the account is in the third, not the fortieth year. If this were in the fortieth year, it would be their second time in the area, and they would have known – in advance – that there was no water there. However, if this was the second stay, nothing was said of a lack of water in the first stay. Only if this is during the time of the spies would this make sense.

^{2 (con't)} so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

It is another internal clue concerning an early dating of the narrative. In Chapter 17:5, it said, “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.” However, the people are now gathering together against Moses and Aaron to contend with them.

Thus, it is the first generation who came out of Egypt, and who were faithful at being unfaithful. At this time, they have gathered together against their leader.

³ And the people contended with Moses and spoke,

Here the word is *riv*. It means to contend or strive with another. It is the same word used in Exodus 17 in the parallel account –

“Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; but *there was* no water for the people to drink. ²Therefore the people **contended** with Moses, and said, ‘Give us water, that we may drink.’”

- Exodus 17:1, 2

One can see that the two accounts are being tied together with the use of the particular words and concepts. Something is being instructed to us for our learning.

^{3 (con't)} **saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!**

Here are still more clues that this is at the beginning of the time of punishment and wilderness wanderings. Instead of saying, “our fathers,” it says, “our brothers.” After the many years of wandering, they would have spoken of the deaths of their parents.

Further, they use the word *gava*, or perish. It gives the sense of breathing one’s last. It was what the people were afraid of after the budding of Aaron’s rod, something that will actually occur later even though it has already been recorded, and it is the word used of Aaron’s death in verse 29 of this chapter.

Only the first generation would have spoken of the perishing of their brothers, meaning those who had perished at places like Taberah and Kibroth Hattaavah. The choice of wording here seems to exclude even Korah’s rebellion which had not happened yet in the chronology of events.

⁴ **Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness,**

The same thought, again, continues with these words. Why would a generation of people who had been brought into the wilderness almost forty years earlier ask this? After refusing to enter Canaan, this is exactly what the Lord said would happen –

“And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness.” Numbers 14:33

After refusing to enter Canaan, the people were under punishment of death in the wilderness. Such a question makes no sense after the ending of those long years. This is especially so because if this is the end of the time in the wilderness, it would be their second trip to this same location and the surroundings would have been known to Moses and the people. The question is unnecessary for a group that had already been made aware of the geography. Further, in their question, there is a special focus on the animals...

^{4 (con't)} **that we and our animals should die here?**

Here the *beir*, or beasts, are noted. It is a rather rare word, being used just six times in the Bible, but three of them are in this passage – verses 4, 8, & 11. The word comes from *ba’ar*, meaning to burn away or consume. They are animals that consume the land

as they go. The question of their grazing animals is similar to the same type of question in Exodus 17:3 where they are called *miqneh*, or “livestock.”

Paul noted, in our text verse from 1 Corinthians 10, that the rock followed them, meaning that from the time of this account on, the water was present with them. Only after the water came does he then say, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.”

The water came before, not after, the sentence, and the concern for the animals occurred at that time, not after. It is the exact same pattern revealed in the New Testament where Christ came, Israel was offered salvation through Him, but which also included the Gentiles, and then Israel received its punishment and exile. This is stated by the people explicitly in the next verse...

⁵ And why have you made us come out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place?

Here Egypt is mentioned. It is the place from which they have been redeemed. Egypt pictures a life of bondage to sin. The Lord redeemed them from that and brought them to Sinai. One thing is for sure, which is that they have already received the law.

Despite being redeemed, they are under the yoke of the law, which is its own bondage according to Paul as stated several times in Galatians, and it is noted elsewhere in the New Testament. Though they are freed from Egypt, the people complain that they have been brought to an evil place. They now describe what that means...

^{5 (con't)} It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates;

There are five aspects of this place that are lacking. Five is the number of grace, and it is lacking. Further, each indicates this. The first is *zera*, or seed. Seed is where life generates from. Christ is noted as the Seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15. At this point, they are under law. The law doesn't bring life, but death, as Paul says –

“I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” Romans 7:9

The next is the *te-enuh*, or fig. Its significance is one of a connection to God, or a disconnect from Him. They note that there is no fig, and thus no connection to God. Jesus gave a foreshadowing of this when He cursed the fig tree in Mark 11 –

“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. ¹³ And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’” Mark 11:12-14

He was making a living parable of the cutting off of the spiritual connection to God through the ineffective temple worship. No fruit was borne through it, and it was to be terminated.

After this is the *gephen*, or vine. The vine signifies the Lord’s favor through the impartation of spiritual blessing. Israel is equated to a vine, but the vine became corrupt. They remained under the law and failed to produce. Jesus is called the true Vine in John 15:1. He is the true Source of spiritual blessing. He fulfilled the law and He produces abundance.

The fourth thing which is lacking is the *rimmon*, or pomegranate. It is associated with the word *rum* – “to be high,” or “exalted.” It carries the connotation of mental maturity and calling to remembrance. Paul says those under the law are under a tutor; they are not mature. On the contrary, he says in Galatians 3:25 that for those in Christ Jesus, “...after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” Finally, the people exclaim...

⁵ (con’t) **nor is there any water to drink.”**

Water carries many meanings in the Bible, but the obvious connection here is to life. In this case, we have already seen that the Rock is Christ, and from the Rock issues water. Thus, water is life not under law, but life in Christ; the giving of the Spirit.

The people have been given law, but the law has brought them death, not life. It has not established a suitable connection to God. It has not produced spiritual blessing. It has not brought them to spiritual maturity. And it has not brought them the Spirit and life. It is Moses and Aaron who fill the positions as lawgiver and high priest under this covenant. Therefore, they go to seek the Lord...

⁶ So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces.

It is important to note here that both Moses and Aaron left the assembly and went to the door of the tent of meeting. What will occur affects them both because both are

types of Christ in regards to their positions under the law. The door of the tent of meeting means “at the brazen altar.” The altar and the door are united in one thought again and again in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. There, they fall on their faces. One can get the image of the law before the Lord at the place of sacrifice. It looks to the law being humbled as it was nailed to the cross, as Paul says in Colossians 2:14. In that picture, and at that spot it says...

⁶ (con’t) **And the glory of the Lord appeared to them.**

The glory of the Lord is revealed to the lawgiver and the high priest. What they are to be presented with, then, is to be seen as typical of something coming in the greater work of Messiah. His glory now is given to anticipate the glory which lies ahead. The people are not satisfied with life under the law. It has not given what they desire, nor what they need. Moses and Aaron are there to obtain what the people need.

⁷ **Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,**

The Lord speaks solely to the lawgiver. The high priest’s duties come from the introduction and giving forth of the law. At this time, the instructions are for Moses to...

⁸ **“Take the rod;**

This is not Aaron’s rod which budded. That actually happens later in the chronology of events. Rather it is the same rod used many times previously. It was called, “the rod of God” in Exodus 4:20. It was used before Pharaoh in Egypt in the performance of many miracles and wonders, including the parting of the Red Sea. It was also used to strike the rock in Exodus 17:6, and it was lifted during the battle with Amalek. It was clearly used as a picture of Christ in each of those passages.

⁸ (con’t) **you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together.**

Unlike the account in Exodus 17, where only the elders were taken to see the rock struck by Moses, now the congregation is to be gathered together.

⁸ (con’t) **Speak to the rock before their eyes,**

The verb is plural, *v’dibartem*, “And speak you (plural).” Both Moses and Aaron are to speak to the rock.

⁸ (con't) **and it will yield its water;**

By merely the spoken word of the lawgiver and the high priest, in the presence of the rod, the rock will yield its water. In typology – Lawgiver = Christ; High Priest = Christ; Rock = Christ; Rod = Christ; Water = Spirit of Christ. Everything is typologically given to prefigure Christ.

⁸ (con't) **thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.”**

In the account in Exodus 17, it said –

“Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” Exodus 17:5, 6

There is a change in what is to be done. Moses is told to speak to *ha'sela*, or “the rock.” Moses doesn't question which rock. He knows where to go and what should be done. The Rock is Christ. Of this, there is no doubt because Paul explains it as such in 1 Corinthians 10, our text verse in this sermon.

The Lord's word goes otherwise unexplained as to the reason, but it is the word of the Lord, and thus it is to be obeyed. Both Moses and Aaron are expected to comply.

Some of the differences between the two accounts: 1) There, only the elders went; here, the congregation goes. 2) There, it says *ha'tsur*, “the rock;” here it says, *ha'sela*, “the rock.” *tsur* comes from a root meaning to confine, bind, or besiege; *sela* comes from an unused root meaning “lofty.” Why the difference? 3) The Lord said He would stand before Moses on the rock in Exodus; here, that is left unstated. 4) There, Moses struck the rock; here, Moses and Aaron are to speak to it. 5) There, the people *may* drink; here, the congregation and the animals *will* drink.

⁹ **So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him.**

The rod is said to have been *miliphne Yehovah*, or “before the Lord.” Thus, it was kept in the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle. It is to be brought out for the bringing forth of the water, but only by its *presence*, not through its *action*.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock;

The assembly, implying any or all the people, are brought *el pene ha'sala*, or "to *the face of* the rock," meaning "before the rock."

10 (con't) and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels!

The object is a verb, not a noun. He says, *shimu na ha'morim* – "Hear, I pray, the rebelling." Moses was not told to reproach the people for their rebellion, but rather he was to speak to the rock and it was to issue forth water for their thirst. What they needed, was to be supplied solely as grace from the Lord. However, Moses sees the people as being in a state of rebellion and that is to be corrected. But who will do that?

10 (con't) Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"

The words are not what the Lord directed. Although it would be fine to speak out what will happen, Moses acts as if it is not of the Lord's doing, but that of Moses and Aaron. It is a plural verb indicating that he and Aaron will bring the water out of the rock as if by *their* effort.

11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod;

This is in complete disobedience to the Lord. Nothing was said for them to strike the rock, and certainly not twice. But he did. Despite his disobedience, the grace to the people is imparted anyway...

11 (con't) and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

The water flowed forth, and it was sufficient for all. As in verse 8, the animals are, once again, noted as being provided the same water as the congregation.

12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron,

Both are addressed. The lawgiver first, and the high priest who represents the sacrificial system of the law. They are combined into one judgment by the next words of the Lord...

12 (con't) "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Here is another clue that the events precede the punishment levied upon the people to wander in the wilderness, and thus Miriam's death – along with the entire account – is in the first month of the third year. In Numbers 14:30, the Lord said this to Moses –

“Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in.”

It was already understood, at that time, that Moses and Aaron would also not enter Canaan. And so, it is certain that this account fits into the time frame that the twelve spies were gone to Canaan. And this is actually then seen in the otherwise incomprehensible words of Deuteronomy 1:34-40 –

“And the Lord heard the sound of your words, and was angry, and took an oath, saying, ³⁵ ‘Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see that good land of which I swore to give to your fathers, ³⁶ except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the Lord.’ ³⁷ The Lord was also angry with me for your sakes, saying, ‘Even you shall not go in there. ³⁸ Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.”

³⁹ ‘Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it. ⁴⁰ But *as for* you, turn and take your journey into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea.”

Moses notes that his punishment came *before or at the same time* as the punishment of the people, and only after that does the Lord then go on to tell him to turn with the people away from Canaan and toward the Red Sea. Why is this important? It is because it then fits the typology of everything we previously saw in those sermons. Our verses today fit chronologically between Numbers 13:21 and 13:25.

In this account, Moses was told to speak to the rock, not strike it. To understand what occurred in Exodus 17, I'm sorry but you will have to go back and watch that sermon. But, in short, it pictured Christ being struck in His fulfillment of the law. It used the same word, *nakah*, or “strike,” there as was used of Christ in Isaiah 53 –

“Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.” Isaiah 53:4

Moses was told now to speak to the rock because it was to not picture Christ’s sufferings leading to the giving of the Spirit, but the giving of the Spirit through the speaking of the word faith. This is seen in Paul’s words to the Galatians –

But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Galatians 4:11-14

Moses and Aaron, representing the law, are incapable of speaking the word of faith.

¹³ This *was* the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord,

Again, as in verse 20:3, the word *riv* is used. It means to contend or strive. Thus, the place is named Meribah, meaning Quarreling or Place of Quarreling. As is commonly the case, the place is named because of the surrounding circumstances. The children of Israel quarreled and the Lord resolved the matter. In the process, He was hallowed among His people.

^{13 (fin)} and He was hallowed among them.

The verb here, and in the previous verse, *qadash*, is of the same root as that of the name Kadesh. Thus, the place also gets its name from the events which surrounded the circumstances. This then explains why the name of the place, Kadesh, was not used before the spies went out in Numbers 13, but it was used upon their return.

The events here occurred *during* the time the spies were in Canaan. However, the name was used, as we saw in that sermon, for a specific reason of showing us other hints of the future. In order to maintain the typology of various stories, the Lord introduces events at intervals which are not chronological, and yet which show us marvelous hints of redemptive history as they are placed into the sacred writings.

*Where will we find water to drink to quench our thirst?
This is a parched and barren land
If only the waters through this Rock would burst
We could drink until filled; wouldn't it be grand!*

*We know the waters are there, but what can we do?
We have given all of our effort, but not a drop have we obtained
But we believe the waters will burst through
And then from them true life we will have gained*

*What is the secret? How can we obtain a drink?
Who will open the Rock and bring it out for us?
Is it really so simple that faith is the link?
Just believe and receive from the Lord Jesus?*

*Surely He has done the work, and so He can the waters give
If we but trust in Him, by the Water of Life, surely we will live*

II. Pictures of Christ

The account began in the Wilderness of Zin, meaning the thorn. It is a picture – as it has been before – of the cross of Christ. Miriam is said to have died at this time. In the Numbers 12 sermon, she was seen to represent the prophetic witness of Israel. That ended at the time of Christ. There is no longer a prophetic witness for the time of the Law of Moses.

Any future prophecy falls under the New Covenant. Here, she dies prior to the time of punishment upon Israel. Only after that, then will Israel be sentenced to perish in the wilderness, just as Israel was sentenced to perish among the nations, after rejecting Christ.

In this area, there is no water for the people. They have been brought out of the bondage of Egypt, but to an evil place. It is the time of the law which only highlights their sin. It cannot take it from them, except through a fulfillment of the law.

They noted five aspects of life that were lacking – seed, figs, vines, pomegranates, and water. As we saw, the lack of these pictured life under the law. It brought them death, not life. It did not establish a suitable connection to God. It did not produce spiritual

blessing. It could not bring them to spiritual maturity. And it did not bring them the Spirit and life.

At this time, Moses and Aaron – the law and its sacrificial system – go before the Lord and fall on their faces and He appears to them in glory. It pictures the radiance of Christ before which the law is brought to its place of humility. They are told to take the rod. The rod, which has not been mentioned since Exodus 17, is suddenly reintroduced for this parallel passage. It is said to have been *miliphne Yehovah*, or “before the Lord.” It is a picture of Christ, after completing His work, returning to His position of authority before God in heaven.

It is brought out in order to bring forth the Spirit, not through *action*, but through *presence alone*. It is a note of the deity of Christ; His omnipresence. Wherever the word of faith in Christ is spoken, the Spirit will issue forth, but not by deeds of the law. Rather by faith alone.

By merely the spoken word of the lawgiver and the high priest, in the presence of the rod, the rock is expected to yield its water. As we saw, Lawgiver = Christ; High Priest = Christ; Rock = Christ; Rod = Christ; Water = Spirit of Christ. Everything looks to prefigure Christ and the grace which comes from Him.

This is how it is. The giving of the New Covenant and the sacrificial work of the High Priest yields forth the Spirit. The Lord told Moses and Aaron – the lawgiver and high priest of the law – to speak to the rock and bring forth water. Both were to speak. As noted, these are some of the differences between Exodus 17 and here –

- 1) There, only the elders went; here, the congregation goes. The elders pictured the apostles who were witnesses of Christ’s work. Here, and because of their word, all can see the work of Christ.
- 2) There, it says *ha’tsur*, “the rock.” Here, it says, *ha’sela*, “the rock.” *tsur* comes from a root meaning to confine, bind, or besiege. *sela* comes from an unused root meaning “lofty.” In Exodus 17, it pictured Christ’s sufferings; here, it pictures Christ’s exaltation. In both, He is the Rock.
- 3) The Lord said He would stand before Moses on the rock in Exodus. Here, that is left unstated. There, the Lord stood before the law – in fulfillment of it. Here, the Lord is unseen. The water comes from an act of faith.
- 4) There Moses was to strike the rock; here Moses and Aaron are to speak to it. Christ was struck for our sins before the law. After that, Christ is received by the

word of faith. The law has no part in the issuance of the Spirit, except as it was previously fulfilled in Christ.

- 5) There, the people may drink; here, the congregation and the animals will drink. How do you show that all are included in the spiritual blessings of Christ when it is simply a single nation of people in the wilderness? You use typology. The animals in the wilderness, though not Israel, shared in the commonwealth and blessings of Israel. It is a picture of Gentiles being given the same water of life as Israel –

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— ¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:11-13

However, Moses and Aaron violated what the Lord spoke, they destroyed the symbolism, and they were consigned to die in the wilderness with the people. It is an obvious picture of the ending of the Law of Moses *before* the people are restored to God. As we have seen from the chronology, Moses and Aaron are actually assigned their punishment *before* the congregation received theirs, not after. It points to the death of the law coming prior to the punishment and exile of Israel in AD70. This is exactly how the New Testament reveals the chronology.

However, Moses and Aaron live up until the fortieth year of wanderings. Likewise, Israel remains under the law until just prior to the end of their time of punishment. That is the purpose of the tribulation period and the last seven years of the law. Only those who live by faith, pictured by Joshua and Caleb, would enter into God’s promised rest.

Verse 12 said, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” The law is not of faith, but of works. It is also incapable of bringing man to heaven. Only Christ Jesus can do that.

Under the law, there is only quarreling and strife. Until the waters of the Spirit come forth, there cannot be contentment. This is why Miriam’s death is so important to the account, and why it occurred now, prior to the coming of the water and the sentence of punishment upon the people.

Her life was used as symbolic of the prophetic witness to Israel. Her death ends that time of prophetic witness, just as John the Baptist was the last to prophesy before the coming of Christ. In his death, that prophesy of the law ended.

Further, her name – Bitter Waters, or Waters of Strength – is used in type to show what occurred both to those who remain under the law, and how they would fare after the giving of the Spirit.

As you can see, the teaching mentioned at the beginning of the sermon concerning the two accounts of the giving of the water from the rock in Exodus 17 and then again here – which said that it reflected Christ’s first and second advents – is entirely wrong. It doesn’t fit the typology. Rather, it is the same account revealed with two different truths – all occurring in His first advent.

The first account in Exodus 17 pictured Christ, under the law, struck for our sins in order for the Spirit to be given. This second account is Israel’s rejection of Christ and holding to the law instead. Thus, they struck Him twice through that act. In this, and for Israel, it can be said, “Three strikes and you are out.”

This is why it is important to go methodically, verse by verse, through the Old Testament. To simply make a conclusion based on such a passage alone, will inevitably result in a faulty conclusion, based on a presupposition of what the account supposedly tells us. For now, this is the lesson of this marvelous passage of Scripture. The Lord is, as He does consistently, revealing to us pictures of the immensely glorious workings of God in Christ. Let us pay attention to the words, and let us respond by living by faith, and by faith alone, in what He has done for us through His Son, Our Lord Jesus.

Closing Verse: *“He split the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink in abundance like the depths.
¹⁶ He also brought streams out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.” Psalm 78:15*

Next Week: Numbers 20:14-29 *Wandering under punishment must be a bummer, for shor...* (From Kadesh to Mount Hor) (39th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Waters of Meribah

Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation
Came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month
———-as we are made aware
And the people stayed in Kadesh
And Miriam died there and was buried there

Now, there was no water for the congregation
So they gathered together against Moses and Aaron
———-as an angry horde
And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying
“If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!”

Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord
Into this wilderness
That we and our animals should die here?
This is a real pickle and a giant mess

And why have you made us come up out of Egypt
To bring us to this evil place?
It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates
Nor is there any water to drink, not even a trace

So Moses and Aaron went from the presence
Of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting
And they fell on their faces
And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, such was the greeting

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These words to him He was then relaying

Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron
Gather the congregation together as well
Speak to the rock before their eyes
And it will yield its water, as to you I tell

Thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock
And give drink to the congregation and their animals

— — —-both the herd and the flock

So Moses took the rod from before the Lord
As He commanded him; according to His word

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together
Before the rock; and he said to them in a stern talk
“Hear now, you rebels!
Must we bring water for you out of this rock?”

Then Moses lifted his hand
And struck the rock with his rod twice
And water came out abundantly
And the congregation and their animals drank
— — —-water, refreshing and nice

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron
“Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me
In the eyes of the children of Israel
Therefore you shall not enter the land which I have given them
— — —-bring this assembly

This was the water of Meribah
Because the children of Israel contended with the Lord
And He was hallowed among them
Among that disobedient horde

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 20:14-29 (FROM KADESH TO MOUNT HOR)

Taking these Old Testament stories, and then combining them with truths found in the New Testament, one can see pattern after pattern jump off the Bible's pages. Concerning Aaron and his office, this is no surer than when one reads the books of Romans and Hebrews. But hints of such things are found all through the epistles.

In Romans, Paul explains the doctrinal truths which tell us of the weakness of the law and of the strength of being in Christ. Hebrews tells of the weakness of those who administered the law, and the strength of Christ who administers the New Covenant. In understanding the content of both books, one gets a full picture of the Person and work of Christ in relation to those who come to Him, and the difference between those who only looked to Him in type and shadow.

In the end, when those truths are understood, the completely ineffective, temporary, and futile system which is the Law of Moses comes shining forth. And remember, these books of the New Testament weren't written by biased Gentiles who had some type of ax to grind against the Jews.

Rather, they were written by Jews who had lived under the law, grasped what God had done through Christ, and had moved wholeheartedly to cling to the One who had become the focal point of their lives and faith. In Paul's case, there were very few in all of Israel who stood on a more sure footing under the law, and yet he realized how unsure that footing actually was.

Text Verse: *"Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:23-25*

Whether Paul was the author of Hebrews or not, the author understood the fallible nature of the Aaronic priesthood, which administered the Law of Moses, simply by noting the deaths of the priests, particularly meaning the high priests.

The first of those deaths is recorded in our verses today. Aaron, from whom the line of the Aaronic priesthood is derived – a priesthood that lasted almost 1500 years – died and was buried. He could no longer make intercession for the people of Israel. Instead,

one of his sons had to take his place. And then another son came, and another, and another.

They kept on dying, like dominoes in time, one dropping after the next. If you were looking for permanency under the law, you weren't going to find it. And more, consider what the ultimate cause of their deaths was from.

If you can remember what that is, then you can figure out much more about the weak, ineffective, and sad state of affairs of that priesthood, and of the hopeless state of those who were ministered to under that priesthood. Only in the hope of Messiah was there any true hope at all. These truths are once again to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Edom's Refusal (verses 14-21)

The timing of the events of this account is hard to pin down. As we saw, the first thirteen verses of this chapter referred to the incident at Meribah which occurred before the time of punishment for not entering Canaan. The verses now come towards the end of their time of wandering in punishment.

Both Numbers 20:1 and Numbers 20:14 indicate that the events are in Kadesh, and so the entire time of punishment is overlooked in the narrative. They were in Kadesh at the beginning of their punishment, and they ended up in Kadesh as their punishment was ending. Other than that, it is hard to be dogmatic about timing. Especially because dogs don't use calendars.

¹⁴ Now Moses sent messengers

The word for "messengers" here is *malak*. It is the same word translated as "angels," including when speaking of the Angel of the Lord, and so on. It simply means an envoy, messenger, etc. Therefore, it can refer to divinely appointed messengers, or simply men who are designated as envoys. In this, Moses sent *malakim*...

¹⁴ (con't) from Kadesh to the king of Edom.

Kadesh means, "Sacred," or "Holy." It received its name from the words of verses 12 & 13 of this chapter which occurred about 38 years earlier. That name continues on now at the close of this lengthy period. Edom means, "Red." It is the name given to Esau who

sold his birthright for a bowl of red soup. The events of this sending of messengers is referred to, many years later, by Jephthah in Judges 11:17 –

“Then Israel sent messengers to the king of Edom, saying, ‘Please let me pass through your land.’ But the king of Edom would not heed. And in like manner they sent to the king of Moab, but he would not *consent*. So Israel remained in Kadesh.”

Edom’s territory is to the south of the area of the Dead Sea, on the westward side of the sea. It extended southward to the Red Sea. It comprises the southern area of the land of Jordan today. The intent, then, is that Israel wants to pass along their territory, on their westernmost border, and to travel toward Canaan arriving and entering there from the east. Moses now makes this petition to *melekh edom*, or the king of Edom, based on their family ties...

¹⁴ (con’t) **“Thus says your brother Israel:**

Jacob, who is Israel, and Esau, who is Edom, are brothers. Though they had a great dispute when they were seventy-seven years old, and which brought about death threats from Esau towards his brother, they later reconciled and put aside their enmity. Both were present at the burial of their father Isaac. With their reconciliation, Moses appeals to this king, Esau’s descendant and representative of Edom, as his brother. He now calls their history to mind...

¹⁴ (con’t) **‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us,**

Moses uses a rare word, *telaah*, or distress, to describe their situation. It was used once in Exodus 18 concerning their hardships while Moses spoke to Jethro. It will only be seen two more times, in Nehemiah and Lamentations. It comes from a word signifying weariness. The travails of Israel have been many, and they have worn them out. Moses next details those hardships...

¹⁵ **how our fathers went down to Egypt,**

This is referring to the move of Jacob and his family 254 years earlier, and which is recorded in Genesis 46.

¹⁵ (con’t) **and we dwelt in Egypt a long time,**

This comprises everything from Genesis 46 until the exodus of Israel in Exodus 12. Israel dwelt in Egypt for 215 years.

¹⁵ (con't) **and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers.**

This was first described in Exodus 1 with the words –

“So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. ¹⁴ And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve *was* with rigor.”

-Exodus 1:13, 14

That affliction continued on, but then there was relief...

¹⁶ **When we cried out to the Lord,**

That is recorded in Exodus 2 saying,

“So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged *them*.” Exodus 2:24, 25

¹⁶ (con't) **He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt;**

It is the same word, *malakh*, used in verse 14 and translated as “messengers.” In this verse, it simply says “angel,” without the article. Edom would probably not be aware of the Lord as the Angel of the Lord, and so no article is used. However, here it is speaking of the Messenger of the Lord, the Angel of God, who was sent to deliver Israel. It speaks of the eternal Christ, Jesus.

The first mention of the Angel of the Lord that Moses is referring to was in Exodus 3:2 when He appeared to Moses in the burning bush. From there, He was mentioned in Exodus 14 when He, the Angel of God, went before Israel and then moved behind them, standing between them and the Egyptians. He continued to be mentioned in Exodus, but this is the first reference to Him in Numbers. The words of Moses are recounting the events for the king of Edom to consider...

¹⁶ (con't) **now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border.**

As I noted earlier, they were in Kadesh at the beginning of their time of punishment wanderings, and now they are there again, standing in anticipation of finally entering the land of promise. However, instead of going up through the south, as had been rejected 38 years earlier, they intend to go through the east. The shortest route to achieve this would be up the western border of Edom, and so he petitions now for that to be allowed...

17 Please let us pass through your country.

The wording of the verse is formal and dignified. He first notes that the land is the country belonging to the king. He is the ultimate authority, and so it is only by first obtaining his permission that they would consider passing through.

17 (con't) We will not pass through fields or vineyards,

Though the king of Edom probably doesn't know it, there is no need for Israel to wander out of their direct path. Fields and vineyards would be needed for such a large group, except... that they are Israel. They have manna to sustain them on the trek through Edom.

17 (con't) nor will we drink water from wells;

Again, the king would not know it, but there would be no need for Israel to drink from the wells of the land. They are Israel, and they had the rock which followed them –

“For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” 1 Corinthians 10:4

17 (con't) we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.”

The term *derek ha'melekh*, or “Way of the King,” is first used here. It would be a public road paid for at the cost of the king's treasury, and would be kept in proper order at all times for the king and his army to set out on in times of either offensive or defensive battles. It would pass through the heart of the land, and so Moses says that they will not depart from this set path at any time, but would pass directly through the land on it.

However, the words must have seemed incredulous to Edom's king. Would they carry enough food and water for several million people and their animals to trek from one end

of his land to the other? He surely must have thought that the impossible nature of their claim meant that they planned more than a peaceful journey through Edom, and thus...

18 Then Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through my *land*, lest I come out against you with the sword.”

The refusal shows the doubting nature of the king. There is no reason to assume this is from the ancient enmity between the two. That was resolved before the brothers' deaths. He is concerned about his land and his revenue. So much so that he promises a battle will ensue if they attempt to pass through.

Despite how things turn out here, it is obviously the plan of the Lord for Israel to have to take the longer route around. He knows the end from the beginning, and the benefits of land acquisition which lie ahead in the book of Numbers comes directly from the refusal which now occurs.

As we saw earlier, in Judges, Jephthah says that both Edom and Moab refused Israel passage through their land. It is obvious that emissaries were sent to both countries at the same time, because it would do no good to get through Edom, only to be refused further travel by Moab. However, there is no need to mention that now.

If Edom refuses, then Moab's refusal is irrelevant to mention. Further, only mentioning Edom now is needed to set the typology for the pictures of redemptive history now being made. The Lord is directing the events now in order to establish the many patterns and types of Christ, and also to make the land acquisitions which lie ahead prior to, and at the time of, Israel's entry into Canaan. We are looking back on what we know, but Israel is looking ahead on an unknown, therefore...

19 So the children of Israel said to him, “We will go by the Highway,

This now has to be a second petition to the king. Here is a new word in Scripture, *mesilah*, or “highway.” It comes from *salal*, meaning to mount up, lift, up, cast up, etc. Thus, it is a true highway. This explains, “the way of the king,” in verse 17.

19 (con't) and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing *more*.”

In this second appeal, it appears that they clued into the doubting nature of the king. How could a gathering of this immense size pass through the land without needing food

or water? Surely, this must be a subterfuge, and the true intent is to catch Edom unaware.

They must have understood this now and they qualify this second appeal by stating that if any water is drunk by the people, they would be willing to pay for it. It further says, *raq ayin daber b'raglay eeborah*, "only (it is nothing) on my foot I *will* pass over." They note that the matter is as inconsequential as allowing people to simply walk through without any chance of harm. But it is too late. The king is determined that they will not pass through the heart of the country with such a large contingent of people...

²⁰ Then he said, "You shall not pass through." So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand.

Edom was so convinced of the state of things not being right with allowing Israel to pass, that the king mustered a large army and a great show of force as a warning that Israel was absolutely not to pass through their land.

What seems likely from the narrative is that Israel didn't expect a negative reply and actually began its trek through Edom on the king's highway before being told they could proceed no further through the mountains. This verse and the next are stated now to complete the narrative before entering into the next subject, that of the death of Aaron, but this verse and the next probably belong after verse 22 chronologically.

²¹ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

With this statement, the issue of whether Israel can pass through Edom or not is complete. Instead of passing through the midst of Edom, Israel will skirt its borders as is relayed in Deuteronomy 2.

*The span of your years has come to an end
And your time has now run out
Your death is quickly approaching, friend
And of that fact, there can be no doubt*

*When your years have ended, Another shall take your place
And in your demise, a new path will be revealed
Through your administration, none could see God's face
Through you, the veil remained, and He was concealed*

*But Another is coming to make the way plain
And through Him there will be access forevermore
Where there was sadness and loss, there will now be joy and gain
When the new High Priest opens the Door*

II. The Death of Aaron (verses 22-29)

²² Now the children of Israel, the whole congregation,

Here again we have the same emphatic statement that was made in verse 1, “the whole congregation.” That was first stated at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings when Miriam died. Now it is once again stated at the end of the wilderness wanderings. During the whole 38-year period, the entire congregation of Israel remained united. Despite being under condemnation, and a death sentence in the wilderness, they remained a united people.

The connection to modern Israel, and the continuing picture which is made, is not to be missed. The whole congregation went under an extended period of exile, even for the fullness of the time allotted for their punishment, and yet they have remained “the whole congregation.” Israel of today is the same group who began their punishment 2000 years ago.

²² (con’t) journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor.

The meaning of Hor is simply “Mountain.” Thus, Israel traveled from Kadesh to *hor ha’ har*, or “mount of the mountain.” The mountain, as recorded even to antiquity, is what is now known as Mount Harun (Mount Aaron), which is located close to Petra in Jordan. It is a double-peaked mountain with a tomb on it which is said to be where Aaron was buried.

²³ And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying:

This is the last time that the words, “And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron,” are recorded. There is a finality about them that we quickly read over without thinking of the sadness that must have filled Moses’ heart at what will be relayed to them next.

Again, as in the previous verse, the Hebrew reads *b'hor ha'har*, or “in mount of the mountain.” This is specifically noted as being “by the border of Edom.” It is here, without Israel yet entering into the land of promise, that Moses and Aaron are scheduled for a trip up the mountain. The reason for this is...

²⁴ “Aaron shall be gathered to his people,

It is a standard statement indicating death. It is simply what happens to a person. He is gathered to those who have gone before him. There is nothing here to indicate the location of the interment, as if there was a spot waiting for him. Rather, it is an all-encompassing statement that they are interred, and he is going to join them. Aaron is set to die prior to achieving the goal which had been set out for almost 40 full years earlier...

^{24 (con't)} for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel,

The land is Canaan. It is the land of promise, and it is that which represents, in its most idyllic sense, heaven. It is the place where rest was promised, though Israel did not attain that rest. Rather, their true rest lies yet ahead of them in the day when they come to receive their Messiah. However, Aaron, the high priest of the law, and the mediator between Israel and God, would not see that land which so closely mirrors the hope of mankind – the land where God will dwell with men. The reason for this is next explained...

^{24 (con't)} because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah.

What occurred in this same chapter, but which was actually many years earlier, was sufficient to bar Moses and Aaron from entry into the Land of Promise. Together, they were to speak to the rock and water was to issue forth. But instead of speaking, Moses struck the rock twice.

The symbolism of Christ was destroyed, and the penalty was spoken – “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them” (Numbers 20:12). Because of this, Moses is now told to...

²⁵ Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor;

Moses means, “He who draws out.” Aaron means, “Very High.” Eleazar means, “Whom God Helps.” Moses is asked to bring his older brother and his nephew, Aaron’s oldest

surviving son, to perform a particular ritual which was hinted at all the way back in Exodus 29 at the top of *hor ha'har* or “mount of the mountain...

²⁶ and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there.”

The details for the consecration of Aaron and his sons are found in Exodus 29. There, this was recorded –

“And the holy garments of Aaron shall be his sons’ after him, to be anointed in them and to be consecrated in them. ³⁰ That son who becomes priest in his place shall put them on for seven days, when he enters the tabernacle of meeting to minister in the holy *place*.” Exodus 29:29, 30

It was anticipated, even at the time of their consecration, that the high priest would die, and that he would be replaced with another high priest. The time for a son of Aaron to minister in place of him has arrived. As directed, so he obeys...

²⁷ So Moses did just as the Lord commanded,

Moses disobeyed the Lord, and it brought about a death sentence for himself and his brother, outside of Canaan. Now, he obeys the Lord in order for that death sentence to be executed upon Aaron.

²⁷ (con’t) and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

Whether the congregation was informed that Aaron was going to die or not, this is stated so that there would be no uncertainty that the transfer of the priesthood was completed according to the law, and that the transfer was specifically to Eleazar. There was to be no doubt about the succession of priests, and thus there was to be no challenge to the priesthood, as had occurred in Korah’s rebellion.

²⁸ Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son;

It was Moses’ joyous honor to dress Aaron in these priestly garments a bit over 38 years earlier, and it was now his mournful duty to strip him of them and pass them to Eleazar. There was probably no more difficult moment in the life of Moses than this. Despite all of the trials and frustrations, an age was ending, and it was an age which departed with the life of his sole remaining sibling.

At the same time, it was probably a very proud moment for Aaron, seeing his son receive the sacred garments of the priesthood. To avoid defilement, the transfer is made before Aaron's death. But again, sorrow must have filled the heart of Eleazar. Despite the honor placed upon him, and which meant that he could not mourn the death of his own father, his heart must have been overwhelmed with grief. Further, he would have to remove himself from Aaron before he actually died. This was seen in Leviticus –

“He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes; ¹¹ nor shall he go near any dead body, nor defile himself for his father or his mother.” Leviticus 21:10, 11

Such was the burden of the newly established high priest.

28 (con't) and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain.

Here, it is simply called *ha'har*, or the mountain. The transfer was complete, the garments were placed upon Eleazar, and Aaron breathed his last. What is probable is that along with Moses and Eleazar, some attendants went with them who would bury Aaron and then required purification with the ashes of the red heifer.

If this were not the case, then either Moses went down defiled, which is highly improbable, or Aaron was left to die and the Lord determined how his body would find its final mode and place of deterioration. Concerning his death, Numbers 33:38, 39 says –

*“Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the Lord, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first *day* of the fifth month. ³⁹ Aaron *was* one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.”*

This is in exacting agreement with Exodus 7:7 which says. “Moses *was* eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.” That then agrees with Deuteronomy 34:7, which says, “Moses *was* one hundred and twenty years old when he died.” This then is the year 2554 Anno Mundi, or from the creation of the world. It is also in the 39th year of Aaron's ministry.

28 (con't) Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain.

As I said, it is highly improbable that Moses touched Aaron's body after he died. If so, there could be no contact between him and Eleazar. He who wore the sacred garments was to remain away from anyone who was unclean. This would, according to law, include Moses. The weight of the law, and the burden of ensuring it was met, now fell upon him.

²⁹ Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

Thirty days is, according to Deuteronomy 34:8, the standard time given for such an event. That passage details the same thirty-day period of mourning for Moses. And, so closes out the record of Aaron's life. Moses' own demise is coming only a short time later. It will be mere months, and the time for that sad event will be experienced by the people of Israel.

*A greater priesthood lies yet ahead
But it cannot come when the old remains alive
Not until the first one is finished and dead
Can the new come in and begin to thrive*

*But the first cannot end until all is complete
Only when that happens can the new one come in
When the law is fulfilled, and the devil suffers defeat
Then! Joyfully then, will the New Covenant begin*

*Let us put our trust in the One who has done it
Let us look to He who died on Calvary's tree
To Him alone shall we our souls commit
Because He alone has set us free!*

III. A Greater Priesthood

The passage we just looked over shows, very clearly, the temporary nature of the Law of Moses. The instructions given at the time of the consecration of Aaron which said that upon his death the garments were to transfer to his son, and the noting of that act now, in the 39th year of Aaron's priesthood shows that nothing was made perfect through the Aaronic priesthood.

Aaron was the representative of the law before the Lord, and yet he died. This shows that his sinful state remained. Further, if the designated representative before the Lord

died, then those on whose behalf he ministered for were also not perfected. This is explained in Hebrews 10 –

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

-Hebrews 10:1-4

However, at the time of the establishment of the priesthood, these things weren't expected to be thought through. Only now as we look at the whole counsel of God can we clearly see the temporary nature of the law, and the limitations that went along with the associated offices and rites connected to it. Only in Christ is that which is perfect and eternal realized.

The death of Aaron in the 39th year of his priesthood is surely a subtle hint to the ending of the priesthood in the coming of Christ. There are 39 books of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi. In that final book, the Messenger of the covenant is promised who is called the Sun of Righteousness.

The darkness of the law would be overshadowed by the brilliancy of the arrival of Messiah who would come with healing in His wings. Where Aaron ministered under a law of death, leading to death, Messiah would come with a covenant of life, leading to life.

What we have seen here today is the time when Israel is ready to be brought into the New Covenant. Their time of punishment is almost over. It notes that they are in Kadesh, or Holy, and want to go through Edom in order to advance towards the Land of Promise. As we saw in Numbers 13, Kadesh signified access to the kingdom of God through Christ. That is their starting point, but how will it come about? In Genesis, Edom was given as a picture of Adam, the natural man. Israel, the spiritual man, wants to go through Edom, the natural man, in order to get to their promised inheritance. It is a picture of attempting to enter heaven through works of the law, meaning through the natural man. But it doesn't work that way. Edom refuses. Even when promising to take the King's Highway and pay for their food and water, the refusal is made.

One does not buy what God offers freely, as Simon the sorcerer found out in Acts 8, and as Isaiah proclaims –

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.” Isaiah 55:1

One cannot go through the natural man in order to receive or enter the promise. Israel had the Rock with them all along, just as Israel has had Christ with them all along. But as Paul says, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.”

Israel’s attempts to enter the promise through Adam, meaning the flesh, are so strongly rejected that it says that Edom came out against them with many men and a strong hand. So much for such an attempt! And so it says they turned away from him. Israel will turn away from Adam at some point.

That point is then introduced in the next words which state that they journeyed from Kadesh, or Holy, to Mount Hor, or “Mount of the mountain.” What would that be picturing? The last named mountain that they were at was Mount Sinai, which is called the mountain of the Lord, and which they departed from in Numbers 10. If Sinai, which represents the law is the mountain of the Lord, and if Christ is the fulfillment of the law, then Mount Hor, the “Mount of the mountain” would be a picture of Christ.

It is at this location that Aaron is set to die. Two truths are seen in Aaron. The Aaronic priesthood is typical of Christ, the greater High Priest. But Aaron is also, literally, the high priest of the law. He is in the 39th year of his priesthood; the Old Testament ends with the 39th book of the Bible. And by Providence, we are in our 39th Numbers sermon today. Kind of fun!

The transfer of the priesthood from Aaron, meaning Very High, and typical of Christ, but who is also the line of the high priest of the law, to the son Eleazar, or Whom God Helps, represents the change of the priesthood from that which pictures Christ in his work, “Very High,” to that who pictures Christ in His person, “Whom God helps.” He fulfilled the law and established the New Covenant, becoming God’s true, and final, High Priest. Being fully God, it is He who helps those who come to Him in faith.

Aaron, representative of the Law of Moses, had to die outside of the Land of Promise, because it is not by works of the law that one can enter, but through faith in Christ. The

typology is set because the typology points to Christ. Remember the poignant lesson from our sermon last week.

The law can perfect nothing. This is seen in the death of the law's high priest. If he wasn't perfected by the law, then nobody could be perfected by it. Only One born perfect under the law, and who then perfectly fulfilled the law, could bring the law to its end. Aaron died on the "Mount of the mountain." The law died in Christ –

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." Colossians 2:13, 14

The message of these Old Testament stories keeps telling us, time and again, that only in the coming of Messiah will things truly be as they should be. The Aaronic priesthood will continue on after Aaron, and there will be oodles of pictures of Christ there as well, but the thing to remember is that the folks just kept dying – priests, kings, prophets, and common folk – they just kept dying.

The law itself says that the man who does the things of the law will live, but the people just kept on dying. What futile, pointless existence if the law of Moses is where you have put your hope – except when it is in the One who fulfilled that law. If that is where your hope is placed, it is well placed indeed.

Come to Christ, rest in Christ, and trust in Christ. Put away your arrogant deeds of the law, and be saved by Jesus Christ our Lord. May it be so, and may it be today.

Closing Verse: *"It is finished!" John 19:30*

Next Week: Numbers 21:1-9 Exciting stuff... You won't be bored... (The Standard of the Lord) (40th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

From Kadesh to Mount Hor

Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh
To the king of Edom, words to discuss
“Thus says your brother Israel
‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us

How our fathers went down to Egypt
Jacob and his family, so they did do
And we dwelt in Egypt a long time
And the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers too

When we cried out to the Lord
He heard our voice and sent the Angel, by divine order
And brought us up out of Egypt
Now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border

Please let us pass through your country
We will not pass through fields or vineyards, as I say
Nor will we drink water from wells
We will go along the King’s Highway

We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left
———so shall it be
Until we have passed through your territory

Then Edom said to him
“You shall not pass through my land
Lest I come out against you with the sword
This you best understand

So the children of Israel said to him, “We will go by the Highway
And if I or my livestock drink any of your water, for sure
Then I will pay for it
Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more

Then he said, “You shall not pass through
So Edom came out against them with many men
———and with a strong hand
Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory

So Israel turned away from him, as we now understand

Now the children of Israel, the whole congregation, so we know
Journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor
———-to Mount Hor they did go

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor
———-to them He was relaying
By the border of the land of Edom, saying

“Aaron shall be gathered to his people
For he shall not enter the land, such is this spoken law
Which I have given to the children of Israel
Because you rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah

Take Aaron and Eleazar his son
And bring them up to Mount Hor; that is where
And strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son
For Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there

So Moses did just as the Lord commanded, as was fitting and right
And they went up to Mount Hor in all the congregation’s sight

Moses stripped Aaron of his garments
And put them on Eleazar his son
And there on the top of the mountain Aaron died
Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain

Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead
All the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days
———-for him their tears were shed

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy

Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply
And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 21:1-9 (THE STANDARD OF THE LORD)

It is an amazing set of nine verses today. The first three seem completely disconnected from the final six, but they are not. And more, their placement has caused countless scholars to scratch their heads and look for rather odd explanations as to how they ended up in this spot.

But everything does fit as it should. That will be evident enough as we go on. One bite at a time and the whole elephant goes down. And, that is what we are doing each week as we continue through this magnificent word.

Several times while typing today's passage, I actually said out loud, "What a marvelous word! It is alive." And that is just how the author of Hebrews describes it. He calls it "living and powerful." And this is so. It is living and active because it points to the Source of life and power.

Text Verse: *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John 1:17*

What does the law in relation to grace have to do with a passage from the law? And why would that be an acceptable text verse for our passage? Well, if we remember what happened in the previous sermon where Aaron died, and what that pictured, then we can take a general snapshot of redemptive history with some of our verses today, and then we can continue on with that theme from there.

It's generally not possible to take these stories and put them in a chronological box, and so things are introduced, and then details are filled in, and then the story continues on. We have seen this consistently since we departed Sinai with Israel, and it will continue on today. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. And the Lord Listened (verses 1-3)

¹The king of Arad,

We now come to a story, the occurrence of which is not chronologically easy to determine. The last occurrence noted was the death of Aaron, and that came just after Edom's refusal to allow Israel to pass through their land. It is also mentioned in relation to Aaron's death in Numbers 33 –

“Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the Lord, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first *day* of the fifth month. ³⁹ Aaron *was* one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.

⁴⁰ Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel.” Numbers 33:38-40

Therefore, the initial event, that of the coming out of the king of Arad against Israel, likely happened at that time, after Aaron's death. But, it does not naturally follow that Israel's retaliation occurred at that time. This will be seen later.

The passage also comes directly before a memorable account that will be referred to by Jesus in John 3. It appears they are placed as they are based on subject matter rather than chronology.

Here it mentions *melekh arad*, or the “king of Arad.” The name Arad comes from either an unused root meaning to sequester, and thus a fugitive, or from a root which signifies untamed, such as the wild donkey. Either way, the result is the same – it carries the sense of one who is unrestrained. The location is believed to be what is today called Tel-Arad which is about 20 miles south of Hebron. He is further designated as...

^{1 (con't)} **the Canaanite,**

ha'kenaani – “the Canaanite.” As we have seen in previous sermons, Canaanites pictures those who bring others into subjection. That is literally seen here in the coming verses.

^{1 (con't)} **who dwelt in the South,**

yoshev ha'negev – “sitting in the Negev.” The word *yashav* means to sit, and thus it is a place of ease, meaning one's dwelling. Negev is a word which comes from a root meaning “dry” or “parched.” It is the southern desert area of Israel.

^{1 (con't)} **heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim.**

These words are a bit tricky. This king of Arad heard that Israel was coming, but the Hebrew reads, *derek ha'atharim*, The word *derek* signifies a way or a road, but the next word, *ha'atharim*, is found only here in the Bible. It is debated whether this is a name, meaning “the Atharim,” or an explanation, meaning “the spies,” or “the merchants,” either of which may be correct.

The word may be connected to the word found in Numbers 14:6, *ha'tarim*, or “the spies,” who had gone to spy out Canaan. The same word is found in parallel verses in Kings and Chronicles and is translated as “merchants.”

The word is also similar to the Arabic word *athar*, which signifies a footprint, or a trace, and so it might mean simply a caravan route. This seems the most likely because the spies would have taken an obvious route in their trek to and through Canaan, and if it is not the same route as then, they would still travel on a known route.

¹ (con't) **Then he fought against Israel and took *some* of them prisoners.**

It appears that Arad came quickly and without Israel being prepared in any measure for their arrival. In this, he was able to fall on Israel and take some of them captive. This seems likely because if Israel had been prepared, Arad would not have been able to succeed in this manner. This is evident from the coming verses.

At this point, there is no mention of any reason for the attack, such as Israel's disobedience. It is simply recorded that the Canaanites came upon Israel. Thus, this is an anticipatory lesson for Israel.

The Lord knew this would occur, and yet He allowed it to happen without informing them to be prepared. Thus, it would be a lesson that Israel should always be on guard against those who come against them, and that the conquest of Canaan was not of their own will and ability, but because of the Lord's. They were to trust in Him, and acknowledge that He alone wins the battles. That appears evident from the next words...

² **So Israel made a vow to the Lord,**

v'yidar yisrael neder l'Yehovah – “and vowed Israel a vow to Yehovah.” It is trust in the Lord, and a reliance on Him that is highlighted here. Were it not so, the people would have been recorded as going up against Arad with their own might, as they attempted to do in Numbers 14.

As we will see, the two passages are being set in parallel to show the expected outcome based on a reliance on the Lord.

² (con't) **and said, “If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand,**

im naton titen eth ha'am hazeh b'yadi – “if in giving, You will give the people, the this, into my hand.” It is a statement of absoluteness and surety. Israel is making a proclamation to the Lord that he will take specific and complete action on a particular matter if the Lord will grant his petition.

It is showing a complete and total reliance on Yehovah for the outcome, but with a promise that in the outcome there will be no deviation from what is promised and what was requested. They are tied together in one thought. The request is that of the Lord giving the people into his hand. The promise, based on that condition is...

² (con't) **then I will utterly destroy their cities.”**

v'ha'kharamti eth arehem – “and the complete devotion I *will give* their cities.” The word is *kharam*, and the meaning is to devote, or set apart, something to the Lord. In this case it is as accursed, or made anathema. It is what was expected of Jericho when it was destroyed. The entire city was set apart to the Lord. This was proclaimed by Joshua to the people in Joshua 6:17-19 –

“Now the city shall be doomed by the Lord to destruction, it and all who *are* in it. Only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all who *are* with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. ¹⁸ And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. ¹⁹ But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, *are* consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord.”

There, the entire city was devoted to the Lord. Some things were to be utterly destroyed, and the precious things were to be wholly dedicated to Him. No plunder could belong to the people because the city was under the ban to the Lord alone. All things under such a devotion were returned to Him in one way or another.

³ **And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel**

The lack of mentioning the name Moses is not to be missed. Rather, Israel is mentioned four times in these three verses, this being the last. It says, *v'yishma Yehovah b'qol yisrael* – “and listened Yehovah to voice Israel.” Israel was attacked, Israel was harmed, Israel made a vow, and the Lord listened to Israel.

Obviously, Israel spoke through Moses to the Lord, but that is not what is being conveyed. The unity of the people is. Unlike Chapter 14 where there was disunity, here there is complete unity. Moses does not need to be named. In their unity, the Lord heard...

3 (con't) and delivered up the Canaanites,

v'yiten eth ha'kenaani – “and delivered up the Canaanite.” The word is singular. They are taken as one under Arad, just as Israel is taken as one under the Lord. It isn't one against many, or many against one, but a force against a force. The Canaanite, he who brings into subjection, is himself brought into subjection. He is defeated before Israel because the Lord delivered him up...

3 (con't) and they utterly destroyed them and their cities.

v'ya'kharem eth-hem v'eth arehem – “and they gave the complete devotion to them and their cities.” Exactly as had been promised by Israel, so Israel fulfilled their promise. Unlike Jericho where Achan brought trouble on Israel by violating the ban, the people here faithfully followed through with the vow they had made.

Here it notes “cities” in the plural, therefore, Arad is not the only city included, and it looks then to Hormah being a general location which encompasses several cities, inclusive of Arad. Finally, as a sign of their victory in the Lord, the account finishes with...

3 (con't) So the name of that place was called Hormah.

v'yiqr shem ha'maqom kharemah – “and called name the place Hormah.” The name *Kharemah* or Hormah comes from the word which was used in verses 2 & 3, *khar-ram*. The name comes from the act, and it signifies what occurred at the place. It is the same name given to the place at the end of Numbers 14, except there it contained an article, *ha'kheremah* or “The Destruction.”

What seems certain, is that the actual destruction of this place now does not take place until later. The promise is made, and when the city was attacked by Joshua after Israel's entrance into Canaan, the devotion actually took place.

This is because the same location is named in Joshua 12:14. There it mentions the king of Hormah and the king of Arad. It may be, as I said a moment ago, that Hormah is a location encompassing a general area inclusive of Arad, and Arad was a lesser city within the area. For some, there is a troubling aspect to the thought of the devotion to destruction being complete only later at the time of Joshua. This is mentioned by the Pulpit Commentary –

“This, however, throws the narrative as it stands into confusion and discredit, for the ban and the destruction become a mockery and an unreality if nothing more was done to the towns of the king of Arad than was done at the same time to the towns of all his neighbours. It would be more reverent to reject the story as an error or a falsehood than to empty it of the meaning which it was obviously intended to convey.” Pulpit Commentary In this, the Pulpit Commentary says that putting the account here is inappropriate because the cities of the king of Arad received the *same fate* as the rest of the towns of Canaan which were conquered by Joshua. For this reason, they go on to say that Israel destroyed Arad now, the towns were repopulated, and then they were destroyed again by Joshua after entering Canaan.

That is incorrect. First, the conquest of Canaan occurred starting just a few short months after this account. They are in their fortieth year. Aaron is dead and in a short span Moses too will be dead. After thirty days of mourning for him, Israel will enter Canaan in the first month of the forty-first year. The entire conquest of Canaan will only take seven years. Therefore, this is incorrect.

Secondly, Israel would have to enter into Canaan, in part or in whole, in order to destroy Arad now. That is not recorded, nor would it be acceptable until the time of punishment was fulfilled. Only the twelve spies had entered, ten had died, and only two others would enter after the forty years were complete.

And finally, Arad and its cities *did not share the same fate* as the other cities of Canaan as the Pulpit Commentary supposes. Jericho was under the ban and devoted wholly to the Lord. However, the other cities were not. For example, of the second city to be destroyed, Ai, it says this –

“Now the Lord said to Joshua: ‘Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. ² And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves. Lay an ambush for the city behind it.’” Joshua 8:1, 2

And again, after the total destruction of all of the cities mentioned in Joshua 10 & 11, where it is said time and again of each city that Israel came against, they struck all of the people who were in the city, meaning men, women, and children. Nothing was left alive. However, in summery of these battles, in Joshua 11, it says this –

“So all the cities of those kings, and all their kings, Joshua took and struck with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded. ¹³ But *as for* the cities that stood on their mounds, Israel burned none of them, except Hazor only, *which* Joshua burned. ¹⁴ And all the spoil of these cities and the livestock, the children of Israel took as booty for themselves; but they struck every man with the edge of the sword until they had destroyed them, and they left none breathing.” Joshua 11:12-14

Therefore, these surrounding cities *did not* share the same fate as Arad. They were not *kherem*, or devoted to destruction; only the people were. Arad, however, was *kherem*, and therefore the entire city – like Jericho – would be offered up to the Lord as an offering of devotion. Even the plunder would be so devoted.

The account here, as we have seen numerous times so far, is one which gives certain details in advance, and the events and the rest of the detail is explained later. And so what we have here is a passage which is set parallel to the account in Numbers 14:39-45. In order to see this, both passages should be read, side by side.

Then Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly. ⁴⁰ And they rose early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, “Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!”

⁴¹ And Moses said, “Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. ⁴² Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord *is* not among you. ⁴³ For the Amalekites and the Canaanites *are* there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you.”

⁴⁴ But they presumed to go up to the mountaintop. Nevertheless, neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed from the camp. ⁴⁵ Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down and attacked them, and drove them back as far as Hormah. Numbers 14:39-45

The king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim. Then he fought against Israel and took *some* of them prisoners. ² So Israel made a vow to the Lord, and said, "If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities." ³ And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So the name of that place was called Hormah. Numbers 21:1-3

The first occurred just after the punishment was levied upon Israel for rejecting the Lord. The second began to occur about thirty-eight years later, just before the time of punishment was ended. The first saw Israel rejecting Moses' words, and thus rejecting the word of the Lord. It ended in defeat and their being driven back as far as The Destruction. The second saw Israel work in agreement with the Lord and resulted in the destruction of their enemies.

The first pictured attempting to enter God's inheritance through personal works through the law, or simply through personal righteousness. This second pictures relying on the Lord alone to be brought into His inheritance, and only then working to please the Lord. The first occurred while Aaron was alive, picturing his mediation of the law, which cannot bring about salvation. The second occurred after the death of the high priest, picturing entering God's inheritance after the death of Christ, not before.

This is why Moses is never mentioned in this passage. It is not by the law that one enters God's promise, but by faith in the One who fulfilled the law and who then brings in His people and subdues the enemies. The victory is the Lord's alone.

*The enemies of the Lord's people come to harass and destroy
They come after the weak and the weary without a care
But the Lord will defend them, great weapons He will employ
Don't have fear, good Christian; for you, the Lord is there*

*He is the Rod lifted high, the power of God
He is the Stone of support as a place of rest*

*His gospel of peace is nigh, so have your feet shod
The enemy is around, so in your armor be dressed*

*By His power you can word off all foes
In His strength the devil stands no chance
Though he comes at you with mighty blows
Fix your feet firmly in the battle; a warrior's stance*

II. The Bronze Serpent (verses 4-9)

⁴ Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea,

This is now in response to not being allowed to travel through Edom, as was seen in the previous chapter. The people had to actually turn away from the direction of Canaan, having their backs to it. This was in order...

^{4 (con't)} to go around the land of Edom;

Cambridge's commentary on this says, "Throughout the whole of the detour no encampments are named until Israel reaches the region of Moab." It is as if they find it curious that for such an immensely long journey, no stops are named. And that would be true unless one understood that the Lord only chooses events which will give insights into later redemptive history.

Real events of history are selected to help lead us to understand Jesus, His work, and His plans. Those things which occurred as normal life in the times of Israel are ignored because they have no bearing on the greater story of redemption.

^{4 (con't)} and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way.

Aaron died on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year. They mourned for him thirty days. Therefore, they could not have left Mount Hor until at least the start of the sixth month. This would be around September. It would be extremely hot and dry.

They would have to travel through the Aravah desert towards Ezion-geber, which is very near Elath today, right at the head of the Red Sea where Egypt, Israel, and Jordan meet. The trek would be an arduous one for so many people while on foot.

This terrain would be loose sand and gravel, therefore, so many people would kick up immense dust. There is no shade except some shrubs and desert trees with minimal foliage, and it would have been the time of the year when the east winds with their immense heat and accompanying sandstorms would come through. Thus it says *va'tiqsar nephesh ha'am baderek* – “and was reaped the soul of the people on the way.”

Their souls being “reaped” signifies that their tempers were cut short, as if reaped. Before going on, it needs to be remembered that the entire time this is occurring, the shoes never wore out, and the pillar of cloud and fire was with them. And, the people continued to receive manna each and every morning, six days a week.

⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses:

It is an unusual statement. It says they spoke against *elohim*, God, rather than Yehovah, meaning the Lord. The next verse clearly identifies Yehovah as God, but this is a word against God in general and against Moses in particular. And their complaint is...

^{5 (con't)} “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?”

It is the same complaint that their fathers had made about thirty-eight years earlier in Exodus 14 and 16. Now the new generation of Israel, including those nineteen and younger who departed from Egypt, repeat the same thing as their faithless fathers.

^{5 (con't)} For *there is no food and no water*,

The words are untrue. The Rock, which is Christ, and which gave forth water, is said to have followed them in the wilderness, and it would have been impossible for them to have survived the trek without it. Paul shows that they were, in fact, sustained by the Rock in 1 Corinthians 10 –

“For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.” 1 Corinthians 10:4, 5

And the manna is said to have never ceased during the entire time, from Exodus 16 until Joshua 5. They simply did not consider Christ – meaning the water and the manna – acceptable...

^{5 (con't)} and our soul loathes this worthless bread.”

Here they use a term of great contempt, *ha'qeloqel*, or "the worthless." It is an intensification of the word *qalal*, mean cursed, or lightly esteemed, and it is only seen here in Scripture. It is as if they are being cheated by the grace of the giving of the manna instead of having bread they could work for on their own...

⁶ So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people,

Here it says Yehovah sent *ha'nehashim ha'seraphim*, or "the serpents, the burning." It is debated whether the words "the burning" refers to their physical color or their painful bite. The word *saraph* in this noun form is first seen here, and it will only be used seven times.

In Deuteronomy 8, the word is used to again to describe the serpents, and it is stated in conjunction with scorpions. Therefore, it is referring to the bite of the snake, regardless of the color. There is no reason to assume that only one type of snake is even being referred to. The people are inundated with poisonous snakes which cause extreme burning...

^{6 (con't)} and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

At the Lord's command, they were brought forth, and in response to the command they inundated the people. It is the bite which is focused on here, and the death which results is highlighted. In this, it was obvious to the people that this was more than just a chance occurrence, but rather a divine rebuke for their faithless conduct. Instead of crying out to the Lord for relief, they cried out against God and His lawgiver in distrust and ingratitude. The serpents were their just reward for their conduct, as is next noted...

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you;

Here is another clear reference to the deity of Christ. It says in this verse that they had spoken against Yehovah and against Moses. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul identifies Christ as the one spoken against –

“...nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents;” 1 Corinthians 10:9

It is impossible to read the two passages and not arrive at a one-to-one correlation between Yehovah and Christ Jesus. Unless the Bible is simply a contradictory, confused

book, it must be so. Therefore, when one speaks against Christ, including His deity, one speaks against the Lord God.

They have spoken against the Lord, and they have spoken against the Lord's lawgiver, meaning Moses, but Moses only speaks what the Lord speaks forth first. This was seen in our text verse today, The law was given *through* Moses, not *by* Moses.

And truth came through Jesus Christ. As Jesus said to the Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Jesus is the incarnate Word, and He is the embodiment of the law and of truth. And so they speak to Moses, not that *he should heal them*, but that *he would go to the Lord for their healing*.

^{7 (con't)} **pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us."**

Moses has interceded for the people on several occasions, but this is the only recorded time that the people have asked him to do so on their behalf, and it is specifically for the Lord to take away the serpents which were afflicting them.

In this, the Hebrew says, *v'yaser me'alenu eth ha'nakhash* – "and take away from us the serpent." It is singular. One could argue that the singular stands for the plural, but that is not how an excited group would speak in such a matter. Rather, this is a clear allusion to the *nakhash* of Genesis 3. Ultimately, death came through the serpent, and only the Lord can take away the power of the serpent. This is explicitly stated by the author of Hebrews –

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14

The serpent of Genesis 3, also called the devil elsewhere, and who has the power of death, could only be destroyed by the power of the One who gave the law, through which came sin, in the first place.

^{7 (con't)} **So Moses prayed for the people.**

Here Moses, emblematic of the law which came through him, appeals to the Lord on behalf of the people. It is a clear indication that only the Lord, from whom came the Law, can destroy the power of the devil. As that Lord is said in Hebrews 2 to be the incarnate Christ, then it – once again – can only mean that Jesus is the Lord God.

In theology 1+1 will always equal 2. And so the divine answer to the request is given, and it is an answer which explicitly points in typology to Jesus Christ...

⁸ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery *serpent*,

aseh lekha saraph – “make to you fiery.” Moses is told to emulate the fiery of the serpent. The question with this is, as already mentioned above, “Is the *fiery* speaking of color or of the burning death it causes?”

^{8 (con’t)} and set it on a pole;

v’sim otow al nes – “and set it on a standard.” The word is *nes*, which comes from *nasas*, meaning “high,” or “conspicuous.” It was first, and only, used so far in Exodus 17:15, where it referred to the Lord, Yehovah. There it said, *Yehovah nissi* – “The-Lord-Is-My-Banner.” Here, the *fiery* is to be set on a standard.

It is not one with the standard, but is placed on it. Only then do the two become one, and only then will there be an effect. It is made this way for a particular purpose...

^{8 (con’t)} and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.”

Here we have a perfect example of being saved by grace through faith. The *fiery* on the pole is harmless, but it bears resemblance to the death which surrounded them, and yet it then brings life. Further, it is not merely the *fiery* on the banner that brings life, nor is it the act of looking at something, that brings life. It is only when the act of looking at the *fiery* on the pole that life is granted.

⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent,

Scholars claim that this conclusively proves that it is the bronze color which is being referred to in the word *saraph*, or fiery, which describes the snakes rather than the bite which causes burning death. That is a faulty conclusion which will be seen as we continue. For now, Moses does as is instructed and first makes the *nehash nekhoshet*, or “serpent, bronze.”

^{9 (con’t)} and put it on a pole;

In accord with the word of the Lord, the serpent – after it is made – is put on the standard. The two only become one at this point. The implication is that without the standard, the serpent has no effect. Without the serpent, the standard has no effect.

^{9 (fin)} **and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.**

As promised by Yehovah, so it came about. Those who looked to the *nekuhash ha'nekuhoshet*, or “serpent the bronze,” were healed. They were already dead through the bite, it has just not yet been finalized, but by faith in looking at the bronze serpent, that assured death was negated. If one didn't look to it, death – which was already alive in the person – was inevitable.

As I said, it is the bite resulting in death which is represented by the word *fiery*, not the color of the snake. The reason for this is first, bronze has been used, consistently so far to indicate judgment, and also endurance. It will continue to consistently picture that throughout Scripture.

This judgment can be positive or negative. If positive, it results in purification and justification. If negative, it results in punishment or even death. However, there is the truth that in order for there to be positive judgment for a sinful person, then there must be death of an innocent in his place. Therefore, the positive judgment still carries with it a negative aspect.

Second, because there must be death of an innocent in place of an offender to be absolved of sin, then the *fiery* is referring to the bite of death, not the color of the serpent. The serpent brought death, and, therefore, death is what is being portrayed on the standard. It is, in essence, a movable substitute for the brazen altar, and a pictorial representation of what occurs there – death in the form of a substitute.

The book is written and sealed with the final word, “Amen”

God has a plan which will surely come about

Be sure to refer to it time and time again

And you will be strengthened for the battle no doubt

The Lord is my Banner, exalted is He!

He stands upon the high mountain watching over us

And He is the Victor over even the greatest enemy

He is the One who prevailed even over death; our Lord Jesus

*Surely from generation to generation our foes are defeated
Because of the Lamb who to Calvary's tree was nailed
So marvelous is the story it needs to again be repeated
Until the end of time, our Lord, our Christ has prevailed!*

III. Pictures of Christ

What we have in these passages ties in directly with Aaron's death of the previous chapter. His death, in the 39th year of his ministry, was shown to be the ending of the Mosaic Law, just as the ending of the Old Testament of 39 books was coming to its completion. After that is recorded, we have the three verses concerning Israel, Arad, and Hormah. Unlike before, Israel does not try to conquer the Canaanites under their own power, nor do they attempt to do so prior to their entry into the Land of Promise.

Despite being recorded here, we saw that only occurs later. Some of Israel were made captive, but the rest will deal with them at the Lord's will, not theirs. That is a clear indication of not battling those who oppose the gospel by one's own efforts, but through the efforts and will of the Lord. Only after entry into the promised inheritance, the enemies will be utterly destroyed.

From there it mentions departing Mount Hor, that is where Aaron died and was buried. The high priest has died and the people are ready to begin a circuitous route to Canaan, around the land of Edom. As we saw in the last sermon, Edom was given as a picture of Adam, the natural man. Israel, the spiritual man, must go around the natural to enter the Promise.

In this trek of man, the devil – the serpent – is brought out. This is a snapshot of what happened in human history. Man was in the garden, and he rejected the way of the Lord's leading. In this, the people spoke against God and against Moses. Moses the law-giver, pictures law here – whatever law.

In Eden man rejected God and he rejected God's law, and so through the serpent came death. It is the bite of the serpent by which this comes. After the fall, the people admit their sin and ask *law* to intercede for them to the Lord. This is exactly what occurred. As I said when Moses prayed for the people, the serpent of Genesis 3 – who has the power of death – could only be destroyed by the power of the One who gave the law, through which came sin, in the first place. The law (Moses) intercedes for the people because the law calls for the coming of Messiah to do so.

This is where the story of redemption meets up with the picture of Aaron's death – which anticipated Christ – in the narrative. Christ, the embodiment of the law came in the form of sinful flesh –

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” Romans 8:3

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

It is Christ, who took the curse upon Himself that removes the curse in His people. The fiery serpent was first made – Christ was first given a body. Only then was He placed on the standard. People saw Christ walk in Israel, and that didn't save them. And people saw crosses all the time in Israel, and those didn't save them. Only when Christ went to the cross is the picture complete. Only in that can Paul say in Colossians 2:13-15 –

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

And only then could Peter say concerning Christ that He “Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24)

It is the death on the cross which replaces the sting of the serpent, meaning death, which is the result of sin, and which finds its strength in the law. As Christ embodies the law, and as Christ died in fulfillment of the law, the power of the law, and thus the power of sin is defeated and annulled. That is why Paul calls out the victory cry in Romans 7 –

“O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Romans 7:24, 25

That this is the correct and sure interpretation of what we have seen today is confirmed by the words of Jesus Himself –

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:14-17

The death in the people because of the sting of the serpent pictures the sting of sin in all of us. We are already dead, but in Christ we are made alive. In the next verse of John, Jesus says, “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

It is not to be missed that Isaiah speaks of the Lord and His work using the same word, *nes*, or standard, twice concerning the coming Messiah and His cross. He says –

“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a **banner** to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.”
¹¹ It shall come to pass in that day
That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time
To recover the remnant of His people who are left,
From Assyria and Egypt,
From Pathros and Cush,
From Elam and Shinar,
From Hamath and the islands of the sea.
¹² He will set up a **banner** for the nations,
And will assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And gather together the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.” Isaiah 11:10-12

Isaiah notes the Gentiles in relation to this banner before speaking of the regathering of Israel. He also notes that it is a second regathering of them. Isaiah prophesied this before the first exile of Israel. He presupposes two exiles. And he prophesies that the Gentiles would seek the Messiah *before* collective Israel would.

This is exactly what is seen in these ongoing passages. Israel has been wandering in the wilderness for 38 years, picturing Israel under punishment these past 2000 years. While

that has been going on, Gentiles have streamed to Christ. Only at the end of the time of wandering are the Jews now calling out to Christ in ever-increasing numbers.

It is in looking to Christ, believing in what He did, and receiving that, and in nothing else, that the dead soul is brought to life. It is, as is clearly presented in this passage today, a voluntary act of the will. Unless one voluntarily receives Christ by looking to the cross in faith, there can be no salvation. Choose wisely; choose Christ.

WOW!

This chapter has some unbelievable acrostics hidden! When I first saw the acrostics that the computer algorithm found in this chapter, I was immediately fascinated because of the collection of words which are all connected to each other — but even more so — to the context of the chapter!

It takes a long time to sort them and put them into sentences, so unfortunately, I was only able to look into a couple of verses.

— VERSE 6 —

“So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.” —Numbers 21:6

“וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה בְּעָם אֶת הַנֹּחַשִׁים הַשָּׂרְפִים וַיִּנְשְׁכוּ אֶת-הָעָם וַיָּמָת עִם-רַב מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל”

The acrostics in this verse are fascinating! Check this out:

If we take the first letters of the entire verse and write them down, we will get a grammatically correct sentence in Hebrew:

וערם (ה) ויבא ההוא

With the exception of the (ה) in the middle which I can't make sense of, the sentence reads: “And that one came cunning” — “cunning” (Arom) is the same word as used in Genesis 3:1 to describe the serpent who is cunning. It is important to note that there is an article “The” — which make it clear that it alludes to Satan — who is cunning!

But that's not all for this verse. If we take the last letter of each word and write them down, we'll get 6 different acrostics which all have the same root word: Death:

ותמת, המתם, ממות, תומם, במתם, תמתו:

Die, In their death, their end, from death, he killed them, and died;

That cannot be a coincidence that the verse that speaks about snakes that have killed many has a hidden acrostic sentence referring to the cunning one and then 6 acrostics speaking all about death! Six being the number of man; destined to die! Unbelievable!

I just also realized that the number of the verse is — SIX. Ha

Charlie — verse 7 the sentence “pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us” (אֶת מְעַלְגֵינוּ וַיִּסַּר יְהוָה) has a backwards acrostic in it that forms “Torah”. Could it be that

the people are asking Moses to take away THE LAW from them that brought forth death?

Verse 9 has an incredible acrostic.

The words "set it on a pole" form an acrostic "העון" (ha-aven), meaning "The Iniquity".

The words "and it shall be that everyone who is bitten" form an acrostic "נאוה" (Neh-ah-veh), meaning "Fitting".

The two word acrostics are one after the other: They have no separation.

Together, they form the sentence "fitting iniquity". What an incredible picture of Christ! The iniquity which is fitting upon the people is set on a pole! Further, the word "Fitting" could also be translated as Lovely/Beautiful depending on the context.

Closing Verse: *"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:56, 57*

Next Week: Numbers 21:10-20 So exciting it will be as if you are on needles and pins...(Filling Wineskins) (41st Numbers sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Standard of the Lord

The king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South
Heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim
Then he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners
This was uncalled for, so it would seem

So Israel made a vow to the Lord, and said
"If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand
Then I will utterly destroy their cities
We know that You surely understand

And the Lord listened to the voice of Israel
And delivered up the Canaanites. We might say "Ooh la la"
And they utterly destroyed them and their cities
So the name of that place was called Hormah

Then they journeyed from Mount Hor
By the Way of the Red Sea, as the record does say
To go around the land of Edom
And the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way

And the people spoke against God and against Moses:
“Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness
For there is no food and no water
And our soul loathes this bread; it is worthless

So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people
———-who had the Lord tried
And they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died

Therefore the people came to Moses, and said
“We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord
———-and against you
Pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us
So Moses prayed for the people; this thing he did do

Then the Lord said to Moses
“Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; these instructions I give
And it shall be that everyone who is bitten
When he looks at it, shall live

So Moses made a bronze serpent
And put it on a pole; so he did do
And so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone
When he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived! Whoo hoo!

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 21:10-20 (FILLING WINESKINS)

I admit that I had no idea what this passage was about until I sat down on 25 March and did the study. Glad I did.

If anybody here is old enough to remember Johnny Horton, or at least his music, he was a singer during the 1950s who did some great tunes, a couple of which were about wars. One of them was The Battle of New Orleans. It was based on a battle between the Americans and the British about 100 years before his birth.

It was such an obscure battle that people in England didn't even realize that it was real until they researched the contents of the song that they heard on the radio. His words are in a poetic fashion, and the meaning of them is almost obscure to someone who isn't aware of the lingo he used. For example, in part of it, he says...

We held our fire
'Till we see'd their faces well
Then we opened up our squirrel guns
And really gave 'em – well we...
Fired our guns and the British kep a-comin'
There wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago
We fired once more and they begin to runnin'
On down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico

Unless you were aware of the nuances of the language, the shortness offered at one point for the sensitivity of the people's ears, and the locations mentioned, it wouldn't make much sense. He had another great war song called Sink the Bismark. It was a marvelous remembrance of an event that occurred just a few years before, and which he put to music.

In the verses today there is a reference to the Book of the Wars of the Lord. Because of the name of it, and because of the references in it, critical scholars, specifically liberal critical scholars, have argued that this must be a book that had nothing to do with Moses.

Some argue that it was actually written by the Ammonites about the conflicts of Baal in which the feats of their heroes, like Sihon and others, were celebrated in poetry. Others

say that it must be a book dating from the time of Jehoshaphat and which contains early history of Israel from the time of the patriarchs to the time of around Joshua.

Others make up other, ridiculous, theories about it, completely disregarding the fact that it is recorded here in the Books of Moses, and that it speaks of things that Israel of the time was intimately familiar with.

There is no reason to assume it was written at some point many centuries later, and it is the height of stupidity to credit the book to the Ammonites when it is specifically said to be *sepher mikhamot Yehovah*, or the “Book of the Wars of Yehovah.” Liberal scholars are, please forgive the forthrightness, idiots.

Text Verse: *Then David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son,¹⁸ and he told them to teach the children of Judah the Song of the Bow; indeed it is written in the Book of Jasher:*

¹⁹ *“The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places!*

How the mighty have fallen!

²⁰ *Tell it not in Gath,*

Proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon—

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,

Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

²¹ *“O mountains of Gilboa,*

Let there be no dew nor rain upon you,

Nor fields of offerings.

For the shield of the mighty is cast away there!

The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.

²² *From the blood of the slain,*

From the fat of the mighty,

The bow of Jonathan did not turn back,

And the sword of Saul did not return empty.

²³ *“Saul and Jonathan were beloved and pleasant in their lives,*

And in their death they were not divided;

They were swifter than eagles,

They were stronger than lions.

²⁴ *“O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,*

Who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury;

Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

²⁵ *“How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!*

Jonathan was slain in your high places.

*²⁶ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
You have been very pleasant to me;
Your love to me was wonderful,
Surpassing the love of women.
²⁷ "How the mighty have fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!" 2 Samuel 1:17-27*

That is certainly the longest text verse I have ever used, and maybe that will stand as a permanent record. Either way, David wrote the Song of the Bow and it is recorded in the Book of Jasher. That was a book known as far back as the time of Joshua, maybe further, as we will see today.

It is only a person with a set and perverse agenda who would willingly deny that the Book of the Wars of the Lord, like the Book of Jasher, wasn't recorded exactly as the surrounding text states. The burden of the proof of such ludicrous claims rests solely on those making them, and they ain't got it.

Be careful who you believe. Check all things. Hold fast to what is good. This is a wonderfully precious and sacred word we have been given. It is filled with marvelous wonder and delight. Yes, great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Arise, O Well! (verses 10-20)

¹⁰ Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth.

The first three verses of the chapter detailed a battle between Israel and the Canaanites under the king of Arad. The Israelites prevailed, and it says that they called the place of the destruction which occurred Hormah. After that were the six verses concerning the bronze serpent. However, no location was named in that account.

The words now say that Israel has "moved on and camped in Oboth." Because it doesn't give a starting point, and only the destination is recorded, we can't tell if the accounts have actually been chronological or not. However, we can tell the record of movement from the detailed list found in Numbers 33 –

“Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel.

⁴¹ So they departed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. ⁴² They departed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon. ⁴³ They departed from Punon and camped at Oboth. ⁴⁴ They departed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, at the border of Moab." Numbers 33:40-44

As is seen here, this location, Oboth, is the third stop since leaving Mount Hor, where Aaron died and was buried. Nothing has been said of Punon yet, and this is the first time the name Oboth is found in Scripture. This tells us that everything seen in these accounts is recorded in a specific order by the Lord in order to show us hints of redemptive history.

The name Oboth is simply the plural of *ov*, which signifies a skin for holding water or wine. Therefore, it means, "Water Skins," or "Wine Skins." It could be that the Israelites were able to fill their skins with either water or wine at this location, and thus the name was given because of this. However, *ov* also signifies a ghost or a necromancer. To understand the connection will take a moment.

Ov comes from the same as *av*, or father, as in someone prattling a father's name, like saying dah dah instead of daddy, and so it is then a mumble. A waterskin will resonate from its hollow sound. When one blows into it, out comes the familiar hooooo that we get when we blow into a bottle. Hence it leads to the idea of a necromancer or ghost who utters hollow sounds, as a ventriloquist might.

It is this, for example, which is used to speak of the witch of En Dor in 1 Samuel 28, and also of the familiar spirit which Saul asks to be brought forth in that same passage. For such a simple two-letter word, *ov*, there is much to be considered. Oboth is located in the land of Edom.

¹¹ And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim,

From Oboth, with all of the highly interesting meaning associated with the name of that place, Israel is said to travel next to Ije Abarim. The Hebrew actually says, *iyeha'avarim*, or "Iye of the Abarim." *Iye* comes from *iy*, meaning "a ruin." *Avarim* comes from *avar*, meaning "to pass through." Thus, *iyeha'avarim* means something like "Ruins of the Passers," or "Ruins of the Crossing-over." This location is said to be...

¹¹ (con't) in the wilderness which is east of Moab, toward the sunrise.

The location of the wilderness is twice described. The Hebrew does not say “east of Moab.” It says, “against the face of Moab.” This is then further defined as *mimizrakh ha’shamesh*, or “toward the rising of the sun.” Thus, by default, it is on the east edge of Moab.

The name Moab comes from two words – *mi* which means “who” and *ab* which means “dad.” In modern language, we’d call him “Who’s your daddy?” The answer comes from the story of how he was born to the union of Lot and one of his daughters, and so the name has a secondary meaning of “From Father.”

¹² From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered.

After leaving Ije Abarim, Israel then picked up stakes and camped in *nakhal zared*, or “The Valley of Zered.” The word *nakhal* is not a valley as one would think of it today. It signifies a wadi where water would flow through during the seasons of rain. That word comes from *nakhal* meaning, “to take possession,” or “inherit.”

It is well translated as the “Valley of Zered,” rather than the “Brook of Zered,” because one doesn’t camp in a brook. Rather, they camped in the valley, whether water was running at that time or not. However, it is likely it was as Deuteronomy 2 implies.

Zared comes from an unused root meaning to be exuberant in growth of foliage. According to Deuteronomy 2, this location represents a significant milestone in the travels of Israel, as will be explained in the next verse...

¹³ From there they moved and camped on the other side of the Arnon,

Israel is said to have left the Valley of Zered and their next travel took them to the side of the Arnon. The translation which says, “the other side of the Arnon” is not correct. The Hebrew says, *me’ever*. It simply means, “on the side,” and can speak of either side. However, Deuteronomy 2:24 and Judges 11:18 both indicate that they had not crossed over the Arnon into Moab. It should simply say that they camped “on the side of Arnon.” The name Arnon comes from *ranan*, a word which has only been seen once, at the dedication of the sanctuary. When the Lord consumed the offering on the brazen altar, the people *ranan*, or shouted, and fell on their faces. It signifies to give a jubilant, ringing cry, and thus rejoicing. Therefore, this is the Roaring Stream. It is that river...

¹³ (con’t) which is in the wilderness that extends from the border of the Amorites;

The encampment by the Arnon is next described as being in the wilderness which extends from the border of the Amorites. The name *ha'emori*, or "the Amorite," comes from *amar*, meaning to utter or say. Therefore, the name signifies being spoken of, and thus "Renowned."

¹³ (con't) **for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites.**

The Arnon is the dividing line between the two territories, one belonging to Moab and the other to the Amorites. The river itself comes out of the mountains of Moab, crosses between these two nations, and finally falls into the Dead Sea.

In crossing this valley where the river is, a milestone which was anticipated for thirty-eight years had been reached. In Deuteronomy 2, it says –

"Now rise and cross over the Valley of the Zered.' So we crossed over the Valley of the Zered. ¹⁴ And the time we took to come from Kadesh Barnea until we crossed over the Valley of the Zered *was* thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war was consumed from the midst of the camp, just as the Lord had sworn to them. ¹⁵ For indeed the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed." Deuteronomy 2:13-15

Upon entering this area, the final trek before leading into Canaan is seen. It will be in a short time that Moses will speak out the words of Deuteronomy, climb to the top of Mount Nebo, see the land of promise, and then die. As Deuteronomy 1:2 says, it is an eleven-day journey from Horeb, meaning Mount Sinai, to Kadesh Barnea.

That is where Israel was told to enter into Canaan and subdue it. But the people rebelled. Because of this failure on their part, they were told to depart that area and wander until all of that wicked generation was dead.

From there, Deuteronomy 2, that I just read, said that they wandered for thirty-eight years, until all of that generation was dead. What is implied is that the last person under sentence is Moses himself. In thirty-eight years, and in just a few recorded stops, hundreds of thousands of people, or more, met their end and were buried in the wilderness. With the crossing of the Arnon, all but Moses were gone. Only Joshua and Caleb would be left of that generation after that. Instead of eleven days, and then the beginning of a victorious entry into Canaan, there were thirty-eight years of death, defeat, heartache,

and woe. That time is now complete, and the new generation is set to begin anew without their faithless fathers. With this crossing, a particular record is made, and which is recorded for Israel...

14 Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord:

There is great speculation as to what the “Book of the Wars of the Lord” is. What seems likely, but without being overly dogmatic – because dogs snarl and fight, but they don’t conduct war – is that this would be a collection of songs or psalms which celebrated the great acts of the powerful deliverances the Lord’s people experienced through His personal action.

It may or may not even be what is later called the Book of Jasher, or the Upright One, which is seen in Joshua 10:13 and again in 2 Samuel 1:18.

From the coming words, it is likely that it is such a book of songs, and it probably even included the Song of Moses from Exodus 15. It is difficult to be adamant, but it seems certain because of the words which begin with...

14 (con’t) “Waheb in Suphah,

va’hev b’suphah. Of the words here, and through verse 15, Adam Clarke says that the words are “impenetrably obscure.” And it is true that there are as many opinions on what is said here as there are people who have sat down to evaluate them. The Hebrew is complicated, but remember Johnny Horton’s song. This is to be expected.

However, the KJV, which basically plagiarized the Geneva Bible, and which itself followed from the Latin Vulgate, gives a general thought in these translations which appears to make the most sense.

And so, the word *v’hev* would be translated as “And He did.” The next word, *b’suphah*, would then be “in the Red Sea.” In Hebrew, the Red Sea is called *yam suph*, or the “Sea of the Ending,” meaning the end of the land in reference to Israel. And so the words here would say, “And He did in the Red Sea.” Next, it says...

14 (con’t) The brooks of the Arnon,

v’eth ha’nekhalim arnon – “And unto the brooks of the Arnon.” In other words, it would then be an all-encompassing thought which goes from the majestic display of power in

bringing Israel through the Red Sea, even unto delivering them, finally, at the brooks of the Arnon as they were ready to begin their battles for the conquest of Canaan.

Thus, it would make sense that the Song of Moses, which highlighted the magnificent power of the Lord would be included in this book. One would imagine it would also have included a song concerning the battle against Amalek in Exodus 17, and the battle against the king of Arad in this same chapter, Numbers 21.

The great acts of the Lord would have been put to poetry for future generations to remember what He had done for Israel. It may even be that such a book was started at the time before the exodus, as the plagues came upon Egypt.

Here, it speaks of the “brooks” of the Arnon, poetically using the plural for the singular, and maybe speaking of the many streams which led into the greater river.

15 And the slope of the brooks

v'eshed ha'nekhalim – “And the spring of the brooks.” The word *eshed* is found only here in Scripture. It indicates “an outpouring.”

15 (con't) That reaches to the dwelling of Ar,

asher natah l'shevet ar – “Which inclines to the dwelling of Ar.” Ar is a place in Moab, but it simply means “city.” A city is a place of habitation where there is a constant guarded watch over it. Here, the city is poetically personified by saying, “the dwelling of Ar.”

15 (con't) And lies on the border of Moab.”

v'nishan ligvul moav – “And rests on the border of Moab.” It is this river which is the dividing line mentioned in Deuteronomy 2 and which brings to an end the last of the rebellious generation who perished for their disobedient conduct.

The reason for this poetic inclusion, then, is that it is as a record of all that happened between these two major events – from the crossing of the Red Sea until now. Only this portion is included in Scripture, but it is to show that the Lord was with Israel all the way through their time in the wilderness, and what He did for them is recorded in those songs, even unto the camp at the Arnon.

Despite having been consigned to their fate, which was that the older generation was to die in the wilderness, the Lord had remained with them and had watched over them every step of the way. From this point on, only Joshua, Caleb, and Moses would be left of them, and Moses is also soon to meet his end...

¹⁶ From there *they went to Beer,*

u-misham beerah – “And from there to Beer.” Beer means “Well.” The name of the place is given based on the well which is there. If the well is given a name, then the location may have the name of the well, such a Beersheba. In this case, it is simply, “Well.” But, something important is recorded at Beer...

¹⁶ (con’t) which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.”

It is rather unusual because nothing to this point has been said of them thirsting, but He obviously knows that they thirst. There are no complaints as with the older generation. With the disobedient generation all gone, having been counted among the rolls of the dead, the Lord now graciously provides them with water.

In order to do so, He tells Moses, or He who draws out, to “Gather the people together. In their gathering, water will be provided. And in His giving, there is a response from the people...

¹⁷ Then Israel sang this song:

az yashir yisrael eth ha’shirah ha’zot– “At that time sang Israel the song the this.” The word *az* is a demonstrative adverb which basically means “at that time.” Next, the verb *shir*, or to sing, has only been seen so far in Exodus 15 where it was used three times in connection with singing out the Song of Moses when Israel was delivered through the Red Sea. It seems to be a clue that what I said in the previous verses concerning the translation about the Red Sea is correct. There is a singing forth once again as there was then. The Lord’s works are being exalted in a logical, orderly way. Of these words, Adam Clarke says –

“This is one of the most ancient war songs in the world, but is not easily understood, which is commonly the case with all very ancient compositions, especially the poetic.”
Adam Clarke

This is certainly true, but despite not being easily understood, it is a part of something the Lord is trying to speak out to us through His recorded word, if we will just pay heed. It must be remembered that typology is often how He does this, and so despite the difficulty, He is giving us advance pictures of things to come which are selected from true accounts of things which actually occurred.

17 (con't) **"Spring up, O well!**

ali beer – "Arise, well!"

17 (con't) **All of you sing to it—**

enu lah – "all of you respond to it." The word *anah* means to answer or to respond. Saying "sing" destroys the intent of the passage because it is a completely different word translated as "sing" in the previous clause. Young's Literal translation takes these two clauses even further. Instead of, "Arise, well. All of you respond to it," he says, "Concerning the well – they have answered to it." Though it is hard to determine how he came up with this, and though it is an odd translation of the word which means "arise," it is a marvelous translation concerning what is being pictured.

18 **The well the leaders sank,**

beer khapharuha sarim – "well, sought out, *by the rulers.*" With the exception of the CEV, in this clause or the next, all translations agree that this is an active digging by the leaders. They say that they "sank," "dug," "hollowed out," etc. The CEV says, "with their royal scepters, our leaders pointed out where to dig the well."

Though the CEV is right that the leaders certainly weren't the ones to dig the well, their translation doesn't reflect the Hebrew. Rather, it is a paraphrase attempting to show intent, probably because it is obvious that the rulers would not be the ones to dig a well. The word is *khaphar*. It means "to pry into," and thus by implication, to delve, explore, pry, paw, search out, seek, or even dig. Because this is dealing with a well, the most obvious thought is, "Oh, they have to dig it." But that is not the job of a leader, and so that is not what is being relayed. Rather, these rulers sought out what the Lord has provided to them.

18 (con't) **Dug by the nation's nobles,**

karuha nedive ha'am – “opened by the willing of the people.” The word *karah* means to open. That means by digging, but figuratively it can mean to open one’s ears, and it is translated as pierced in Psalm 22, when referring to the crucifixion.

The next word, *nadiv*, signifies something voluntary, and thus anyone who is inclined, willing, magnanimous, or someone like a noble. There is a voluntary opening of the well.

¹⁸ (con’t) **By the lawgiver, with their staves.”**

bimkhoqeq b'mishanotam – “by decree, with their staffs.” The word *khaqaq* comes from a root meaning “to hack.” Thus, it means to engrave and by implication, “to enact.” From there, it can be used to indicate a lawgiver.

The word *mish'edah* means a staff, as for support. One thing is for certain, nobody would use a staff to dig a well. A shovel yes, their hands maybe, a pack of chihuahuas possibly, but not with a staff. Of the verse, the scholar Keil says –

“...here God gave the people water, not as before by a miraculous supply from a rock, but by commanding wells to be dug. This is evident from the ode with which the congregation commemorated this divine gift of grace.”

Like Keil’s thoughts, translations, for the most part, indicate an active digging of the well, rather than searching it out and opening it without physical effort, but that is hardly a divine gift of grace if someone has to dig for it. The water coming from the rock is certainly divine grace. It is spoken to and the water comes forth. The same is true here. The entire song, as translated by me says –

“Arise, well!”

“All of you respond to it.”

“Well, sought out, *by the rulers.*”

“Opened by the willing of the people.”

“By decree, with their staffs.”

There is a well which is waiting to come forth for the people. The people are being asked to respond to it. It was a well sought out by the rulers. It was opened by the willing of the people, and it was by decree, while the people did nothing. They simply placed their staffs where the well was, and water came forth.

¹⁸ (con’t) **And from the wilderness *they went* to Mattanah,**

u-midbar mattanah – “and wilderness to Mattanah.” *Mattanah* simply means “gift.” It is used, for example, in Psalm 68:18 –

“You have ascended on high,
You have led captivity captive;
You have received **gifts** among men,
Even *from* the rebellious,
That the Lord God might dwell *there*.” Psalm 68:18

19 from Mattanah to Nahaliel,

Nakhaliel means “Valley of God.”

19 (con’t) from Nahaliel to Bamoth,

Bamoth means “High Places,” or “Great High Place.”

20 and from Bamoth, in the valley that is in the country of Moab,

Here Bamoth, or “Great High Place,” is said to be in the *guy*, or valley, in the country of Moab, or “From Father.” From there, our journey today ends with...

20 (fin) to the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland.

rosh ha’pishgah, or “the top of the Pisgah.” Pisgah comes from *pasag*, meaning to pass through, and thus it is a cleft. It is always prefixed by the definite article, and thus it is THE Cleft. Pisgah is said to look down on *ha’yeshimon*, or the wasteland. Some translations say, Jeshimon, but with the definite article, it simply means, “the wasteland.” That comes from a word meaning “to be desolate.”

It is this place where Israel will wait for word to travel on through the land of the Amorites. Stay tuned for the exciting details in the next sermon.

*Arise, O Well! Bring forth the Water of Life
We have long been in a barren and ruined land
But now has ended our time of punishment and strife
Now we know the truth; now we understand*

*Our fathers didn't believe, and they were sent away
They were exiled to a barren and ruined land
But here we are, new wineskins – ready to obey
Now we know the truth; now we understand*

*We have come to trust in You alone, O Lord
No more shall we pass through the barren and ruined land
We know the truth of Messiah, the incarnate Word
Now we know the truth; now we understand*

II. Pictures of Christ

The account begins with the children of Israel moving on and coming to Oboth. As we saw, that means skins. In this case, we can be certain it is wineskins. This will become evident, but the picture is seen in Jesus' words of Luke 5 –

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. ³⁹ And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’” Luke 5:37-39

Jesus was actually speaking of the law and grace. If one tries to put the grace the Lord provides into the law, the skins couldn't handle it. They were incompatible and both are ruined in the attempt.

That this is the picture is certain because the old generation is now dead. They had rejected the grace of Christ which was pictured in entering the land of promise, and they went into punishment.

Likewise, Israel rejected Christ, crucified Him, and went into punishment. That went until a set point in time, and they are now being brought back to God. They aren't there yet, but this is what is pictured. The wineskins are being prepared.

From there, they went through Ruins of the Passers, or Ije Abraim. In order to get to glory, one must pass through the ruins of his past life. Nobody starts in glory, and this is what is being seen here. The wineskin of grace means passing through that which is ruined.

This was said to be east of Moab, toward the sunrise. Man in search of God must head west. That is where Moab, or From Father is. And that is the trek we make, pictured by the casting of Adam east of Eden, and the Most Holy Place of the Sanctuary being in the west with the cherubim facing east.

After this, they went to the *nakhal zered*, or Valley of Zared. Nakhal comes from a word signifying to inherit, or take possession. The valley is named Zared because of abundant foliage, implying well-watered and vibrant.

In this, the significant milestone of all of the disobedient generation being gone, which is recorded in Deuteronomy, was seen. This is the last stop where any but Moses will be. The time of punishment is over which seems to be reflected in the idea of taking possession of the abundant foliage. Abundant life is once again ready to be possessed.

The next stop is on the side of the Arnon. As seen, that comes from *ranan*, meaning jubilant or rejoicing. It is in the wilderness and lies between Moab, or From Father, and the Amorites, or Renown. The name Renown, gives the sense of foreboding.

In Numbers 13, a fear of these people, along with the others in Canaan, led to their downfall and punishment. But this is a new generation, and such will not be the case. They will live by faith, and will be given life through faith. At this time came the first poetic offset –

“And He did in the Red Sea.”

“And unto the brooks of the Arnon.”

“And the spring of the brooks.”

“Which inclines to the dwelling of Ar.”

“And rests on the border of Moab.”

The Book of the Wars of the Lord is referred to here to tell the people that despite their time of punishment, He had been with them, leading them to this point. They are on the border of Moab, or “From Father,” and no matter what they face, they have been cared for and would be cared for.

The poetic offset looks forward to taking possession of the outpouring which leads to the city and which rests on the border of Moab, or From Father. In other words, it is a picture of receiving the Spirit and entering into the promised heavenly city which is where God interacts with man.

This is then seen with their arrival at Beer, or “Well.” It is here that the Lord promises to give them water. Their time of punishment has ended, and the people will drink water from the well. It is an obvious picture. Israel will someday, not too far off from our present time, receive Christ, and they will receive the Spirit which issues from Christ. The words of the poetic offset said –

“Arise, well!”

“All of you respond to it.”

“Well, sought out, *by the rulers.*”

“Opened by the willing of the people.”

“By decree, with their staffs.”

In speaking of the well sought out by the rulers, that is referred to by Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39 –

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

It is only when Jerusalem, meaning the leadership of Israel, seeks out the Lord, calling on Him, that He will return to them. When they do, He will. Zechariah 12 shows the fulfillment of this picture we are looking at from Numbers 21 –

“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” Zechariah 12:10

That is further explained in Zechariah 13:1 –

“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.” Zechariah 13:1

This explains why the translation does not say “dug.” It is the grace of Jesus Christ, poured out on his long disobedient people, but who have ended their time of punishment, which is pictured here.

After this, it says they went to Mattanah, or Gift. What does the giving of the Spirit to a person imply? It implies salvation. From the well, they are given the gift –

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

-Ephesians 2:4-9

The people had gone from attempting to enter salvation through their own efforts in Numbers 14, to coming to the Lord through faith here in Numbers 21. The entire time in the wilderness has been one long procession of thought, detailing Israel’s history since the coming of Christ.

From Mattanah, or Gift, they then went to Nakhaliel, or Valley of God. As this is a picture of Israel coming to faith at the end of the tribulation period, after their time of punishment, I would go so far as to say that this is speaking of the valley where Christ will judge the people. In Psalm 110, a messianic psalm, it speaks of exactly this, including the word *nakhal*, or valley, which is the source of the name Nakhaliel –

“The Lord *is* at Your right hand;
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.
⁶ He shall judge among the nations,
He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies,
He shall execute the heads of many countries.
⁷ He shall drink **of the brook** by the wayside;
Therefore He shall lift up the head.” Psalm 110:5-7

From Nakhaliel, the people then went to Bamoth, which means High Places or, Great High Place. That would be Jerusalem which Micah 1:5 calls the high places of Judah. It is a picture then of where the Lord will reign during the millennium.

Bamoth is said to have been in the *guy*, or valley, in Moab. Isaiah 22:1 calls Jerusalem *ge khizayon*, or the Valley of Vision. Thus, this is a reference to Jerusalem, being this

valley which is, as Moab is translated, "From Father." It is a reference to what will be during the millennium, the great high place in the valley where the Father's blessings will flow.

That is beautifully seen in the picture of the millennium in Ezekiel 47 where water flows from under the threshold of the temple all the way to where the Dead Sea is now. Finally, the narrative ends at the top of Pisgah, or "to pass through," which looks down on the wasteland. This must be a reference to what is stated about the millennium by Isaiah in the very last verse of his book –

"And they shall go forth and look
Upon the corpses of the men
Who have transgressed against Me.
For their worm does not die,
And their fire is not quenched.
They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh." Isaiah 66:24

The people will have passed through the cleft to life, but they will look back on those corpses of the fallen, pictured by the rebellious generation who died in the wilderness. The entire passage today is simply a foreshadowing of what Israel missed and therefore they suffered exile and death over for the past 2000 years, but which will eventually lead to their salvation and exaltation when Christ returns for and to them.

The pattern has been seen since Numbers 13. Each passage has moved along that same theme, reflecting the state of Israel since their rejection of Christ. And now what will come upon them someday in the future has been methodically detailed in today's verses.

As this is so, and as it is certain, what that means beyond Israel the people is that the message of Christ is just as true for them in the days ahead as it is for all people at this time. If what God says about the work of Christ and the giving of the Spirit is true for Israel, it is true for the world.

Israel missed the significance of the coming of Messiah, and so He went to the nations during their time of punishment. However, He will be coming back to them and they will receive Him. Before that day, He will call the church home and the time of woe which Israel has faced will extend to a time of woe levied upon the whole world. Only after that final period of purification will Israel call out to God. And until they do the woes will only increase.

To be spared from that, the Lord offers grace. It is grace in the giving of His Son, and it is free. The people in today's passage did nothing to receive the gift. The Lord led them to the Well, and by decree, the people simply opened it by resting their staffs upon it. A staff is a symbol of authority of the one who possesses it, and of where one places his trust. In the case of Israel, the picture is that they took their authority, and placed it at the well, trusting in it to provide, and not in their own self. The well is Christ, the water is the Spirit. They trusted Christ, and the Spirit came forth.

This is what God asks of us. He asks us to come, in faith, putting aside trust in self, and in deeds of merit. Are you ready to come to Christ and submit yourself to His capable hands. The Lord is calling. I pray you will make the right choice.

Closing Verse: *People shall mourn upon their breasts*

For the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.

¹³ *On the land of my people will come up thorns and briers,*

Yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city;

¹⁴ *Because the palaces will be forsaken,*

The bustling city will be deserted.

The forts and towers will become lairs forever,

A joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks—

¹⁵ *Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,*

And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,

And the fruitful field is counted as a forest.” Isaiah 32:12-15

Next Week: Numbers 21:21-35 When they are gone, God's people will be overjoyed (Two Foes to Be Destroyed) (42nd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Filling Wineskins

Now the children of Israel moved on and camped in Oboth

And they journeyed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim

In the wilderness which is east of Moab

Toward the sunrise, from where the sun first does beam

From there they moved and camped in the Valley of Zered
|From there they moved and camped on the Arnon's other side
Which is in the wilderness that extends
— — —-from the border of the Amorites
For the Arnon is the border of Moab
— — —-between Moab and the Amorites; so it does divide

Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of the Lord:
So is recorded this poetic word

“Waheb in Suphah,
The brooks of the Arnon,
And the slope of the brooks
That reaches to the dwelling of Ar,
And lies on the border of Moab.”

From there they went to Beer
Which is the well where the Lord said to Moses, about the throng
“Gather the people together, and I will give them water
Then Israel sang this song:

“Spring up, O well!
All of you sing to it—
The well the leaders sank,
Dug by the nation's nobles,
By the lawgiver, with their staves.”

And from the wilderness they went to Mattanah
From Mattanah to Nahaliel, from Nahaliel to Bamoth
— — —-so we understand
And from Bamoth, in the valley that is in the country of Moab
To the top of Pisgah which looks down on the wasteland

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land

May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 21:21-35 (TWO FOES TO BE DESTROYED)

On the day I typed this sermon, I got to verse 27 and needed an analogy concerning the type of literature that is being presented. The Marine Corps hymn came to mind, and so I did a search to pull it up. Ironically, an article concerning the hymn was published that same morning.

The commandant of the Marines directed that instead of coming to attention and remaining silent when the hymn is played, all Marines are to now sing it out loud. Due to the irony of these two things coming about on the same day, I decided that we should hear the hymn read so that we can, like Israel did, remember the history of our Marine warriors.

From the Halls of Montezuma
To the shores of Tripoli
We fight our country's battles
On the lands, and on the sea
First to fight for right and freedom
And to keep our honor clean
We are proud to claim the title
Of United States Marine
Our flag's unfurled to every breeze
From dawn to setting sun
We have fought in every clime and place
Where we could take a gun
In the snow of far-off northern lands
And in sunny tropic scenes
You will find us always on the job
The United States Marines
Here's health to you and to our Corps
Which we are proud to serve
In many a strife we've fought for life
And never lost our nerve
If the Army and the Navy
Ever look on Heaven's scenes,
They will find the streets are guarded
By United States Marines

From the Halls of Montezuma
To the shores of Tripoli
We fight our country's battles
On the lands, and on the sea
First to fight for right and freedom
And to keep our honor clean
We are proud to claim the title
Of United States Marine

Text Verse: *"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice:
"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" Revelation 5:11, 12*

Whether singing a song about the deeds of the heroes of a nation, or of the greatness of God, we remember these things because they stir our souls and remind us of past deeds which carry future significance.

Someday, the redeemed of the Lord will shout out together the words of Revelation 5:12 – all hailing the great deed which was done and which will have not just future, but eternal significance.

But there is nothing wrong with calling out those words today. The words of our text verse were put to music by George Frideric Handel in his most esteemed work, Messiah. In fact, it is the 53rd and last portion of the work. It encompasses Scene 4 and is entitled "Worthy is the Lamb."

So, in preparation for the marvelous day when the saints of God together sing out to the Lamb, maybe you will, from time to time, take advantage of listening to the words of Handel's Messiah. And certainly, because I know you read your Bible daily, you will come to Revelation 5 at least a couple times each year.

When you get there, you can ponder on the great things that Christ has done for His people. Someday, Israel will be on that same page with us. That was seen last week, but it continues to be seen this week. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Sihon King of the Amorites (verses 21-28)

21 Then Israel sent messengers

va'yishlakh yisrael malakim – “and sent Israel messengers.” The word “messengers” is *malak*, a word often translated as “angel.” In the Hebrew, as in the Greek, the idea of an angel is a divine messenger. The word itself is simply one that signifies being dispatched as a messenger.

21 (con't) to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying,

Sihon, or *Sikhon*, is introduced here. The name will be referred to many times in the Old Testament, even as late as the time of Jeremiah. His name will be directly associated with the land he rules. The name comes from a root which signifies “to sweep away,” or “to strike down.” Thus his name may signify anything from “Tempestuous” to “Warrior.” He is defined further as *melekh ha'emori*, or “king of the Amorite.” We saw in last week’s verses that Amorite comes from *amar*, meaning to utter or say. Therefore, the name signifies being spoken of, and thus “Renowned.” Israel is sending messengers to this king with a petition which is not at all unreasonable.

During an acrostics search of Chapter 21, our friend Sergio found that in the words, “Then Israel sent messengers to king Sihon,” there is a forward running acrostic which says *ve-yemasam* which means — “and rejected them.” This is the forward acrostic. The same words also form a backward running acrostic which says *khen la'melekh*, or “Favor to the King.”

Together, they show what happens in the passage. Israel extends favor to the king and the king rejects their request. It is rather astonishing. This is especially so because the length of the first acrostic is rather long which is quite unusual.

22 “Let me pass through your land.

This first sentence is one of appeal. There is no presumption in it, and there is no hint of threat. It is simply a request. But more...

22 (con't) We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards; we will not drink water from wells.

There is the promise of respect for the property of the Amorites, signifying that they have the right to the land, and that right will not be violated in any way. Instead...

²² (con't) **We will go by the King's Highway until we have passed through your territory."**

derek ha'melekh, or "Way of the King," signifies a public road paid for at the cost of the king's treasury. It would be kept in proper order at all times for the king and his army to set out on in times of either offensive or defensive battles. It would pass through the heart of the land, meaning that Israel would be completely under the eye of the Amorites, and at their mercy. They would, in essence, be leaving themselves open to the forces of Sihon.

The entire appeal is similar to that found in Numbers 20 when speaking to the king of Edom –

"Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory." Numbers 20:17

²³ **But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory.**

It is the same reaction as that of the king of Edom. There, it said, "You shall not pass through my *land*, lest I come out against you with the sword" (Numbers 20:18). After a second appeal, it then said that Edom came out against them. Here, no second appeal is recorded. Rather, it simply says...

²³ (con't) **So Sihon gathered all his people together and went out against Israel in the wilderness,**

What is unrecorded in this account of Numbers, but what is stated in Deuteronomy 2, is that the Lord already knew what the outcome of sending these messengers would be. There we read –

"Rise, take your journey, and cross over the River Arnon. Look, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to possess *it*, and engage him in battle. ²⁵ This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the nations under the whole heaven, who shall hear the report of you, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of you.'" Deuteronomy 2:24, 25

It is only after stating this that Moses then sent the messengers. The reason for telling him that they would be given to Israel in battle is twofold. First, the Amorites were set for destruction by the Lord because they were ripe for judgment. That is seen in Genesis 15 –

“But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:16

Abraham was told that the reason for his not receiving the land during his years was because the Amorites had not yet reached the full measure of their iniquity. That time has now come. Secondly, the verse in Deuteronomy explains that the nations would hear of what occurred and fear. Thus, this would give them the psychological advantage in future battles.

However, despite being told, in advance, that they would engage in battle, Moses followed the proper protocols in order to demonstrate that Sihon was the aggressor, and that when the land was won in battle, it rightly became the possession of Israel. If Israel had attacked without this diplomatic offer, then the validity of the land acquisition would be in question.

Further, it says that Sihon “went out against Israel in the wilderness.” Thus, Israel had not even entered into Sihon’s land. This was a war initiated by Sihon, and it was an attack outside of his jurisdiction. Therefore, Israel was wholly within their rights to assume the land as theirs. In Deuteronomy 2, it says this –

“But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as *it is* this day.” Deuteronomy 2:30

It says here that the Lord hardened Sihon’s heart. The question is, was this an active, or passive hardening. The answer is that it was passive. The fact that Israel had retreated from Edom led Sihon to a false conclusion that they were weak, but the Lord would not allow them to war against their own brother.

The same is true with Moab, as is recorded in Deuteronomy 2. But Sihon didn’t realize that the Lord had forbidden Israel to battle them either, having given the land to the descendants of Lot. Therefore, Sihon’s heart was passively hardened, making him think that Israel was a cowardly nation that could be easily plundered...

²³ (con't) **and he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel.**

The name *yahatz*, or, Jahaz, comes from a root meaning “to stamp.” Thus, it signifies, “Trodden Down.” It appears that the name of the place is derived from what occurred during the battle. At this location, the Amorites were trodden down, and thus Israel gave the location its name as a memorial of the battle...

²⁴ **Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword,**

The Hebrew is more descriptive, saying, *le-pi kharev*, or “with the mouth of the sword.” The sword consumes the souls of men, devouring their existence. This sets up the next words...

²⁴ (con't) **and took possession of his land**

The word translated as “took possession” speaks of inheritance. Through death, Sihon disinherited, and thus Israel is now the inheritor or possessor of the land that goes...

²⁴ (con't) **from the Arnon to the Jabbok, as far as the people of Ammon;**

As seen last week, Arnon comes from *ranan*, which signifies to give a jubilant, ringing cry, and thus rejoicing. Therefore, it is the Roaring Stream. The *yaboq*, or Jabbok, has only been seen in Genesis 32:22 where Jacob wrestled with the Man in the night.

At that time, it was noted that Jabbok means, “Pouring out.” Like the name Israel, it carries a double entendre. There is a pouring out of God’s favor – love, grace, mercy and the like – even the Holy Spirit. But, there is also a pouring out of God’s wrath.

²⁴ (con't) **for the border of the people of Ammon was fortified.**

These words explain why the land acquisition ended at the Jabbok, not the reason why Israel didn’t attack them. Because of the strong fortification of their border, Sihon’s territory only extended that far. However, Israel was given the reason for not conquering them. That is stated in Deuteronomy 2 –

“And *when* you come near the people of Ammon, do not harass them or meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of the land of the people of Ammon *as* a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot *as* a possession.”

-Deuteronomy 2:19

Ammon comes from the word *am*, or “people.” In this, the sense is that they are the people called “A People,” and thus inbred, having their source in the union of Lot and his younger daughter.

Like Moab, his brother Ammon, was not to be harassed. They were both sons of Lot through his two daughters. Both nations have individuals who entered into the line of the Messiah. The Lord’s plans in such things always have the purpose and intent of leading to, or revealing, the coming Lord Jesus. For Sihon, however, such was not to be the case...

²⁵ So Israel took all these cities, and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages.

Israel took possession, and it is seen that certain tribes took favorably to the land and decided they wanted to stay there and make this their possession. That will be recorded later in Numbers. But for now, the account states this as a fact of the victory in battle. *kheshvon*, or “Heshbon” comes from *khashav*. It is a word which signifies to consider, calculate, or devise. Therefore, it signifies an explanation of things, or “Intelligence.” This mentions both Heshbon and “all its villages.” The Hebrew reads, “all its daughters,” and so it means Heshbon is a mother city with small villages dependent upon the greater city. It would be comparable to the cities of Venice, Osprey, Nokomis, and so on found in the greater Sarasota area.

²⁶ For Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon.

This verse explains that the city of Heshbon once belonged to Moab, and that it was acquired during a battle with Moab, including all of the land up to the Arnon itself. Thus, it was not improper for Israel to take possession of the land.

The rule of war is that land lost in a battle which one has initiated is no longer theirs. Instead, it transferred to Sihon, and from Sihon it transferred to Israel. Moab requires no explanation or payment for this transfer. This land will become a point of contention at the time of the Judges, and Jephthah will recount what occurred here to defend Israel’s rights to it.

Ia: Poem Part I – The Words of the Amorites

²⁷ Therefore those who speak in proverbs say:

The word, “Therefore,” is given to explain the previous verse. A proverbial saying had come about to reflect the Lord’s victory and how it stood in relation to what had happened in the past. In this is a new verb, *mashal*. It signifies “to represent,” or “to be like.”

Thus, it is speaking in proverbs and making a comparison of one thing to another. It is the basis for the noun, *mashal*, meaning “a proverb.” The reason for this being spoken as a proverb instead of a song is because the destruction of Heshbon by Sihon is now likened to the destruction of Sihon by Israel. The words forthcoming were commonly spoken or sung, just as we might, even today, sing the Marine Corps hymn.

27 (con’t) “Come to Heshbon, let it be built;

bou kheshvon tibaneh – “Come to Heshbon; *it* shall be built.” The idea here is that Heshbon was destroyed during the battle by Sihon and must be rebuilt. The words here are a taunt to Moab concerning their defeat and Sihon’s great victory. In the rebuilding of Heshbon, it will be given a new title...

27 (con’t) Let the city of Sihon be repaired.

v’tikonen ir sikhon – “and let be prepared *the* city *of* Sihon.” The city of Hesbon would henceforward also be known as the “city of Sihon.” This is similar to Jerusalem being called, the “City of David.” The conqueror receives the honor. In fact, this was so common that we read this in 2 Samuel 12:26-29 –

“Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. ²⁷ And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, ‘I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city’s water *supply*. ²⁸ Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name.’ ²⁹ So David gathered all the people together and went to Rabbah, fought against it, and took it.”

28 “For fire went out from Heshbon,

ki esh yaseah me-kheshvon – “For fire went out from Hesbon.” This is speaking of the fire of war which proceeded from Heshbon after Sihon had made it his own new capital city. From that staging point, war – symbolized by fire – went out further...

28 (con’t) A flame from the city of Sihon;

lehavah miqirat sikhon – “A flame from the city of Sihon.” Another new word is seen here, *qiryah*, or “city.” That comes from a word signifying “to happen,” or “come to pass.” Thus, it is a place where events occur. From the city of Sihon, a flame went forth. It is a parallel statement to the previous clause.

A flame is shaped like a blade, or the head of a spear, and so it poetically is speaking of the blade of war going forth to consume, just as fire consumes. In this case...

²⁸ (con't) **It consumed Ar of Moab,**

akelah ar moav – “It devoured Ar of Moab.” Deuteronomy 2:29 shows that the city of Ar was inhabited by Moab. Therefore, it could be that the words are comparable to saying, “We stomped on them all the way to Tokyo.” The city itself wasn’t taken, but the land right up to it was, and the people were crushed along the way.

²⁸ (con't) **The lords of the heights of the Arnon.**

baale bamoth arnon – “The lords of the high places of Arnon.” This is parallel to the preceding clause. The “lords of the heights of the Arnon” is probably referring to the priests and people who worshiped their god in the high places. In verses 19 and 20, the location Bamoth was mentioned. It is the people of this area that were consumed by the war fire of Sihon.

Ib: Poem Part II – The Words of Israel

²⁹ **Woe to you, Moab!**

oy lekha moav – “Woe to you Moab!” Here, the familiar word *oy* is introduced. It signifies “woe.” Today, we hear Jews proclaim, *Oy veh!* This is something like, “Woe is me!” In this case, it is “Woe to you, Moab!” This is because...

²⁹ (con't) **You have perished, O people of Chemosh!**

abadta am kemosh – “You are annihilated, people of Chemosh.” The people of Sihon are taunting the Moabites by taunting their god, Chemosh. The meaning of Chemosh can’t be definitively defined, but it seems to come from an unused root meaning “to subdue,” and thus it means something like “Vanquisher.”

The taunt then is all the more striking when it says, that the people of their god “Powerful” are powerless to ward off annihilation. And more taunts towards Chemosh are forthcoming...

29 (con’t) He has given his sons as fugitives,

natan banav peletim – “Given sons as fugitives.” Those sons of Moab who trusted the failing god Chemosh that weren’t destroyed were taken from their people and given as fugitives to Sihon...

29 (con’t) And his daughters into captivity,

u-benotav bashevit – “And daughters into exile.” The daughters of Chemosh have been separated from their people. Because of his inability to protect them, they were given away...

29 (con’t) To Sihon king of the Amorites.

l’melekh emori sikhon – “to king of the Amorites, Sihon.” Sihon and his people had defeated Moab, the people of Chemosh. They were victorious in battle, and what belonged to Moab became the property of Sihon. However, something new has been added to the song of war, making it a proverbial song...

1c: Poem Part III – The Victory of Israel

30 “But we have shot at them;

va-niram – “And we have shot at them.” In contrast to the great power of Sihon over Moab, the greater power of Israel over Sihon is seen. Thus, because the god of Moab gave up to the power of the Amorites, so the god of the Amorites could not withstand the power of the Lord.

30 (con’t) Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon.

abad kheshvon ad divon – “Has perished Heshbon as far as Dibon.” Just as Heshbon had been taken from Moab, now those who took it have been destroyed, even as far as a place called Dibon. The name probably comes from *duv*, meaning “to pine away.” And thus Dibon would be “Pining.”

30 (con't) Then we laid waste as far as Nophah,

va-nashim ad nophakh – “And made desolate to Nophah.” Again, another taunt is raised concerning the greatness of the victory. The name Nophah comes from a word meaning “to breathe,” or “to blow.” It is what the Lord did to Adam on the day He created him. He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” It is also what Ezekiel says will again happen to Israel in the Valley of Dry Bones when the breath is breathed again into the slain.

Therefore, the name probably means, “Windy Place.” An entire section of the land was destroyed from Heshbon to Nophah by the onslaught of Israel. And, it is Nophah...

30 (con't) Which reaches to Medeba.”

asher ad medeva – “Which extends to Medeba.” This would be the reading according to the text itself, but there is a special mark above the last letter of the word translated as “which.” If that letter does not belong, as the mark calls it into question, then the text would match what it says in the Greek translation of the passage, and so it would say, “With fire unto Medeba.”

That would then form a proper parallel to the previous clause – “We laid waste as far as Nophah, with fire unto Medeba.” It would also, then, correspond to the flame and the fire mentioned in verse 28. This is probably the correct reading. Either way, Medeba means something like, “Waters of Rest.”

In all, the poem calls out the superiority of Israel over the Amorites, and thus the greatness of Yehovah over the gods of both the Amorites and the Moabites. Because of this...

31 Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites.

This is stated, like was said earlier, to show Israel’s right to dwell in this area. Any future claim on the land by the children of Lot would be invalid because Israel had defeated those who had defeated Moab. It was, at the time of Israel’s battle, “the land of the Amorites.”

32 Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its villages and drove out the Amorites who were there.

The next area of conquest is a place called *yatser*, or Jazer. This means something like, “Helpful” or “He Shall Help.” It was an area of the Amorites which was subsequently defeated and driven out. Jazer was a main mother city which had its own daughter villages. This verse includes a new word in the Bible, *lakad*. It signifies to capture or seize. It will become a common word from this point on, both for and against Israel. After this, it says...

³³ And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan.

From Jazer, a turn is made and Israel ascended on the way to “the Bashan.” There is an article in front of Bashan. The name signifies something like “Place of fertile soil.” Another foe is now seen...

^{33 (con’t)} So Og king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei.

Og is said to be king of the Bashan. His name comes from *uggah*, which is a round baked cake. That comes from *ug*, to bake. Here, it says that he led his entire force out to meet Israel at Edrei. Edrei means something like “Mighty.” Despite the name, implying the great force which has arisen against them, the Lord is more powerful, and has good news for His people...

³⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon.”

We will find out later that Og was one of the giants, a man of great stature, like Goliath. That, along with the large accompanying army, would have made them appear as a formidable foe, but as Hezekiah noted many years later against his own great foe, with Og was an arm of flesh; but with Israel is the Lord their God, to help them and to fight their battles. There was no need to fear such an impotent foe...

³⁵ So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him;

This requires an explanation found in Deuteronomy. In both the battle against Sihon and that of Og, every person was *kharam*, or devoted to destruction. As it says in Deuteronomy 2 & 3 –

“We took all his cities at that time, and we utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city; we left none remaining. ³⁵ We took only the livestock as plunder for ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we took.”

-Deuteronomy 2:34

“And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city.” Deuteronomy 3:6

What may seem overly brutal to our sensibilities today is irrelevant to what the Lord determines. He creates, and He can dispense with His creation in whatever way He finds appropriate.

^{35 (fin)} **and they took possession of his land.**

Again, this is a final statement which reveals Israel’s right to the land they have acquired. Both Sihon and Og came out against Israel, they were defeated by Israel, and Israel has the right to the land because of their victory. It is the standard procedure revealed throughout history concerning victory in such a battle.

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom
Worthy is Lamb, so we say again
Glorious is the Lamb and we are His kingdom*

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive strength and honor and glory and blessing
Worthy is the Lamb, so we say again
Let the song of the Lamb clothe you like dressing*

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
All honor is to be given to Him now and for always
Worthy is the Lamb, and so we say again
We shall sing of the glory of the Lamb for eternal days*

II. A Look Ahead in Redemptive History

This is the last recorded event of the wilderness wanderings, just after all of the disobedient generation are dead, and just before the narrative dramatically changes, leading

into an entirely different theme. Here, despite Israel as having been seen to receive the Spirit in the last sermon, there are two foes which must be defeated.

In the end times, there are two foes which need to be defeated, the Antichrist and the false prophet. How do you take an account of the future, where two foes are destroyed at the same time, and give details of them so that it is understood that each foe is who is being pictured? You give two separate stories in the same narrative.

Here we see Israel first tries to appease Sihon, asking to simply pass through his territory. Sihon means “Warrior,” He anticipates the Antichrist. He comes out to Jahaz to war against Israel. That means “Trodden Down.” It is what happens to Jerusalem in the end times where it says in Revelation 16:2, “And they will tread the holy city under-foot *for* forty-two months.”

Israel defeated Sihon and, as it says, took possession of the land. The word used speaks of inheritance. What belonged to the Antichrist and his master, the devil, is regained for Israel. At that time, it says that they have inherited the land from the Arnon to the Jabbok.

Arnon comes from *ranan*, which signifies to give a jubilant, ringing cry, and thus rejoicing. The *yaboq*, or Jabbok, means, “Pouring out.” There was a pouring out of God’s favor – love, grace, mercy and the like – even the Holy Spirit – on Israel. But there is also a pouring out of God’s wrath on the Antichrist.

In this, *kheshvon*, or “Heshbon” is highlighted. It comes from *khashav*. It is a word which signifies to consider, calculate, or devise. Therefore, it signifies an explanation of things, or “Intelligence.” It is in the acquisition of Heshbon that the poetic offset was introduced.

Sihon had taken it from the former king of Moab, but Israel took it from Sihon. The poem looks to the state of the world that will continue until Christ’s final rule. Paul speaks of it in 1 Corinthians 1:19 –

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” (NIV)

The wisdom and intelligence of God, meaning the gospel, represented by Heshbon, was unavailable to Israel. The spirit of Antichrist is that which denies the Son (1 John 4:3). Sihon's defeat of Heshbon looked to Antichrist's defeat by Israel. The sons were fugitives, and the daughters were captives to Sihon.

But, in Israel's calling out to Christ came the return of Christ and the destruction of Antichrist. The supposed wisdom of the wise was destroyed. That is why the land is said to be laid waste "as far as Dibon ... as far as Nophah, which reaches to Medeba." Dibon means "Pining." Nophah signifies "Windy Place." Medeba, means "Waters of Rest."

The intelligence of this world is gone, and with it everything that stands against the knowledge of the breath of life which reaches to the waters of rest. This will be fully realized when the Antichrist is defeated. After this, Moses sent to spy out Jazer. It signifies, "He Shall Help." It looks to the Lord as their Helper, as Israel no longer trusts in self. The second foe to be defeated is the false prophet, represented by Og. The account says they went by the way of *ha'bashan*, or "the Bashan," a place of fertile soil.

Og is said to be king of the Bashan. His name comes from *uggah*, which is a round baked cake. That comes from *ug*, to bake. The picture we see is one set in opposition to Israel and who is to be destroyed. The *uggah*, or baked cake, is seen seven times in the Bible. It is that which nourishes and sustains life.

Thus Og, who is king over the fertile place of soil, pictures the False Prophet who denies the people of God the truth and nourishment of the word. The battle of Israel against him was at Edrei which signifies "Mighty." Despite the mighty place chosen for this final battle, it is the Lord, through Israel, who defeats Og.

As the passage finishes, it says that they were defeated until there were no survivors left. Both Sihon and Og were devoted to destruction, along with all of their people. That is well represented by the destruction of the armies gathered together against the Lord who has come back to defend Israel in Revelation 19 –

"Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh." Revelation 19:20, 21

The history of Israel, from their exile due to rejecting Christ, all the way through until the time just prior to the millennial kingdom, found in Revelation 20, has been beautifully represented in type and picture since Numbers 14. The symbolism is perfectly clear.

As asked earlier, how does one present an account of history, before it happens, so that the things will be understood when they come about, but without simply giving all of the details in clear text? It is done through typology. The Lord uses real events of history, recording those which will match later events, so that the overall picture becomes evident. The majority of the typology has already been seen in the coming of Christ, and in the completion of the writing of the New Testament, but some of the things revealed in the New are yet to come about – things like the rapture, Israel's coming to Christ, the second coming of Christ, and the millennium.

By knowing what the Bible clearly reveals about the future, we can then look for and identify the typology that was given to foreshadow it. This gives us a double-assurance that what is prophesied to yet come about is all the more certain.

If only Israel could look at the past, compare it with themselves, their current state, and what lies ahead, they would avoid many troubles in the days to come. We should pray for them, and hope that they will open their eyes and see what the Lord is shouting out to them from His word.

And the same is true with us. The things we are looking at aren't novel stories, but real examples of God's care over redemptive history. In the word of God, we have a sure word. And that word, above all, tells us of Jesus. It reveals His love for this world, and His love for Israel, despite their current rejection of Him. He who is ever-faithful will never forget His promises.

Let us trust in this, and let us be confident of it as we continue our walk down life's path. Let us be grounded in Christ, and in this, we will never be led astray from His goodness.

Closing Verse: *"That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun."* Ecclesiastes 1:9

Next Week: Numbers 22:1-21 What is the story of Balaam about? Stay tuned and we shall see... (Curse This People for Me) (43rd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Two Foes to Be Destroyed

Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying
“Let me pass through your land
We will not turn aside into fields or vineyards
We will not drink water from wells, please understand
We will go by the King’s Highway until we...
Have passed through your territory

But Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his territory
So Sihon gathered all his people together and went
———-as the record does tell
Out against Israel in the wilderness
And he came to Jahaz and fought against Israel

Then Israel defeated him with the edge of the sword
And took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok
———-yes on that side
As far as the people of Ammon
For the border of the people of Ammon was fortified

So Israel took all these cities
And Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites
In Heshbon and in all its villages
Having sunny days and sleepy nights

For Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites
Who had fought against the former king of Moab
———-so it was this way
And had taken all his land from his hand as far as the Arnon
Therefore those who speak in proverbs say:

“Come to Heshbon, let it be built;
Let the city of Sihon be repaired.

“For fire went out from Heshbon,
A flame from the city of Sihon;
It consumed Ar of Moab,
The lords of the heights of the Arnon.
Woe to you, Moab!
You have perished, O people of Chemosh!
He has given his sons as fugitives,
And his daughters into captivity,
To Sihon king of the Amorites.
“But we have shot at them;
Heshbon has perished as far as Dibon.
Then we laid waste as far as Nophah,
Which reaches to Medeba.”
Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites
Then Moses sent to spy out Jazer; probably at early dawn
And they took its villages and drove out
———-the Amorites who were there
And they turned and went up by the way to Bashan

So Og king of Bashan went out against them, so we see
He and all his people, to battle at Edrei
Then the Lord said to Moses ——
“Do not fear him, for I have delivered him into your hand
With all his people and his land

And you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites
Who dwelt at Heshbon, so we understand
So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people
———-until there was no survivor left him
And they took possession of his land

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand

And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 22:1-21 (CURSE THIS PEOPLE FOR ME)

I am Mesha, son of Chemosh-gad, king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I have reigned after my father. And I have built this sanctuary for Chemosh in Karchah, a sanctuary of salvation, for he saved me from all aggressors, and made me look upon all mine enemies with contempt. Omri was king of Israel, and oppressed Moab during many days, and Chemosh was angry with his aggressions. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab. In my days he said, Let us go, and I will see my desire upon him and his house, and Israel said, I shall destroy it for ever. Now Omri took the land of Madeba, and occupied it in his day, and in the days of his son, forty years. And Chemosh had mercy on it in my time. And I built Baal-meon and made therein the ditch, and I built Kiriathaim. And the men of Gad dwelled in the country of Ataroth from ancient times, and the king of Israel fortified Ataroth. I assaulted the wall and captured it, and killed all the warriors of the city for the well-pleasing of Chemosh and Moab, and I removed from it all the spoil, and offered it before Chemosh in Kirjath; and I placed therein the men of Siran, and the men of Mochrath. And Chemosh said to me, Go take Nebo against Israel, and I went in the night and I fought against it from the break of day till noon, and I took it: and I killed in all seven thousand men, but I did not kill the women and maidens, for I devoted them to Ashtar-Chemosh; and I took from it the vessels of Jehovah, and offered them before Chemosh. And the king of Israel fortified Jahaz, and occupied it, when he made war against me, and Chemosh drove him out before me, and I took from Moab two hundred men in all, and placed them in Jahaz, and took it to annex it to Dibon. I built Karchah the wall of the forest, and the wall of the Hill. I have built its gates and I have built its towers. I have built the palace of the king, and I made the prisons for the criminals within the wall. And there were no wells in the interior of the wall in Karchah. And I said to all the people, 'Make you every man a well in his house.' And I dug the ditch for Karchah with the chosen men of Israel. I built Aroer, and I made the road across the Arnon. I took Beth-Bamoth for it was destroyed. I built Bezer for it was cut down by the armed men of Daybon, for all Daybon was now loyal; and I reigned from Bikran, which I added to my land. And I built Beth-Gamul, and Beth-Diblathaim, and Beth Baal-Meon, and I placed there the poor people of the land. And as to Horonaim, the men of Edom dwelt therein, on the descent from old. And Chemosh said to me, Go down, make war against Horonaim, and take it. And I assaulted it, And I took it, for Chemosh restored it in my days.

That is the text of what is known as the Mesha Stele. It is an inscription by Mesha, king of Moab, who is mentioned in 2 Kings 3:4. The account he writes substantiates several

names and places listed in the Bible, and it also shows us something that the Bible reveals concerning the gods of the nations.

Here he speaks of his god Chemosh, and he speaks of Israel's God, Yehovah. Nations generally had their own god or gods, and at times, one nation would take the gods of another nation as their own. This even happened in Israel, where in 2 Chronicles 25:14, Amaziah defeated the Edomites, captured their gods, set them up, and bowed down to worship them – not the brightest bulb in town.

The point of this is that just because someone claims the Lord is their God, it doesn't mean that is true. Balaam is a soothsayer and so for him to call on one god or another was what he did. If he could profit off of Yehovah, that was as good as profiting off of any other god of any other nation.

Text Verse: *“Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you.” Deuteronomy 23:5*

As you have seen, Balaam had to be summoned twice before he actually went. Moses says that the Lord wouldn't listen to Balaam. It is apparent from the verses today that Balaam either didn't listen or he didn't heed the Lord's word either.

His first visit showed that he was obedient, but only partially so. This resulted in a second visit with a better offer. The Lord passively hardened his heart in this. The second visit, where he was allowed to go, left him overjoyed at the prospects which lay ahead. However, by the end of his time with the king, he will lose his fee—reward altogether, he will become reckless, and he will bring about his own destruction. This won't be evident for quite a while, but I'm apprising you now so that you will have a better idea of why Balaam is so looked down on from this point and forward, even to the book of Revelation. He is a curious figure, and we will be following him for a while.

The story of Balaam, and what he says and does, are a marvelous part of God's superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Who Are These Men with You? (verses 1-14)

¹Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab

The last recorded details of Israel's march toward Canaan brought them into battle with Sihon and Og where they took possession of the land of both kings. Now it says that the children of Israel moved on from there, camping "in the plains of Moab."

Here is a new word in Scripture, *aravah*, translated as "plains" because it is in the plural here. It is a steppe, or a desert plain. It comes from the verb *arav*, meaning to become evening, or grow dark. In this, it signifies a wilderness area. The word is often prefixed by an article, and thus it speaks of a specific desert often called "the Aravah."

In Psalm 68:4, the word is used when referring to where the Lord rides, and so some translations will say "clouds," or "heavens," which is how the NKJV translates it –

"Sing to God, sing praises to His name;
Extol Him who rides on **the clouds**,
By His name Yah,
And rejoice before Him." Psalm 68:4

Here in Numbers, it is simply referring to the wilderness of Moab.

^{1 (con't)} **on the side of the Jordan *across from* Jericho.**

Where they are now is right at the doorstep of Canaan. As it says, *me'eber l'yarden yerekho*, or "on the side of Jordan Jericho." The Jordan is the dividing line. When they cross over that, they will be in Canaan, the land of Promise. The name "Jordan" signifies "Descender."

It is given this name because it goes from the high mountains all the way down into the Dead Sea. However, when the Jordan is used in typology, it signifies the advent of the Lord. He is the Descender who has come from the heights of heaven and descended even to the pit of death in order to redeem man.

As Israel is on one side of the Jordan, it signifies they are on one side of Christ's advent. It is anticipatory of them crossing over and into what is Promised by going through Christ. This is the typology to remember as we advance towards the book of Joshua when that actually occurs.

Where they are is at the Jordan, across from Jericho. Jericho is introduced into Scripture now. It will become common in the OT from here, and it will also be referred to in the NT synoptic gospels and Hebrews.

The name Jericho is based on one of two roots, *yareakh*, or “moon,” or *ruakh*, meaning “smell.” The first would indicate “City of the Moon,” or the other would be “Place of Fragrance.” In fact, the similarity in the roots probably means that there is an understood duality in the name where both meanings equally apply.

The exact travel to where they are, and the spread of their encampment, is recorded in Numbers 33:48, 49 –

“They departed from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho. ⁴⁹ They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jesimoth as far as the Abel Acacia Grove in the plains of Moab.”

Thus, they are on the east of the Jordan in the plains of Moab. But, this is land that was taken in battle from Moab and which Israel then took from the hand of those who took it from Moab.

² Now Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.

Here Balak the son of Zippor is introduced. The name *Balaq* comes from the verb *balaq* which signifies “waste.” In this, the name means something akin to Devastator, Empty, or Wasting. Zippor comes from *tsippor*, a little bird. It is the same root as the name of Moses’ wife Zipporah.

It may be, then, that this person, though being in Moab, is a Midianite, bearing a name similar to other Midianites, named after birds and animals. He saw what Israel did to the Amorites, and he is fearful of encountering them himself. Therefore...

³ And Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because they were many,

Here the word *gur* is used to describe the people. It means to sojourn or dwell among others. In this, you get the sense of people huddling together in fear because of the multitudes of Israel. This is then expanded on with...

^{3 (con’t)} and Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel.

Here the word *quts*, or dread, is used. It is the same word used to describe how the Egyptians felt at the expansion of Israel right at the beginning of the book of Exodus –

“But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in **dread** of the children of Israel.” Exodus 1:12

The translation, “because of the children of Israel,” gets the meaning across, but it lacks the substance of the Hebrew. The word is *mi’peneh*, “from the face.” And so it more literally reads, “and Moab was sick with dread from the face (meaning the presence) of the children of Israel. It is as if the collective whole, made up of a great multitude, is staring at them in the face, and they shrink back, cowering together in fear.

In what is an interesting parallel, the first time *mi’peneh* was used in the Bible was in Genesis 3:8 where it said –

“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”

There Adam and Eve who were “from Father,” having been created by God, hid in fear from the presence of the Lord. Now, Moab, or “from Father,” shrinks back in fear from the presence of Israel.

⁴So Moab said to the elders of Midian,

This is a possible indication that Balak is not a hereditary king of Moab, but is rather a king such as Herod was over Judah. Herod was an Idumean and Balak appears to be a Midianite. Midian means, “Place of Judgment.” Midian was descended from Abraham through his wife Keturah, and so they are actually more closely related to Israel than the Moabites.

The term “elders” is a word which indicates being old. It comes from a word meaning a beard. And so it is someone who is known for his beard, and thus an elder. If the same people, these men are called the “five kings of Midian” in Numbers 31.

⁴ (con’t) **“Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.”**

The word used, *qahal*, speaks of Israel not as a group of individuals, but as an organized whole. It is one mass of people who are now likened to an immense ox which consumes so much that nothing is left when he is finished.

Here is a new word, *lakhak*, or lick. It is used twice here, and it will be seen just four more times in the Bible.

⁴ (con't) **And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.**

As the Moabites came to the elders of Midian, it would appear that they are under the kingship of Midian, with Balak as the head. It could be the other way around, but this is the more likely scenario. Whichever way, he now takes action...

⁵ **Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor,**

The name *Bil'am* is a bit hard to pin down, but it may mean "Destroyer of the People," or "Confuser of the People," or "Swallowing up the People." Regardless, in each, there is something negative which occurs with the people. There is a connection of this name directly to the Nicolaitans who are found in Revelation 2:14-16 –

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

Nicolaitan comes from two words signifying "victory," as in conquering, and "people." Thus, "Destroyer of the People" seems to be the intent of both, one Hebrew and one Greek. This is seen in Revelation elsewhere such as Abaddon & Apollyon, and Satan & Devil.

These Nicolaitans are equated to Balaam because they tried to trip Christians up by committing sexual immorality, just as Balaam did to Israel in Numbers 31. However, Balaam is also equated by both Peter and Jude as one who followed after profit –

"They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet." 2 Peter 2:15, 16

"Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah." Jude -11

Balaam here is called to be a destroyer of the people through a curse. That will fail. Later he will be used in an attempt to destroy the people through interbreeding and sexual immorality. The name fits the character.

His father's name, Beor, comes from *baar*, "a burning." And so it means someone like "Burning," as in a lamp. Pethor means, "Interpreter," as in one who interprets dreams or visions. The names seem to indicate that his father was also a diviner and the place where they dwell is known for divination.

^{5 (con't)} **which is near the River**

The River is the Euphrates. Here and in other places, it is simply called *ha'nahar*, or "the River," due to its eminency. That this is speaking of the Euphrates is confirmed by Deuteronomy 23:4. However, the next clause may also confirm this...

^{5 (con't)} **in the land of the sons of his people,**

Here it says, *eretz bene ammo*, "land sons of his people." However, a good number of Hebrew and other manuscripts all say *eretz bene ammon*, or "land sons of Ammon." That would be in accord with Deuteronomy 23. Either way, "the River" means "Euphrates."

^{5 (con't)} **to call him, saying: "Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me!"**

Here is a phrase seen only three times in the Bible. It doesn't say, "the face of the earth." Rather, it says, "the eye of the earth." It was first used in Exodus 10:5 when speaking of the locusts which covered everything. Now, it will be used twice in this chapter in regards to Israel.

Israel is so numerous that it would be as if the "eye" of the land would be darkened by them, just as the eye of the earth in Egypt was completely covered by the locusts. All the white is swallowed up by the masses.

The fact that the same term is used, and that he says these people have come out of Egypt, even though that was forty years earlier, is not to be missed. A direct connection between Israel being redeemed from Egypt, and Israel being led to a land of promise, is being made.

The eye of the earth had been covered to bring forth Israel, and now Israel – who had been brought forth – covers the eye of the earth. The same people, with the same God who established them, is now at his own doorstep. If God is on their side, to him there is only one possible remedy to their plight. He now seeks it...

⁶Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they *are* too mighty for me.

Although the king of Moab believes that a curse upon the people by Balaam would be a satisfactory weapon against Israel, he apparently doesn't believe that such a curse was powerful enough to work unless he was right there with him.

Today, we may get an email from a person in Australia who wants prayer, and so we pray. Location means nothing when speaking to the omnipresent God. But Balak doesn't understand, or he doesn't accept, this premise. And so he summons someone he believes can effectively curse Israel in order to diminish their power, which far exceeded his own...

^{6 (con't)} Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land,

In cursing Israel, he would be limiting their power. As each nation had its own gods, apparently he believes that the curse of Balaam was sufficient to weaken the God of Israel. So confident is he in this that he acknowledges it as an almost omnipotent ability...

^{6 (con't)} for I know that he whom you bless *is* blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed."

The reputation of Balaam preceded him, and he was renowned for his ability. This is a close comparison to another man in the New Testament who was given the same high regard –

“But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, ¹⁰ to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is the great power of God.” ¹¹ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.” Acts 8:9-11

Misplaced trust in the ability of man, regardless as to who he is, inevitably turns out to be a disaster for the one who was at first so confident. Such is the case with Balak now. But onward he goes...

⁷ So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.

Here it specifically says that elders of both Moab and Midian were members of the summoning party. The two groups are united in purpose and intent against Israel. With them, they bring *qesemim*, or divinations. The word *qesem*, or divination, is introduced here. In stating it in the plural, *qesemim*, it signifies payment for divination. With this diviner's fee presented, they repeat the words of the king expecting that Balaam would come along without any delay. However...

⁸ And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as the Lord speaks to me." So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam.

The narrative is rather confusing to the reader, and it has been so all along. If Balaam were a true prophet, one would think he would have known Israel to be the chosen people of the Lord and to send the emissaries away immediately.

But, he says specifically that he would relay to them whatever the Lord, meaning Yehovah, spoke to him. Thus, he has a knowledge of the God of Israel. But this doesn't mean it was any more than a "knowledge of name" knowledge. In Exodus 18:1 it says –

"And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt."

Jethro had a name knowledge, and wanted to increase it to an understanding of who Yehovah was and what He was in relation to Israel. The same is true with Rahab the harlot –

"Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, ⁹ and said to the men: 'I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.'" Joshua 2:8-10

It is obvious that the name of Israel's God went before them, and it had gone as far as Mesopotamia, where Balaam dwelt as well. What appears to be the case is that Balaam

sought out whatever god of whatever land he was asked to seek out. Yehovah is the God of Israel, and therefore, to the God of Israel, meaning Yehovah, he will make his petition. In this case, he seeks out Yehovah, not because he knew him, but because he knew of him. In the night, that begins to change...

⁹ Then God came to Balaam and said, “Who *are* these men with you?”

Here it says, *v’yabo elohim el bil’am* – “and came God to Balaam.” When He comes, it is with a question. It doesn’t mean God is curious. Rather, it is a common way that God introduces Himself when attempting to elicit a cognitive process in the one He is speaking to.

He asked, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”, when He wanted Elijah to consider his spiritual state. He asked King Hezekiah, through Isaiah, a series of questions concerning his actions towards the Babylonians. This was to get Hezekiah to consider what he had done in his prideful display before them. The same is true here.

It very well may be that Balaam didn’t expect any answer from Him, but it was a pretense to get them to think he was actually able to communicate with the other-world of the gods. It is even possible that he could have gifted them for a higher fee by claiming this was a special case.

Whatever the reality of the situation, the Lord is not inattentive to it. However, in not knowing how Yehovah deals with men, meaning at times in the form of an interrogative, Balaam now assumes that Yehovah is not omniscient. Rather, He needs to be informed concerning the matter.

It is a way of hardening Balaam’s heart without him even realizing it. “Yes, Yehovah is a ‘God’ but He doesn’t know everything. I have to explain to Him the details.” However, in this question by God, Balaam should have immediately realized that the God of Israel was not limited to where Israel was.

Rather, He was with Israel, and yet could extend Himself beyond their location in knowledge of events which concerned them. Emissaries are there, and they are there because of His people, Israel. Due to the question of Elohim, Balaam realizes that Elohim requires a proper answer, which he then provides...

¹⁰ So Balaam said to God,

Elohim, or God, is mentioned six times in this chapter. This is the only time the word is prefixed by an article. It says, *v'yomer bil'am el ha'elohim* – “And said Balaam to **the** God.” It is a clear indication that the God to whom Balaam spoke is the true God, whether Balaam realizes this or not. This does not make Balaam a true prophet of God. It simply means that he is a diviner who has now had an encounter with the true God. God revealed Himself to Pharaoh in a dream. He did so to Nebuchadnezzar as well. Both were for the benefit of the people of the Lord, not because they were prophets. The same is true here.

If he had demonic encounters in past divination, he could readily assume that those were also “gods” along with the God he is now speaking to. Regardless as to how he views Yehovah, he answers...

¹⁰ (con't) **“Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me, saying,**

There is an abruptness in the Hebrew. The word “saying” is not in the original. It seems to show that Balaam is caught off guard by being questioned as he is, as if it was actually *unexpected*.

¹¹ **‘Look, a people has come out of Egypt, and they cover the face of the earth.**

Balaam is specific with his words. He says, “**the** people have come out of Egypt.” The article specifically identifies them. He knows that Yehovah is their God, and so he is directing his words with that in mind. He then repeats that they cover “the eye of the earth.” The connection to the locust plague of Egypt, and the immense size of Israel as an assembly, is repeated back to the Lord. The earth is darkened with them. Because of this Balak had said...

¹¹ (con't) **Come now, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out.”**

Here is a word not seen before in Scripture, *qavav*. It will be seen eight times, all in the account of Balaam being asked to curse Israel from Numbers 22-24. It comes from a root meaning “to scoop out.” Thus, it means to malign someone, stabbing them with words. In essence, the words would scoop out their power and allow them to become overpowered. In this, Israel would be driven out.

¹² **And God said to Balaam, “You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they *are* blessed.”**

God now explains, rather clearly, that there is no point in Balaam going, and so he tells them he is not to go. Balak had said to him, "...he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed." But God tells him that they are, in fact, already blessed. His maligning them would mean nothing. But after receiving this information, he fails to convey it to the emissaries...

¹³ So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, "Go back to your land, for the Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you."

The words here show us that Balaam is a cunning operator who is looking to profit off of this deal. He knows Israel is blessed, and he knows that his words would be ineffectual against them – he has been told as much. But he never conveys this to his guests.

Instead, he says, that Yehovah has simply not given him permission to go with them. This leaves open the door that he would have gone with them if he had permission. In his words with the Lord, he never asked what he should do, or any relevant question. Thus, he was not seeking the Lord's counsel at all. And to tell them what the Lord had said would have ended the matter. Instead, his words don't just leave open the door for Balak to return with a greater reward, rather, it assures it...

¹⁴ And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us."

The words God spoke to Balaam were his words. Balaam's words to the emissaries included the directive of the Lord, but not the substance of His words. Now, the word of the Lord is completely missing. It is man's word alone which Balak receives, and it has nothing in common with what was conveyed by Yehovah. Because of this, the expected result follows...

*Please curse this people with a curse
Bring them to ruin with the words you speak
Bring them down to a lowly state, or even worse
Take away their power and make them weak*

*They are too powerful for me and I need relief
Curse them so that over them I can prevail
Curse them and bring them to sorrow and grief
Bring them low; no longer the head, but only the tail*

*I will reward you for your effort, curse them now
In your words, I will gain the victory
Curse them and with woe please them endow
Curse them for they are too powerful for me*

II. Rise and Go with Them (verses 15-21)

¹⁵ Then Balak again sent princes, more numerous and more honorable than they.

Balak understands that Balaam wasn't actually unwilling to come, but that in order to do so, he would need to be enticed more than the first time. If not, he would have simply given up on the matter. In sending greater dignitaries, it meant greater honor and prestige for Balaam. It is what any head of state would do in such an instance. The word "honorable" here is *kaved*. It signifies that which is weighty or heavy. Thus, they are heavy with honor and abounding in dignity.

**¹⁶ And they came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak the son of Zippor:
'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me;**

The recorded words are more formal than before. They specifically state the full name of their king, indicating that they are under his authority, and are speaking his exact words. And the words of Balak are firm in their intent. It is a royal invitation, but it is also a royal appeal, and it comes with a royal promise...

¹⁷ for I will certainly honor you greatly,

Again, the word *kaved* is used, *kaved akavedkha meod* – honoring you, I will honor you greatly. The superlative nature of the words indicates that the weighty nature of the emissaries will be outmatched by the dignities he is to be extended by the king.

^{17 (con't)} and I will do whatever you say to me.

It is a word like that spoken by King Ahasuerus to Esther, or that of King Herod to Herodias' daughter when they promised them up to half their kingdom. What Balaam desired, he would receive.

^{17 (con't)} Therefore please come, curse this people for me.'"

It is the second time he has used the word *qavav*, meaning to malign Israel with words. But Balak now reintroduces his supposed piety before the Lord, and dismisses the promised honors as if they were nothing to him...

18 Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

Balaam reveals where his heart is with these words. He translates the idea of honor into silver and gold, and he fails to say that he has already been told that cursing Israel would be pointless. And then he says *Yehovah elohai*, “Yehovah my God.” Yehovah is Israel’s God, and so he is, in effect, aligning himself with Israel.

Now that he has done this, and because his curse would be ineffective anyway, he can trust that he will indeed receive a great reward from Balak, and neither he nor Israel will be harmed, but he will be immensely more wealthy when his calling is complete. If this were not correct, he would have simply ended the talk with what was said to him the first time. But instead, he anticipates either no response from the Lord, or a favorable one. Now that the Lord is his God, how could he be turned down? And so he says...

19 Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me.”

The fact that he asks them to stay the night again indicates that he really wanted to go with them. If not, he would have simply repeated what he already knew, and he would have then excused them for their journey home, but instead, he anticipates that the Lord will have something new to speak out. This is evident with the words *mah yosef*, or “what more.”

20 And God came to Balaam at night and said to him, “If the men come to call you, rise *and* go with them; but only the word which I speak to you—that you shall do.”

The word “if” here should be “since.” They have come to call, and so, the Lord will send him on the journey to Moab, but he warns him that what he is instructed to speak, only that is he to speak.

There is no contradiction in now allowing Balaam to go. The prohibition was on cursing Israel, to which not going with the first emissaries was attached. Now, in fact, it is clear

that Yehovah wanted all along for Balaam to go and bless Israel, turning what man had designed as man's curse into what the Lord purposed as His blessing.

It is not correct that Balaam's curse would become a curse upon Israel, but it is true that the Lord's blessing through Balaam would be a blessing upon them. This was the Lord's intent, regardless of the attitude of Balaam. His path is a reckless one, but the Lord's is one which is set, and it is pre-determined, as we now see...

21 (fin) So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab.

It is interesting that this is stated, and then in verse 22, we will see that Balaam is with two of his servants, but then much of the account after that is as if he is all alone in the world with just him and his donkey. This donkey will be seen fourteen times in this chapter, but not again in either Chapter 23 or 24.

Though it is an anxious place for us to stop, in the middle of the chapter, and just before the coming of one of the Bible's memorable passages, it is good that we stop now. It will 1) instill in us a need to come back next week to continue on, and 2) it will also teach us patience as we wait.

Until then, we shall close with the thought that the Lord's word is set and we are to live by it, we are to pass it on as we receive it, and we are not to add to it or subtract from it. The reason this is important, is because it tells us of our state before God, and the only way to correct that state. We have a defect in us, and that defect is sin.

Christ Jesus came to correct that, and He did just that, but we must act upon what He did by believing the message and applying it to our lives. We'll close with that thought and be back here next week, the Lord willing, to continue on with the story of Balaam.

Closing Verse: *"Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you.
Be master over your brethren,
And let your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be everyone who curses you,
And blessed be those who bless you!" Genesis 27:29*

Next Week: Numbers 22:22-41 It didn't come by divination, through moans or creaks. Rather it came through an animal... (The Donkey Speaks) (44th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Curse This People for Me

Then the children of Israel moved
And camped in the plains of Moab, it was there
On the side of the Jordan
Across from Jericho is where

Now Balak the son of Zippor, that was his ancestral rights
Saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites

And Moab was exceedingly afraid
Of the people because they were many, as the record does tell
And Moab was sick with dread
Because of the children of Israel

So Moab said to the elders of Midian
“Now this company will lick up everything around us
———so says this rhyme
As an ox licks up the grass of the field
And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time

Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor
Which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people
———so we see
To call him, saying: “Look, a people has come from Egypt
See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me

Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me
For they are too mighty for me, this situation is just the worst
Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them
———and drive them out of the land
For I know that he whom you bless is blessed
———and he whom you curse is cursed

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian
Departed with the diviner's fee in their hand
And they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak
As we now understand

And he said to them, "Lodge here tonight
And I will bring back word to you
As the Lord speaks to me
So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam, so they did do

Then God came to Balaam and said
———"Who are these men with you?"
So Balaam said to God, as requested to do
"Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab
Has sent to me, saying
'Look, a people has come out of Egypt
And they cover the face of the earth. Thus he was relaying

Come now, curse them for me, I trust your clout
Perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out

And God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them
———so He to Balaam addressed
You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed

So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak
As he was instructed to do
Go back to your land
For the Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you

And the princes of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said
"Balaam refuses to come with us. That end is dead

Then Balak again sent princes
———more numerous and more honorable than they
And they came to Balaam and to him said
"Thus says Balak the son of Zippor:
'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me
———hurry to me instead

For I will certainly honor you greatly
And I will do whatever you say to me
Therefore please come, curse this people for me
I'm desperately in need of you, can't you see?

Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak
"Though Balak were to give me his house
———full of silver and gold
I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God
To do less or more than just as I have been told

Now therefore, please, you also stay here tonight
———won't you hear my plea?
That I may know what more the Lord will say to me

And God came to Balaam at night
And said to him words sure and true
"If the men come to call you, rise and go with them
But only the word which I speak to you—that you shall do

So Balaam rose in the morning; on this journey he took a stab
Saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 22:22-41 (THE DONKEY SPEAKS)

It dawned on me while getting ready to type this sermon, that of the commentaries I read for sermon prep each week, and despite the scholarly and immensely intelligent nature of those men, they couldn't really make the pictorial connection to many of the stories that we are reading and analyzing, because they were not alive when the promises of God to Israel had come about.

Only in Israel's return to the land in 1948, could some of these things properly be grasped. It is true that all of the pictures are revealed elsewhere in the Bible in one way or another, but to actually make these necessary connections to what is revealed would certainly be much harder without seeing this group of people returning and occupying the land.

A couple of the scholars, John Gill and Adam Clarke in particular, openly wrote about the necessity of Israel being returned to the land as a sign of the truth of the Lord in accord with His written word. Rather than saying that the church replaced Israel, these men – even hundreds of years ago – faithfully proclaimed that Israel was still a part of God's plans in redemptive history.

However, the duration of their exile, the circumstances surrounding their return, the state of the nations in the world today, and a host of other unknowns added to these, meant that they were left without the information we now possess.

Because of this, one can see that it wasn't until Israel's return that the pictorial meaning of these many passages could really have come about. And who knows how much more is left unknown to us? I've struggled with the Balaam sermons, hoping to make a final connection as to what he is picturing, and as of this sermon, I am still chewing it over.

Text Verse: *"Surely the Lord God does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets." Amos 3:7*

The words there from Amos do not mean that people today receive prophecy from the Lord, and that they then pass on the mysteries of God. Rather, the prophets *have* spoken, the word *is* written, and God *has* recorded His plan in it. It is now our job to search it out and to attempt to discern what it is that He *has* revealed.

The longer time goes by, the more knowledge that is added to the body of commentaries on Scripture, and the more we read and study what the Lord is telling us, the surer it is that we will understand what those prophets have had conveyed to them from the Lord. This is the beauty of studying the Bible. It is all there if we can work it out.

Today's passage is another wonderful part of this beautiful treasure we call the Holy Bible. Hopefully today, we will find some more wonderful insights from it, because it is a part of His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Why Have You Struck Your Donkey? (verses 22-33)

²² Then God's anger was aroused because he went,

v'yikhar aph elohim – “and burned *the* nostril of God.” It is as if fire shot out of His nose over the events taking place. It is curious that Balaam had been given permission to go, but that now God's anger is fired up over his going. However, it is apparent, even if not explicitly stated, that the intent by going was to curse Israel. That is why the emissaries had been sent.

Had he told them that he could not curse Israel, they would have said, “Well then, there is no point in you coming back with us.” However, by going, the implication is that he will, in fact, curse Israel. That is the entire purpose of the promised payment. As the Bible later records of Balaam, he ran greedily for profit.

In this verse, rather than “because he went,” the verb more rightly says, “because he was going.” It's not just that he went on the journey, but he started and continued deliberately and with conviction on it, pressing forward to the intended end. As Keil notes –

“...it is evident, on the one hand, that the anger of God was not excited by the fact that Balaam went with the elders of Moab, but by his behaviour wither on setting out or upon the journey.”

His being given permission to go did not mean he had to go, but that the expectation was that he would do right if he went. The fact that he decided to go, and pressed on as he went, meant that this would not be the case.

²² (con't) and the Angel of the Lord took His stand in the way as an adversary against him.

v'yityashev malak Yehovah baderek I'satan low – “and took His stand *the Angel of Yehovah* in the way as an adversary against him.” The word *satan*, or adversary, is introduced into the Bible here. It is one who opposes or an accuser. When it is prefixed by the definite article, it speaks of Satan, the arch-enemy of God.

Here, it is *malak Yehovah*, or “the Angel of the Lord,” meaning the eternal Christ, who stands in opposition to Balaam.

22 (con't) And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him.

Here, he is said to be riding on his *athon*, or female donkey along with two *na'ar*, or young men. These two servants are curiously only mentioned here in what then seems like a superfluous addition of detail. Why mention them at all?

23 Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way and went into the field.

It is an irony of Scripture that the supposed seer and diviner of the gods was wholly incapable of seeing the Angel of the Lord, whereas his brute beast, a donkey, not only saw Him, but turned away in understanding.

One cannot claim that the path was so narrow that it had to take action. If this were so, it would have stopped or tried to squeeze by, as she will later do. Rather, the donkey avoided the path altogether and went into the field.

So, blinded by his now obvious intentions of receiving a king's reward, his supposedly bright intellect is clouded over. At the same time, the beast on which he sat perceived with perfect clarity that the hand of her Creator was against them.

Here the verb *shalaph* is introduced. It means to draw out, grow up, or pluck off. The Angel of the Lord stands with His sword drawn, indicating the type of death Balaam would face if he continued down his reckless path. Unfortunately, he did – in fact – continue down it and in Numbers 31:8, it is shown that this is the exact death that he will face.

23 (con't) So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.

In his ignorance, he strikes the donkey who is, at this time, his only means of not being struck down. The irony is palpable. He, the soothsayer and the one who supposedly communes with the gods cannot see what a mere donkey perfectly realizes. If only those

in the church today would trust their own donkeys, we wouldn't have so many false teachings from so many blinded people swirling about our churches!

²⁴ Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side.

The Hebrew uses the term *mishol*, or a hollow passage, to describe the path. This word is only used here in the Bible, coming from a word which indicates a hollow hand, and thus a handful. One can think of a path running through vineyards, with the vines forming a tunnel to go through.

Thus, this is probably a dividing line between two independent vineyards that people would travel through. On each side would be a *gader*, or wall. It is another new word signifying a wall or a fence. This was probably of stone which was cleared from fields and used to mark the edge of the property. This would make passage limited.

²⁵ And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she pushed herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he struck her again.

Here the donkey can't turn off the path, but it still knows it can't press forward, and so it lurched to the side which would have smushed Balaam's foot against the wall. It is a different word for "wall" here, *qir*. It comes from a root signifying to bore or dig. And so it is something with depth to it. His foot is smashed against the surface of it in the donkey's attempt to not be struck.

²⁶ Then the Angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

The same word, *v'yoseph*, which was just used in the previous verse to signify that Balaam had struck his donkey, is used again here. It says, *v'yoseph malak Yehovah abor*, or "and again *the* angel of the Lord went." It isn't speaking of the distance, meaning further, but of the event, meaning a third time.

This time, however, he appears standing in a place that is so narrow that the donkey can't even attempt to get away. In such a tight place, she would be distressed, therefore...

²⁷ And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam;

Well, she doesn't want to get struck again, and she cannot turn left or right, and so the perceptive donkey simply lays down on the spot. She may not have wanted a beating, but one comes anyway...

27 (con't) so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff.

v'yikhar aph bil'am – “and burned *the* nostril *of* Balaam.” It is the same words used above when speaking about the anger of the Lord. The number three in Scripture signifies that which is substantial, complete and entire. The Lord has taken Balaam through the entire course of events in order to alert him to the severity of the situation.

As is what can normally be expected of sin, he first allows us to divert from the path, but we remain untouched. He next draws judgment nearer and causes discomfort to arise. And finally, if the lesson is not learned, we end in such a tight spot that we have nowhere to turn, but to simply fall before Him, voluntarily or involuntarily.

In this case, Balaam is saved from himself by an unreasoning animal who can discern more than he could imagine...

28 Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?”

It is astonishing to read the commentaries of scholars, some of whom find the Bible the literal word of God, and yet who dismiss the words of this verse in a thousand different ways. Whereas their commentaries might normally be a few sentences, they spend paragraphs writing out how this verse doesn't really mean what it says. However, both Peter, and anyone else who accepts the word as written, must take the verse as it is intended. Peter says –

“They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.” 2 Peter 2:15, 16

The Hebrew says, *v'yiphtakh Yehovah eth pi ha'athon* – “And opened Yehovah *the* mouth *of* the donkey.” Who made the donkey? The Lord. If the Lord can fashion a donkey, and if He can fashion a man, He can also make the donkey speak with the words of a man.

The narrative is based on the redemptive plans of the Lord, and therefore, they are given to reflect that redemptive plan in a particular manner, and for a particular reason.

If the donkey didn't speak, and if Balaam only imagined it, this would not have restrained his madness, it would have increased it. In asking why she had been struck three times, she is speaking the word of the Lord, as prompted by the Lord. The donkey knows perfectly well why she was struck three times.

She wasn't asking this because she didn't know. She was asking, because this is how the Lord wakes His people up from their spiritual slumber – “What are you doing here, Elijah?” The Lord knew why Elijah was there. But He wanted Elijah to think the situation through with clarity. “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” The Lord already knew the answer, as is obvious from his response –

“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” John 21:17

Peter said what he said about Balaam because he knew how the Lord worked, and how He accomplished His plans through even the thick-headed like Balaam, and even like he himself.

In the case of Peter's words in his epistle about Balaam, the Greek actually reads *Balaam tou Bosor*. Instead of calling him Balaam son of Beor, he is called by Peter Balaam son of Bosor. Why would he do that?

Some translations simply skip over it as an anomaly and translate it as Beor instead of Bosor, as do some manuscripts. However, the curious change is credited to Peter making a play on words.

The Hebrew letter *ayin*, when pronounced in an especially guttural way, would make the name sound like Bosor, and would then correspond to the Hebrew word for “flesh” which is *basar*. In other words, he makes a pun by calling him “Balaam, Son of the Flesh,” which speaks of his pursuing the carnal lusts of the flesh in his madness to get rich.

²⁹ And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have abused me. I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you!”

The word Balaam uses, and which is translated as “abused,” signifies “to go over completely.” It is what one does when he gleans. He goes over an area until it is picked clean. Balaam says, in essence, “You have completely derided me.”

And then his next words are in the perfect tense in the Hebrew, “Having a sword in my hand, for now, I had killed you.” It is as if the act were accomplished, but for the lack of a sword. “As I only had my stick, instead I beat you with that.”

Balaam is so furious at this point that he has not come to his senses. His donkey spoke to him, and instead of thinking clearly over that, he responds in words that he might have said to someone irritating him over some petty matter. He needs more donkey talk to pull him back from the edge...

³⁰ So the donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?” And he said, “No.”

The words are from the Lord, but spoken as if through the donkey. Despite their ultimate Source, there is nothing theologically deep. There is simply the continuance of the questioning that had already begun. The answer to the questions are obvious, and have the sole intent of bringing Balaam to right reason.

He had been told by God not to curse Israel, but then when permitted to go with the emissaries, he had closed his mind to that and opened it up to the riches that lay ahead. With simple questions from a simpler donkey, he is being nurtured into reasoning out the surrounding circumstances.

With that now done, and only with that having been settled, is he enabled to see what was kept from him...

³¹ Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes,

v’gal Yehovah eth ene bil’am – “And uncovered Yehovah Balaam’s eyes.” It wasn’t that his eyes were shut, it is that they were covered over. What he couldn’t see, he now sees. And this was an uncovering not by his own action, but by that of the Lord...

^{31 (con’t)} and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand;

There is an irony which has occurred in these verses. Balaam was traveling to Moab, or “From Father,” to earn his reward. However, the Angel of the Lord who was sent from Father, has blocked the way. It is a remarkable parallel to Christ’s own words of John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

The reward is through Christ, and only through Him. The *way* is where the Lord is standing. The *truth* is that He is, in fact, standing there, and the *life* is symbolized by the sword which can be sheathed granting it, or swung, thus removing it. Balaam now sees what Jesus literally proclaimed. And the reaction to this knowledge is obvious...

³¹ (con’t) and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

It is the common reaction of any who comes before the Lord with the knowledge of who the Lord is – awestruck wonder. In the case of Balaam, he literally fell prostrate with his face to the ground.

³² And the Angel of the Lord said to him, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because *your way* is perverse before Me.

Now the Angel of the Lord speaks directly to Balaam, but first in the form of a question. The donkey asked, “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?” Now the Lord asks, “Why have you struck your donkey these three times?” The word for donkey, *athon*, comes from the word *ethan*, meaning perennial, or ever-flowing. It is where the common English name “Ethan” comes from.

If you know an unsaved Ethan, you can now use this to begin your witnessing to him. Knowing the source of Hebrew names is a marvelous way to do this because many of our names are derived from the Hebrew language. As far as the narrative, we can see that the *athon*, or donkey, is a symbol of constancy, consistency, and even patient endurance.

The donkey patiently endured her beatings, and the Lord patiently endured as the donkey was beaten. But it was for this reason that the Angel of the Lord says *anokhi yatsati l’satan* – “I have come out to stand as an adversary against you.” Again, it is the word, *satan*, which when prefixed by an article speaks of Satan, God’s arch-foe. Here, it only speaks of being an adversary.

And He stood in this manner for a purpose. It was to uncover the eyes of Balaam and correct his rash ways. Here, the Angel of the Lord uses a very rare word, *yarat*. It is only found here and Job 16:11, it signifies that which is rash or perverse as in rushing head-long into destruction. The Lord has personally intervened to stop this disastrous progression.

³³ The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times.

The Angel of the Lord credits the discernment of a mere donkey for turning because of what she saw. He doesn't say, "I appeared to the donkey." He simply notes that the donkey perceived His presence. However...

³³ (con't) If she had not turned aside from Me, surely I would also have killed you by now, and let her live."

The Hebrew here appears broken, as in an aposiopesis. It is as if a challenge to Balaam's mind. Further, it is in the perfect tense, as an accomplished fact – "Perhaps she turned aside from before Me... for now I have killed you; and she lives." Balaam must infer what is being said, and to make the right choice about his future path.

*A donkey speaks, who would believe?
And from where does she get her word?
Did she just learn, or from God did she receive?
What prompted her? What is it she heard?*

*And with what words does she speak?
Wondrous oracles about the future of man?
No, just a question to her master about his beating streak
Why did he do it? Just because he can?*

*But donkeys don't speak, as we all know
It was the Lord who allowed words to come from her
To restrain the prophet's madness, and this is so
He was on a wayward path, which the Lord was set to deter*

*A donkey speaks, who would believe
A message from God for the wise to receive*

II. The Word That God Puts in My Mouth (Verses 34-41)

³⁴ And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord, “I have sinned, for I did not know You stood in the way against me.

Here Balaam acknowledges his sin, but he doesn't say how he sinned. Was it because his way was perverse, or is it because he struck a donkey which didn't deserve it? The Lord standing in the way was because he was acting in a perverse manner. And that is what brought about the beatings. But because the Lord stood in the way, Balaam speaks on...

^{34 (con't)} Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back.”

The Hebrew reads, “And therefore, if evil in your eyes, I will turn back.” This shows that Balaam is still intent on going. The word “if” shows this.

There is nothing to gain by going, apart from the promised riches, and so it is the promised riches which are still on his mind. But the Lord has blessings planned for Israel, and so Israel will be blessed.

³⁵ Then the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak.”

Here, the Angel of the Lord assumes the same authority as God in verse 22:20 by speaking the same words as then. It is a clear indication that the Angel of the Lord, is the Lord. What he says is both a prediction and a command – “The word that I speak to you, that you shall speak.” He has been called to curse, but the Lord has determined otherwise. And so it shall be...

^{35 (con't)} So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Where these men have been during the past many verses is not stated. In verse 21, they were called the princes of Moab. Now, they are called the princes of Balak. Together, they depart for their destination, obviously sending messengers ahead...

³⁶ Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the border at the Arnon, the boundary of the territory.

The king desired to provide a true state visit for Balaam, and so instead of awaiting him to come to his location, he went to the extremity of his territory to meet with him. It shows the importance of the matter to the king. He is anxious to give Balaam great

honor in hopes that he will accept it and act in the most favorable manner concerning the situation with Israel.

The Hebrew in this verse says, *ir moav*, which is probably the same as Ar of Moab in Numbers 21:15. It is located on the Arnon, or “Roaring Stream,” which formed the boundary of Moab.

³⁷ Then Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not earnestly send to you, calling for you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?”

Balak’s words are superlative, *halo shaloakh shlakhti elekha liqro* – “Did not sending I send to you for calling?” Because the original message from the Lord was so watered down by Balaam, and then completely missing from the words of the messengers, the denial made no sense at all to Balak.

In the words, “Am I not able to honor you?” there is a certain amount of wondering if Balaam thinks he is good for his word or not, as if he is hurt at the mere suggestion of it. As one can see, and will continue to see, Balak is a highly emotional person who becomes frustrated over his inability to get his own way.

³⁸ And Balaam said to Balak, “Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.”

Here, it appears at first as a pious note of faithfulness, but it is a set of words which lack that. First, instead of saying Yehovah, he says God. Twice before, Balaam has said Yehovah, and once he said, *Yehovah elohaj*, or Yehovah my God.

Now, he simply says, *elohim*. That can be the true God, or any god, or multiple gods. The context decides the meaning, and here, the meaning is questionable as to who he is even speaking of.

Secondly, he never tells him that Yehovah had forbidden him to come, or that he was told to only speak what Yehovah said. And third, Yehovah had said that what was to be uttered was blessing, not cursing. Though Balaam has stated a fact, he has only partially stated it, and he has – once again – withheld more than revealed.

³⁹ So Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kirjath Huzoth.

From their meeting place, it says they have traveled to *qiryath khutsoth*, or City of Streets. The name may imply a trading city, or a city where people sell their wares on the

streets, or something like that. The word *khuts* simply means “outside.” This is the only time it is seen in Scripture.

⁴⁰ Then Balak offered oxen and sheep, and he sent *some* to Balaam and to the princes who were with him.

Here the word “offered” indicates a slaughter for sacrifice. Two kinds of animals are mentioned, the *baqar*, which comes from a root meaning to inquire or seek, and *tson*, which comes from a word meaning to migrate. Both indicate animals which move as they forage for food.

The sacrifice is certainly intended as a means of seeking the favor of the gods of Moab, and hopefully appeasing the God of Israel. That it is sent to Balaam and the princes indicates that it is also a type of fellowship offering, where there is a meal between the deity and the people.

^{41 (fin)} So it was, the next day, that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.

The chapter ends with Balak going to either a specific place called Bamoth Baal, or it could also be any given place. The meaning of *bamoth* is “high places,” but it also refers to a specific place at times. It is one of the places where those of Moab would worship their god Chemosh.

In saying, “the extent of the people,” it can mean “from one extent to the other,” or “the outlying extent of them.” The former seems likely based on what will later be done. Here is where the chapter ends, high with anticipation concerning what will happen when Balaam is asked to speak out his utterance against the people of Israel.

In a cursory reading of the chapter, even many times, I had always looked at the positive side of Balaam. That made the later passages about him, which are spoken in the negative, more difficult to understand. Some of my friends who emailed me about him felt the same.

However, after studying this first chapter in detail, it becomes evident that he was, in fact, an opportunist who held Yehovah as simply one God among many. His sitting down to a meal sacrificed by the king of Moab, knowing that he would have done so to Chemosh, reflects this as much as anything else which has been presented.

He may have desired to only speak what Elohim told him to speak, but Elohim is a very large word which conveys many meanings in Scripture. In Balaam's case, it was most certainly a collection of gods who were there to help him become wealthy.

Unfortunately, we are all susceptible to following after "the gods," of this world which are led by the "god" of this world, meaning the devil. Money, addictions to sex, drugs, fame, or whatever else, even lesser gods of chance, luck, and fortune, and so on. The world is filled with "gods," but we are told to reject them, because they all belong to one ruler, Satan.

Instead, we are to stand opposed to them and to proclaim that there is one, and only one true God, and that God – the Creator – has revealed Himself to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. May we set our hearts and affections on Him, and let us pursue Him and Him alone – to the glory of God the Father.

Closing Verse: *"A man with an evil eye hastens after riches,
And does not consider that poverty will come upon him." Proverbs 28:22*

Next Week: Numbers 23:1-12 *His words are not just allegorical (Balaam's First Oracle)*
(45th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Donkey Speaks

Then God's anger was aroused because he went
And the Angel of the Lord took His stand
———-in the way as an adversary against him
And he was riding on his donkey
And his two servants were with him
———-as things took a turn that was grim

Now the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord
Standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand
And the donkey turned aside out of the way
And went into the field, something of which he had not planned

So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road
Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path, it wasn't wide
Between the vineyards
With a wall on this side and a wall on that side

And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord
She pushed herself against the wall
And crushed Balaam's foot against the wall
So he struck her again, not very nice at all!

Then the Angel of the Lord went further
And stood in a narrow place; of leeway it was bereft
Where there was no way to turn
Either to the right hand or to the left

And when the donkey saw the Angel of the Lord
She lay down under Balaam; seemingly an annoying gaffe
So Balaam's anger was aroused
And he struck the donkey with his staff

Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey
And she said to Balaam, words for our rhymes
"What have I done to you
That you have struck me these three times?"

And Balaam said to the donkey
"Because you have abused me, so you did do
I wish there were a sword in my hand
For now I would kill you!"

So the donkey said to Balaam
"Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden
———Isn't it so?
Ever since I became yours, to this day?
Was I ever disposed to do this to you?"
———And he said, "No."

Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes

And he saw the Angel of the Lord there in that place
Standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand
And he bowed his head and fell flat on his face

And the Angel of the Lord said to him
“Why have you struck your donkey these times three?
Behold, I have come out to stand against you
Because your way is perverse before Me

The donkey saw Me and turned aside from Me these three times
If she had not turned aside from Me
Surely I would also have killed you by now
And let her live, that’s the way it was to be

And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord
“I have sinned, for I did not know; the knowledge I did lack
You stood in the way against me
Now therefore, if it displeases You, I will turn back

Then the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam
“Go with the men, but only the word that I speak to you
— — —-hear Me now as I talk
That you shall speak
So Balaam went with the princes of Balak

Now when Balak heard that Balaam was coming
He went out to meet him at Moab’s city
Which is on the border at the Arnon
The boundary of the territory

Then Balak said to Balaam
“Did I not earnestly send to you, calling for you?
Why did you not come to me?
Am I not able to honor you? When I speak, so I will do

And Balaam said to Balak, “Look, I have come to you!
Now, have I any power at all to say anything?
The word that God puts in my mouth
That I must speak; to His word alone I must cling

So Balaam went with Balak
And they came to Kirjath Huzoth on a whim
Then Balak offered oxen and sheep
And he sent some to Balaam and to the princes who were with him

So it was, the next day
That Balak took Balaam and brought him up
———high like atop a steeple
To the high places of Baal
That from there he might observe the extent of the people

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 23:1-12 (BALAAM'S FIRST ORACLE)

In early 2017, a gathering of self-proclaimed witches around the US came together and performed a mass spell intended to stop President Trump from continuing with his agenda, which they found an unhappy one for their lifestyle choices.

As has been seen in the two years since then, their poofy arts, magic incantations, and summoning of the dark spirits proved to be a flop. He is still in office, his agenda is continuing on unabated, and if anything, those forces aligned against him have only lost their voice and their power.

This isn't an indication, nor is it a claim, that President Trump is a sound Christian. He may be; he may not be. Those who are closest to him, and who are of the faith, believe he is. But either way, those who attempted to stop his agenda were ineffective against him because his position – and his filling that position – is established by God, as the Bible proclaims concerning all those in positions of authority.

Because of this, it is childish at best, and certainly foolhardy, to suppose that their purported powers of darkness have any true ability to accomplish what they set out to bring about. However, it served several purposes.

First, it showed the folly of their attempts, demonstrating their actual impotency. Secondly, it got Christians who believe this kind of stuff in a high tizzy until it was proven to be lacking power. Hopefully they learned, but Christian skulls can be rather thick. And thirdly, it gave me material for an introduction to today's sermon, something for which I am always grateful because the introductions often are hard to think up.

Text Verse: *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” Romans 13:1, 2*

Throughout the Bible, the sovereignty of God is seen. From the first page where it is said that God created the heavens and the earth – meaning that He is both their Creator, and the One who then has control over them – to the times where the Bible reveals that the

universe is still, even now, being held together by God in Christ, and even to the seemingly out of control things which happen, but which we find out are in complete control, we see that God is sovereign.

This has been seen, and it will continue to be seen, in the story of Balaam and of Israel – and in numerous ways. One person wants Israel cursed, God overrides that. The curse is intended to bring harm, and instead a word is given to bring blessing.

And even when a curse is pronounced upon God’s people, we find the truth that it cannot override the blessing. President Trump was blessed with the authority of his position. His leadership was ordained by God, and his leadership will continue until the time when God chooses it to end, and in whatever way He determines.

He may die of a Big Mac overdoes on Air Force One, he may be taken out by the deep state, or he may serve out his term and a second term and then go on for whatever time the Lord ordains. Or, he may be taken out at the rapture of the righteous should that day come during his tenure.

We don’t have to worry about these things, and we don’t have to worry about the curses of our enemies falling upon us. They are powerless. Don’t get sidetracked into strange doctrines concerning such things. Keep yourself on an even keel in your walk with the Lord, and know that – because of Christ Jesus – harm cannot come upon you except as has been ordained by Him. As this is so, don’t fret when it comes, but look to it as a part of His unfolding plan for you. Whatever happens, happens within the framework of the love of the Father for you.

Be confident of this, knowing that these truths are to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Word in Balaam’s Mouth (verses 1-8)

¹Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.”

The chapter now begins right where the previous chapter left off. There, the last words said, “So it was, the next day, that Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.”

There, in the high places of Baal, Balaam gives his instructions which include seven altars for sacrifice, and fourteen animals which include seven bulls and seven rams.

The Hebrew word for “bull” is *par*, it is an animal which denotes wild strength, coming from the word *parar* which gives the sense of breaking, casting off, or annulling. This would be as a petition for the Lord to break off his covenant with Israel, and to instead be favorable to the petitions of Balaam on behalf of Balak.

The *ayil*, or ram, comes from the word *ul*. This signifies something fixed and firm, and denotes strength – like a firm pillar or a tree. Thus, this would be a petition to form a strong bond based on the request of Balak. One scholar sees the seven altars as a form of idolatrous worship. In the sanctuary, and at other times in earlier history, there is only one altar. This appears to be correct. Further, the location being the high places of Baal indicates idolatrous worship as well. Man does not ascend to God in order to sacrifice. Rather, God came down to men in Christ, and His sacrifice alone rises to God.

Another commentary says, “The number seven was especially connected with the revelation of the tree God, the Creator of the world, and was probably observed here for this reason” (Pulpit).

This is not necessarily so. It dismisses what is seen later in the book of Job, a book which chronologically precedes the time of Balaam, and which occurs outside of the covenant people, Israel. In Job 42:8, and at the word of the Lord, it says –

“Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your* folly; because you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*.” Job 42:8

The exact same sacrifices were requested by the Lord, seven bulls and seven rams, that are offered by Balaam here. Only the number of altars is left unstated in Job. The number seven, whether in Israel, Persia, Greece, Rome, or other nations, has always had a special significance in connection to the perfection of God. And so what we have here is a typical example of mingling original truth with man’s additions to what God had first ordained.

As was noted in the last verse of the previous chapter, it is likely that Balaam has a view of the camp, looking from one end of it to the other as it is stretched out away from him. It is from this vantage point that he makes his request for the altars and sacrifices.

² And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken,

When Israel sacrificed a bull or a ram, it was according to the specifications of the law, and in anticipation of Christ to come. Everything about their sacrifices looked to the blessing found in the coming Messiah. Here, the bull and the ram are in opposition to that. Instead of blessing in anticipation of Christ, it is petitioning a curse on Christ.

How do we know this? It is because Christ is to come through Israel, the covenant people. For the Lord's curse to take effect, it would signify annulling His covenant with Israel, and a strengthening of a covenant with Balak and Balaam. To curse Israel would then be a curse upon Messiah who comes through Israel.

Despite being on the high places of Baal, Balaam is offering to Israel's God. It would be pointless to petition any other god when it is the Lord who has already said in the previous chapter that the people of Israel are blessed. It is his offering here which is in hopes of annulling that blessing in order to allow the curse.

^{2 (con't)} and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on *each* altar.

Here it says that both men offered a bull and a ram. This is unlike Israel where only priests were to offer sacrifices in this manner. By this time, the law was written, and so the only priests were those of the line of Aaron. No other person, including a king, was to make the sacrifice, although the king or anyone else could make the offerings which were in accord with the law.

Here, there is the typical mingling of that which is correct and that which is false. Only through Israel in accord with the Old Covenant, and only in Christ who is the fulfillment of that Covenant, are the sacrifices to God properly conducted and pleasing to Him.

³ Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you."

With the sacrifice made, Balaam assumes that the Lord, meaning Yehovah – Israel's God – is appeased and will offer him a vision or an oracle. In this, he is seeking the Lord through divination. This is stated explicitly about what he is now doing in Numbers 24:1–

"Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery, but he set his face toward the wilderness."

-Numbers 24:1

The word “sorcery” is *nakhash*. It signifies practicing divination or seeking an omen, and the verb form of the word was strictly forbidden to Israel in Leviticus 19:26. Balaam, being unaware of this, resorts to this form of sorcery. He will proclaim, however, in verse 23 of this chapter, that such things are not done in Israel. Where divination is sought it can be thwarted, but what Israel receives is God’s direct revelation and cannot be.

3 (con’t) So he went to a desolate height.

Here is a new word, *shephi*. It signifies a smooth or bare height or plain. It comes from *shaphah*, a verb meaning to sweep bare. Balaam’s intent is to go to where there is nothing but him and open sky around him. Any omen, then, would be obvious and not likely to be misconstrued. Balaam looked at the Lord as one of many gods, and as such, the scholar Hartung says –

“As the gods did not live outside the world, or separated from it, but the things of time and space were filled with their essence, it followed, as a matter of course, that the signs of their presence were sought and seen in all the visible and audible occurrences of nature, whether animate or inanimate. Hence all the phenomena which affected the senses, either in the elements or in the various creatures, whether sounds or movements, natural productions or events, of a mechanical or physical, or voluntary or involuntary kind, might serve as the media of revelation.” Hartung

In this *shephi*, or bare spot, one could think of the meaning of the word Golgotha, or Calvary, it is the place of the skull. It is a bare place where the Lord’s sign would be obvious and could not be misconstrued. Such an open place would be considered ideal for Balaam to seek his oracle.

4 And God met Balaam, and he said to Him,

There is no article before “God.” But it is not necessary, because the next verse will define the *elohim*, or God, that he met as the Lord Yehovah. How God met with him remains unstated, but it is certain that he did. In this, Balaam speaks his words to the God...

4 (con’t) “I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram.”

It is a note of achievement expecting a reward. “I have done this for You. It is the full amount of sacrifices You could expect. And, all are offered at once on seven altars.” First,

the implication is that they were, in fact, offered to Yehovah and not to Baal. Otherwise, he would be a fool to make a request of the Lord. Secondly, the statement to the Lord implies, “Now, you probably have something for me in return.”

The intent is to secure a curse upon Israel, speak the curse, and be paid for his time, but he also knows that whatever he is told to say, he must say – curse or otherwise. The Lord will take the evil intent of Balak, and the follow-through of that evil intent by Balaam, and turn it around. This follows logically with the Proverb –

“The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination;
How much more *when* he brings it with wicked intent!” Proverbs 21:27

Though the offering was made to the Lord, it was one anticipating evil, and thus it is a sacrifice of the wicked with wicked intent. To overrule this, it next says...

⁵ Then the Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, “Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak.”

If Balaam was hoping for a change in the Lord based on his offerings, he was to be disappointed. Rather, he is given a set, specific, and unalterable word to speak to Balak. Of this verse, Bishop Wordsworth says, “God, who had opened the mouth of the ass in a manner contrary to her nature, now opens Balaam’s mouth in a manner contrary to his own will.”

⁶ So he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab.

Balaam, as instructed, returned to Balak and there it says, *v’hinneh nitsav al olato hu* – “and behold, he *was* standing by his burnt offering.” It is as if the scene is a bit of a surprise, because it then says, *v’kal sare moav* – “and all *the* princes of Moab.”

The seeming surprise is probably, first, because he is still by the burnt offering, as if he is truly expecting that it will be effective in changing the Lord’s mind. And, secondly, because all the leaders of Moab are there, it means that there will be a loss of face for Balak in front of them, and possibly danger to Balaam because of them.

Balaam is now stuck between two options, curse Israel and face the wrath of the Lord whom he had petitioned, or speak the words of the Lord and possibly face the wrath of

the king and his princes. Balaam wisely chooses the former and complies with the Lord's words to him...

⁷ And he took up his oracle and said:

Here the word *mashalo* is introduced. It is a proverb or a parable. It comes from *ma-shal* which was introduced in Numbers 21:27. That signifies "to be like," as in using figurative language. Therefore, the words that are to be spoken are an allegory or a representation of the intent of the Lord as spoken through Balaam.

In other words, it is the word of the Lord in intent, but it is spoken from Balaam's perspective. In such a proverb, there is a progression of speech from that which is individual and concrete to that which is more universal and general. This will be seen time and again.

Adam Clarke notes that, "All these oracular speeches of Balaam are in hemistich metre in the original. They are highly dignified, and may be considered as immediate poetic productions of the Spirit of God."

It is to be noted that Balaam is not so much speaking to Balak or anyone else as he is just speaking forth words which go forth for any to receive. In this, they are as valid to the reader today as they were when spoken in front of Balak. And they carry the same weight today as they did then.

And more, the utterances are not like those of the true prophets of the Lord. They are more like songs or simile-type utterances that may have been inserted among their prophecies. These cannot be considered, then, as direct prophecies of the Lord, even if they contain full prophetic truth. Those utterances now begin with...

⁷ (con't) "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram,

min aram yankheni balak melek moav – "from Aram has led me Balak king of Moab." Aram is fully named in Deuteronomy 23:4 as Aram Naharaim, or "Aram of the two rivers," meaning the Euphrates and the Tigris. In Greek, it is known as Mesopotamia. The word Aram signifies a highland.

He places the reason for his having come on the leading of the king of Moab. Thus, it is considered that he was brought forth in kingly honor to perform a task. What is understood is that without having been led, he would not be there now. The call had been

made, and he had followed based on that call. This is the specific part of the words. He then gives the general part by saying...

⁷ (con't) **From the mountains of the east.**

mehare qedem – “From *the* mountains *of the* east.” He had spoke of the specific place from which he had been led, now he describes where they are. The mountains of his dwelling sit eastward in relation to Moab.

As the words here are allegory, it should be remembered that mountains in the Bible will, at times, represent kingdoms, authority, or rule. The east is aforetime, meaning “the past.” He came from the area where Abraham and his family had been called out from in the past.

Israel is now ready to enter into the land promised to them, first to Abraham, and then to Isaac and Jacob after him. It is as if the kingdoms of the past have been sought to come forward and stop the plan of the future. To do this, he has been called to...

⁷ (con't) **‘Come, curse Jacob for me,**

lekhah arah li yaaqov – “Come, curse for me Jacob.” Despite the son of promise, Jacob is a natural man who is a son of Isaac. Balaam has been called to curse this son of promise. Here, the common word for curse, *arar*, is used. It simply means “to execrate.” In the Old Testament, it is seen sixty-three times from Genesis 3 to Malachi 3.

This is the specific act which is called for, a curse upon Jacob. Next comes the general act towards him...

⁷ (con't) **And come, denounce Israel!’**

u-lekhah zoamah yisrael – “And come rage against Israel.” Israel is the spiritual man, named as such when he was blessed by God after he wrestled with the Man at night by the Jabbok River, as was seen in Genesis 32. Here, Balaam is said to have been called to *zaam*, or denounce Israel.

It is a new and much rarer word. It comes from a root signifying “to foam at the mouth.” It is to be enraged at, or indignant. The call for a curse was a specific action. This is a call for a general outpouring against Israel. However, the Lord has already blessed Israel, and so it would be futile to act in either way...

⁸ “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?”

mah eqov lo qaboh el – “How to defame not has maligned God?” Here two words are used. One is *naqav*. It signifies to pierce, blaspheme, or even appoint by name. The other is the one used by Balak in the previous chapter, *qavav*. It signifies to malign with words. The meaning of what he says, as instructed by the Lord, is that he cannot logically defame one that God has not maligned.

He could, in fact, do so, but it would be pointless, and it would be self-destructive as well. Jacob was blessed by his father, the possessor of the divine blessing. Israel was blessed by God, who is the Source of all divine blessing. To bring a word against this people would be futile.

In this clause, he uses the simple term, *el*, or God. It signifies a mighty one. It is a shortened form of *ayil*, or ram, which had been offered. And, that explains and confirms what has already been said about the ram offering which came along with the bull offering. He had hoped to first annul the covenant between the Lord and Israel, and then firm up his own between their God and himself.

Like all such diviners, he thought that he could arbitrarily hand out blessings and curses at his own whim, or that he had the power to influence the gods through his divination so that they would agree to his doing such. But he is indicating through his words that such is not the case with Yehovah. He is God, and Balaam cannot impugn what God has not impugned.

^{8 (con')} And how shall I denounce *whom* the Lord has not denounced?

u-mah ezom lo zaam Yehovah – “And how to be enraged at has not been enraged at the Lord?” Like the previous question, this question is rhetorical. The Lord has not had indignation towards Israel, and so how could Balaam be indignant with them. It would be counterproductive to work against the will of the Lord.

Such a pronouncement would go unratified by the One he sought the favor of. The favor was not granted, and so any such further action would be pointless. The only assured outcome is that the Lord would then be enraged against him.

*Who can curse whom God has not cursed
And who can speak against the people of God*

*If he has blessed them, that cannot be reversed
To think otherwise... such thinking is flawed*

*And who has been blessed, but the people of God
Those who share in the commonwealth of Israel
He has scattered His favor near and abroad
Saving His people from the clutches of hell*

*Upon those who are His, no curse can alight
They are secure in Him, His upright ones
He watches over them both in day and in night
And His favors extends to all of His sons*

II. The People of the Messiah (verses 9-12)

⁹ For from the top of the rocks I see him,

ki merosh tsurim erenu – “For from top rocks I see him.” As in the previous lines, it is specific in the first clause. Balaam says that he sees the one he is looking at from a specific location, which is the top of the rocks.

What Balaam is relaying here is literally true. He stood and looked upon Israel. But his mind sees him from the top of the rocks as well. In the Bible, the *tsur* or “rock,” speaks figuratively of a mighty one, and at times of God as the Rock.

In a figurative sense, then, Balaam is seeing the vision as he was told to speak it. From the top of the mighty ones, meaning “From the vantage point of God, I see him.” It is a way of saying, “I see this people dwelling safely under the Almighty.” From there, he restates it in a more general term...

^{9 (con't)} And from the hills I behold him;

u-migevaoth ashurenu – “And from hills I observe him.” He was standing atop the rocks visually looking down upon Israel. Now he says that from the hills he is looking them over, as if in observation. Like the mountains, the hills are representative of a seat of power, such as in Isaiah 10:32 where Zion is called “the hill of Jerusalem.”

It is therefore a way of saying that among all the seats of power, Israel is to be observed. It is a truth which has never ceased to be realized, even in their dispersion, much less in

their time of being in the land of their possession. Wherever Israel is, they are observed among the seats of power.

For Balaam, it is from such a lofty position, with such a unique vantage of them that he then speaks of their unique nature...

^{9 (con't)} **There! A people dwelling alone,**

hen am l'badad yishkon – “Behold! People to isolation dwelling.” The words were literally true for the moment. Israel dwelt apart from the surrounding nations, but this is not only what is being referred to. Moab dwelt in their land. China dwells in their land. Mongolians live in their land, but they are not alone and separate in the way that Israel is indicated to be here.

The very fact that Balaam says they dwell alone signifies more than just a physical location. Though the physical location defines the specific nature of their dwelling. From there, he goes to the more general nature of the thought...

^{9 (con't)} **Not reckoning itself among the nations.**

u-bagoyim lo yitkhashav – “And among the nations not are woven.” They are like a thread left out of the whole fabric, and like a number not counted among other numbers when added together. This was true with Israel in their land. They were a distinct people from all the others. It was, and is, true while Israel is among the nations as well. For 3500 years, they have remained distinctly separate from the other nations. Thus, it is not so much the physical separation that Balaam is perceiving, but the moral and national character of them as God’s possession and covenant people. Of this verse, the scholar Hengstenberg (1802-1869) amazingly said, at a time when it was still not to be imagined –

“How truly Balaam said that Israel ‘did not reckon itself with the heathen’ appears from the fact that while all the powerful empires of the ancient world—the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and others—have utterly perished, Israel (which even under the Old Covenant was rescued from so many dangers that threatened its entire destruction, particularly in being brought back from exile) flourishes anew in the Church of the New Covenant, and continues also to exist in that part of it which, though at present rejected, is destined to restoration at a future period.” Hengstenberg

¹⁰ **“Who can count the dust of Jacob,**

mi manah apher yaaqov – “Who has counted the dust of Jacob?” It is a metaphor which speaks of the number of people who comprise Jacob. The word *aphar*, or dust, is in the singular construct. It comprises the whole.

In Genesis 2:7, it says that man was taken from the *aphar*, or dust, of the ground. He is comprised of a mass of dust which is considered one mass. When he sinned, the Lord said that he was dust and would return to the dust.

In Genesis 13, Abraham was told that his descendants would be as the dust of the earth. That is now what is spoken of here. The dust of Jacob is the literal descendants of Jacob. It is one people. That is the specific. Balaam next goes to the general...

¹⁰ (con't) **Or number one-fourth of Israel?**

U-mispar eth rova yisrael – “And number fourth-part of Israel.” What Balaam literally saw was the sanctuary surrounded by four separate encampments, as laid out by the Lord – to the east, south, west, and north. But what the Lord is referring to through Balaam is the innumerable size of Israel which includes those Gentiles who are brought into Israel’s commonwealth through the work of Christ.

The dust of Jacob spoke of the specific, literal descendants of Jacob. Israel, in this case, is a general description of all those in Messiah. The number four in Scripture denotes creation. To attempt to count one-fourth of believers in creation would be pointless. As there is no literal east or west, one would count in one direction, and never cease to count. That is the idea which is referred to here.

¹⁰ (con't) **Let me die the death of the righteous,**

tamot naphshi mowt yesharim – “Let die my soul death the righteous ones.” The word “righteous” is plural. It is speaking of those who are reckoned as righteous before God. Israel here is reckoned as the righteous ones because of their calling.

But not all of Israel was, or is, righteous. For example, Korah could not be counted as such. Therefore it is those of Israel who are deemed righteous because of imputation by their God who are being referred to. David spoke explicitly of the non-imputation of sin in the Old Testament, and Paul cites David’s words in the New. To not have sin imputed implies that righteousness has, instead, been imputed.

In other words, this is a general statement concerning Israel. In Deuteronomy, Israel will be called Jeshurun, or “Upright One,” three times. Isaiah will use the term once as well. It is speaking of the collective whole regardless of the individual.

And Israel’s imputation of righteousness was no different than ours. It was, and it is, by faith in Messiah alone. Israel the people looked forward to Him until His coming, the Commonwealth of Israel looks back on His coming since then. For those in Messiah, there is an understood very good end...

10 (con’t) And let my end be like his!”

u-tehi akhariti kamohu – “and let be my end according to his.” The previous clause spoke of the specific, “let me die.” This clause speaks of the general, “my end.” The word is *akhar*, and it signifies, “the latter (or after) part.”

The death of the righteous signifies one who lived righteously. The end of the righteous signifies the life lived by the righteous. The life of the righteous is one which is lived in Messiah, not apart from Messiah. One can only die in Messiah if they lived in Messiah. The words of the Lord given to Balaam to speak are those of anticipation of Messiah, and the people of Messiah.

11 Then Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me?”

Balak takes the oracle of Balaam as a personal attack against him. By not cursing Israel, a negative has now fallen upon him.

11 (con’t) I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!”

Balak uses the same word he used twice in the previous chapter and which Balaam used in verse 8 here, *qavav*. He had asked for Balaam to malign Israel, and instead, as he says, *v’hinneh berakhta barekh*, “And behold, you have in blessing blessed.” In response, Balaam answers...

12 (fin) So he answered and said, “Must I not take heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?”

Balaam finishes this first round of offerings with words reflecting the state of the matter. He had hoped to come and change the course of events through the offerings, but they

had no effect upon the Lord. He was forced to speak out what the Lord instructed him to speak. As it says, “what the Lord has put in my mouth.”

The words of the passage today show that God is in complete control of things going on around us. It further shows that God has a plan, that plan is set and it cannot be thwarted, and that the focal point of the plan is the Messiah.

Without doubt, the words of the Bible reveal that Jesus is that Messiah. Understanding this, the upright ones who are spoken of in this passage today cannot be speaking of Israel of the flesh. They were twice exiled, and they are still not right with Christ Jesus. And yet, the utterances of God given to Balaam speak of Israel as a people, not just at that time, but at any given time. Therefore, it must now speak of those of Israel who are in Christ and of those Gentiles who are brought into the commonwealth of Israel with them. Not that the Gentiles are Israel, but that they share in the blessings of Israel.

Together, one whole is formed for the time in which we live. At some point, the people of Israel, those still apart from Him, will come to see the state of their existence, and, as Paul says, “all Israel will be saved.” That is future to us now, but until then, God has them safely cared for.

The ordeals they will face, and the trials they will suffer through, will be allowed in order to refine them, but no curse against them will stand, except the curse of their own self-inflicted wounds.

Such is true with those who are in Christ as well. The curses of the enemies of God’s people are ineffective. We are not to be concerned that there is a power which can overcome us. Instead, because of Christ, we are the blessed of the Lord, and because of that, no curse can stand. Be comforted in this, and be thankful to God for your position in Him because of what He did for you in Christ.

Closing Verse: *“Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow,
So a curse without cause shall not alight.” Proverbs 26:2*

Next Week: Numbers 23:13-30 *In the list it is number 2, categorical (Balaam’s Second Oracle) (46th Numbers Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is

there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Balaam's First Oracle

Then Balaam said to Balak
"Build seven altars for me here
And prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams
Are my instructions clear?

And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, in this he did not falter
And Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering
And I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me
———-to set my words aright
And whatever He shows me I will tell you
So he went to a desolate height

And God met Balaam, and he said to Him
"I have prepared the seven altars, as I knew to do
And I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram
To now receive a word from You

Then the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said
"Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak; so you shall do
So he returned to him, and there he was
Standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab too

And he took up his oracle and said:
The words he spoke as he was led

"Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram,
From the mountains of the east.
'Come, curse Jacob for me,
And come, denounce Israel!'
"How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?
And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced?
For from the top of the rocks I see him,

And from the hills I behold him;
There! A people dwelling alone,
Not reckoning itself among the nations.
“Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number one-fourth of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!”

Then Balak said to Balaam
“What have you done to me?
I took you to curse my enemies, and look
You have blessed them bountifully!”

So he answered and said
“Must I not take heed to speak
What the Lord has put in my mouth?”
His words I cannot change; not even a little tweak

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 23:13-30 (BALAAM'S SECOND ORACLE)

What we can see from Balak in today's passage is his continued thought that the Lord, meaning Yehovah, is one of many gods. Balaam cannot be said to disagree with this, because he continues to do what he is told by the Lord, but he also continues to make appeals which are based on what is contrary to what the Lord has said.

By understanding the nature of God, meaning the One and Only God, these things would cease and desist, but the people of the world are not used to thinking clearly, this goes for both Balak and Balaam.

It must be so, because if they knew the nature of God, they would have already stopped their appeals, but they don't. And even after the second oracle, where God continues to reveal His nature, we see that Balak insists on a third attempt. This shows, without a doubt, that they believe Yehovah to be one of many gods.

This will become more apparent when we get to Balak's words after this second failure. Critical thinking was not on the curriculum at these guys' schools. And the first principles were certainly not explained either. Or, if they were, these guys didn't pay attention.

Text Verse: *“For I am the Lord, I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.
7 Yet from the days of your fathers
You have gone away from My ordinances
And have not kept them.
Return to Me, and I will return to you,
Says the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 3:6, 7*

God is said to be pure Actuality, meaning He has no potential for change. As He created time, space, and matter, then He is before those things. Change occurs in time. If a supposed god changes, in any way at all, then it ain't the God of the Bible.

From the first principles, we learn of the positive principle of modality. This principle says that as nothing cannot cause something, and one contingent being can't be caused by another contingent being, then anything that comes to be must have been caused by a Necessary Being, meaning God.

The negative of this principle shows that a Necessary Being is a being that cannot *not* be and therefore cannot be caused. If we know that nothing cannot exist – because we exist – then we can deduce that a Necessary Being must exist. This is God.

Understanding this, we can also logically understand that only one Necessary Being can exist. If there were two “gods,” then one would have to be somehow different than the other, and yet, by the very definition of God, that cannot be.

The reason for all of this, isn’t to convince anyone that the Lord is God, but that there is a God, just one. As there is one God, why would there be a need for lesser gods? Unfortunately, there are some in Christian circles that have gotten off onto that tangent. They claim to have interesting insights into what the term *elohim*, or “God,” means.

By misusing Scripture, you can come up with all kinds of faulty conclusions about that. Standard orthodox thought is that there is one God who has revealed Himself in three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is no need to go beyond that, and to do so inevitably leads down faulty trails.

Balak and Balaam continue to head down faulty trails, and in the end they will both suffer because of it. For now, let’s get into the passage. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The field of Zophim (verses 13-24)

¹³ Then Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place from which you may see them;

Balak’s first attempt to have Israel cursed had failed, but he is intent on it coming to pass. And so, he suggests another location by which he could view Israel and bring about the desired curse. The reason for this isn’t stated, but it could be one of several possibilities.

It could be the location itself and how it was perceived by Balak in relation to the type of curse against Israel that could be uttered from the location. That will be explained at later point. It could be that he felt the location wasn’t deemed suitable by the Lord, and so attempting a curse at another location may be more suitable to Him.

It could even be that he thought that the layout of the camp in relation to the four directions in which they were situated made Balaam's curse ineffective. For whatever reason, he determines to give it another shot. In this, he would take them to a place where...

13 (con't) you shall see only the outer part of them, and shall not see them all;

The Hebrew of this clause is so obscure that what is being said is highly debated and argued over. The words, "outer part," are *ephes qasehu* – "a ceasing extremity." Some scholars say that he previously could only see a portion of Israel, and now he will be brought to see the entire assembly.

In order to come to this conclusion, they make the clause parenthetical and past tense. They would then translate it as if to say, "for you have seen but the outer extremity of them, but you have not seen them all."

Others take exactly the opposite view. Balaam had already seen them all, and now he will only be presented with a view of a partial portion of them. In this, Balak might have thought that Balaam was so overwhelmed with the massive body of people that he saw, that he could not dare to attempt to curse them.

Now, by taking him to see only a part of them, he could curse that part. From there the curse would creep across the rest of the camp. This second view seems more probable. He had said in the previous oracle, "Who can count the dust of Jacob." It indicates to Balak that what Balaam saw was beyond his ability to curse.

What Balak fails to understand is that the words were given, not by Balaam, but by the Lord. Balaam simply spoke what he was instructed to speak. Whatever words were spoken forth will not be retracted or overridden because the Lord does not change. Balak doesn't know this and so from the new spot he bids Balaam to...

13 (con't) curse them for me from there."

As I said, it seems more likely that Balaam is now going to be presented with a view of a part of the camp. In this, he could curse a portion, go elsewhere and curse a portion, and so on. And so, he could whittle away at the whole until they were all one big cursed nation. Such seems to be the sense of Balak's plan now.

14 So he brought him to the field of Zophim,

Here, Balaam is brought to *sadeh tsophim*, or the “field of the watchers.” This is the only time it is mentioned in the Bible. The word *tsophim* comes from *tsaphah*, to look out or about, to spy, or to wait upon. That is from a primitive root meaning to lean forward, and thus to peer into the distance.

The word *sadeh*, or field, comes from the same as Shaddai, or the “Almighty.” Those, in turn, come from *shadad* meaning to deal violently with, despoil, or ruin. Probably, the idea is that an open field is something that has been made barren, and thus it was as if the power of the Almighty has made it that way.

This “field of the watchers” is said to be an elevated field because Balak brought him...

¹⁴ (con’t) **to the top of Pisgah,**

Pisgah was seen in Numbers 21:20. It will continue to be seen a total of eight times through both Deuteronomy and Joshua. It is always preceded by a definite article, “THE Pisgah.” It comes from *pasag*, meaning to pass through, and thus it is a cleft. It is at this spot that Balak and Balaam stop...

¹⁴ (con’t) **and built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on *each* altar.**

It is the same offering recorded in verse 4 which was made at the high places of Baal. The “bull” or *par*, denotes wild strength. This would be as a petition for the Lord to break off his covenant with Israel, and to instead be favorable to the petitions of Balaam on behalf of Balak.

The *ayil*, or ram, signifies something fixed and firm, and denotes strength – like a firm pillar or a tree. Thus, this would be a petition to form a strong bond based on the request of Balak. If Balak can get the Lord to reject Israel, he would then be in a favorable position to make his own bond with Him.

¹⁵ **And he said to Balak, “Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet *the Lord* over there.”**

Balak is the one supplying the offering, and his staying by the offering is to acknowledge that. However, Balaam is the diviner, and he is the one to meet with the one he summons. In this case, the Hebrew is much simpler, saying, “and I will meet thus.”

The words, “the Lord” are inserted by the translators. He is implied, however, as Balaam has already said as much in verse 3 –

“Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you.”

The divination is successful, and the Bible tells us that the Lord, does come to him...

16 Then the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, “Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak.”

The words are very similar to verse 5. It is the Lord who meets Balaam, and it is the Lord who tells him what he is to say. As before, he is given a set, specific, and unalterable word to speak to Balak.” What Balak had hoped for, and what Balaam certainly desired, is again rejected.

17 So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him.

Again, the words are close to those of verse 6. However, this time Balak is antsy and in high expectation and preempts Balaam...

17 (con’t) And Balak said to him, “What has the Lord spoken?”

Before Balaam could speak, as he did in verse 7, Balak excitedly anticipates that an oracle has been given, and he questions what the word was. One can see the anxiety which has built up in him since the previous encounter.

18 Then he took up his oracle and said:

It is the Lord’s words, but they are spoken by Balaam. Therefore, it is his oracle to speak. However, being the Lord’s word, he dare not speak anything but what was put into his mouth. And so he proceeds...

18 (con’t) “Rise up, Balak, and hear!

qum balak u-shama – “Rise Balak, and hear.” “Rise!” It is calling on Balak to arise in respect and focused attention. As the previous verse said he was already standing by the offering, it is a call to bring himself to complete attention. The Lord is to speak, and Balak is to pay heed to what is uttered, listening to and assimilating what is said.

The sentiment is similar to what occurs in Judges 3. Ehud of Israel told Eglon, the King of Moab “I have a message from God for you.” The response was, “So he arose from *his* seat.” This is the same sentiment that the Lord is now requiring of Balak through Balaam.

18 (con't) Listen to me, son of Zippor!

haazinah adai benow tsippor – “Listen to me, son of Zippor.” The word, “listen,” is *azan*. It comes from the word *ozen*, meaning “ear.” The idea is to broaden out the ear, and thus to listen. One might say, “Give ear unto me!” It is a further call for completely focused attention.

In this clause, he identifies him by the name of his father, Zippor, or “bird.” It is a way of further identifying him, as we might do by saying, “Pay attention, Charlie. Be sure to listen to what I say, Mr. Garrett.” The words of the Lord through Balaam are in couplets to highlight what is said by restating it in a different way. This continues with...

19 “God is not a man, that He should lie,

lo ish el vikazev – “no man *is* God that He should lie.” Here, the word *ish*, or an individual male person, is used. In this, he provides the first words to Balak which indicate that he isn't like men who are prone to falsity for the sake of gain, deception, or manipulation. Rather, God lacks nothing, He is consistent, and His word is fixed and final.

A new word, *kazav*, or lie, is seen here. It will be seen 18 times, and it comes from a root indicating to lie, meaning to deceive. In Isaiah 58, it is used figuratively to indicate a spring of water which does not fail. In other words, the spring won't deceive by running dry. God is ever the same and consistent.

19 (con't) Nor a son of man, that He should repent.

u-ben adam v'yitnekham – “nor son of Adam, and repents.” Here the word *adam*, or humanity is used. God isn't a son of humanity, meaning a son of Adam. Interestingly, though Christ was born into humanity, he did not inherit Adam's nature because He was born of a woman, but not by a man. Thus, this verse cannot be used as a denial of the divinity of Jesus who is eternal and unchanging in His divine nature, received from God in the incarnation.

The word *nakham*, or repent, is used, saying that He does not do this, and yet, in Genesis 6, and elsewhere, the same word is used to say that the Lord had repented, or changed His mind. This has caused many to attack the Bible as unreliable. But that is because of our inability to understand the context and the intent of what is said.

God's "repenting," "changing His mind," or "being sorry" doesn't presume any actual change in Him or in His intent. The Bible uses human terms and applies them to God so that we can understand His nature towards a matter, such as sin. There is not a changing feeling. Instead, His very nature is being expressed in a way we can comprehend. However, as this verse shows, there is actually no change in Him at all.

The words of this couplet are telling Balak that his sacrifices, even if repeated an infinite number of times, are worthless. They have made no impression upon Him, nor will they ever. He cannot be induced to curse those whom He has determined to bless.

The words here are similar to what Samuel said to Saul when he told him that the kingdom would be taken from him and given to another. To ensure Saul understood that this was a fixed, firm, and final decision, he said, "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He *is* not a man, that He should relent."

19 (con't) Has He said, and will He not do?

hahu amar v'lo yaaseh – "has he said and no will He do?" A new couplet begins with a rhetorical question. Is there a word the Lord has spoken that will not be accomplished by Him? The question begs the answer, "No." When He said that Israel will be blessed, and that He would bless Israel, the decision was final. The sentiment is seen in the words of Isaiah 14 –

"The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying,
'Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass,
And as I have purposed, so it shall stand'" Isaiah 14:24

The words of the couplet are then strengthened by the next clause, another rhetorical question...

19 (con't) Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

v'dibber v'lo yeqimenah – “And has He spoken and not will He confirm it?” The previous clause used the word “said.” Here it says, “spoke.” The difference in the words is minimal, but it is an intensification of what is being relayed. The Lord says and He does; the Lord speaks, and He confirms what is spoken. It is the same sentiment that is seen repeated in Psalm 89 –

“My covenant I will not break,
Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.” Psalm 89:34

In the words, the unchanging nature of God is seen. It is a nature which James describes in a unique way in James 1:17 –

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

In James' words, he uses the term *parallagé*. It describes a transmutation of phase or orbit. One can think of a parallax. When one looks at an object from any second angle, no matter how minuscule the change, there will be a slight difference in it. However, if one were able to look at God, from any vantage point, there will be absolutely no change at all.

In God saying or speaking, what is said or spoken must come to pass because it is a reflection of His unchanging nature. Balak expects the word of the Lord to change, and he expects the result of that word to then reflect the change.

However, this is because he perceives Yehovah as one of many gods. As there are many gods to him, then there must be change in each of them because they are finite. But Yehovah does not fit into that mold and it is beyond Balak's understanding that it is so. With this in mind, Balaam now speaks out concerning the matter...

²⁰ **Behold, I have received *a command* to bless;**

hinneh barekh laqakhti – “Behold! To bless I have received.” Balaam confirms that he has been called to bless Israel. The Lord has moved in his spirit that it was so. Balak called him to curse Israel, but rather than this negative action being possible, the opposite is now revealed.

Not only will he not curse, but he is actively impelled to bless. The Hebrew does not say that he is commanded to bless. Instead, it is something that has been instilled in him that it must *be* because of what *is*, and that is...

²⁰ (con't) **He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.**

u-berekh v'lo ashivenah – “and He has blessed, and no I reverse.” Balaam notes that the Lord has, in fact, blessed. Because this is so, and because it is the Lord who is being referred to, then the matter is accomplished and cannot be reversed, undone, redirected, or altered. As the scholar Keil notes –

“The unchangeableness of the divine purposes is a necessary consequence of the unchangeableness of the divine nature.” Keil

God is unchanging, and therefore what proceeds from God as to what He has determined must come about. From the moment the matter was initiated, the end of the matter was confirmed. This is beautifully expressed in Isaiah 46 –

“Remember the former things of old,
For I *am* God, and *there is* no other;
I *am* God, and *there is* none like Me,
¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times *things* that are not *yet* done,
Saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure,’” Isaiah 46:9, 10

²¹ **“He has not observed iniquity in Jacob,**

lo hibit aven b'yaaqov – “no observed iniquity in Jacob.” The subject of this and the next clause are indefinite. Translators have chosen the word “He,” referring to the Lord, but that is left unstated in the Hebrew. A statement of fact is being made without regard to the observer.

In this couplet, a new word is introduced, *aven*. It comes from an unused root which means to pant, and thus to exert oneself, usually in vain. In this, it is translated in various ways, but iniquity will suffice.

As with the entire discourse, it has to be remembered that the anticipation for this group of people is that through them will come the Messiah. The words must be taken in

that light. What is stated in this clause and the next would be laughable if it were not so. Israel has risen to levels of perversity and wickedness which find almost no parallel at any time or in any place in recorded history.

In the Bible, this word, *aven*, is used many times when referring to Israel, but in the annual atonement of their sin, and in the Lord's purposes of leading to Messiah, the iniquity is purified from them in order to bring them to the point when He would come. In His coming, the people who were considered as the Lord's people would be granted His righteousness, and would not have their sins imputed to them. This then applies to those who anticipated His coming, and those who accepted Him when He came. As Paul says, "For they are not all Israel who *are* of Israel" (Romans 9:6). The same thought continues with...

21 (con't) Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel.

v'lo raah amal b'yisrael – "and no seen mischief in Israel." The word *amal* has only been seen once so far. It comes from a word meaning "toil." In this, the toil of wrongdoing is not seen in the people Israel. And yet, the Lord – who sees the end from the beginning – uses the same word, *amal*, in Isaiah 59:4 to describe the conduct of the people –

"No one calls for justice,
Nor does *any* plead for truth.
They trust in empty words and speak lies;
They conceive **evil** and bring forth iniquity." Isaiah 59:4

In the previous clause the people were called Jacob; here they are called Israel. The words are used in parallel, and the concept remains the same. Though wickedness was, in fact, seen in Israel, it is the anticipation of Messiah, and what He would accomplish for Israel, which is being referred to here.

The greater plan covers the lesser details. The entire point of the words, then, is that because these things are not found in the people, there is nothing that allows for a curse to stand upon them from him. Balak's attempts are futile. Rather...

21 (con't) The Lord his God *is* with him,

Yehovah elohav immo – "Yehovah his God *is* with him." The Lord is with them. Who can curse them? He is the Source of all goodness and blessing, and He resides among Israel. Therefore, a curse upon Israel is ineffectual. It can be spoken, but it bears no weight.

From time to time I am emailed about this. “Someone cursed me. How do I remove the curse?” The answer is, “If you are in Christ, the curse had no effect in the first place.” This is the thought expressed here.

21 (con’t) And the shout of a King is among them.

u-teruat melekh bow – “and shout of a King *is* in him.” This is coupled to the previous clause. As God is within Jacob, so is the shout of a King in Israel. It is He who guides them and He who protects them. And it is not from without, but from within. They are His people, and He dwells in them. This is realized in its fullest sense in Christ as is recorded in 2 Corinthians 6 –

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

‘I will dwell in them

And walk among *them*.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people.’” 2 Corinthians 6:16

Though speaking of the church, the church is comprised of those truly of Israel and of those Gentiles who have been grafted into the commonwealth of Israel.

22 God brings them out of Egypt;

el motsiam mi-mitsrayim – “God is bringing them out of Egypt.” The verb denotes continuous action. He brought them out and He continues to direct them. The trek is not yet complete. Further, it wasn’t of their own doing, but it was because of God’s presence and direction.

Again, God literally brought Israel out of Egypt, but He brought the people of the world out of what Egypt pictured, bondage to sin. There is both the literal and the spiritual application to be seen.

22 (con’t) He has strength like a wild ox.

ketoaphot reem lo – “As strength of a wild ox He has.” This is a very difficult set of words. Two rare words are introduced here, *toaphah*, and *reem*. *Toaphah* signifies eminence and so one would think of horns, and thus strength.

The second word, *reem*, signifies something like a wild bull. It is used again in Deuteronomy 33:17 where it is described as having two horns. Thus if you have a KJV, you can line out “unicorn” and put in wild ox. Unicorn?

The words here are speaking of either God or Israel. As the clause is parallel to what was said in the previous clause, and as both are referred to, it is hard to be dogmatic, especially when it is referring to a bull and not a dog, but it is probably Israel.

This seems more likely, because in Deuteronomy 33, the same bull will be used to describe the tribe of Joseph. The idea being conveyed is that of a people mighty and invincible because of their God. And again, the next words also refer to the people...

²³ **“For *there is no sorcery against Jacob,***

ki lo nakhash b’yaaqov – “For no sorcery in Jacob.” Here is a word used just twice, now and in chapter 24, *nakhash*. It is a verb, coming from the noun meaning sorcery. The idea is that because God is with them, there is no need for them to resort to sorcery.

Most translations say, “There is no sorcery *against Jacob,*” as if He has blessed them, and is leading them, and so no type of sorcery can have any effect – of any degree – against them. That is possible, but it is more probable that it is speaking of the fact that Jacob has no need for sorcery...

²³ (con’t) **Nor any divination against Israel.**

v’lo qesem b’yisrael – “And no divination in Israel.” The people do not need to resort to divination because God provides them with prophecy directly through His chosen seers and prophets. This is seen, for example, in 1 Samuel 9 –

“And the servant answered Saul again and said, “Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give *that* to the man of God, to tell us our way.” ⁹ (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: ‘Come, let us go to the seer’; for *he who is now called* a prophet was formerly called a seer.)” 1 Samuel 9:8, 9

²³ (con’t) **It now must be said of Jacob**

ka-eth yeamer l’yaaqov – “According to the time it shall be said to Jacob.” In other words, when the time is right, God will speak to His people concerning whatever matter

needs to be said. When it was time for the Lord to speak through Isaiah, he did so. When it was time to prophesy of the coming Messiah through David, so He relayed that to the people.

23 (con't) And of Israel, 'Oh, what God has done!'

u-l'yisrael mah paal el – “And to Israel what has done God.” Again, the words are coupled to the previous clause. It spoke of Jacob; it speaks of Israel. There is no need for the people to resort to hocus pocus because they have God’s immediate revelation to relay to them what He will do, when He will do it, and how it will be done. This is confirmed by Amos –

“Surely the Lord God does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7

24 Look, a people rises like a lioness,

hen am kelavi yaqum – “look people like a lioness rises.” The words in verse 24 look back to the blessing of Jacob upon Judah in Genesis 49:9. That is now transferred to the nation as a whole. The same words are seen here as there. It is another early indication that Judah will be the lead tribe of the people, and that the blessing upon Judah – meaning that of Messiah – will come about as prophesied.

Here, he notes that the people of Israel rise like a lion. It is a masculine word, but to show a distinction between here and the next words, some translations say “lioness.” The idea is that of being unconquerable because of their fierceness. God is with them, and there is nothing to do but run from their attack. When the lion rises, it is to do battle. So it will be with Israel.

24 (con't) And lifts itself up like a lion;

v'kaari yitnasa – “like a lion lifts itself up.” The word for lion here is *ari*. It comes from *arah*, meaning to pluck. Thus, one gets the idea of a lion tearing off limbs. When it lifts itself up, the battle will come, and there will be a tearing of their foes as it next says...

24 (con't) It shall not lie down until it devours the prey,

lo yishkav ad yokal teeph – “Not it shall lie down until it devours prey.” When Israel battles, they will do so until the enemy is destroyed. This is seen in Deuteronomy 20 –

“When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. ¹¹ And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people *who are* found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. ¹² Now if *the city* will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it. ¹³ And when the Lord your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword.” Deuteronomy 20:10-13

²⁴ (con’t) **And drinks the blood of the slain.”**

v’dam ha’lalim yishteh – “and blood the slain drinks.” The idea here is of complete destruction of the foe and the gathering of every bit of the plunder, symbolized by the lions’ drinking of the blood. Again, this is seen in Deuteronomy 20 –

“But the women, the little ones, the livestock, and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies’ plunder which the Lord your God gives you.” Deuteronomy 20:14

*It didn’t work once, so we tried again
It didn’t work twice, and that’s too bad
Gather up your things, we’re heading out men
We’re going to another spot, over that way a tad*

*How can we get a curse against Israel to work?
What is it that we can do to make it come about?
Once again our tactics, we will have to rework
But we will get it right eventually, no doubt*

*Balak and Balaam, you are wasting your time
Think it through logically and give up on this pursuit
You shall not prevail in this, now or at anytime
Your continued attempts just don’t compute*

II. To the Top of Peor (verses 25-30)

²⁵ **Then Balak said to Balaam, “Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!”**

Balak is so upset at what he has heard that he excitedly shouts out his exasperation. The idea here is that it would be better to not curse them, than to do what he has done by blessing them. In essence, “Just shut up rather than bless them.” But he brought it on himself, as he is now reminded...

²⁶ So Balaam answered and said to Balak, “Did I not tell you, saying, ‘All that the Lord speaks, that I must do’?”

In fact, that is exactly what he said toward the end of Chapter 22 –

“And Balaam said to Balak, ‘Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.’”

-Numbers 22:38

Yes, Balak remembers that is what was said, and it immediately brings to his mind another option...

²⁷ Then Balak said to Balaam, “Please come, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there.”

Here, a completely new idea comes to his mind which he feels must be the answer. In this, he uses the term *ha’elohim*, or “the God.” It appears that Balak is intending on making an appeal to “the God” of all gods.

So far, Balaam has made his appeal and divination by the Lord, meaning Yehovah. Balak looks at Him as a limited God, such as Chemosh, Molech, or whatever other “god,” is named. But he is hoping that *ha’elohim*, the God, will override Yehovah. His theology is obviously severely deficient.

²⁸ So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that overlooks the wasteland.

Balak takes Balaam to a new location *rosh ha’peor*, or “head of the *peor*.” The word “top” is *rosh*. It signifies the top, first, highest, etc., but it also signifies head as in a person’s head, both literal and figurative. *Peor* comes from the verb *paar*, meaning “to open wide.” Thus, it means, “The Opening.” Abarim says of this word –

“It’s used to apply to the mouth but suggests to allude to other bodily cavities. This verb yields no nouns, which suggests that it describes doings out of a kind of hunger or desire

rather than merely the mechanics of opening. In that sense it means to desire, to yearn and obviously also to lust.”

Their analysis of the word is clearly realized in the use of the name each time it is seen in Scripture. We are being asked to think on the meaning in relation to where they have been and where they now are. Balak is not following a willynilly pattern of attempting to curse Israel. Instead, he is doing his best to methodically determine what will work. With that in mind, the passage continues with...

²⁹ Then Balaam said to Balak, “Build for me here seven altars, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams.”

It is word for word and letter for letter exactly the same as was recorded in verse 1 of the chapter. The stupidity of Balaam is again revealed in this verse. He is still looking at Yehovah, the God of Israel, as just another God.

He has taken Balak’s advice which included the thought of “the God,” which indicates that he feels this way. Maybe he can get “the God” to override Israel’s God. Unfortunately for both of them, they failed to understand that they are one and the same. Because of this...

^{30 (fin)} And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on every altar.

The only difference here from verse 2 is that it only notes that Balak, not Balaam also, made the offerings as he alone did at Pisgah in verse 14 as well. With this, the chapter closes out, and we must wait a bit longer to finish the long, involved, and highly complex passage which speaks of Balaam and Balak in their attempt to curse Israel and exalt Moab.

We are continuing through one passage of many parts, and it isn’t really easy keep in our heads everything that is happening, but the main idea that we need to remind ourselves is that the passage concerning Balaam is telling us of God’s faithfulness to His covenant with Israel, and what that means in relation to the church which Christ began when He introduced the New Covenant.

God is absolutely faithful to Israel, despite their unfaithfulness. That was seen in several ways today. Because of His faithfulness to them, and to the covenant He made with them, we can be completely confident of His faithfulness to each of us within the church.

He has established the covenant, set the parameters, and given His assurances. He asks us to do one simple thing to be a part of that – demonstrate faith. The Bible is given to tell us the story, we are to accept what it says, believe what it reveals, and be restored to God through that faith.

He has done the work. We just need to believe. Thank goodness for the vast body of Old Testament writings which give us the assurance that what we read in the New is reliable. Have faith. The book is written and God’s word is complete. Trust in Christ, rest in Christ, and hold fast to your faith in Christ.

Closing Verse: *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” 1 Corinthians 3:16*

Next Week: Numbers 24:1-11 *His words are not just metaphorical* (Balaam’s Third Oracle) (47th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Balaam’s Second Oracle

Then Balak said to him, “Please come with me to another place
From which you may see them; I will show you where
You shall see only the outer part of them
And shall not see them all; curse them for me from there

So he brought him to the field of Zophim
To the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars; so he did do
And offered a bull and a ram on each altar
In order to try to curse Israel anew

And he said to Balak, concerning this affair
“Stand here by your burnt offering
———while I meet the Lord over there

Then the Lord met Balaam
And put a word in his mouth, and said

“Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak
The words you are given, just as you are led

So he came to him, and there he was
Standing by his burnt offering, waiting for the token
And the princes of Moab were with him
And Balak said to him, “What has the Lord spoken?”

Then he took up his oracle and said:
The words he spoke as he was led

“Rise up, Balak, and hear!
Listen to me, son of Zippor!
“God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
Behold, I have received a command to bless;
He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.
“He has not observed iniquity in Jacob,
Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel.
The Lord his God is with him,
And the shout of a King is among them.
God brings them out of Egypt;
He has strength like a wild ox.
“For there is no sorcery against Jacob,
Nor any divination against Israel.
It now must be said of Jacob
And of Israel, ‘Oh, what God has done!’
Look, a people rises like a lioness,
And lifts itself up like a lion;
It shall not lie down until it devours the prey,
And drinks the blood of the slain.”

Then Balak said to Balaam, with his Moabite bawl
“Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all!”

So Balaam answered and said to Balak
“Did I not tell you, saying

All that the Lord speaks, that I must do’?”
Wasn’t I to you these words relaying?

Then Balak said to Balaam
“Please come, I will take you to another place
Perhaps it will please God that you may curse them
———-for me from there
Perhaps He will extend to me this grace

So Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor
That overlooks the wasteland, that land barren and sore

Then Balaam said to Balak
“Build for me here seven altars, as you know to do
And prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams
As I am instructing you

And Balak did as Balaam had said
And offered a bull and a ram on every altar
———-according to the instructions as he was led

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 24:1-11 (BALAAM'S THIRD ORACLE)

The words of today's verses include lots of happy images of Israel's future exaltation. They are spoken by Balaam about Israel. Of this, there is no doubt, but if that was all the imagery there was to be seen in them, it wouldn't be a very happy passage. Yes, Israel has had times of great prosperity, wealth, and blessing, but they have also had lots of the opposite as well. If the past times for Israel are all that are being spoken of, then the passage is unhappy at best.

And if the passage only speaks of things yet future to us now, then it really isn't happy for the rest of the world. They will devour their enemies and sit fat, dumb, and happy in their permanently exalted state! That doesn't really seem like a swell picture for anyone else but Israel.

But, if you follow the messianic cults in Israel, this is what they are hoping for, and this is their expectation. They kind of overlook the obvious similarities between Leviticus 26 where God promises to punish them for disobeying Him, and how things have come out for them over the past two thousand years in exactly the same way that He said they would in that passage.

It is as if that was some type of accidental occurrence, not worth looking into as to why those things came about. Only when passages like the one today are taken in light of the greater promises to Israel which point not merely to their exaltation as a nation, but to the exaltation of God in Christ, do the words really have any meaning.

But until they stop looking at the world as being subservient to them, and start looking at it as being subservient to Christ the Lord, they will never be in the idyllic circumstances which Balaam's third oracle proclaims. Only then will such passages make sense.

Text Verse: *"Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all."* Romans 11:28-32

God has wonderful promises in store for Israel, but they first and foremost are for Israel under Him, not simply Israel over the nations. It is Christ who is Lord of all and over all. In their rejection of Christ, they brought upon themselves terrible times, but God promises them mercy in due time.

And with mercy, they will receive pardon, purification, and exaltation. But their exaltation will be in accord with the Lord's glory, not despite it. When we bless Israel, we are – hopefully – doing it with the purpose of their being blessed as the people of God in a faithful, covenant relationship with Him.

Until they enter the New Covenant, this is not possible. And so when we bless them, let us do it with this in mind. We are to bless them for who they will be in Christ. He has promised them this, and it shall come to pass. Until it happens, let us keep proclaiming Jesus. Eventually, they will get it, and He will return to them when they do.

Such wonderful promises and truths are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. From the Top of Peor (verses 1 & 2)

The previous sermon ended with Balak having failed twice to get Balaam to curse Israel. The first attempt was at the high places of Baal. The second attempt was as the field of Zophim. At the end of the last sermon, the chapter closed with them at the top of Peor, overlooking the wasteland.

In this location, we have the completion of a marvelous pattern which has developed over these three locations where these three oracles are uttered – Baal, Zophim, and Peor.

The first, *bamoth baal*, or the high places of Baal, looks to the superintending lordship of the people. The word *ba'al* simply means owner, lord, or master. Thus, it was an attempt to curse the people, dissolving the spiritual authority over them.

The next location, *sadeh tsophim*, or the “field of the watchers,” then looks to an attempt to curse the people's intellect. As a watchman looks out and discerns who is coming and what type of a threat they are, so that was an attempt to curse their ability to rightly discern what is correct.

The third place, now introduced, is *rosh ha'peor*, or the top of the Peor. This place signifies that which leads to yearning and even to lust. Thus, this is an attempt to curse Israel's moral underpinnings.

Balak is not merely attempting to curse Israel arbitrarily, but he is methodically pursuing a path of attempting to find a weakness in Israel which he can exploit between them and their God. It is what the devil did to Jesus in Matthew 4.

First, he came to tempt Him into making the stones into bread, thus he attempted to destroy the spiritual hierarchy which is found in God. He then tested Jesus' intellect by misusing Scripture, but which Christ corrected. And then he appealed to Jesus based on the lust of the flesh by showing him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. The devil, in essence, set about to curse these orders, but he failed.

This is what Balak intends now, and it is a prefiguring of the trials of Jesus by the devil in the wilderness. Will Balak succeed? Would the devil succeed? Not when Yehovah, the Lord, is in the equation! That begins to be evidenced in the first verse of this passage...

¹Now when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel,

Twice, Balaam has gone forth, and both of those times, it is implied that he looked for a word from God in the use of sorcery. That will be seen in just a moment. In his previous attempts to curse Israel, he found that it would not be possible to do so. Rather, "it pleased the Lord to bless Israel."

The Hebrew literally reads, "that *it was* good in the eyes of Yehovah to bless Israel." What Balaam looked to see in the obtaining of a curse was exactly the opposite of what was pleasing in the Lord's eyes. For him to see what the Lord saw, he had to submit to what the Lord determined, and that was to bless. Now understanding this, it says...

^{1 (con't)} he did not go as at other times,

Here is a curious phrase that will be seen just five times between now and 1 Samuel 20, *k'paam b'paam*, or "as at a time, in a time." The means of obtaining his oracle from the Lord in the past was one way. Now, having seen that "as at a time, in a time" the Lord would not submit to cursing, he has clued in that this will not change. Because of this, there was no need...

^{1 (con't)} to seek to use sorcery,

The word used, *nehashim*, was introduced in verse 23:23 and now this is its second and last use in Scripture. It is a verb indicating some sort of divination. It is debated exactly what type of divination was used, but it was certainly some type of augury.

One might find it surprising that the Lord would allow Himself to be sought out through, and to respond to, such things, but that would be to misunderstand what is happening. The Lord has a plan. That plan will not be thwarted.

If someone comes to the Lord through such a divination, and that divination will yield a result which would stand in the way of His plans, then He will intervene to ensure that what He intends comes out. A perfect example of this is found in Ezekiel 21.

The king of Babylon sought for a sign in order to determine which path he should take in order to engage one foe or another in battle. The result was to come against Jerusalem, as the Lord's plan determined –

“The word of the Lord came to me again, saying: ¹⁹ ‘And son of man, appoint for yourself two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to go; both of them shall go from the same land. Make a sign; put *it* at the head of the road to the city. ²⁰ Appoint a road for the sword to go to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah, into fortified Jerusalem. ²¹ For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver. ²² In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a *siege* mound, and to build a wall. ²³ And it will be to them like a false divination in the eyes of those who have sworn oaths with them; but he will bring their iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken.’” Ezekiel 21:18-23

Balaam has seen that seeking a divination against Israel is pointless, and so he no longer bothered to pursue this path...

^{1 (con't)} **but he set his face toward the wilderness.**

The question here is, “Does Balaam intend to bless Israel because it pleases the Lord, or does Balaam intend to curse Israel by forsaking the divination so that he, rather than the Lord, will control the outcome?”

The entire point of coming to Balak, and then going to the various places they have gone, was to curse Israel, not bless them. How one would answer that question would probably be based on whether they were a half-cup full or half-cup empty type.

I would go with the half-empty and say he desired still to curse Israel, and so he left behind the divination and set his face toward the wilderness, meaning the area where Israel sat encamped. Now, facing in that direction, it next says...

² And Balaam raised his eyes, and saw Israel encamped according to their tribes;

From the top of Peor, Balaam could see the entire encampment of Israel. John Lange's commentary places the spot where Balaam is to the east of Israel, with Edom on the south and the vast desert reaching to the river of Assyria behind him. With this view, looking west and down upon Israel, he views them, as it says "according to their tribes. The layout, as seen in the Numbers 3:14-39 sermon, is that of a giant cross, extending out to the east, west, north, and south, and with the tabernacle directly in the center. Where Balaam was then, he would see the entire cross from the base – meaning east, and extending out from there directly in front of him. With this massive cross directly in his view, it then says...

^{2 (con't)} and the Spirit of God came upon him.

Unlike the previous two times where it says the Lord put a word in his mouth, this time, the *ruakh elohim*, or Spirit of God, came upon him. He is cast into an ecstatic state which opens his spiritual mind and leads him to utter his oracle, regardless as to what he purposed.

One might question, "How could it be that he wanted to curse Israel, but instead he was led to bless them?" The question would assume that Balaam was intending on speaking for God in a positive blessing all along and that God would not otherwise come upon a wicked person. This is incorrect thinking. First, Deuteronomy 23 clearly shows this was his intent –

"Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you." Deuteronomy 23:5

Secondly, Scripture in several instances, shows that those who may or may not be right with the Lord will still speak according to the Spirit. This will be seen in king Saul in 1

Samuel 19:23. He had lost favor with the Lord, and yet the same terminology is used there as it is here. The Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied.

It also is the case that Caiaphas, the wicked high priest of Israel prophesied the word of the Lord, as is seen in John 11 –

“Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.” John 11:51, 52

In such instances, God will come upon even the wicked to effect His purposes. As John Gill rightly states, such as are “not in his grace but in his gifts; not as a spirit of sanctification, but as a spirit of prophecy.” In this state, and with the Lord in control of the events, it says (after a brief poetic interlude)...

*A sign to the world for all to see
It is set on high by God for fallen man
A torn body hanging on a tree
The sign determined before the world began*

*How terrible and yet lovely is the cross
Terrible because we caused our Lord to go there
But O so lovely too, no more sin nor loss
For Christ our Lord, our sin did bear*

*The Lion of Judah has prevailed
The cross was not the end of our beautiful Lord
Victory over death, the grave He has assailed
And to God through Him we have been restored*

*How beautiful is the cross that brought us back to You
How beautiful are You, O Lord, ever faithful and true*

II. Balaam’s Oracle (verses 3-11)

³ Then he took up his oracle and said:

Here again Balaam is said to take up his *mashal*, or oracle. It is a proverb or parable, and thus it is a comparative saying where one thing in a clause is like another in the next. The words that are to be spoken are an allegory or a representation of the intent of the Lord as spoken through Balaam.

In other words, it is the word of the Lord in intent, but it is spoken from Balaam's perspective. In this, there will be a progression of speech from that which is individual and concrete to that which is more universal and general.

This *mashal*, or oracle, will be like those he has already spoken, which is in a highly poetic form and in standard meter.

³ (con't) **"The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,**

neum bil'am beno beor – "Utterance Balaam son of Beor." In these words, Balaam identifies himself by name and by heritage, Balaam the son of Beor. It is, therefore, words spoken by him, even if the Lord directed him. It is a way of indicating that his eyes were closed, just as the eyes of his father had been closed. Now, there is a change which he will explicitly state in a minute.

For now, he uses the word *neum*, or utterance. This is a word that is almost exclusively used when proclaimed by the Lord. There are only three exceptions to this where the word is attributed to a human bearer. This is the first. It will be used by David in 2 Samuel 23:1, and then by Agur in Proverbs 30:1.

In this case, it is the Lord's prophetic word being spoken through Balaam. He is speaking it as if it is from his own viewpoint, but it is the word of the Lord being revealed through him. This is more fully realized with the next words...

³ (con't) **The utterance of the man whose eyes are opened,**

u-neum ha'geber shethum ha'ayin – "And utterance the man are opened the eyes." Balaam again uses the word *neum*, or utterance, and then he says that it is his utterance – he is the man whose eyes are opened. Some translations will say, "The man whose eyes are shut." His eyes were shut, but the intent is that they are now spiritually opened through the effect of the Spirit upon him.

The word is a new and rare one, *shatham*. It means “to unveil,” and it will only be seen here and in verse 15. Balaam’s eyes were closed, but now they are unveiled. God has opened his spiritual insight to reveal through him words concerning His people, Israel.

⁴The utterance of him who hears the words of God,

neum shomea imre el – “Utterance of him who hears words of God.” Here, he again uses the word *neum*, or utterance, but he says that it is the utterance of him who hears the words of God. Thus, he is implying that his utterance is in accord with those words. He is speaking out what he hears and what will be said is that which is directed by God. Further, he is one...

⁴ (con’t) Who sees the vision of the Almighty,

asher makhazeh shaddai yekhezeh – “Who a vision of the Almighty sees.” He now states that he sees a *makhazeh*, or vision. It is a very rare word, used just four times, but two of them are in this chapter. It was used in Genesis 15:1 when it said that the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. That was a vision to a friend of God. Now it is a vision to one who has been a foe of God.

He further uses the term, *Shaddai*, or Almighty. This is not a mere god, but the all-powerful God. The words come from the Source of all power, and therefore what will be said are words which reflect that power. Nothing can thwart them. Despite his previous state of one who came to curse, he cannot. Instead, he is now one...

⁴ (con’t) Who falls down, with eyes wide open:

nophel u-gelui enayim – “Who falls down and opens wide his eyes.” The idea of falling down is being overwhelmed by force of what has occurred. It is similar to what happened to Saul in 1 Samuel 19:23, 24. There it says –

“Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴ And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, ‘Is Saul also among the prophets?’”

This then would be unlike the other true prophets, such as Daniel, Ezekiel, and John, who were overwhelmed by the vision of the splendor and glory of the Lord. Rather, like

Saul, Balaam is overthrown by an opposing and greater force, casting him down and impelling him to speak contrary to what he originally intended.

In this, Keil notes that “upon men like Balaam, whose inner religious life was still very impure and undeveloped, the Spirit of God could only operate by closing their outward senses to impressions from the lower earthly world, and raising them up to visions of the higher and spiritual world.”

With that accomplished, his spiritual eyes were now open to what they had been completely closed to in the past. The words concerning his eyes being opened here are different than those used concerning them in the previous verse. With his spiritual eyes opened, and now gazing with his physical eyes upon this massive cross in the wilderness, he begins his words of blessing...

⁵ **“How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!**

mah tovu ohalekha yaaqov – “How pleasing *are* your tents Jacob.” This is certainly not referring to the individual tents. A tent is a tent. It is referring to their layout – the order, structure, and beauty of the cross which stood before him.

Rather than a group of people haphazardly jumbled around the valley, they were meticulously aligned around their central sanctuary. Outside of it would be the Levites, and then outside of them would be three individual camps branching out in each direction. There was order, harmony, and design in the cross, just as out of the cross of Christ comes order, harmony, and design. There is a purposeful intent behind the structures because they form the very heart of God for the people of the world as revealed in redemptive history.

⁵ (con’t) **Your dwellings, O Israel!**

miskenotekha yisrael – “Your tabernacles, Israel.” This clause is parallel to the previous one. The tent is the edifice which is seen, the *mishkan*, or tabernacle, is the place of dwelling itself. The words are almost used synonymously. It would be comparable to saying, “Your house is beautiful; the place where you reside.” From there, he describes how this is so...

⁶ **Like valleys that stretch out,**

kinkhalim nitayu – “like valleys which extend.” The four branches which extended out from the sanctuary were like valleys. In the center is Life, and from that point the Life extended to the farthest reaches of Israel. So much so that they were...

⁶ (con’t) **Like gardens by the riverside,**

keganot ale nahar – “Like gardens by a river.” The words are parallel to the previous clause. The tents of Israel were so ordered and structured that together each branch appeared to be a garden all its own. When one plants a garden, they do so in rows, each with its own fruit, and each according to its most propitious place in regards to soil, sunlight, and space.

The camps of Israel were shorter at the far end, longer nearer to him, and of equal distance on each side, but each was vibrant and orderly, as if aligned along the side of a river. They were...

⁶ (con’t) **Like aloes planted by the Lord,**

ka-ahalim nata Yehovah – “As aloes planted by Yehovah.” This is speaking of the lignum or wood aloes. It is a tree eight to ten feet tall which has a sweet smell, and provides shade. It also provides the source for aromatic resins and incense. It is used when speaking of the Lord in the 45th Psalm –

“All Your garments *are scented* with myrrh and aloes *and* cassia,
Out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad.” Psalm 45:8

The word itself is spelled the same as that of “tent,” and so it is somewhat of a pun saying that their tents are like these aloes. Both provide shade. As the aloes are planted by the Lord, they are orderly and beautiful, just as the tents of Israel are. They are also...

⁶ (con’t) **Like cedars beside the waters.**

ka-arazim ale mayim – “Like cedars by *the* waters.” This is now parallel to the previous clause again. Cedar is also an aromatic wood. And as the aloes were planted by the Lord, signifying order and beauty in their arrangement, these cedars are “besides the waters,” implying great health and beauty. The sentiment is later reflected in Psalm 104 –

“The trees of the Lord are full *of sap*,
The cedars of Lebanon which He planted.” Psalm 104:16

⁷ He shall pour water from his buckets,

yizal mayim midaleyav – “Will flow water from his buckets.” Here is a new and rare word, *deli*. It’s not a place to get sandwiches. Rather, it is a bucket. It will only be seen here and in Isaiah 40:15. There, in Isaiah, the nations are counted as drops in a bucket. However, here, there is the opposite thought.

The idea one gets is a man carrying two buckets which are so full that they overflow. Immediately, it is a picture of abundance and life. In a parched land, water is precious, but this looks to such an abundance that water in the buckets will freely flow out of them. However, it is a prophecy of the Spirit flowing forth to such an extent from the buckets of Israel, meaning that found in Christ, that when carried by those who proclaim the gospel, it will overflow, watering all who are provided from the abundance. Though the nations are but a drop in a bucket, the Spirit overflows in the greatest of abundance to God’s people.

^{7 (con’t)} And his seed shall be in many waters.

v’zaro b’mayim rabbim – “And seed in waters many.” It is parallel in thought to the previous clause. Immediately, one would think of seed for planting because of the abundant waters, and this is the thought Balak must have considered, but this is more especially speaking in a prophetic sense of descendants, which the word “seed” is used to refer to. The idea of many waters is elsewhere equated to people groups. Thus, it is a prophecy of the seed of Israel going forth to many people groups. In its fullest sense, it looks to the peoples of the nations being brought into the commonwealth of Israel.

^{7 (con’t)} “His king shall be higher than Agag,

v’yarom me-agag malkow – “And shall be higher than Agag, his king.” The name Agag is connected to the word *gag*, or roof. It thus signifies that which is the highest. This name is directly connected to the names Gog and Magog.

Magog goes back to Genesis 10:2 as a son of Japheth. Gog and Magog are found as the great enemies who will come against Israel as noted in Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20. Agag, or the “Highest,” will be topped by the King of Israel. It is a prophecy of the coming of Messiah who will be above all other kings.

^{7 (con’t)} And his kingdom shall be exalted.

v'tinase malkuto – “And shall be exalted his kingdom.” The kingdom of Israel was exalted for a period under David and Solomon, but those were short lived. This is speaking of something beyond that. Balaam’s spiritual eyes were opened to the kingdom of God in Christ which will cover the world, and to which all kingdoms will be subservient.

⁸“God brings him out of Egypt;

el motsio mimitsrayim – “God brought him out of Egypt.” The words of this and the next clause are almost identical to Numbers 23:22. The only difference is it said “them” there, and it says “him” here. In those verses, it was speaking of Israel the people. Here it appears to be immediately speaking of Israel the collective, but it is prophetically speaking of Messiah.

Egypt is the place of bondage. Christ was born under the law, a yoke of bondage, but God in Christ brought Him out of that. Only in that, could He then bring us out of that bondage.

⁸(con’t) He has strength like a wild ox;

ketoaphot reem lo – “Like strength, a wild ox.” This is parallel to the previous clause. Bringing one out of Egypt implies great strength. Here, that strength is described as a *reem*, or wild ox. It looks forward to the strength of God, in Christ. It is what Paul refers to in Romans 1:3, 4 –

“...concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴and declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

The strength of God in Christ is untameable and matchless.

⁸(con’t) He shall consume the nations, his enemies;

yokal goyim tsarav – “He eats up *the* nations, his enemies.” In the immediate sense, this is speaking of Israel, entering Canaan and destroying the nations which currently occupied the land, but this looks forward, again, to Messiah who will subdue all nations. They will either come to him in peace, or be consumed by Him in pieces.

⁸(con’t) He shall break their bones

v'atsmotehem yegarem – “And their bones, he makes bare.” Another rare word, *garam*, is seen, it gives the sense of denuding. Thus, the clause is parallel to the previous one. As He eats up the nations, so He shall devour them, making bare their bones. It signifies that all of their strength will be consumed by Him.

⁸ (con't) **And pierce *them* with his arrows.**

v'khitsav yimkhats – “And with arrows, he shall shatter.” It is another new word, *ma-khats*, meaning to shatter, wound, pierce-through, etc. It is a complicated clause because of the structure of the Hebrew. But what it appears to be saying is that after His victory, He will break His own arrows because they will no longer be needed. It would then follow along with the words of Isaiah –

“He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.” Isaiah 2:4

When the Lord destroys His enemies He will destroy His weapons of war, and the nations shall follow suit.

⁹ **‘He bows down, he lies down as a lion;**

kara shakav kaari – “He crouched, he lay down, as a lion.” Here the words are similar to those of 23:24, but they have richer significance. In 23:24, it said –

“Look, a people rises like a lioness,
And lifts itself up like a lion;
It shall not lie down until it devours the prey,
And drinks the blood of the slain.”

There, the lion rises and goes forth to devour. Here, the lion crouches and lies down in victory, having devoured. This reflects, again, both Israel and Messiah. Israel went forth as a lion, but only in Christ is the victory won. Israel’s battles were earthly, Christ’s battles are spiritual. In His victory over the law, sin, death, and the devil, He then found His rest.

⁹ (con't) **And as a lion, who shall rouse him?'**

u-kelavi mu yeqimenu – “And as a lioness who shall stir him up?” Who would dare consider it? The lioness at rest is not to be disturbed. Likewise, who would consider provoking the Lord from His place of rest. Here, as throughout the utterance, the words speak immediately of Israel, but they find their ultimate fulfillment in the One Israel anticipated. And so like Israel...

⁹ (con't) **“Blessed is he who blesses you,
And cursed is he who curses you.”**

mevarakhekha varukh – “Is he who blesses you blessed.”

v'orerekha arur – “And is he who curses you cursed” The words of these clauses go back to Genesis 27:29 where Isaac pronounced his blessing upon Jacob –

“Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you.
Be master over your brethren,
And let your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed *be* everyone who curses you,
And blessed *be* those who bless you!”

The blessing was upon Jacob, who is Israel, but it pointed to the coming of Messiah. In Messiah, Israel is blessed. Apart from Him, they are cursed. This isn't a secret or something hidden. Rather it is the reality of the situation. In cursing Christ Jesus, they have only brought a curse upon themselves. When they bless Him, so will they be blessed. And such is true with all peoples and nations. Those who bless God's Anointed will be blessed. For Balak, it is a warning to cease his attempts to curse Israel. For Balaam, who will later attempt to curse Israel in a different way, it will be a death sentence. For all, it is a warning to come to Christ while there is time. Those who curse Him are cursed. So ends the third oracle of Balaam.

¹⁰ **Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together;**

Again we see the descriptive term *v'yikhar aph balaq*, or “And burned the nostril of Balak.” By this point, he is fuming mad, and so it says that he *saphaq*, or struck, his hands together. It is a new word which means to clap, strike, slap, etc. But it comes with the sense of grief or indignation. The same gesture is not uncommon in much of the Mideast

today. The sentiment is well reflected in Lamentations when speaking of the ruined state of Jerusalem after the Lord's judgment fell upon it –

All who pass by **clap** *their* hands at you;
They hiss and shake their heads
At the daughter of Jerusalem:
“Is this the city that is called
‘The perfection of beauty,
The joy of the whole earth’?” Lamentations 2:15

Balak has spent great time and effort to get Balaam to do just a simple thing for him, not realizing that Balaam is wholly incapable of following through with the request, even though he wanted to. Therefore, in his anger...

^{10 (con't)} **and Balak said to Balaam, “I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed *them* these three times!**

If you think about it, Balak isn't just a dolt, but he is a sub-dolt. He was told when he sent his first emissaries that the Lord had refused him permission to go. He then told him that he could only speak the word the Lord put in his mouth. He then blessed Israel, instead of cursing them – three times.

The fact that someone traveled as far and as long as Balaam did just to do the opposite of what he was being paid for, demonstrates either an idiot, or someone who is compelled, apart from his will, to take the course he has taken. Balak however, accuses Balaam of being in the wrong in this particular matter. And so he continues...

¹¹ **Now therefore, flee to your place.**

The words don't really catch the emotion that was surely welled up inside of Balak. Something more close in thought would be, “Now beat it. Get back to where you belong!”

He had his fill of Balaam, and all he could think of was putting him on his donkey and giving her a good swat on the rear to get her moving along. But before that, he finishes the passage with one more thought...

^{11 (fin)} **I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the Lord has kept you back from honor.”**

The words, whether he actually believes the Lord spoke through Balaam or not, are loaded with irony. Balak promised great honors to Balaam, and yet – one way or the other – it was the Lord who kept him from that honor.

From this, it is surmised by some that Balaam felt justified in himself and that he was blessed along with Israel for having blessed Israel. However, this is not the case. Nor will it be the case after he finishes his final oracle.

Balaam turned not to bless Israel, but to curse them. It was only because the Lord thwarted his attempt that he instead blessed them. That is certain from the surrounding events. Because of this, he could not feel that he was entitled to the blessing.

Further, if he really accepted that the words he uttered were true, he would have ridden his donkey to the camp of Israel, not in the opposite direction. Rather than aligning himself with the people of God, like Rahab the harlot did, he will go back to his old practices. It is a fatal mistake for any who turned from Israel because it was Israel through whom God sent His Son. And in sending Jesus, it was a fatal mistake for many generations of His own people who ignored the very warnings of God spoken through Balaam.

Israel means “He strives with God.” He either strives with God, for God, or he strives with God, against God. But either way, Israel strives with God. The forty years of punishment in the wilderness are behind them as they sit encamped at Moab. And the two thousand years of punishment among the nations is coming to its own close as they slowly regather from among the nations.

Balaam’s final oracle will speak of the destruction of the nations around Israel by Israel. Later in Scripture, the destruction of the nations is again prophesied, and that final judgment is summed up in the words of Jesus in how the nations treated His brethren, meaning Israel, as recorded in Matthew 25.

At that time, He will separate the nations according to the blessing which rests upon Israel. For now, our passage is complete and it calls out for us to consider how we will respond to the Messiah. Though Israel is the immediate subject of the verses, it is the One who came from Israel who is the ultimate Subject. One cannot escape making a decision in regards to Christ Jesus.

You can either choose to receive and bless Him, or you – by default – curse Him. Whether actively or passively, it makes no difference. To fail to choose Christ is to reject Christ. He is the Subject of this marvelous word God has given us, and it is laid out so

that we don't miss that fact. Be sure to call on Jesus and be reconciled to God through this marvelous Gift.

Closing Verse: *"Now therefore, be wise, O kings;*

Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear,

And rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,

And you perish in the way,

When His wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." Psalm 2:10-12

Next Week: Numbers 24:12-25 *It is future, but it is also historical...* (Balaam's Fourth Oracle) (48th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Balaam's Third Oracle

Now when Balaam saw

That it pleased the Lord to Israel bless

He did not go as at other times, to seek to use sorcery

But he set his face toward the wilderness

And Balaam raised his eyes

And saw Israel encamped, and he was awed

Laid out according to their tribes

And came upon him the Spirit of God

Then he took up his oracle and said:

These are the words by which he was led

"The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,

The utterance of the man whose eyes are opened,

The utterance of him who hears the words of God,

Who sees the vision of the Almighty,

Who falls down, with eyes wide open:
“How lovely are your tents, O Jacob!
Your dwellings, O Israel!
Like valleys that stretch out,
Like gardens by the riverside,
Like aloes planted by the Lord,
Like cedars beside the waters.
He shall pour water from his buckets,
And his seed shall be in many waters.
“His king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted.
“God brings him out of Egypt;
He has strength like a wild ox;
He shall consume the nations, his enemies;
He shall break their bones
And pierce them with his arrows.
‘He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?’
“Blessed is he who blesses you,
And cursed is he who curses you.”

Then Balak’s anger was aroused against Balaam
And he struck his hands together as things had gotten worse
And Balak said to Balaam
“I called you my enemies to curse

And look, you have bountifully blessed them these three times!
Now therefore, flee to your place; heed my word
I said I would greatly honor you
But in fact, has kept you back from honor the Lord

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand

And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 24:12-25 (BALAAM'S FOURTH ORACLE)

I won't lie to you. I almost broke my brain on each of these Balaam sermons. They have been complicated, difficult to determine what is being pictured, and scholarly comment on the verses, along with the many translations of them, are so divergent that it seemed almost hopeless to try to resolve what the text is actually saying.

It has been an extremely complicated six weeks. One of the most frustrating parts of each day was holding my tongue from some type of profanity directed at the scholars at Cambridge as they continuously argued about the unreliability of the text, about the additions that came from later scribes, and so on as they tried their best to destroy the word of God rather than to take the time to figure out what it is saying and how reliable it actually is.

For example, a part of their analysis of verse 19 says it is –

“An obscure verse, which is perhaps a later addition to the song. It appears to look forward to a Messianic prospect of universal dominion. Some think that Numbers 24:18-19 are both entirely corrupt beyond restoration.”

First, there is no evidence at all that verse 19 was added later. And then secondly, their next comment completely destroyed their own supposition. How can it be that a later addition to the song is entirely corrupt and beyond restoration? The point of adding something later would be to add clarity and correction.

It is maddening to see how people who went to school for an education in biblical theology, and who are trained in the biblical languages, then spend the rest of their lives trying to destroy the very basis for their education. It is like a person who goes to school to become an engineer, and who then spends the rest of his life working on designs that can never cross a span of any length or bear a weight of any amount. Who would do that?

Text Verse: *“O My people, remember now
What Balak king of Moab counseled,
And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him,
From Acacia Grove to Gilgal,
That you may know the righteousness of the Lord.” Micah 6:5*

The Bible is not only perfectly reliable, but it is astonishingly intricate and detailed, validating itself time and time again. The Lord, through Micah, appealed to Israel to remember what Balak counseled. That was for Balaam to curse Israel.

And then He asks them to consider what Balaam answered to Balak. That was the four oracles of these sermons. The Lord purposed that Balaam would bless them, and he did. But the Lord also gave him a prophetic look into the future concerning the coming Messiah, and also the times which still lie ahead which are coming because of their rejection of Him.

This is what the Lord is trying to wake Israel up to in the book of Micah, and it is what the Lord has been trying to wake them up to throughout the Bible and throughout their continued history in relation to the Bible. He calls out, "Wake up!"

History is set and will not change. How do we know? It is because the book is written. The prophecies have been given, and they point to what has been determined. Let us pay heed to the word, this marvelous word of God, which tells us of the coming Messiah.

It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I Am Going to My People (verses 12-14)

¹² So Balaam said to Balak, "Did I not also speak to your messengers whom you sent to me, saying,

We left off the passage last week with the indignation of Balak on prominent display. Balaam had blessed Israel for a third time, and in response to that, we then read –

"Then Balak's anger was aroused against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, 'I called you to curse my enemies, and look, you have bountifully blessed *them* these three times! ¹¹ Now therefore, flee to your place. I said I would greatly honor you, but in fact, the Lord has kept you back from honor.'" Numbers 24:10, 11

Balaam's response now is that he did not follow any intentional path of trickery, but had already told Balak's messengers that things might not come out as Balak desired. This, however, is not the full story.

As we saw, Balaam did not convey the full word of the Lord to the messengers on the first visit, and he failed to immediately dismiss them on the second visit, which would have been acting in obedience to the original word of the Lord. Despite that, and to remind Balak of what he had already told him in Chapter 22, he continues on with...

¹³ 'If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord, to do good or bad of my own will. What the Lord says, that I must speak'?

This is a combination of verses 22:18 and 22:38. They said –

“Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.” (22:18)

“Look, I have come to you! Now, have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.” (22:38)

There are a few changes in what he relayed between these two times. When speaking to the messengers, he said “the word of the Lord my God.” Here, he only says, “the word of the Lord.”

This inconsistency reveals a dishonest streak. Before, when a possible reward awaited him, he said, “the Lord my God.” Now, to justify himself by distancing himself from the Lord, he simply says “the Lord,” as if Yehovah were one of many gods.

Also, there he said “less or more.” However, here he says “good or bad.” The fact is that he did speak less to the messengers than the Lord spoke to him. Now, he is claiming a type of righteousness by saying *laasot tovah o raah milibi*, or “to do good or bad of my own heart.”

But as testified to by the Lord when He met Balaam on the donkey, this is exactly what was on his mind. As it said, “I have come out to stand against you, because *your* way is perverse before Me.” He did intend to pursue good or bad according to his own heart. Another difference is that in chapter 22 he said, “The word that God puts in my mouth, that I must speak.” Here he says, “What the Lord says, that I must speak.”

First, he has gone from the idea of God instilling a word in him to a word which the Lord speaks to him. Secondly, the word *elohim*, or “God,” may or may not be speaking of the Lord. Without the article, it can mean any “god.” He has gone from the general to the specific in name.

What seems as if he is justified in his words is not as sure when the two passages are placed side by side. For a person who supposedly was to speak the exacting words of the Lord, he is not nearly as careful – either intentionally or incompetently – with his own words. Despite this, he does have more words to speak, and they are precise because Scripture records them as another oracle...

¹⁴ And now, indeed, I am going to my people.

Balaam realizes that he is no longer wanted, and that no reward is forthcoming. Whereas he came to a royal welcome, he is now to return with no formal sendoff at all. He will return to the land he came from with a stain on his record in the eyes of those who had eagerly sought his abilities in the past. But, before he goes, he is to speak one last time...

¹⁴ (con't) Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days.”

The word he uses, translated as “advise,” is *yaats*. It is meant to give counsel. In other words, “I will tell you what is coming upon your people so that you will be able to consider it now.” The words are set as an obvious warning to Balak. It can be inferred that “What this people will do to your people” means something negative. Further, it will come about, as it says, “in the latter days.”

This is now the second of sixteen times that the term *b’akharit ha’yammin*, or “in *the* end of the days” is seen. There is debate over what it means exactly, but it often certainly covers the total time of Israel’s existence, from whatever point it is spoken all the way through until the millennial kingdom of Christ.

These are prophetic utterances which will come about according to the timeline the Lord has set, but they are spoken and recorded in Scripture, and so they are guaranteed to occur at some point during the history of Israel.

Some of the words he will speak will be of the coming Messiah. They are exact and precise and they have always been considered as referring to Messiah. That along with

other words of how Israel will interact with the surrounding nations is now to be relayed to Balak, and also to us through the recorded word...

*Before I leave, I will share the word
It was given to me and now I pass it on to you
It is that which came from the Lord
It is sure, it is fixed, and it is faithful and true*

*I will tell you of things which are yet come to pass
They are things that will surely come about
To know such things is worth more than you could amass
Because they will leave you with certainty; not wonder or doubt*

*It is the word of the Lord who has come among men
And what has been assures us of what He promises to do
And so carefully pay heed, time and again
And this word will be a guide and a lamp for you*

II. A Star and a Scepter (verses 15-19)

¹⁵ So he took up his oracle and said:

The oracle he now speaks is unlike those already given in that it will be solely future prophecy. It is not so much a blessing upon Israel as it is an explanation of their future in regards to the coming Messiah, and of their relation to the nations of the world.

It is divided into four sections, each with the same words as we see now, "So he took up his oracle and said." Thus, though this is counted as one oracle overall, making four total from Balaam, it is actually four separate oracles, making seven total from Balaam. The first will speak of Messiah and how He will deal with the two relatives of Israel through Lot, Moab and Edom.

The second will deal with the arch-enemy of Israel, Amalek. The third will deal with the Kenites, who were allies of Israel, and who dwelt closely with them. The final oracle will deal with distant nations and the judgment upon them. Each of these is a *mashal*, or parable, which will follow exceptional literary techniques, just as the previous oracles did.

¹⁵ (con't) "The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,

neum bil'am beno beor – “Utterance Balaam son of Beor.” As in verse 24:3, he identifies himself by name and by heritage, Balaam the son of Beor. As there, these are words spoken by him, even if the Lord directed him. It is a way of saying that his eyes were closed, just as the eyes of his father had been closed, but that is now changed.

Again also, he uses the word *neum*, or utterance. It is a word almost exclusively used concerning what is said by the Lord. Here, it is the Lord’s prophetic word being spoken through him. He is speaking it as if it is from his own viewpoint, but it is the word of the Lord being revealed through him.

¹⁵ (con’t) **And the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened;**

u-neum ha'geber shethum ha'ayin – “And utterance the man are opened the eyes.” Balaam again uses the word *neum*, or utterance. It is from one whose eyes are opened. The intent is that his eyes were shut, but that they are now spiritually opened through the effect of the Spirit upon him.

It is the second and last time in the Bible that the word *shatham* is used. It means “to unveil.” His eyes were closed, but now they are unveiled. God has opened his spiritual insight to reveal, through him, words concerning His people, Israel, including their Messiah.

¹⁶ **The utterance of him who hears the words of God,**

neum shomea imre el – “Utterance of him who hears words of God.” It is the same as verse 24:4. He implies that his utterance is in accord with the words of God. He is speaking out what he hears and what will be said is that which is directed by God. Further...

¹⁶ (con’t) **And has the knowledge of the Most High,**

v'yodea daat elyon – “And knows knowledge of Most High.” These words are now added to what he said in his third oracle. It does not say “the knowledge” though. It simply says, “knowledge.” He possesses knowledge *of or from* the Most High, but he does not possess the Most High’s knowledge. The translation leaves an incorrect sense of what is said.

¹⁶ (con’t) **Who sees the vision of the Almighty,**

makhazeh shaddai yekhezeh – “Vision of Shaddai sees.” The words are similar to those in verse 24:4. It is a vision which comes from God which has opened his spiritual eyes so that he can perceive that which would otherwise be hidden.

Again as before, he then says, Shaddai, or Almighty. This is not a mere god, but the all-powerful God. The words come from the Source of all power, and therefore what will be said are words which reflect that power. Nothing can thwart them...

¹⁶ (con't) **Who falls down, with eyes wide open:**

nophel u-eglui enayim – “Who falls down and opens wide his eyes.” It is the same words as in 24:4. He has been overwhelmed by the force of what has occurred.

It should be noted again that this is unlike the other true prophets, such as Daniel, Ezekiel, and John. He is overthrown by an opposing and greater force, casting him down and impelling him to speak contrary to what he would otherwise proclaim.

As before, he is still standing in the place where all Israel was laid out before him in the shape of a cross. With that in perfect view, he next speaks of the One who would prevail over that cross...

¹⁷ **“I see Him, but not now;**

erenu v'lo attah – “I see Him, and not now.” This cannot be speaking of Israel the people. They are there before him. Further, it is third person, masculine, singular. Therefore, this is clearly a reference to the Messiah who would come from Israel.

It is true that David, and kings in his line, could be considered, but ultimately it is speaking of One who would come as the final Victor over the enemies of God's people. Balaam could see Him, but He was also far in the distant future...

¹⁷ (con't) **I behold Him, but not near;**

ashurenu v'lo qarov – “I behold Him, but not near.” The clause is parallel to the previous one. The word *shur* is used, as it was in verse 23:9. It gives the sense of perceiving as if through a close inspection. His spiritual eye could see One that was there in front of him, and yet He was also in the distance, certainly meaning in time. At some future point He would be revealed...

17 (con't) **A Star shall come out of Jacob;**

darak kokav miyaaqov – “Has marched forth *a* Star from Jacob.” It is a new word, *darak*, which signifies to tread. It is in the perfect tense. Thus, the prophecy – though of a future event – is spoken of as if it has occurred.

It is as if the Star has marched out of Jacob and into the stream of humanity. Jacob is the natural man. This Star shall come forth from Jacob in a natural sense. He will be a human being. Of this, Hengstenberg notes –

“A star is so natural an image and symbol of imperial greatness and splendour, that it has been employed in this sense in almost every nation. And the fact that this figure and symbol are so natural, may serve to explain the belief of the ancient world, that the birth and accession of great kings was announced by the appearance of stars.” Hengstenberg Thus, we have in this a foreshadowing of the coming of the star of Bethlehem which anticipates the Star, or Ruler, out of Jacob, Jesus.

17 (con't) **A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,**

v'qam shevet miyisrael – “And has risen *a* Scepter from Israel.” It is parallel to the previous clause. The scepter indicates rule and authority. The words are again in the perfect tense. It is spoken of as having occurred, and thus it is certain to come about. This Scepter has already been prophesied by Jacob, who is Israel, in Genesis 49 –

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes;
And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.” Genesis 49:10

This Scepter, anticipated in the prophecy of Jacob, has arisen from this spiritual people, meaning Israel, who are Yehovah's people. He is a particular Ruler who has caught the full attention of the prophetic eye of Balaam.

17 (con't) **And batter the brow of Moab,**

u-makhats paate moav – “And shatter the sides Moab.” The word *paate* is widely translated. It signifies a side or a corner, but what that is referring to must be taken from what it says in Jeremiah –

“Those who fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon
Because of exhaustion.
But a fire shall come out of Heshbon,
A flame from the midst of Sihon,
And shall devour the **brow** of Moab,
The crown of the head of the sons of tumult.” Jeremiah 48:45

There it speaks of the brow, or forehead, of Moab. Thus, this verse in Numbers is speaking of the sides of the forehead, meaning the temples. It then looks to the destruction of Moab from the left and the right, crushing his forehead. But there is more...

17 (con't) And destroy all the sons of tumult.

v'qarqar kal bene sheth – “and destroy all sons of tumult.” This clause is parallel to the previous one. The words are debated over, and translations vary widely. However, Jeremiah 48:45 again may provide the correct interpretation. There it says *v'qodqod* instead of *v'qarqar*. The two letters in Hebrew are very similar in appearance. If this is correct, then it would say, “And the skull of the sons of tumult.” The Moabites here are being equated to a fierce, tumultuous group of people.

Again, if correct, then the idea is that the Scepter would come and batter Moab on both temples and crush the crown of his head. No matter what translation, the symbolism is obvious from the destructive nature of the surrounding words. Bad times lay ahead for Moab, or “From Father.”

Moab, or “From Father,” can have one of two pictorial meanings. Is it speaking of “From Father,” meaning God, or “From father,” meaning the devil. Jesus spoke of those whose father is the devil. This is what is being referred to here.

There is a literal fulfillment of subduing the nation of Moab. But there are also those who are enemies of Messiah, and who have failed to come to God through faith in Christ and who remain under the devil’s authority, and thus they are sons of tumult.

18 “And Edom shall be a possession;

v'hayah edom yereshah – “and shall be Edom a possession.” Here is a word found twice in this verse, and nowhere else in the Bible, *yereshah*, or possession. It signifies that Edom would become the property of this Ruler to come.

Edom had been subdued and ruled by Israel, but this looks forward both to a literal possession of the land by Messiah, and also to what Edom pictures, Adam, the fallen man. Edom or Adam, shall be possessed by the Messiah. Such is literally true in the sense of what the Bible teaches, as prophesied in graphic detail in Isaiah 63:1-4 –

Who *is* this who comes from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah,
This *One who is* glorious in His apparel,
Traveling in the greatness of His strength?—
“I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”
² Why *is* Your apparel red,
And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?
³ “I have trodden the winepress alone,
And from the peoples no one *was* with Me.
For I have trodden them in My anger,
And trampled them in My fury;
Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments,
And I have stained all My robes.
⁴ For the day of vengeance *is* in My heart,
And the year of My redeemed has come.” Isaiah 63:1-4

The judgment upon Edom is also detailed minutely in the book of Obadiah.

¹⁸ (con't) **Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession,**

v'hayah yereshah seir oyevaiv – “And shall be a possession Seir his enemies.” The words are parallel to the previous clause. Seir is mountain range in Edom, known as Mount Seir, or the hairy mountain, because of its appearance. The word Seir comes from *sear*, or hair. This too shall be the literal possession of the Messiah.

However, as has been seen in the past, hair in the Bible signifies awareness. Those who have an awareness are being referred to. It speaks of the cognitive, thinking being who is man. Just as Edom – or Adam, meaning man – shall be his possession, so also man, the sentient being of God's creation, shall be.

¹⁸ (con't) **While Israel does valiantly.**

v'yisrael oseh khayil – “And Israel does valiantly.” This clause stands alone, without a parallel thought. It signifies that Israel, certainly the Israel of God, meaning those Jews who belong to Messiah, will be remarkable in their state under Messiah.

19 Out of Jacob One shall have dominion,

v'yered miyaaqov – “And shall rule One out of Jacob.” This speaks of Messiah, and it is more fully explained in Psalm 78:2 –

“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.” Psalm 78:2

The One coming from Jacob is prophesied to have dominion, meaning rule. Thus, it is implying total dominion.

19 (con't) And destroy the remains of the city.”

v'heevid sarid me-ir – “And destroy survivor from the city.” The words are in the singular, but they are probably signifying the plural. In other words, the clause is parallel to the previous one. Just as the One from Jacob is ruler, so the one from the city will be destroyed. As Albert Barnes notes –

“The phrase tersely describes a conqueror who first defeats his enemies in battle, and then hunts out the fugitives until he has cut off all of every place.”

The idea here is that the ruler is the absolute ruler, and the foe is absolutely destroyed. This fits perfectly with the concept of the rule of Messiah, Jesus, as revealed in Scripture.

*Out of Israel shall come to Me
One who will lead and protect them as they go
He shall destroy the enemies valiantly
And into confusion, His enemies He shall throw*

*Moab and Edom shall face His hand
And over them His dominion shall extend
His victories are assured, and they shall be grand
He shall sustain Israel through it; to the end*

*Who can rouse himself against the Lord
And who can stand against the Holy One of Israel
He stands victorious with His bloodied sword
As the word of God reveals all too well*

III. From the First to the Last (verses 20-25)

²⁰ Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said:

This now begins the second part of Balaam's forth oracle. It is a judgment pronounced upon Amalek. To look upon Amalek does not mean physically. Rather, he is looking on them in the vision instilled in his mind.

As seen in previous sermons, the name Amalek is derived from the word *am*, or people, and *malaq* which means to nip or wring off the head of a bird with or without severing it from the body.

Thus, they are the "The People Who Wring Off." They are those who are disconnected from the body and strive to disconnect the body. Balaam next describes them...

²⁰ (con't) "Amalek was first among the nations,

reshit goyim amaleq – "First the nations Amalek." This is not speaking of either first in power, or first in time, such as "the oldest among the nations." Rather, this is speaking of being the first of the enemies of Israel. No sooner had Israel left Egypt than they faced their first foe in battle, Amalek. That is recorded in Exodus 17, and the passage ended with this thought –

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.' ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; ¹⁶ for he said, 'Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord *will have war* with Amalek from generation to generation.'" Exodus 17:14-16

As I said, they are disconnected from the body and they war to disconnect others from the body. It was and remains a picture of those who pursue the law rather than grace in order to be restored to God, such as the Judaizers of Paul's time, and the Hebrew Roots adherents of our time. Amalek of the flesh was destroyed by Israel, but the spirit of Amalek continues, and the war is ongoing...

²⁰ (con't) **But *shall be* last until he perishes.**"

v'akharito ade obed – "And his latter end – forever he perishes." Until the end of the age, there will be those who remain disconnected from the body, and they will work to disconnect others. The war against them remains, and it will continue until they are finally and completely destroyed. The word "perishes" here is *obed*. It will only be seen here and in verse 24 in the Bible.

²¹ **Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said:**

This now begins the third part of Balaam's forth oracle. It is a prophecy pronounced upon the Kenites. The name is the same as that of Cain, the son of Adam. That comes from *qanah*, meaning to acquire. The words of this oracle are extremely hard to pin down, including exactly who is being referred to.

In Genesis 15, God promised the land to Abraham, a land which included Kenites. However, in Israel's history, a group known as the Kenites were close to them, and were exempted from the destruction upon Israel's foes in battle. It appears that this is that group, and the words need to be carefully translated to reflect this.

Instead of being Israel's enemies as Amalek was, they are Israel's friends, but apart from the people Israel. Thus, this oracle is set in contrast to that which was pronounced upon Amalek.

²¹ (con't) **Firm is your dwelling place,**

ethan movoshavekha – "Enduring is your dwelling." With the Kenites dwelling among Israel, and not at war with them, they were secure, and their dwelling was secure.

²¹ (con't) **And your nest is set in the rock;**

v'sim basela qinekha – "and was laid in a rock your nest." This is parallel to the previous clause. Just as their dwelling was firm, so is a nest set on a rock. It has a foundation and stability. There is a play on words here where the Hebrew for Kenite and for nest are grammatically similar.

²² **Nevertheless Kain shall be burned.**

Ki im yihyeh l'baer qayin – “Is it that shall be burned Kain?” It is a question anticipating a negative answer, until a certain point. In other words, it is saying that Kain shall be safe until that time which is set, which is...

²² (con't) **How long until Asshur carries you away captive?”**

ad mah ashur tisbekha – “Until when Asshur carries you away captive.” What is being said is that this group of people, who were allied with Israel, but not of Israel, would remain until they were carried away captive by Asshur or Assyria.

Thus, the Kenites, because of their favorable alliance with Israel, would be safe until the time that Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians. The sad end of the Kenites is found in the fact that though they were Israel's friends, they never joined themselves with Israel and the God of Israel. Thus, when Israel's judgment came, so came the destruction of the Kenites.

The lesson here is that those who join to the people of God in friendship only, but who do not join the people of God in faith, will inevitably be brought to ruin, despite their favorable alliance.

²³ **Then he took up his oracle and said:**

This is now the fourth and final part of Balaam's fourth oracle.

²³ (con't) **“Alas! Who shall live when God does this?”**

oy mi yihyeh misumo el – It is a very difficult set of words that is not agreed on by almost any scholar. However, Cambridge – the most liberal bunch of yahoos around – still have valuable insights. They state, “The only rendering which the words will bear is ‘on account of God appointing him.’”

Therefore, the words, *oy mi yihyeh misumo el* are literally translated as, “Alas! Who shall live when establishes Him God?” In other words, “Alas, who shall live from the time He is established by God?” Balaam cries out “Woe!” because it applies to his own people in the future, as well as Israel.

This, however, calls for an answer as to, “Who is ‘him?’” Is it someone in the previous oracle, meaning Asshur or Assyria? Is it someone in this oracle? No, rather, this is the final

sub-oracle of Balaam's fourth main oracle. That is based on the words of the first prophetic portion of the first sub-oracle. It is speaking of the Messiah, the Star out of Jacob and the Scepter out of Israel.

And so the question is, "Alas! Who shall live from the time He is established by God?" It is reminiscent of the question proposed by the Lord in the book of Malachi towards Israel –

"But who can endure the day of His coming?
And who can stand when He appears?" Malachi 3:2

It is not only disobedient Israel who must face His coming, but the world must face His being established by God.

²⁴ But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus,

v'tsim miyad kittim – "And ships from *the* hand of Cyprus." The clause has no verb. As this is so, it forms the subject for what is in the next clause. The *tsiy*, or ship is introduced here. It comes from *tsavah*, a command, because a ship is a fixture, like the fixing of a command. It will be seen just four times in the Bible.

The word Kittim is generally translated as Cyprus, but it appears from Daniel 11:30 that this is speaking of the Romans and the islands which were under their authority. This is in agreement with the Latin Vulgate. It is these ships that are next spoken of...

²⁴ (con't) And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber,

v'inu ashur v'inu eber – "And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber." Asshur is Assyria. But, it is a bit harder to determine who Eber is speaking of. Genesis 10 shows that Eber is from the line of Shem. In Genesis 10:21, it says that Shem is the father of all of the children of Eber.

It is the line from which Israel descends, and it is where the designation "Hebrew" comes from. Eber means, "the region beyond." And so what we see here is a battle which is coming from the area of Rome, and which will afflict the Middle East, including the land of Israel, who are included in the children of Eber.

This matches Daniel's prophecy of Daniel 9:27 which reveals that the anti-Christ will come from Rome.

24 (con't) **And so shall Amalek, until he perishes."**

v'gam hu ade obed – "And also he forever destruction." The NKJV adds in the name Amalek here. This is because of the use of the word *obed* which was used when speaking of Amalek in verse 20. That word was first used there, and this is its last use in Scripture. They have assumed that he is the subject of both, even though his judgment has already been pronounced.

This is speaking not specifically of Amalek, but of the anti-Christ who is representative of the spirit of Amalek and who will be found in Rome, the seat of the anti-Christ in the end times.

Thus, this final oracle of Balaam today is a prophecy like bookends on the afflictions of Israel. The first was Amalek, and the final one will be Antichrist who is spiritually of Amalek. It is Rome, or Mystery Babylon, who sits on the seven hills.

The Lord, through Israel, began and continued on the battle against Amalek, Israel's first enemy. It is the Lord who will bring the final destruction on Rome, Israel's last great enemy.

What we have in Balaam's fourth oracle, which is comprised of four sub-oracles, is a picture of human history. The first part gave a view of Messiah who was, and who is, and who is to come. He has always existed, and He has come, and He shall come again. It is He who is designated to subdue the rebellious fallen of humanity, pictured by Moab and Edom.

One is either from father, meaning the devil, or from Father, meaning reborn of God. Those who remain in the devil will be destroyed, those who come to Christ will be subdued through peace. Edom represents Adam. Adam, representing humanity, is fallen and of the devil, but he will again be God's possession through the last Adam, Christ.

This will come about through Israel, meaning Christ and the people of Messiah who, as it says, "does valiantly," meaning they bring Adam's fallen seed to God. God's highest creation, man the sentient being, represented by Seir, will again be God's possession.

The second part spoke of Amalek, who can be equated here with the devil. He was the one who disconnected the head from the body, meaning man from the Lord. He was first among the nations but in the latter end, he shall perish forever. His doom is seen in Revelation 20.

The third part referred to the Kenites. They are a real people who lived among Israel, but in type, they are those of Cain, the son of Adam. He was among the people of God, but never became a part of them. His line was taken away in the flood, and the same will happen to those who are like him in the future. One cannot merely be a friend of God's people, but he must join them through Christ, or he will be taken away.

The fourth and final part is future to us and is as was explained already. It is referring to Antichrist and his final destruction.

Balak had called Balaam to curse Israel, but instead, he has blessed Israel, and he has pronounced a prophetic oracle which outlines what will occur to and around Israel until the end of the age. With that now complete, it says...

²⁵ So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place;

Here it says that Balaam rose, departed, and turned *towards* his place, meaning his homeland. But it does not mean that he returned there. He simply headed back in that direction. Numbers 31, however, shows that he wound up with the Midianites and he will die among them, because he led Israel into sin through the Midianites.

It could be questioned how Israel knows of the prophecies of Balaam, and it is supposed that he may have actually went to Israel to explain to them what had happened in hopes of getting his reward from them. That is not recorded anywhere, but it is possible. Or, the Lord simply revealed to Moses what occurred without the need for involving Balaam any further.

Either way, the word is recorded, and it tells us of God's faithfulness to Israel throughout the ages, but it also shows that difficult times lie ahead for Israel before they call on Christ and are rescued from the hand of the Antichrist. It is a sound record of their history which agrees with the rest of Scripture in this regard.

^{25 (fin)} Balak also went his way.

It must be that these two meet up again. Despite having turned to his home, Revelation 2 says –

“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children

of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.”

-Revelation 2:14

Therefore, despite Balak not being mentioned in the coming destruction of Midian, the Lord, through the Apostle John, shows that Balak was considered a part of what is coming in the Chapters ahead. As the leader of the five kings of Midian, the Lord shows that he ultimately was the one who was deceived by Balaam, even if he was not killed by Israel in the battle.

For now, it simply finishes with the thought that he went his way. The story of Balaam is one which has been difficult in many ways to grasp, and yet there are obvious points which have come out from it. One is that God is completely faithful to His covenant with Israel, and therefore, we can be assured that He will be completely faithful to His New Covenant and all that it details concerning our eternal future.

Secondly, we can see that though on the surface, Balaam might have seemed like a reasonable person, with a detailed study, we find that he was one who was sold out to money. He did the right thing despite his ways, not because of them. And that should lead us to always consider that this is possible with those we interact with, especially those who appear to be religiously sound.

Far too many people have been led astray by those who have claimed that had special insights into the things of God, or who claim that they have a special ability or personal connection to God concerning prophetic matters. We need to be extremely careful to not simply believe people like this.

It is the word of God, and that alone, from which we receive our instruction in such things. If we were to count the number of supposed prophets, healers, miracle workers, and etc., throughout the church age, the list would go on and on. They are there in abundance today, and they add nothing to the Word of God.

Let us be reasonable in our doctrine, and let us pursue sound theology by pursuing God through His word alone. In that, we will stand approved, and not be remembered as Balaam and Balak, but as great people of God who are found pleasing in His eyes. This is our charge, and this is our responsibility. And so let us assume it, and let us pursue it all the days of our lives. To the glory of God.

Closing Verse: *“Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, ‘Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.’” Revelation 18:21*

Next Week: Numbers 25:1-18 *This guy was full of high octane gas...* (The Zeal of Phinehas) (49th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Balaam’s Fourth Oracle

So Balaam said to Balak

“Did I not also speak to your messengers
— — —-Whom you sent to me, saying, and I am saying still
‘If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold
I could not go beyond the word of the Lord
— — —-to do good or bad of my own will

What the Lord says, that I must speak
And now, indeed, I am going to my people, my path I will blaze
Come, I will advise you
What this people will do to your people in the latter days

So he took up his oracle and said:
Words that should make Balak dread...

“The utterance of Balaam the son of Beor,
And the utterance of the man whose eyes are opened;
The utterance of him who hears the words of God,
And has the knowledge of the Most High,
Who sees the vision of the Almighty,
Who falls down, with eyes wide open:
“I see Him, but not now;
I behold Him, but not near;
A Star shall come out of Jacob;
A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,

And batter the brow of Moab,
And destroy all the sons of tumult.
“And Edom shall be a possession;
Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession,
While Israel does valiantly.
Out of Jacob One shall have dominion,
And destroy the remains of the city.”

Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said:
Things that for Amalek lay ahead

“Amalek was first among the nations,
But shall be last until he perishes.”

Then he looked on the Kenites, and he took up his oracle and said:
Words for them of what lay ahead

“Firm is your dwelling place,
And your nest is set in the rock;
Nevertheless Kain shall be burned.
How long until Asshur carries you away captive?”

Then he took up his oracle and said:
What things would be like in the days ahead

“Alas! Who shall live when God does this?
But ships shall come from the coasts of Cyprus,
And they shall afflict Asshur and afflict Eber,
And so shall Amalek, until he perishes.”

So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place
Balak also went his way, with mud all over his face

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land

May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 25:1-18 (THE ZEAL OF PHINEHAS)

There are a lot of confusing subjects in Scripture, but one of the most confusing of all comes from the book of James, which, by the way, we are currently going through in our daily verse by verse analysis of Scripture. You might learn something if you follow along *hint hint.*

In James 2, he speaks about faith versus works, and justification in relation to that. It is such a difficult subject to understand that there are still giant differences in theology among scholars concerning his words two thousand years after they were penned. Paul says in Romans 3, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” But James says in James 2, “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” That sounds like a contradiction, doesn’t it?

Some say it is, and that Scripture isn’t reliable. The Roman Catholics grab on to James’ words and beat congregants over the head with them in order to justify the unjustifiable. In fact, they say in Canon 10 from the Council of Trent that –

“If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”

In other words, they mean that a person isn’t saved by grace through faith alone. Rather, we need to do stuff in order to be justified before God. However, the reformers came out and said, “No, we are saved by grace through faith alone.” So how did they handle the words of James? They said, and they still say today, that works stem naturally from saving faith and they are the fruit of that faith. If we don’t have works, we probably aren’t saved.

That begs a lot of questions, first and foremost, “Just what works are you implying?” Regardless of that though, the RCC came back against that with Canon 24 at the Council of Trent –

“If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema.”

So we have some faulty logic from the reformers, but we also have some heretical teachings from the RCC. Where do we go to get an answer to these things?

Text Verse: *“They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor,
And ate sacrifices made to the dead.*

*²⁹ Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds,
And the plague broke out among them.*

*³⁰ Then Phinehas stood up and intervened,
And the plague was stopped.*

*³¹ And that was accounted to him for righteousness
To all generations forevermore.” Psalm 106:28-31*

It says here that the Phinehas stood up and intervened. Because of that, it “was accounted to him for righteousness.” In other words, he was justified before God. That sounds a lot like the Roman Catholic position, doesn’t it? He did something and he was reckoned as righteous.

Is that what Numbers 25 teaches? If so, should we take Paul’s words and chuck them out of the Bible? Where do we go to get a proper answer? It is, “To the word of God.” Yes, every such answer is to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Deed Done in Faith (verses 1-9)

¹Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove,

v’yeshev yisrael ba-shitim – “And sat Israel in the Shittim.” The name Shittim is first seen here, but the last place that they were noted at was recorded in Numbers 22 –

“Then the children of Israel moved, and camped in the plains of Moab on the side of the Jordan *across from* Jericho.” Numbers 22:1

This is further defined by Numbers 33 –

“They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jesimoth as far as the Abel Acacia Grove in the plains of Moab.” Numbers 33:9

Israel is spread out over this large grassy area. The name Shittim means Acacias. That, in turn, comes from a word signifying “a scourge.” This is because of its scourging thorns which cover the tree and are hard and sharp. It is in this place that another event occurs which will be remembered throughout the pages of the Bible, even to the book of Revelation.

This is the last stop for Israel before entering into Canaan, and yet, it is here that Israel succumbs to great temptation and the violate the very laws which they had been given to keep them from such things. This is evidenced with the words...

1 (con't) and the people

The words, “and the people,” are general in nature. It doesn't mean “all the people,” but rather it is referring to Israel as a whole regardless as to the number who actually fell into transgression.

1 (con't) began to commit harlotry

The word here has a two-fold meaning. First, it signifies that the people engaged in actual physical fornication. However, the word also signifies harlotry against God. When one worships other gods, it is harlotry against the true God. Both are occurring as can be seen from the context of the passage.

What certainly happened is that the enticements of the women of Moab in a physical manner led the men to also succumb to the spiritual harlotry against the Lord. This is a pattern which any and all need to be aware of. The natural will lead to the spiritual. It is found, for example, in Solomon many years later –

“But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, *and* Hittites—² from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love.³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.⁴ For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as *was* the heart of his father David.⁵ For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.⁶ Solomon did evil in

the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as *did* his father David. ⁷ Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. ⁸ And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.” 1 Kings 11:1-8

For Israel, they were first enticed...

¹ (con't) **with the women of Moab.**

el benot moav – “with the daughters of Moab.” Here we have a great source of falling away from God. Balaam was unsuccessful in his attempts to curse Israel. Instead, his words blessed them. He had subsequently advised Moab that the only way they were going to overcome Israel would be through seduction. This is certain based on the words of Numbers 31 (and elsewhere) where it is noted that Balaam was killed along with the Midianites for recommending this course of action.

By enticing the men with women, they were able to draw them away from their allegiances. This same pattern is seen throughout history in espionage rings which set honey traps for unsuspecting fools. For Israel...

² **They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods,**

The carnal led directly to the spiritual. This was warned against by the Lord in Exodus 34-

“Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. ¹³ But you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and cut down their wooden images ¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God), ¹⁵ lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and *one of them* invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶ and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.” Exodus 34:12-16

He told them that when they came into Canaan, they were to be watchful and not fall into such temptation. They are not even in the land yet, and it has happened. They failed to heed...

² (con't) **and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.**

Exactly as the Lord had said would occur with those in Canaan has come about even before entering it. It specifically notes that the people ate. The reason for this inclusion is two-fold. First, when a sacrifice is made to a god, it is customary to participate in the eating of that sacrifice. Thus, one joins himself to that god.

But secondly, it is to be remembered that Israel had the manna each morning. They had complained against that on several occasions, but the manna pictures Christ's sustaining influence. They found Christ tasteless and insufficient, and so they went after other gods. What started with sexual enticement took the people in a completely unholy direction.

Through sexual enticement, the hearts of the people were drawn to spiritual harlotry. Does anyone here today think they are immune from this? Watch and pay heed.

³ **So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor,**

In the previous verse, the word "gods" was used twice. It is the standard word for "god" which is *elohim*. The plural here stands for the singular. Israel joined himself to Baal of Peor, which is believed to be a different name for their god Chemosh, the god of war. The word Baal simply means "master" or "lord," and it can be used to speak of a person or even the Lord, but in the context, it is referring to the lord of Peor. *Peor* comes from the verb *paar* meaning "to open wide." Thus, it means "The Opening." Abarim says of this word –

"It's used to apply to the mouth but suggests to allude to other bodily cavities. This verb yields no nouns, which suggests that it describes doings out of a kind of hunger or desire rather than merely the mechanics of opening. In that sense it means to desire, to yearn and obviously also to lust."

The name fits the account. The people are drawn to the "master of lusts." Also in this verse, the word *tsamad*, or joined, is introduced. It is a rare word, and three of its five uses will be in connection with this occurrence now. It signifies to join or fasten. Israel had bound itself to a false god, coming under its yoke and rule through this event. Because of this...

³ (con't) **and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.**

v'yikhar aph Yehovah b'yisrael – “and burned the nostril of Yehovah in Israel.” As has happened before, the anger of the Lord was so hot, it was as if flames shot out of His nostril. There could be no excuse for what occurred and no leniency upon the offenders. What is implied here is that the plague, which will be mentioned later, began immediately because of the anger of the Lord. The only way to stop what had begun would be to take the actions next directed by the Lord. This is the same in thought, then, that was seen in Numbers 16:46 –

“So Moses said to Aaron, ‘Take a censer 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 wrath has gone out from the Lord. The plague has begun.’”

The necessary remedial action is next described...

⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord,

Though debated, this probably doesn’t mean that the leaders would be hung, but that the leaders would be those to testify to the names of the people below them who had gone astray. From there, the leaders would execute punishment upon them.

What occurs here is hard to determine. The word is *yaqa*, and it has only been used so far to describe Jacob’s thigh which was dislocated. The word means “to alienate” or “dislocate.” Thus, translations will say “hang.”

However, the next verse leads to the thought that they were first executed and then hung. Either way, the thought is that they will be publicly and openly exposed, just as they had publicly and openly disgraced the name of the Lord through their actions. In saying, *I’Yehovah*, or “for the Lord,” the idea is that their being exposed was as means of appeasing His wrath.

^{4 (con’t)} out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.”

The Hebrew reads *neged ha’shemesh*, or “against the sun.” The idea is that they would be on display in the open sun, and then their bodies would be taken down at the setting of the sun. Their being exposed was to humiliate them for their actions, just as their actions had humiliated the Lord’s name among the people.

⁵ So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.”

In the last verse, the *rashe*, or heads were mentioned. Here the *shofete*, or judges, are mentioned. They are probably the same people, first designated by their status, and now by their function. As heads of the people, they were to be judges of their actions. And more, they were then to be the executioners of the offenders. Anyone who had transgressed and joined to the Baal of Peor was to be called out, judged, and executed.

⁶ And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman

It is certain that the anger of the Lord and the plague upon the people had begun. Further, the command to execute the offenders has been given, but this person was probably unaware of it and was simply on his way to enjoy himself.

The Hebrew says, “the Midianite woman,” not “a Midianite woman.” She is singled out here first because of her status, which will be explained later, and which means this event was not by chance, but was rather planned.

Secondly, it is seen that the Midianites are actually the force behind what is occurring, even though they are first mentioned here. And thirdly, calling her “the Midianite” sets her apart for all future references to this event in the memory of Israel.

⁶ (con’t) in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

The transgression of this person is aggravated by the fact that this individual not only brought a foreign woman into the camp, but he brought her directly before the tent of meeting. Moses’ tent was stationed directly east of the sanctuary.

This is a willful act of defiance against the Lord, against Moses, and in a spiteful jab at the people who gathered at the tent of meeting to mourn the events which had taken place, including the plague of the Lord’s anger. With the authorization of the Lord for action to be taken already given, a hero arises to do just that...

⁷ Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand;

The name *phinehash*, or Phinehas, comes from the words mouth and brass or mouth and serpent. Thus, the name means “Mouth of Brass,” meaning “Mouth of Judgment,” because brass signifies judgment, or “Mouth of a Serpent.”

It is apparent that he was one of the congregation weeping at the tent of meeting. He was distraught by the events which had occurred, and at the anger of the Lord which had arisen because of the actions of the people.

In his anger, he got up and grabbed a *romakh* or javelin. It is a new word which comes from an unused root meaning to hurl. Thus it is a weapon, like a spear or javelin, one would hurl at an enemy.

⁸ and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body.

Here is a word found only here in Scripture, *ha'quvah*, or “the tent.” It signifies an arched area. It is the inner or rear part of the tent where privacy would be sought. The privacy they sought was ended with the coming of Phinehas.

The context clearly implies that the two were one above the other, and thus in the act of having sex. In his anger at the events, Phinehas took the javelin and plunged it through them both.

In this is another word found only here in the Bible, *qovah*, or belly. Both words – *quvah*, or tent, and *qovah*, or belly, are derived from the word *qavav*, or curse, which was used eight times in the Balaam passages. That word signifies “to scoop out.” Thus, it almost appears as if the words are selected to show a connection to the attempted curses of Balaam on Israel and to what occurs here.

Regardless of that, the action of Phinehas was enough to satisfy the Lord that the honor of His name had been defended...

^{8 (con't)} So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.

Just as in Numbers 16 when Aaron went among the congregation with the incense to atone for the sins of the people, thus stopping the plague, so the actions of Phinehas also stopped the plague. The Lord looked on his deeds with approval and relented from any further slaughter of the people, but by then, many had died...

⁹ And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

Here is an interesting dilemma between the Old and New Testaments, which liberals will often use to say that the Bible has contradictions in it. In 1 Corinthians 10:8, Paul says, “Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.” The Old says 24,000 while Paul says 23,000. However, Paul does say, “in one day.”

What appears to be the case is that one thousand died separately from the others. This would then be those tried and executed by Moses which would be in addition to the 23,000 who died in the plague. As always, there is an individual punishment for offense, and there is collective punishment as well. There is no reason to assume that there is any contradiction between what Paul wrote and what is recorded in Numbers.

*Lord God, wickedness is everywhere and it tears me up
If I could I would end it all now
I would give the wicked their overflowing cup
And I would put it all to an end for sure somehow*

*But I am not in the judgment seat
And I can only do what I can do
And so I speak of Jesus, my Lord, so sweet
Look on my heart, O God; my intentions are true*

*Reward me according to my righteousness
Reward me according to the cleanness of my hands
Though this world is in a dreadful mess
You are the One who sees my heart, and in seeing understands*

II. Harass the Midianites (verses 10-18)

¹⁰ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

With these words, a new section is introduced, even though it bears directly on what has just been recorded.

¹¹ “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.

Again, as in verse 7, the lineage of Phinehas is given. This is to show that he was of the priests and one who bore authority. It is how he has used that authority which is commendable. At other times in Scripture, such people in authority will act in a vastly different manner.

Here the Lord speaks of His *khemah*, or wrath. That word was used in Leviticus to describe the fury of the Lord when Israel disobeys. Even though they have not yet entered into the land of Israel, they have already now partaken of that fury through their vile conduct.

However, His fury was stayed by the zeal of Phinehas. The word here signifies jealousy. It has been seen so far seven times in Numbers 5 concerning the jealousy of a husband in regards to his possibly unfaithful wife.

The Lord is treating Israel as His bride in a covenant relationship. When she strays, His jealousy is aroused. But because of Phinehas' jealousy for the sake of the Lord, he has accepted his actions as an atoning offering and the relationship is restored, and...

¹² Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace;

The covenant of the Lord's peace signifies divine favor and protection. It does not mean that all will be well at all times, but that the Lord will not forget, and that peace between the two shall never end. This is alluded to between the Lord and the people in Isaiah 54 where the term, "covenant of My peace" is used.

Paul uses that passage from Isaiah, and he equates it to the church in Galatians 4. Phinehas is used here as a type of Christ who is zealous for the name and honor of the Lord. Thus, the covenant of peace anticipates that greater covenant to come in Christ.

¹³ and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood,

This needs to be taken in its proper light. The word here is *olam*. It comes from a word which signifies to conceal. Thus, it speaks of time out of mind. It can mean forever, but the Mosaic covenant is not a forever covenant. It was a covenant which anticipated a New Covenant. Thus, the priesthood of Phinehas would last until it was superseded by the greater priesthood of Christ.

The line of Phinehas continued on until the coming of Christ with only one short interruption which went from the time of Eli until David. The promise of this enduring priesthood was fulfilled by the Lord as spoken here.

13 (con't) because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.”

The words here look to the greater work of Christ in two ways. First, the zeal of Christ was seen in His defense of the Lord and the temple in John 2 when He cleared the temple which had been defiled by the people.

Secondly, Christ is the one who made the full and final atonement for the children of Israel. Phinehas' actions atoned for Israel so that the plague of wrath was stopped, but Christ's cross atoned for Israel, and – indeed – all the world so that the plague of death is forever ceased in Him.

14 Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites.

The name Zimri probably deals with music and thus it would be My Musician, My Praise, My Song, or Song of the Lord. He is specifically noted as a leader of his father's house, and thus he was all the more responsible for his actions.

But not only that, this shows the bravery of Phinehas' action because Zimri's status would mean that there would be many who could claim the status of the avenger of blood and thus come against Phinehas. It is certainly only through the Lord's strong approval of his actions that this did not come about.

It appears from Numbers 26, that the main group of those who died in the plague were probably from Simeon. During the second census of the people which is recorded there, Simeon is the tribe with the smallest total number. As they were to the far south of the encampment, they were probably closest to the town which seduced Israel through the Baal of Peor.

Further, noting his position shows that Phinehas did not regard the position, but rather the actions of the man. In his failure to meet the call to his office, and the honor of the Lord, he forfeited his life.

¹⁵ And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian.

The name Cozbi comes from the word *kazav*, meaning to lie, or to be a liar. Thus, her name either means "Lying," or "My Lie." Her father's name, *Tsur*, means, "Rock." He is said to have been a head of the people of a father's house in Midian, just as Zimri was in Simeon. He is named as one of the five kings of Midian in Numbers 31.

The arrangement appears to be a purposeful attempt to subvert the people's authority through such arrangements.

¹⁶ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

Once again, a new thought is introduced. Each step, the narrative is slowly unfolding to lead to a climax in the events. The words here come later in the chronology of events, and they are directly connected to Chapter 31 where the command now to be stated is actually carried out. And for that command, Moses is told to...

¹⁷ "Harass the Midianites, and attack them;

tsaror eth ha'midyanim – "Treat like enemies the Midianites." From this, it is apparent that Midian was behind the seduction of Israel, even if it was in Moabite territory. It was seen at the beginning of the Balaam passage that it is probable that Midian ruled over Moab at this time. That seems to be borne out by the command now.

The Lord tells Moses that they are to treat Midian as enemies and to attack them. This will be carried out in Chapter 31. In this attack, the righteous anger of Phinehas is to be transferred to the whole nation. They are being instructed to learn to detest what God hates, and to destroy that which God has determined is to be destroyed.

Phinehas has set the example, and the people are to learn from it and follow suit.

¹⁸ for they harassed you

The same word from the previous verse is used again. "Treat them as enemies because they treated you as enemies." There was no enmity between the two until Midian determined to subvert the people's devotion to the Lord and pull them away from Him...

¹⁸ (con't) with their schemes by which they seduced you

Here, the same word in noun and verb form is used. In essence, it says, “with the beguilings by which they beguiled you.” They came to Israel with a set purpose and intention. It was to draw the people away from the Lord which was...

18 (con’t) in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi,

There is an emphasis in these words. The matter of Peor was exacerbated by the matter of Cozbi. The foes had attempted to seduce Israel through their leadership and by their leadership. This was because Cozbi was...

18 (con’t) the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister,

The focus is on Cozbi and her position within the community. She was both the daughter of one of their leaders, elevating the matter, and she was also their sister, meaning that it was a commonly known matter. It could not be that it was a secretly conducted affair, but one which was planned at the top and known by all.

18 (fin) who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor.”

The inclusion of these words, the substance of which is already known, is certainly to indicate that as she was killed, so are all of Midian to be killed. In other words, what is said here is given to justify what will be recorded in Chapter 31 –

“And Moses said to them: ‘Have you kept all the women alive? ¹⁶ Look, these *women* caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. ¹⁷ Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. ¹⁸ But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately.’” Numbers 31:15-18

Cozbi’s actions were known and condoned by the leadership and the people. Therefore, their attitude was approving of what she did, and it was a part of their moral makeup. For them, destruction was the only remedy.

*I have a zeal for You in my heart, O God
It consumes me throughout the day and into the night
It burns in me with every step I trod
I wish to honor Your name, Your power, and Your might*

*When I see the wicked, I am distressed indeed
And I loathe what they do, they mock Your glory
They follow hard after their father, they are Satan's seed
It is a sad, maddening truth to life's story*

*But some I can tell about Jesus and His cross
And some will turn away and mock Your glory still
For those who listen, there will be gain, not loss
But for the others, may be done in them, O God, Your will*

III. Phinehas

What we have here is a picture of the battle God's people have faced, and Christ's victory over it. Man is caught in the trap of the devil's lies, stuck in a system of works-based righteousness.

Israel, God's people, are said to be in Shittim, meaning "Scourges." The root of that word, *shotet*, is used only once in the Bible. In Joshua 23:13, it said –

“...know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.” Joshua 23:13

The people of Canaan are equated to scourges who would afflict Israel. Thus, the scourges are that which draw the people away from faith in the Lord and to that which is false. In this place of scourges, the people are beguiled and drawn away from the Lord through the beguilings of Midian – meaning “Place of Judgment.”

But in this place of scourges, along comes a hero, Phinehas, or “Mouth of Judgment.” He is the son of Eleazar, or Whom God Helps. He pictures Christ, who bears the mouth of judgment. He entered into the very spot where man is harassed and beguiled.

In order to restore God's people to Him, Phinehas went into the tent and pierced Zimri and Cozbi through the belly. The words *quvah*, or tent, and *qovah*, or belly, are both derived from *qavav*, meaning a curse.

Here, Phinehas pictures Christ, entering the *quvah*, or place of the curse, meaning our world where death reigns. He destroys the curse, pictured by piercing the *qovah* (the

belly – the curse), with the spear. He is victorious over the curse, and the plague of death upon the people is stopped.

Cozbi, or “Liar,” pictures the lies of the devil. He is called, the “father of lies” by Jesus. She is the daughter of Tsur or “Rock.” Tsur represents the rock of works-based righteousness who is contrasted to the true Tsur, or rock, which is the faith of Abraham. That is seen in Isaiah 51:1 –

“Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness,
You who seek the Lord:
Look to the rock *from which* you were hewn,
And to the hole of the pit *from which* you were dug.
² Look to Abraham your father,
And to Sarah *who* bore you;
For I called him alone,
And blessed him and increased him.” Isaiah 51:1

The man Zimri, or “My Song,” or “My Praise,” is man who is drawn away from the Lord, enticed by the lies of the devil, into works-based righteousness. The “song” here is emblematic of following one’s own course, or song, and uniting with the lie. This is what is destroyed by Christ, represented by the actions of Phinehas.

In his act, Phinehas is granted a covenant of peace with the Lord and an everlasting priesthood, just as Christ was granted through His work. As it says in Hebrews 5, when speaking of Christ –

“So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him:
‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.’
⁶ As *He* also says in another *place*:
‘You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.’” Hebrews 5:5, 6

This, in short, is the pictorial meaning of the passage we have before us today. Christ is the Victor over the devil through His noble actions. From there, we can also see in this passage what it means to be people of faith who live out lives of faith, and how that relates to our deeds before the Lord.

In our text verse, it was said of what Phinehas did that it “was accounted to him for righteousness.” These are the same words, and it is the same sentiment that was spoken of Abraham in what Paul uses as his declaration of justification by faith alone.

And more, the exact same words in the Greek translation of the Old Testament which speak of Phinehas in Psalm 106, are spoken of Abraham in James 2:24, where James then says, “a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”

The question is, “Why would the Lord inspire James to use a passage from Abraham, many years after he had been declared righteous, instead of just citing this account concerning Phinehas whose deeds coincided with his declaration?” It’s a good question. Does anyone want to answer it?

The answer is that Phinehas’ deeds didn’t justify him. His zeal for the Lord did. The Lord looks at intent as action complete. If I have it in my mind to commit adultery, my intent has caused me to sin. That is why there is a tenth commandment which requires no action at all. Coveting is intent.

If Phinehas had jumped up and grabbed the spear and then was restrained by someone, it would make no difference in God’s eyes. His intent was to defend the zeal of the Lord. He simply had nothing to obstruct his following through with that intent.

It was God’s intent, from the foundation of the world, that Christ would go to the cross of Calvary. That is stated explicitly in Revelation 13:8. The difference between the Lord’s will and ours is that ours does not always get carried through to its fulfillment.

We may not commit adultery actually, but we do so when we lust after another in our hearts. We may not be able to defend the Lord’s honor in some manner, but our intent to do so is seen and known. Phinehas may not have been able to carry through with his intent, but his zeal showed that he would have.

These things do not mean that if we “say” we intended to do something, that we are credited for that action. Rather, the intent has to be real and in our hearts where God will read it. We cannot pay lip service to God with our hearts. He reads every motive behind every action – intended or completed.

Phinehas may be the person most emblematic of the Lord above every other person in the Bible simply because everything said about him in this passage reflects Christ.

Phinehas, or Mouth of Judgment, rose from the congregation – as did Christ. He had a zeal for the honor of the Lord, as did Christ. He had a desire to defend that honor, as did Christ, whose mouth speaks judgment. And, he was able to follow through with that in action, as was Christ. In doing so, it says he provided atonement for the children of Israel, as did Christ. In turn, he was promised a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, as was Christ.

In saying that Christ defended the honor of the Lord, it means that He did for the people what they could not do. In the incident here, many people were executed. The executioners were told what to do, and they did it. There was no righteousness imputed to them for what they did. They simply obeyed and acted.

Phinehas, however, did what he did for the Lord's name, not out of command. Likewise, Christ voluntarily gave Himself. As it says in the book of Jonah, "Salvation is of the Lord." Jesus, or Yeshua, is Salvation, and He is of the Lord. The Lord Himself worked out salvation, defending His honor, because it is not by works, but by faith that one is saved. Phinehas' actions did not save him. His faith in, and zeal for, the Lord did. His desire was simply worked out in action.

Let's get this right so that we understand what James is saying, and what we are to learn from Phinehas. James says, "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." What is he talking about? He is talking about intent. Faith is what saves. If we don't have faithful intent in our action, our faith is dead.

Likewise, when he says that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only," how do you explain that to a quadriplegic who loves Christ and yet can't do anything at all for Him? You tell him that his intent, his heart, is what God is evaluating.

In the end, our salvation is solely and entirely of grace through faith. And our rewards will be given to us, or taken from us, based on our true and heartfelt intent, even if we do not, or cannot, act on our intent. When we lust after another, rewards will be lost. When we honestly desire to do, but cannot, rewards will be gained. And when we desire to do and are able to, it will be commendable indeed.

When we cannot follow through, it does not mean we are being un-Christlike. It simply means that we have been inhibited by God from being able to do that thing that we desire to do for Him because He has another plan in store for us.

Christ went through with His mission because He was preordained to do so. When God says, "I will do," it is done. We are not always in such a position, but He knows that already. David desired to build a temple for the Lord his God, but Solomon explains how that went –

"Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple for the name of the Lord God of Israel. ¹⁸ But the Lord said to my father David, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well that it was in your heart.'"
-1 Kings 8:17, 18

Let us be like these heroes of the faith and be like Christ in the process, because they were like Christ. God will look upon your heart and know if you are truly sincere in your desire, or if you are just blowing smoke. So, don't blow smoke. Live for Christ, pursue Christ, and honor Christ with all your heart and in your actions when you can – to the glory of God.

Closing Verse: *"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:*

*⁷ 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;*

⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.'" Romans 4:5-8

Next Week: Numbers 26:1-51 *We are going to keep counting until the thing is done...* (The Second Census, Part I) (50th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Zeal of Phinehas

Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove there and then
And the people began to commit harlotry with Moab's women

They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods
And the people ate and bowed down to their gods for a spell
So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor

And the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel

Then the Lord said to Moses

“Take all the leaders of the people

———And hang the offenders before the Lord

Out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord

———may turn away from Israel, and you be restored

So Moses said to the judges of Israel for sure

“Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor

And indeed, one of the children of Israel

Came and presented to his brethren, a despicable greeting

A Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all

———the congregation of the children of Israel

Who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting

Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar

The son of Aaron the priest, saw it

He rose from among the congregation

And took a javelin in his hand, for some violence to commit

And he went after the man of Israel

Into the tent and thrust both of them through, so the word does tell

The man of Israel, and the woman through her body

So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel

And those who died in the plague that day

Were twenty-four thousand, yes twenty-four thousand passed away

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

These words to him He was relaying

“Phinehas the son of Eleazar

The son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath

———from the children of Israel

Because he was zealous with My zeal among them

So that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal as well

Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him
My covenant of peace; let it be understood
And it shall be to him and his descendants after him
A covenant of an everlasting priesthood

Because he was zealous for his God, yes he did well
And made atonement for the children of Israel

Now the name of the Israelite who was killed
Who was killed with the woman of the Midianites
Was Zimri the son of Salu
A leader of a father's house among the Simeonites

And the name of the Midianite woman
Who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur
He was head of the people of a father's house in Midian
But he didn't get to see his daughter anymore, for sure

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words He was to him relaying

"Harass the Midianites, and attack them
For they harassed you with their schemes
By which they seduced you in the matter of Peor
And in the matter of Cozbi; bad news for them, so it seems

The daughter of a leader of Midian
———-who got ran through there on the floor
Their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague
———-because of Peor

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand

And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 26:1-51 (THE SECOND CENSUS, PART I)

Today we have a sermon that is comprised almost solely of names and numbers. Very little else will be presented, and almost all of the time, you will simply be hearing the meaning of the names of the people, or – in some cases – the best guess of the meaning.

Some names are so rare and obscure that a best guess is all that can be given. Don't fret over the names, trying to remember them. You won't. But when evaluating the word, one verse at a time, this is the logical and proper way of handling sections like this.

There may be a time when you say, "I need to know what that guy's name means." Don't worry, someone has spent his entire Monday figuring it out for you. Even if you never come back to this passage again, you won't have lost anything. Sunday morning is to be filled with the word. That much is certain.

As I will repeat towards the beginning of the verses, the main thing to pay heed to is the fact that this listing differs from the first census because it is based on tribe and then named-family unit.

On the other hand, the first census, was based on the tribe, the chosen leader of each tribe, and then the tribe's total number – as it says – "by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names."

But, in that listing, no families were named. Here, they are. Why are the named families important? Well, we'll see as we go along. There is a harmony which is presented that will take us until the end of the sermon to see.

Text Verse: *"When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,
When He separated the sons of Adam,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel." Deuteronomy 32:8*

The Lord plans everything very, very meticulously. This is true with Israel, this is true with the nations, and this is true with the times and the seasons, the epochs and the eras. Everything fits because God is a God of order, structure, harmony, and wisdom.

When we take a genealogical listing of people such as are found in today's listing, and we consider that God is the Source of this group, and it is recorded for a reason, we should say, I'm sure we have important information to be gleaned from it. Such is the case here. Even if it is just one thing that is revealed, it will be something that speaks out that God is in control.

We will see this today, because this record is another marvelous part of His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. According to Their Families

¹And it came to pass, after the plague, that the Lord spoke to Moses and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying:

Here we begin a completely new path in the history of Israel. In Numbers 20:23, we saw this –

“And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying:”

That was the last time that the Lord addressed Aaron. Shortly after that, Moses, Aaron, and Eleazar ascended Mount Hor and Aaron was gathered to his fathers. Since then, Moses has been spoken to several times, but now, for the first time, the Lord includes Eleazar in his words, calling him, “the son of Aaron the priest.”

This is noted to be “after the plague.” The plague was mentioned in verses 8 and 9 of the previous chapter where it was seen that twenty-four thousand had perished. Now, because of this large change in the size of Israel, and because this is an entirely new generation, a census will again be made of the people.

The plague is seen to have come after the deaths of the previous generation who were told they would die for disobedience. Therefore, it means that those who died were of those who should have entered into Canaan and been granted an inheritance with the people. But through their own fault, this was denied them.

The lesson had been learned, and now a counting of those who remained is set to take place. It should be remembered that the previous chapter ended with Moses being instructed to harass the Midianites. The census is taken before doing this, not after.

This is evident from the words of Chapter 31 where statements are made concerning the number of the fighting men who survived the battle. Those words clearly indicate that the battle against Midian occurred after the census which will now be taken...

²“Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by their fathers’ houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel.”

The words are similar to what was stated to Moses over thirty-eight years earlier –

“Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, ³ from twenty years old and above—all who *are able to go to war* in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.” Numbers 1:2, 3

That census was intended to have an accurate counting of the men who would enter Canaan and be ready for battle just a few short days afterwards. But such was not to be the case. Instead of a counting of how many would fight the Lord’s battles, there was a counting for all to know how many would perish in the wilderness.

Now, those who are battle-ready will again be counted. However, this census is also made to catalog who is in what family and where people belong accordingly, and then from those numbers it will be determined how the land of Israel will be portioned out. This will become evident before the census is complete.

³So Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them

What is left unsaid, but what should be understood, is that Moses and Eleazar are to speak to the leaders of the people, just as during the first census. This is obvious from how the next verse is worded.

^{3 (con’t)} in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho, saying:

b’arbot moav al yarden y’rekho – “in the plains of Moab by Jordan of Jericho.” It is the same location as that recorded in Numbers 22:1. Israel is still encamped where they were when Balak called Balaam to come and curse the people, which is directly opposite Jericho in the land of Canaan.

⁴“Take a census of the people from twenty years old and above, just as the Lord commanded Moses and the children of Israel who came out of the land of Egypt.”

The words, "Take a census of the people" are inserted by the translators, but they are rightly included. Further, the idea of having come out of Egypt is stated to show that the same group of people standing before Moses now, and who are about to be counted, are the same people who came out of Egypt, or who descended from those who came out of Egypt.

The Lord did not unredeem Israel. Rather, they remained under His control despite their extended period of punishment. What was started will find its completion, even though there is a sizable delay in it having come about.

⁵ Reuben was the firstborn of Israel. The children of Reuben were: of Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites;

The listing of the tribes follows that of Numbers 1, with the exception of Manasseh being placed before Ephraim in this census. The names begin with the firstborn, Reuben, which means, "See, a Son." He came through Jacob's wife Leah. His sons are listed with Khanokh, or "Dedicated," first. Next is listed Pallu, meaning "Separated," "Distinguished," or even "Wonderful."

⁶ of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the family of the Carmites.

Khetsron means "Enclosure," or "Surrounded by a Wall." Karmi means "Vinedresser," or "My Vineyard."

⁷ These are the families of the Reubenites:

Here we have the main feature of this particular census, the tally according to *family*. The stress on the unity of the family, along with the unity of the tribe, is given because the land is to be divided not merely by tribe, but by family within the tribe. The evidence of this will be seen especially when we arrive at the families of Manasseh and see what occurs there.

^{7 (con't)} those who were numbered of them were forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty.

The total in Numbers 1 was 46,500. That means Reuben has decreased by 2770. Some of this decrease is probably attributable to the families of Dathan and Abiram being destroyed in Korah's rebellion in Numbers 16, as will be noted in a minute.

⁸ And the son of Pallu was Eliab.

U-bene pallu eliav – “and *the sons of Pallu were Eliab.*” It is plural, but there is one son. The plural is given for the singular to indicate the family. Eliab means “My God is Father.”

⁹ The sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram.

Nemuel may be the same as Yemuel. Yemuel means “Day of God.” Dathan probably means “Their Law.” Abiram means “Exalted Father,” or “My Father is Exalted.”

^{9 (con’t)} These *are* the Dathan and Abiram, representatives of the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the Lord;

The infamy of Dathan and Abiram are remembered, but they are remembered as “representatives of the congregation.” The word is *qari*, and it is the last time it is used in Scripture. It signifies “called,” or “famous.” They weren’t just average Joe’s, but rather they were leaders who stood against Moses and Aaron. Because Moses and Aaron were called of the Lord, these men are said to have contended *against the Lord*. Because of this...

¹⁰ and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign.

The fate of these men is recounted in order to remind the people of what occurred, and that these men were from Reuben. They had no right to the priesthood or leadership, and yet they presumed to take hold of what was not theirs.

Here, it says they became a *nes*, or a sign. It is the same word used to describe the standard upon which was placed the bronze serpent. They were to be remembered as a conspicuous sign, or banner, to the people of Israel to never again attempt to usurp the Lord’s decisions concerning His leadership and mediatorial choices.

¹¹ Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die.

There are many views on the inclusion of these words. It says in Numbers 16 –

“Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, ³²and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods.”

-Numbers 16:31, 32

What is probable is that the sons of Korah were old enough to have moved out and started their own families. Therefore, they were not a part of those who were destroyed with Korah. It is a statement, then, that the children of the fathers will not be destroyed with their fathers if they do not share in their sins.

¹² The sons of Simeon according to their families were: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites; of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites; of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites;

Simeon means, “He Who Hears.” He is the second son of Jacob and also born through Leah. Nemuel, again, may be the same as Yemuel, or “Day of God.” Yamin means, “Right Hand.” Yakin means something like, “He Will Establish.”

¹³ of Zerach, the family of the Zarhites; of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites.

Zerakh means, “Dawning.” Shaul means, “Asked For.”

¹⁴ These are the families of the Simeonites: twenty-two thousand two hundred.

The total number for Simeon in Numbers 1 is 59,300. Here, it is 22,200. Thus, his numbers dropped by 37,100. It is the largest decrease of any tribe. This is probably because many of the tribe were killed in the matter of Peor. It appears that it is their tribe which was most associated with that, and thus they were destroyed by sword and plague because of it.

¹⁵ The sons of Gad according to their families were: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; of Haggi, the family of the Haggites; of Shuni, the family of the Shunites;

Gad means, “Good Fortune.” He is the seventh son of Israel, and the first born to Leah’s maid Zilpah. He is recorded now because he was encamped with Reuben and Simeon. Tsephon means something like “Gaze,” as in watching. Khagi means, “Festal.” Shuni means something like, “Resting,” or “Quiet.”

¹⁶ of Ozni, the family of the Oznites; of Eri, the family of the Erites;

Ozni means, “My Hearing,” or “My Ear.” Eri means, “Watching,” or maybe, “Watcher of the Lord.”

¹⁷ of Arod, the family of the Arodites; of Areli, the family of the Arelites.

Arod is a rare and difficult name. It may mean, “Fugitive.” Areli probably means “Heroic,” or “Valiant.”

¹⁸ These *are* the families of the sons of Gad according to those who were numbered of them: forty thousand five hundred.

The total number for Gad in Numbers 1 is 45,650. Here it is 40,500. Thus, his numbers dropped by 5,150. As Gad was positioned on the same side of the sanctuary as Reuben and Simeon, it is possible that his numbers were reduced by the same events as for those of the other two tribes.

¹⁹ The sons of Judah *were* Er and Onan; and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.

Judah is the fourth son of Jacob, and the fourth born to Leah. The first two sons of Judah, and what little is recorded about them, is found in Genesis 38. They died before the Lord because of the sins they committed. Judah means, “Praise.” Er means, “Watchful.” Onan means, “Strong,” or “Vigorous.”

²⁰ And the sons of Judah according to their families were: of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; of Perez, the family of the Parzites; of Zerah, the family of the Zarhites.

Shelah means, “Sent Out,” or “Branch.” Perets means, “Break Through.” Zerakh means, “Dawning.”

²¹ And the sons of Perez were: of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites.

Khetsron means, “Enclosure,” or “Surrounded by a Wall.” Khamul means, “Spared.”

²² These *are* the families of Judah according to those who were numbered of them: seventy-six thousand five hundred.

The total number for Judah in Numbers 1 is 74,600. Here it is 76,500. Thus, his numbers increased by 1,900.

²³ The sons of Issachar according to their families were: of Tola, the family of the Tolaites; of Puah, the family of the Punites;

Yisakar means, "He is wages." He is the ninth son of Jacob, and the fifth born to Leah. Tola means, "Worm." Puah is difficult to determine. Maybe it means, "Mouth," or "Utterance."

²⁴ of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites.

Yashuv means, "He Returns." Shimron means, "Vigilant Guardian."

²⁵ These are the families of Issachar according to those who were numbered of them: sixty-four thousand three hundred.

The total number for Issachar in Numbers 1 is 54,400. Here it is 64,300. Thus, his numbers increased by 9,900.

²⁶ The sons of Zebulun according to their families were: of Sered, the family of the Sardites; of Elon, the family of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites.

Zebulun means, "Glorious Dwelling Place." He is the tenth son of Jacob, and the sixth born to Leah. Sered is from a root meaning "to tremble." Elon means, "Oak." Yahleel means, "Hope of God."

²⁷ These are the families of the Zebulunites according to those who were numbered of them: sixty thousand five hundred.

The total number for Zebulun in Numbers 1 is 57,400. Here it is 60,500. Thus, his numbers increased by 3,100.

²⁸ The sons of Joseph according to their families, by Manasseh and Ephraim, were:

Yoseph means, "He will add." He is the eleventh son of Jacob, and the first born to Rachel. Manasseh means, "Forgetting." Ephraim means, "Twice Fruitful."

²⁹ The sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites; and Machir begot Gilead; of Gilead, the family of the Gileadites.

Manasseh, son of Joseph, was adopted by Jacob to receive an inheritance among his other sons. He is the firstborn of Joseph. His son Makir means, “Salesman.” 1 Chronicles 7:14 says that Manasseh bore Makir by a concubine from Aram. This may explain why he then named his own son Gilead.

Gilead means, “Perpetual Fountain,” or “Heap of Booty.” It is the border area between Syria and Canaan, and he may have called him this to honor the union between the two people groups he came from. This also explains why this is said in Numbers 32 –

“And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who *were* in it. ⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he dwelt in it.” Numbers 32:29, 40

The same place from which Machir’s son was named – because of the union between his father and mother, Manasseh and Manasseh’s Aramitiss concubine – became their possession.

³⁰ These *are* the sons of Gilead: of Jeezer, the family of the Jeezerites; of Helek, the family of the Helekites;

lezer means, “Helpless.” Khelek means, “Portion.”

³¹ of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; of Shechem, the family of the Shechemites;

Asriel means, “Vow of God.” Shekhem means, “Shoulder.”

³² of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites; of Hephher, the family of the Hephherites.

Shemida means, “Name of Knowing.” Hephher means, “Pit.”

³³ Now Zelophehad the son of Hephher had no sons, but daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad *were* Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Here now are introduced five women who will be mentioned four times together in Numbers and Joshua. They are the daughters of Tselophekhad, or “Shadow of Fear.” Mahlah means, “Infirmity.” It is akin to the name of one of the sons of Elimelech and Naomi in the book of Ruth – Makhlon. Noah signifies, “Shaky Girl,” or “Wandering.” Kho-glah means, “Turning in joy.” It is akin to the word *khag* which is a festival. Milcah means, “Queen.” Tirzah means, “Well-pleasing” or “Delight.”

Noting now that Zelophehad only had daughters, and then naming those daughters, is intended to pave the way for a legal decision concerning land division which will be mentioned in the next chapter.

³⁴ These *are* the families of Manasseh; and those who were numbered of them *were* fifty-two thousand seven hundred.

The total number for Manasseh in Numbers 1 is 32,200. Here it is 52,700. Thus, his numbers increased by 20,500. This is the largest increase of all of the tribes.

³⁵ These *are* the sons of Ephraim according to their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites; of Becher, the family of the Bachrites; of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites.

Ephraim, son of Joseph, was adopted by Jacob to receive an inheritance among his other sons. He is the second son of Joseph. Shuthelakh means something like, “Breach of Ruins.” Beker means, “Born First.” Takhan means, “Encampment.”

³⁶ And these *are* the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family of the Eranites.

v’elleh bene shutalakh – “And these *are the* sons of Shuthelah.” As in verse 8, the plural stands for the singular. Eran means, “Watchful.”

³⁷ These *are* the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those who were numbered of them: thirty-two thousand five hundred.

The total number for Ephraim in Numbers 1 is 40,500. Here it is 32,500. Thus, his numbers decreased by 8000. Jacob had prophesied that Ephraim would become greater than his older brother Manasseh, and so it appears here that the prophecy had failed. But such is not the case.

In the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 33, Moses will again prophesy of the greatness of Ephraim over Manasseh. In the end, this will be the case. This great change in numbers in favor of Manasseh will be temporary.

^{37 (con’t)} These *are* the sons of Joseph according to their families.

This is stated in this way to show Jacob’s double blessing upon his beloved Joseph, calling the names of Joseph’s sons as his own.

³⁸ The sons of Benjamin according to their families were: of Bela, the family of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites;

Benjamin means, "Son of the Right Hand." He is the twelfth son of Jacob, and the second born to Rachel. Bela means, "Gulp" and thus "Destruction." Ashbel means, "Flowing." Akhiram means, "Brother of Height."

³⁹ of Shupham, the family of the Shuphamites; of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites.

Sh'phupham means, "Serpent." Khupham means, "Protected."

⁴⁰ And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: of Ard, the family of the Ardites; of Naaman, the family of the Naamites.

Ard means, "Fugitive." Naaman means, "Pleasant."

⁴¹ These *are* the sons of Benjamin according to their families; and those who were numbered of them *were* forty-five thousand six hundred.

The total number for Benjamin in Numbers 1 is 35,400. Here it is 45,600. Thus, his numbers increased by 10,200. There is a rather large difference between the names here and those of the family of Benjamin in Genesis 46. Two explanations are that the grandsons were counted as sons, which is acceptable in such genealogies, and that some of the sons may have died early and/or childless.

⁴² These *are* the sons of Dan according to their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These *are* the families of Dan according to their families.

Dan means, "Judge." He is the fifth son of Jacob and the first from his concubine Bilhah. Shukham means, "Humbly." Again, as has been seen twice, the verse says "sons" in the plural which simply stands for the singular. Dan had one son.

⁴³ All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those who were numbered of them, *were* sixty-four thousand four hundred.

Here, the counting of Dan is under his single son Shuham. Despite being one son, he became a giant-sized family. The total number for Dan in Numbers 1 is 62,700. Here Shuham is listed at 64,400. Thus, his numbers increased by 1,700.

⁴⁴ The sons of Asher according to their families were: of Jimna, the family of the Jimnites; of Jesui, the family of the Jesuites; of Beriah, the family of the Beriites.

Asher means, "Happy." He is the eighth son of Jacob and the second born to his concubine Zilpah. Yimna means, "Right Side," and thus, "Prosperity." Yishvi means, "Equal." Beriah means, "In Trouble."

⁴⁵ Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites.

Khever means, "Community." Malkhiel means, "My King is God."

⁴⁶ And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah.

Serakh means, "Abundance." The rarity of mentioning the name of a daughter is not to be missed. She is recorded here, setting her apart as a noted exception to the standard names in such a record. The only record I could find on her is from the sage Maimonides who said that she was the daughter of Asher's wife by another man, who had no sons, and therefore his inheritance went to her. That may be just a Jewish fable attempting to explain her inclusion, so please don't make a permanent stamp in your brain with it.

⁴⁷ These *are* the families of the sons of Asher according to those who were numbered of them: fifty-three thousand four hundred.

The total number for Asher in Numbers 1 is 41,500. Here it is 53,400. Thus, his numbers increased by 11,900.

⁴⁸ The sons of Naphtali according to their families were: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family of the Gunites;

Naphtali means, "My Wrestling." He is the sixth son born to Jacob, and the second born to his concubine Bilhah. Yakhtseel means, "God Divides." Guni means, "My Defense."

⁴⁹ of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites.

Yetser means, “Form,” or “Purpose.” Shillem means, “Recompense.”

⁵⁰ These *are* the families of Naphtali according to their families; and those who were numbered of them *were* forty-five thousand four hundred.

The total number for Naphtali in Numbers 1 is 53,400. Here it is 45,400. Thus, his numbers decreased by 8,000.

⁵¹ These *are* those who were numbered of the children of Israel: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty.

The corresponding number in Numbers 1 was 603,550. Thus, in the years since leaving Sinai, there was a decrease in the people of 1,820. In other words, the total number of people, though reduced, had remained virtually unchanged during the years of wilderness wanderings.

Of the twelve tribes listed here, five decreased in size – Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim, and Naphtali. The other seven all saw increases. Of these twelve tribes, there are fifty-seven family divisions recorded.

The largest numerical increase was that of Manasseh, increasing by 20,500. The largest decrease was Simeon, dropping by 37,100 – more than one half of what it was at the start. They are both the largest percentage change as well, both of them surprisingly changing by exactly 63%.

Interestingly, if you take the fifty-seven named families, and then add in the names of the twelve patriarchs, and then add in the name Jacob, you will arrive – once again – at a total of seventy. The proportion is the same as that was recorded when Jacob went down to Egypt in Genesis 46, and which is again recorded in Exodus 1.

Further, it is the same as the number of nations listed according to in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. There is an order and a harmony in how the Lord conducts His affairs in the world, and that order is worked out in and through the people of the world – both obedient and disobedient.

The number seventy wasn't arbitrarily obtained by pulling one number from here and one number from there in order to come to a result. It is exactly what is intended in this listing. As it said in verse 2 –

“Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male individually.”

The families are what have been detailed in this listing. The father’s houses noted in that verse are the twelve patriarchs. Manasseh and Ephraim fall under Joseph. And, Levi – though counted separately due to inheritance – is one of the twelve patriarchs. Therefore, this entire long and seemingly tedious listing has been given to show us that God is in control.

After thirty-eight years of these people wandering in punishment and dying off as they went, the harmony and structure of Israel never changed. Israel went down to Egypt as a group of seventy. This number was restated a couple hundred years later before their exodus from Egypt for the purpose of showing that the same group who went was the same group who came out – only vastly larger in number.

In their affliction in Egypt, they had grown abundantly and multiplied exceedingly. However, after their being redeemed from Egypt, they rebelled against the Lord, and their numbers were diminished overall, while their total number of adults was completely eradicated, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

The Lord consumed them in the wilderness, and yet He preserved them through the wilderness at the same time. And now, as that time ends and the prospect of future blessing is set before them once again, the tally shows that He has been overseeing every step of the process. Nothing is left to chance, and every detail harmoniously shouts out, “I am the Lord. I am in control.”

We can learn from Israel. They were afflicted and the Lord prospered them. They were given freedom and abundance, and they rebelled against Him. The Lord comforts those who face affliction, and His hand is against those who are contrary to Him. It is that simple, even if in the short term it seems otherwise.

Be sure that if you are sitting here with a difficult time weighing you down, He is there with you in it. And be sure that if you are hiding some sin from Him, you aren’t hiding anything from Him. He is fully aware of it.

Draw close to Him and He will draw near to you. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Turn your heart to the Lord, and be refreshed in the cleansing power of Christ. But whatever you ultimately choose to do, today’s passage shows that your decision will not

change the fact that He is completely in control of the situation. He is the God of order, despite our lives of disorder.

Closing Verse: *“Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.” Romans 11:28-32*

Next Week: Numbers 26:52-65 It’s the end of a long chapter, it is true... (The Second Census, Part II) (51st Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Second Census

And it came to pass, after the plague
Without any further delaying
That the Lord spoke to Moses and Eleazar
The son of Aaron the priest, saying:

“Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel
From twenty years old and above, as to you I now tell
By their fathers’ houses
All who are able to go to war in Israel

So Moses and Eleazar the priest
As the account was next relaying
Spoke with them in the plains of Moab
By the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying:

“Take a census of the people
From twenty years old and above, no one shall be clipped
Just as the Lord commanded Moses and the children of Israel
Who came out of the land of Egypt

Reuben was the firstborn of Israel
The children of Reuben were:
Of Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites
Of Pallu, the family of the Palluites; for sure

Of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites
Of Carmi, the family of the Carmites; so all the names agree
These are the families of the Reubenites
Those who were numbered of them were
— — —-forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty

And the son of Pallu was Eliab, the poor guy
The sons of Eliab were Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram
— — —-that is why

These are the Dathan and Abiram
— — —-representatives of the congregation
Who contended against Moses and Aaron, acting untoward
In the company of Korah
When they contended against the Lord

And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together
With Korah when that company died
When the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men
And they became a sign, against anyone else who might have tried

Nevertheless the children of Korah did not die
The Lord is gracious and merciful; that is why

The sons of Simeon according to their families were:
Of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites
— — —-of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites, so we see
Of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites; Of Zerah
— — —-the family of the Zarhites
Of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites, each according to family
These are the families of the Simeonites:
— — —-all Simeonite born and bred
Twenty-two thousand two hundred

The sons of Gad according to their families were:
A large group of families for sure

Of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; of Haggi
——-the family of the Haggites
Of Shuni, the family of the Shunites; of Ozni
——-the family of the Oznites; and there are more to go
Of Eri, the family of the Erites; of Arod
——-the family of the Arodites
Of Areli, the family of the Arelites, that is all the families
——-now we know

These are the families of the sons of Gad
——-all Gadites born and bred
According to those who were numbered of them:
——-forty thousand five hundred

The sons of Judah were Er and Onan
And Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan

And the sons of Judah according to their families were:
Plenty of these guys for sure

Of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; of Perez
——-the family of the Parzites;
Of Zerah, the family of the Zarhites; this is lots of “ites”
And the sons of Perez were:
Of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Hamul
——-the family of the Hamulites

These are the families of Judah; all Judah born and bred
According to those who were numbered of them:
——-seventy-six thousand five hundred

The sons of Issachar according to their families were:
Of Tola, the family of the Tolaites; of Puah, the family of
——-the Punites; and there are more, born and bred
Of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of
——-the Shimronites

These are the families of Issachar according to those who were
— — —-numbered of them: sixty-four thousand three hundred

The sons of Zebulun according to their families were:
Of Sered, the family of the Sardites; of Elon, the family of the
— — —-Elonites; and one more family to be named, born and bred
Of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites
These are the families of the Zebulunites according to those who
— — —-were numbered of them: sixty thousand five hundred

The sons of Joseph according to their families, for sure
By Manasseh and Ephraim, were:

The sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites
— — —-that is one
And Machir begot Gilead; of Gilead, the family of the Gileadites
— — —-yes, Gilead was Machir's son

These are the sons of Gilead:
Of Jeezer, the family of the Jeezerites; of Helek, the family of
— — —-the Helekites, starting us out
Of Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; of Shechem, the family of
— — —-the Shechemites
Of Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites; of Hephher, the family
— — —-of the Hephherites. Lots of families, no doubt

Now Zelophehad the son of Hephher had no sons, but daughters
And the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah
— — —-Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah; five daughters born and bred
These are the families of Manasseh
And those who were numbered of them were
— — —-fifty-two thousand seven hundred

These are the sons of Ephraim according to their families:
Of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthalhites; of Becher
— — —-the family of the Bachrites, so they were
Of Tahan, the family of the Tahanites
And these are the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family
— — —-of the Eranites, for sure

These are the families of the sons of Ephraim
According to those who were numbered of them:
———thirty-two thousand five hundred
These are the sons of Joseph according to their families
All the sons of Joseph, born and bred

The sons of Benjamin according to their families were:
Of Bela, the family of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the family
———of the Ashbelites, so we see
Of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites; of Shupham,
———the family of the Shuphamites
Of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites. Yes, of the
———Huphamite's family

And the sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman:
Of Ard, the family of the Ardites; of Naaman, the family
———of the Naamites, born and bred
These are the sons of Benjamin according to their families
And those who were numbered of them were
———forty-five thousand six hundred

These are the sons of Dan according to their families
Of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites, born and bred
These are the families of Dan according to their families
All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those who were
———numbered of them, were sixty-four thousand four hundred

The sons of Asher according to their families were:
Of Jimna, the family of the Jimnites as are named
Of Jesui, the family of the Jesuites
Of Beriah, the family of the Beriites. Beriah's name they claimed

Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites
Of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites
And the name of the daughter of Asher was Serah
To that name, she claimed the rites

These are the families of the sons of Asher, all born and bred
According to those who were numbered of them:

— — — fifty-three thousand four hundred

The sons of Naphtali according to their families were:
Of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family
— — — of the Gunites, these for sure

Of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites
Of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites, born and bred
These are the families of Naphtali according to their families
And those who were numbered of them were
— — — forty-five thousand four hundred

These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel:
Six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty
— — — as the record does tell

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 26:52-65 (THE SECOND CENSUS, PART II)

Israel is at the door of Canaan. The tribes have been counted except for Levi, and Levi is next. Their counting will be in a different way and for a different purpose, but they too will be counted.

As for the division of the land, that will be by lot. The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, was a big fan of casting lots. He would cast them for all making all kinds of decisions, including both marriage and settling tough theological issues. I wouldn't recommend lots for either – for sure.

If you are planning on finding a wife, and you are set on casting lots, I wish you well in your misery. If you are casting lots for settling a theological debate, you might see where John Wesley landed on some rather important points of doctrine, meaning on the wrong side of them.

However, all things fit the purposes of the Lord, including someone stuck in a bad marriage who will hopefully honor the Lord – even through it. And, His purposes are realized in people with good, as well as bad, theology. Unfortunately, those who follow teachers with bad theology get sucked up into their bad theology as well.

John Wesley leaned towards the view of Jacob Arminius concerning depravity and loss of salvation. His conclusions for both of them are entirely incorrect. Today, there are still teachers out there who follow his doctrine on these issues.

Lots served a purpose at certain times in redemptive history, and they brought about the will of the Lord as He intended, but they are also never mentioned after Acts 2. At that time, the Holy Spirit was given, and in the span of a few short years, the books of the Bible were complete. What on earth do we need lots for now?

Text Verse: *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14*

Paul says that when we trust in the word of truth, meaning believing the gospel of our salvation, the sealing of Holy Spirit of promise is the guarantee of our inheritance. Do we

need to cast lots in order to know if we are saved? Do we need to cast lots in order to know if we are saved once for all time? Do we need to cast lots to determine what the effects of our salvation will be?

No! The Bible, in just those two verses tells us the answer to those (and quite a few other) questions. But, there is something about the idea of the lot, which is found right in the sermon verses we just read, that you might not be aware of.

What does a second census of Israel, just prior to their entry into Canaan, have to do with the idea of lots? Well, stick around and you might find out... pretty sure you will. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Land Shall Be Divided as an Inheritance (verses 52-65)

⁵² Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The Lord is carefully and methodically detailing His intent for Israel. In verses 26:1 & 2, which occurred after the plague, the Lord told Israel to take a census. Think of it! Israel had wandered in the desert since leaving Sinai, and all of that generation had died. The first census would have been no good to them. The number of some tribes had changed dramatically in those intervening years.

Further, some of the greatest changes of all were inferred to have come just a short time before in the plague which resulted from the incident at Peor. The Lord knew that a new census was needed, and now this is the perfect time for it to occur. And this is because they were preparing to enter into their long-awaited inheritance, Canaan. The stage has been set, and that is now explicitly stated...

⁵³ “To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names.

There are three requirements of the division of the land which will be seen. The first is that of the inheritance “according to the number of names,” meaning individual people. Thus, the size of the land will be in accord with the size of the tribe...kind of. This is then further defined by the Lord with the words...

⁵⁴ **To a large *tribe* you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a small *tribe* you shall give a smaller inheritance.**

The words are second person, singular. The Lord is speaking to Moses – “You shall give.” However, with the exception of land east of the Jordan which will be granted before entry into Canaan, the land division doesn’t actually take place for quite some time after his death. It shows that the census under Moses is the deciding factor for those future divisions of inheritance.

As far as the size of the inheritance being larger for a large tribe and smaller for a small tribe, this seems obvious, but it is not what is being referred to. Rather, the word “tribe” is inserted by translators.

This is not referring to the land given to the tribes, but to the land within the allotted portion which is to be given to the families within the tribes. This must be so because the Lord will divide the land by lot for the tribes as is noted in verse 55. That means that the size of the lot per tribe is given by the Lord, not according to total population, but according to location regardless of size.

Despite this, one must also look at the wisdom of God in how this comes about. First, this is the official accounting of the names. And yet, the land will not be divided up according to these names until the land is subdued. That will take over seven years from this point in time as is recorded in Joshua 11 –

“So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had said to Moses; and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Then the land rested from war.” Joshua 11:24

How many will die in battle? How many will die of natural causes? How many sons are, or will be, born to each of these groups during those seven years? And of those sons, how many will turn into adults during those seven years?

Those statistics are irrelevant. The census now will determine the land grant to each tribe after the land is subdued. This is certain, because of the words to Moses, “you shall give,” and by the fact that no census is later directed for the land division. If another census was conducted, it would have been recorded. Instead, the numbers now are the determining factor.

Because the casting of the lot will determine the actual selection of land for each tribe, the size of tribe, though seemingly a factor in deciding land division, is not what is being spoken of here.

Instead, the decision by the lot means that each tribe is to be satisfied with its inheritance as determined by the Lord. A larger family will have a larger inheritance within the confines of its land, and a smaller family will receive a smaller inheritance. Thus...

⁵⁴ (con't) **Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them.**

The numbers apply to each family which comprises the tribe as seen in the counting of the first 51 verses. If you have forgotten that, we can repeat last week's sermon. Or, we can simply note that the sons of Jacob, with the exception of Levi, were numbered. And the numbering of Joseph was divided into his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, who were adopted by Jacob.

Thus, there are ten natural sons, plus the two adopted sons in place of their father Joseph, making twelve tribes, and thus twelve land divisions. Within those divisions, individual families will be granted their portion according to their size.

However, whatever inheritance is given to the tribe as a whole, will be called by that name from that time forward. Thus, the land given to Judah would forever be known as the land of Judah.

From the time of the initial division, this is then seen. For example, in Isaiah 9, it notes "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali." The land is known according to the name of the father. As such, there is never a land spoken of as "Levi."

Though there will be cities known as Levitical cities, there is no specific land named for him. This will be understood as we continue on. Levi means, "Attached," and he will be attached to the other tribes in his own unique way.

⁵⁵ **But the land shall be divided by lot;**

akh b'goral yekhaleq eth ha'arets – "Surely, in lot shall be divided the land." This is now the second requirement of the division of land. It is to be divided by *goral*, or lot.

So far, the only passage where the lot has been mentioned was in Leviticus 16. That lot was used to determine the status of the two goats brought before the Lord – one for sacrifice, and one as *azazel*, or scapegoat. As noted then, so it is to be understood now –

“The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from the Lord.” Proverbs 16:33

This then is a sign that the Lord is the ultimate determining factor of where each tribe will be situated. Though there may be greater numbers of people in a smaller parcel of land, the Lord determined that “each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them.” In this, another proverb is to be considered –

“Casting lots causes contentions to cease,
And keeps the mighty apart.” Proverbs 18:18

One can see that the lot is given to determine what the particular situation of the land which is chosen for each tribe will be. In other words, Judah will be given land to the very south in Israel. As can be seen by the rest of Scripture, and even by prophecies which have already been made, such as by Jacob upon his sons, this is obviously by the Lord’s design.

The situation of Judah, meaning where it is located, will become a point of fulfilling those prophecies. The northern tribes will be situated where the majority of their people will be taken away in permanent exile.

However, Judah will be preserved, returning to her land after an exile of seventy years, thus allowing for the Messiah to come as prophesied. What may seem uninteresting to read actually turns out to be marvelous to the mind when properly contemplated from the larger perspective. The division of lot is next further explained...

⁵⁵ (con’t) **they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers.**

This confirms what has already been deduced and it forms the third requirement concerning land division. The term, “the tribes of their fathers,” indicates the named tribes of the sons of Israel, minus Levi, and inclusive of Manasseh and Ephraim who represent Joseph.

⁵⁶ **According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller.”**

al pi ha'goral – “according to *the* mouth of the lot.” It is an interesting expression which personifies the lot. As the lot speaks out, so shall the inheritance be. And again, it says, “between the larger and the smaller.”

As the larger in number may get a smaller parcel of land, or vice versa, it means that whatever the division for the size of land, so shall the decision of the lot stand according to divine providence. Once that determination is made, from there the land will be divided by family size.

What is interesting, and what speaks of the providence of God over the nations, because – as the proverb notes – the decision of the lot is from the Lord, the scholar Keil, who lived in the 1800s, notes the following –

“On this ground not only was the lot resorted to by the Greeks and Romans in the distribution of conquered lands (see the proofs in Clericus, Rosenmiller, and Knobel), but it is still employed in the division of lands.” Keil

In other words, what may seem as arbitrary in the establishment of the borders of nations in history, is actually a work of God as He directs those borders. He did it first through language, separating people accordingly. However, the nations have continued to have an unseen hand which has kept them aligned according to the will and purpose of God, and this is leading everything to history’s end goal and purpose.

⁵⁷ **And these *are* those who were numbered of the Levites according to their families:**

With the census of the first twelve tribes complete, the counting of the Levites is next recorded. The Levites are counted separately because they are set apart to the Lord. He is their inheritance, and so no land division is to be made for them. Rather, they will be counted for the service of the Lord and of the people.

As a point of generational history, Levi lived to be 137 years old. He went down to Egypt with the family and died there. He is the father of the tribe, and the counting is made first by family according to the sons of Levi...

⁵⁷ (con’t) **of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites.**

These are the three sons of Levi. As a point of generational history, the age of Kohath is specifically given at his death. He was 133 years old when he died. It is from him and his brothers, Gershon and Merari, that the next division of families is to be made...

⁵⁸ These *are* the families of the Levites: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, and the family of the Korathites. And Kohath begot Amram.

These are the next generation of Levites which became families in their own standing, and who are all listed by name in the earlier census in Numbers. As a point of generational history, the age of Amram is specifically given at his death. Like his grandfather Levi, he was 137 when he died.

⁵⁹ The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt;

Now comes a rare occurrence in Scripture where the name of a wife is included in a genealogy. The name of Amram's wife is Jochebed. The only other time she is mentioned is in Exodus 6:20 in the counting of the listing of the family of Levi. There it said –

“Now Amram took for himself Jochebed, his father's sister, as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses. And the years of the life of Amram *were* one hundred and thirty-seven.” Exodus 6:20

Here now, she is again noted as Amram's wife, but instead of calling her “his father's sister,” here she is called “the daughter of Levi who was born to Levi in Egypt.”

The specificity is not to be missed, and the importance of calling her both “his father's sister,” and “the daughter of Levi,” is to ensure that *no mistake* is made concerning the generations of Moses. For example, the scholar John Lange says –

“We notice a significant fact which forms the central point in this narrative, and has occasioned some difficulty. Kohath's son is called Amram, the father of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam bears the same name. This illustrious family is through the identity of names brought back closely to its ancestor Levi. [The recurrence of the same names constitutes no difficulty. But Jochebed could not have been the daughter of Levi in the strict sense. Generations have come and gone between Levi and the mother of Moses. She was a daughter of Levi in the sense that she was a descendant. The term does not necessarily determine the nearness of the relation.” John Lange (incorrect analysis)

John Lange, like many scholars – and as is implied in many translations – assumes that Jochebed could not be the daughter of Levi and yet the mother of Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. He believes this is impossible because, as he said, “Generations have come and gone between Levi and the mother of Moses.”

But this is incorrect. This is why the age of Levi was given at his death (137). The only other son of Jacob whose age at death was recorded was Joseph, and that because it was necessary to know.

Next, of the three sons of Levi, only the age at death is given for his son Kohath (133). And then, for all the sons of Kohath, only the age of Amram is given at his death (137). As the Israelites dwelt in Egypt for 215 years, these ages are given to show us the reliability of God’s promise to Abraham, and thus the reliability of the word of God itself. This is evidenced by the next words...

⁵⁹ (con’t) **and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their sister Miriam.**

Jochebed is Levi’s natural daughter, and Kohath is Levi’s natural son. Amram is Levi’s grandson who married his aunt, Levi’s daughter. It is to this union that Aaron, Moses, and Miriam, Levi’s great-grandchildren, were born.

The special record of this line is given first to establish a direct line from Abraham to Moses and Aaron, through Isaac and Jacob. That is clearly evident when compared with the other sets of genealogies already given in the Bible. This is also recorded because God made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 15 concerning his descendants –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” Genesis 15:13-16

This specially recorded set of years of life, and the special note of Jochebed as being both the daughter of Levi and sister of Kohath, is given to show that the Lord’s words are both true and fulfilled.

Jacob went to Egypt with his family which included his son Levi and Levi's three sons, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. In Egypt, Kohath had a son named Amram and Amram had a son named Moses.

Thus, Moses is the fourth generation from Jacob who went to Egypt. And the sons of Aaron and Moses are the fourth generation from Kohath, Levi's son, who also went to Egypt. As they will enter Canaan, the prophecy has been fulfilled.

This listing is a proof of the fulfillment of covenant promise. Moses, the fourth generation of Levi, has brought the people to the doorstep of the Land of Promise, even if he himself will not enter, and his sons are the fourth generation of Kohath.

Thirdly, because the specific ages of Levi, Kohath, and Amram are given, there is no need to debate the approximate length of time which the Israelites dwelt in Egypt. This dating can be checked against other dating and it confirms that there are no missing generations in the genealogies.

In other words, the line goes directly from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Levi, to Kohath, to Amram, and then to Moses and Aaron without any interim generations being left out. The line is complete and unbroken. Moses is the 7th from Abraham; from Promise to Deliverer. When his sons enter Canaan, they will be the 8th generation, the generation of new beginnings.

The name Jochebed, or *Yokeved*, carries the abbreviated form of Yah, or Yehovah. Her name means either "Yehovah's Glory" or "Glory of Yehovah." It is a fitting and appropriate name indeed!

Her son, Moses, was the one who led the people of Israel as they saw the glory of the Lord in the most astonishing ways. Her husband's name, Amram, means "A People Exalted." Looking at this union there is a picture of what was coming. Israel, A People Exalted, have been united to the Lord of Glory.

As usual, what seems like a tedious and unnecessary listing of names which could only excite someone who had just come out of coma, or maybe put him back into one, is really a marvelously given set of hints and clues to the majesty of what God has tucked away in His superior word.

⁶⁰ **To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.**

Now, the specific line of Aaron, the priestly line, is given. As a point of generational history, the age of Aaron is recorded at his death. Numbers 33:39 will show that he was 123 when he died. Thus, the generations recorded are reliable, the dating is reliable, and the promise is fulfilled. His sons, the fourth generation from Kohath, who had entered Egypt with Jacob, would enter the land of Canaan, even if not all of his sons entered Canaan...

⁶¹ And Nadab and Abihu died when they offered profane fire before the Lord.

Aaron's two oldest sons were excluded from entry into Canaan because they transgressed by offering profane fire before the Lord. Thus, they died and their bodies were buried in the wilderness near Mount Sinai.

Their actions stand as a witness to the holiness of the Lord. Because of their deaths, only the two younger sons would enter into the promised inheritance. But they did enter, and therefore, the promise of God, made hundreds of years earlier, that the fourth generation would enter, was fulfilled exactly. It shows that God is not limited to time, but sees all of history open before Him.

⁶² Now those who were numbered of them were twenty-three thousand, every male from a month old and above;

Unlike the census for the rest of Israel, which was males twenty and above, the counting of the Levites is of all males, one month old and above. The other tribes were counted from twenty because they were reckoned as men of war.

The Levites are taken in place of the firstborn of the other tribes. Because there were firstborn of all ages when that original exchange was made, all ages of Levites are counted, regardless of their ability to serve.

The tribe of Levi increased by 1000 since the first census which was recorded in Numbers 3:39. Such a small increase in number shows that the Levites probably suffered rather large losses in the rebellion of Korah.

This can be inferred because in Numbers 3 there are families – those of Shimei, Izebar, and Uzziel – who are not even listed here. Either these families died off naturally, or they may have died off in the rebellion. Whatever the case, if there were any remaining, they were probably assimilated into the other families listed here.

⁶² (con't) **for they were not numbered among the other children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given to them among the children of Israel.**

These words are based on what was recorded in Chapter 18. First for Aaron, meaning the priests –

“Then the Lord said to Aaron: ‘You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I *am* your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.’” Numbers 18:20

And next, it applies to the non-priestly Levites –

“But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; *it shall be* a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. ²⁴ For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up *as* a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’” Numbers 18:23, 24

Those words are now confirmed at this census. The tribe of Levi, or “Attached,” is counted separately because they will be attached to Israel in a unique way. That will continue to be seen as the pages of Scripture unfold in the days ahead.

⁶³ **These *are* those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho.**

These words take us back to verse 1 where the Lord addressed both Moses and Eleazar. They were instructed to take a census of Israel. There it mentioned those “twenty years old and above,” meaning the tribes of war-aged men. However, this now is inclusive of the census of Levi as well.

The entire congregation is numbered in the plains of Moab, or “From Father,” by the Jordan, meaning “Descender,” which is across from Jericho, or “Place of Fragrance.” One can sense a picture of the people who are accepted by God because of Christ, the Descender. Such was not always the case though...

⁶⁴ **But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai.**

The disobedient generation is gone, consumed by time and their wanderings. This included all of the congregation, including those of Levi, who rejected the Lord some thirty-eight years earlier. And that even included Aaron who is named here as participating in the original census, but whose son has taken his place in this census.

The hope and anticipation of the people at Sinai ended in futility. It is for a new generation to enter into the promised inheritance.

⁶⁵ For the Lord had said of them, “They shall surely die in the wilderness.”

This final verse of the chapter shows us that the word of the Lord was fulfilled, exactly as He had spoken. The people had rebelled, sentence was pronounced, and the execution was completed one day at a time until all of the disobedient were gone with but two exceptions.

Interestingly, there is an acrostic found in the words, *ki amar Yehovah lahem mot yamutu*, or “For said Yehovah of them dying they shall die.” The last letters of four of those words spell out *hemtu* – “They were killed.” It is an additional emphasis in God’s word concerning this disobedient generation. The Lord promised that dying they would die, and – in fact – He killed them off to the last disobedient man.” That left just two of the entire generation...

^{65 (fin)} So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.

The words here confirm the words of Numbers 14 –

“Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the Lord, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: ²⁹ The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. ³⁰ Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. ³¹ But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.” (28-31)

As noted then, Joshua and Caleb were given as types of those would enter the promise. Caleb, or “Dog,” pictures those Gentiles who are of faith and who receive the promise. Joshua, who is also a type of Christ elsewhere, here pictures those Jews who are of faith and who receive the promise. In this typology, the promise was made, and it reflects the

notion of entering into the inheritance based on one's faith in the promise of the Lord. For the others who lacked faith, they met their end apart from the promise of God.

The final words here do not bode well for Moses. Only two names are given as to those who will enter Canaan. Moses is not one of them. Though still alive in order to complete the Torah, he will die outside of the land of promise. The law is not of faith, but of works. The typology was set before time began, and Moses happened to be the one selected to fit the typology. The law has no part in the inheritance.

*The lot to help me decide is cast into the lap
In hopes of telling me what to do
After I settle the matter of divine election I'll take a nap
After I cast the lot, this is what I will do*

*I don't have to think the matter through
Because I have the lot to make the decision for me
Soon I will take my nap, so I will do
When I cast the lot, the truth of the matter I shall see*

*It must be the right way to handle such matters
It worked when the Lord told Israel to do this very thing
But so many people's doctrine are found in tatters
Surely only good doctrine will casting the lot bring*

II. The Casting of Lots

The land of Canaan was to be portioned out to the tribes according to *goral*, or lots. That word comes from an unused root meaning to be rough like a stone, and thus it signifies a pebble. Figuratively, the word signifies a portion, or a destiny. That is seen, for example, in Jeremiah where the word *goral* is used in this figurative way –

“This is your **lot**,
The portion of your measures from Me,’ says the Lord,
‘Because you have forgotten Me
And trusted in falsehood.’” Jeremiah 13:25

Interestingly, the same idea is seen in the Greek. The *kléros*, or lot, is seen in both its literal and figurative sense in the New Testament. Figuratively, it means a portion, or inher-

itance, just as in the Hebrew. Lots were cast for Christ's garment at the cross. Likewise, *kléros*, or lots, were cast for choosing an apostle to replace Judas who once had his own *kléros*, or "portion" in Christ's ministry. The irony there is palpable.

In Acts 8, Simon the Sorcerer was told he had no *kléros*, or "portion" in the matter of the Holy Spirit because he was not right in the sight of God. However, Jesus' said this to Paul at in his conversion –

"I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an **inheritance** among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." Acts 26:18

Paul, that same apostle, later wrote this to those at Colosse –

"...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the **inheritance** of the saints in the light. ¹³He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:12-14

The word *kléros*, in turn, comes from *klaó*, to break – specifically bread. It is used fourteen times in the New Testament, and always in relation to the breaking of bread, implying fellowship. The bread, however, is given as a symbol of Christ's body which was broken, just as bread is broken. But that was, again, in order to grant fellowship.

Without the breaking of His body, there would be no fellowship with God, because He is the only conduit through which fellowship with God could come about. Without Him, meaning what He did and how He did it in the giving of Himself, such could never be. Understanding these things, we can see that the matter of the lot concerning Israel's inheritance is only spoken of now, after the time of the wilderness wanderings. Though a census was made at the beginning of the book of Numbers, nothing was said of a division of the land at that time.

And yet, that was before any rejection of the Lord by, or sentence upon, the offenders. The Lord already knew that Israel would reject Him, and so there was no explanation given to them concerning the lot and the land division at that time, because there would be no inheritance for that generation.

The inheritance is granted based on *faith in the Lord*, not works of the law. Levi was given no inheritance because the Lord is said to be their inheritance. Levi represents the law, and thus the Lord is the law's inheritance. It was He alone who would come and fulfill the law. In His fulfillment of the law, and in His death which is that final fulfillment of the law, the law received its portion.

Only after that came about could the inheritance, the *kléros*, be portioned out. The amazing details of the first census, which seemed so dull and unpalatable before we started into it, is eclipsed by the magnificent concepts and details which are found in this second census, which certainly must have seemed even more dull and more unpalatable before we entered into it.

But such is not the case. God is, in these difficult accounts of recorded history, revealing His plan and the glory of what He would do, and has done, through His Son, Jesus. As we saw from Proverbs 16, there is nothing arbitrary about the casting of lots. Rather, when the lot is cast, the decision is from the Lord. And in the casting of the lot, the inheritance is given, whatever that may be.

Christ Jesus broke the bread and said, "This is My body." And then Christ Jesus gave of His body so that we could obtain the inheritance; our portion among the saints. Just as the Lord knew that the first census would not result in an inheritance, and just as the Lord knew that it would be the fourth generation of those who entered into Egypt that would then enter into Canaan, God knew that the law could not save, apart from the giving of His Son.

Today, I would appeal to you to refrain from attempting to please the Lord through self. Give up on self, and come to Christ. Why do I feel qualified to give you this advice? Because I am a member of *kleroi*, or clergy – one appointed to a lot or inheritance. In this life, my portion is – by the grace of God – one who has been appointed to serve you through the word. And I assure you that my solemn duty is to inform you of your need for Jesus. Come to the Bread which has been broken in order to secure your inheritance with the saints of God. Come to Christ, and receive your allotted, heavenly portion.

Closing Verse: *"In Him also we have obtained an **inheritance** (kléroó – to cast lots), being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."*

-Ephesians 1:11, 12

Next Week: Numbers 27:1-11 *The girls get an inheritance! Isn't that rad!...* (The Daughters of Zelophehad) (52nd Numbers sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Second Census

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words to him He was then relaying

“To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance
— — —-according to the number of names
To a large tribe you shall give a larger inheritance, so shall it be
And to a small tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance
Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were
— — —-numbered of them, as directed by Me

But the land shall be divided by lot
They shall inherit according to the names of the tribes
— — —-of their fathers, one by one
According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided
Between the larger and the smaller, is how it shall be done

And these are those who were numbered of the Levites
According to their families is how it shall be
Of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites
Off Kohath, the family of the Kohathites
— — —-of Merari, the family of the Merarites, as directed by Me

These are the families of the Levites:
The family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites as well
The family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites
And the family of the Korathites, so the record does tell

And Kohath begot Amram
The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, so was she

The daughter of Levi who was born to Levi in Egypt
And to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses
— — —-and their sister Miriam, so we see

To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar too
And so died – when they offered profane fire before the Lord –
— — —-Nadab and Abihu

Now those who were numbered of them were
— — —-twenty-three thousand
Every male from a month old and above, as the record does tell
For they were not numbered among the other children of Israel
Because there was no inheritance given to them
— — —-among the children of Israel

These are those who were numbered by Moses and
— — —-Eleazar the priest, as the counting did go
Who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab
— — —-by the Jordan, across from Jericho

But among these there was not a man
Of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest
When they numbered the children of Israel
In the Wilderness of Sinai; from the greatest to the least

For the Lord had said of them
“They shall surely die in the wilderness; each and every one
So there was not left a man of them
Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 27:1-11 (THE DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD)

With only 1189 chapters in the Bible, and many of them a page or less in length, some a lot less, one surely must wonder when cursorily reading the Bible why a lot of space often seems taken up by things which could be shortened or restated in a way which would take up a lot less space.

And there are some things which seem like they could have been stated somewhere else, thereby saving unnecessary repetition. For example, the five daughters here were mentioned in the last chapter. Wouldn't it have been better to just abbreviate this account and plug it in there instead of here?

Apparently not. Putting it here, after first mentioning them once already, is a way of getting us to consider the details more closely. It's like when Rebekah was first introduced in Genesis 22. She was just casually referred to in a list of about 15 other names. But then, walah, she appears again in a pivotal section of the Bible.

As far as the daughters of Zelophehad, their story includes details concerning the disposition of property if there isn't someone directly available to inherit the land of a deceased person. In such a case, there has to be someone to eventually take possession of it.

Who that is, and how far from the deceased, can show a lot about the life that person lived. Solomon referred to someone like this who is still living, but doesn't have anyone to take over his inheritance. What he describes is the life of a lonely soul...

Text Verse: *"Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:*

⁸ There is one alone, without companion:

He has neither son nor brother.

Yet there is no end to all his labors,

Nor is his eye satisfied with riches.

But he never asks,

'For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?'

This also is vanity and a grave misfortune." Ecclesiastes 4:7, 8

Our lives are vanity, even under the best of circumstances. Our bodies grow old, our minds start to slip, we lose those around us we love, and the things we have stored up over the years often fade away before our eyes.

Everything is temporary, everything is transitory, and nothing is certain, including our next breath. This is true for every person on the planet. Life is futility, vanity, and then death. And all we saved up for ourselves will be passed on to another who may squander it in a moment.

This is reality, and it is futility – for all. That is, except for the one who has a hope which transcends this temporary, earthly existence. And even then, there are those who think they have such a hope, but their faith is misdirected. That’s an even worse fate. They deprive themselves in this life expecting a trip to glory, and they deprive themselves of any hope of future glory by placing their expectations in the wrong path to that future glory. Without Jesus, this existence is truly the most heartbreaking of all possible things. But thank God for Jesus who gives us a sure hope, and a guarantee from God Himself that we are saved through Him.

This will be seen, once again, in today’s passage. It’s a wonderful part of His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Statute of Judgment (verses 1-11)

¹Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph;

The narrative now turns to a matter which will become an obvious problem within Israel if it is not resolved now, before the family land inheritances are made. These daughters of Zelophehad were mentioned in the previous chapter. In verse 26:33, it said –

“Now Zelophehad the son of Hopher had no sons, but daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.”

-Numbers 26:33

Eleven names are mentioned in this one verse. In the first half is the genealogical reference going back to the individual tribe of Manasseh, which in turn is one of the two tribes derived from Joseph. In the second half, the daughters of Zelophehad are reintroduced by name...

² (con't) **and these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.**

The Hebrew reads Mahlah, Noah, **and** Hoglah, **and** Milcah, **and** Tirzah. However, their names are listed in a different order in Numbers 36:11, where it says, "Mahlah, Tirzah, **and** Hoglah, **and** Milcah, **and** Noah. Tirza and Noah switch places.

As Mahlah is named first in both, she may be the eldest, and the other four are probably on an equal footing with one another. The reason for this could be as simple as them being quadruplets, or that only the eldest was recognized with a particular status.

Whatever the reason, they came together as a single group to seek an answer to a dilemma that they faced as the daughters of a man who had no sons after him...

² **And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying:**

The women have a case which requires some type of resolution, and it is obviously a matter which was not resolved at a lower level within the camp. Because of this, they present themselves before the lawgiver, the high priest, the leaders – probably meaning of the individual tribes – and finally "all the congregation."

This doesn't mean that all the congregation was there, but that the matter is open to any of the congregation who were there, whether leaders or laypeople. The matter is not being done in secret, but it is rather a matter which all would eventually need to be made aware of because it is precedent-setting.

The location is said to be "at the door of the tent (not tabernacle) of meeting." The tent of meeting is the entire edifice, inside of which is the tabernacle, which consists of the holy and most holy places. The door of the tent means "by the altar of sacrifice."

As has been seen since Exodus, the brazen altar and the door of the tent of meeting are actually united in thought. One cannot go through the door without first coming to the sacrifice. It is a picture of the work of Christ. One cannot go through the Door, meaning Christ, unless he goes through His cross. This is the place of judgment, and so they now present their case...

³ **"Our father died in the wilderness;**

On the surface, it seems that Zelophehad was of the generation of those 20 and above at the time of the sentence upon the congregation who were destined to wander and to die in the wilderness. But, in verse 4, it will seem more likely that he was under 20 and happened to die, meaning he was not one who was under sentence. If so, he could still have died as old as 58 or 59.

This even seems likely because he was named in the census which had just taken place. If he was alive, that means that he just – at this very time – died. If so, all of a sudden, his inheritance is called into question before he had a chance to have a male child. The timing can't be known, but the Lord has orchestrated this sequence of events to specifically resolve this matter at this time. Either way, the matter at hand is that an inheritance is expected, but with no male son, there is – as of yet – no guidance for what is to be done. This is based on the words of Numbers 14 –

“Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. ³¹ But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.” Numbers 14:30, 31

Either Zelophehad, or his daughters, was entitled to entry into Canaan, and thus they were entitled to a land inheritance...

^{3 (con't)} **but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the Lord, in company with Korah,**

It is questioned why they included this statement, but what seems obvious is that it is based upon what it said in the account when Korah was destroyed. At that time, it noted that all of those in the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed up, including their wives, their sons, and their little children.

As even the little children were swallowed up, it meant that they were cut off from any inheritance. But such was not the case with the daughters of Zelophehad. Therefore, they have a much stronger argument that it was not intended that he be cut off completely as they were, even though he had only daughters.

It is apparent from later in the Bible that Korah had sons who did live, but they were obviously old enough to be in their own homes and not counted under the sins of Korah. But because these daughters were still a part of their father's house, and because he

was not such a villain as Korah, their legal rights to an inheritance seemed right and just. This is because...

³ (con't) **but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons.**

This could mean one of several things. Two of the most likely are that he was one of those twenty and above who were forbidden from entry into Canaan, the penalty of which was death in the wilderness, or that he was simply a man who sinned before God as all people do. Either way, John Lange speaks highly of their understanding of theology. He says –

“Indeed these daughters of Zelophehad possessed a fair faculty for doctrinal discriminations. Death without sin going before it, was for them at any rate inconceivable.” John Lange

What is understood by them, either way, is that forgiveness of sin under the Mosaic Covenant did not mean the granting of life. When it says in Leviticus 18 that the man who does the things of the law will live by them, it obviously excludes being forgiven of sin, which is allowed under the law, such as on the Day of Atonement.

If it did, then the people would be forgiven and never die. However, they were forgiven, but still died. The imperfection of the Mosaic Law is seen in this simple statement by the daughters of Zelophehad. Death under the law of Moses was a natural result of life, not an exception to it. As his death was a common thing which came about through his sin, his name should not be forgotten...

⁴ Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son?

Without being dogmatic about the reason, because dogs have pedigrees, but not genealogies, it seems that Zelophehad was actually not one of those twenty and above who rejected the Lord in Numbers 14. This is because of these words. They say, “Why should the name of our father be removed.” The word is *gara*, coming from a root which means “to scrape off.”

If he was one of the older generation, his name would not have been entered in as an inheritor of the land in the genealogy of the previous chapter. But he was. Now that he has died, and because he has no sons, they are concerned that his name will be removed, scraped off, from the records for landed property.

What is seen here is that these girls were not simply looking for land, because when they got married, they would have land through their husbands. What they want is the preservation of their father's name. All of them would marry and take on new family names, and the name of their father would disappear. Thus, the act by these girls is one of love for their father and his name, not greed.

⁴ (con't) **Give us a possession among our father's brothers."**

The words here are actually words of faith. Israel has not yet entered Canaan. The last time they were this close to entry, the people rebelled and rejected the Lord in their cowardice.

Some wised up to their plight after the Lord's words of punishment and decided to go into the land and subdue it without Him. That proved equally as much of a disaster. Now, they are just outside of Canaan, with the same large nations and well-defended cities as before, and yet, these young ladies stand before the Lord asking for a right to the land which is not even yet subdued.

They are looking forward to their own land and inheritance, within the people of Israel, as if it is already an accomplished fact. Their understanding of the law is remarkable, and their faith in the provision of the Lord is equally so, or even greater.

In this, they are like five wise virgins who anticipate the future and prepare for it. It very well may be that Jesus had them in mind when He spoke out His parable in Matthew 25. Because of these young ladies, Zelophehad is not only mentioned here, but nine times in Numbers, Joshua, and 1 Chronicles, and in each instance, he is named in reference to his daughters.

⁵ **So Moses brought their case before the Lord.**

It seems like a simple statement, but it must be contrasted with what it said in verse 2 – "And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, *by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting...*"

The daughters of Zelophehad brought a request before those who sat in judgment over Israel. The lawgiver, the high priest, the leaders, and indeed the whole congregation – meaning whoever else was there at the time, could not come to a resolution concerning the matter.

And so Moses had to take their *mishpat*, or case, before the Lord. Thus, this makes the fourth and final matter which was of such importance that it specifically says Moses went in before the Lord to obtain clarification as to what should occur.

The first time was in Leviticus 24 when the blasphemer was put in custody while Moses went in to obtain direction from the Lord as to what should be done to him. After that, there needed to be an answer as to what should be done concerning those who were defiled by a dead body during the time of the Passover. That is recorded in Numbers 9. The third instance is that of what was to be the fate of the Sabbath-breaker in Numbers 15. And finally, Moses required direction in this matter concerning the inheritance of Zelophehad.

The first was for a violation of the law, leading to someone's death. The second was to gain understanding about something not specified in the law because of events surrounding someone who had died. The third was for a violation of the law, again leading to someone's death. Again, the fourth is to gain understanding about something not specified in the law, because of events surrounding someone who had died. It is a marvelous a-b/a-b pattern.

In each of these, there is a connection to Christ. To reject Christ is to blaspheme the name of the Lord, who is Christ. To reject the Passover is to reject Christ, who is the Passover Lamb. To reject God's rest, pictured in the Sabbath, is to reject Christ who is our rest. And to not receive God's inheritance is to not receive Christ who is how we obtain our inheritance.

The matter of Zelophehad's daughters is one which is more than just a minor issue, but it is one which anticipates much greater theological issues, at least implicitly.

⁶And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

This would have been from above the mercy seat, as it says in Numbers 7 –

“Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that *was* on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.”
-Numbers 7:89

None of this surprised the Lord, and yet He allowed it to happen so that the precedent would be set, the decision would be rendered by Him, and then it would be recorded in His word as an everlasting testament to the faithfulness of these five wise virgins.

⁷“The daughters of Zelophehad speak *what is right*; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.

The words of this verse, as recorded in the Masoretic Text, have a gender discord in them. It says, *naton titen lahem akhuzat nakhalah*, or “in giving, you shall give **them** a possession of inheritance.” The words are in the masculine, even though it is speaking of the women.

Likewise, the words, *betok ahe abihem*, or “among brothers of **their father**,” are also masculine. However, at the end of the verse, it says, *v’haabarta eth nakhalat abihen lahen*, or “and cause to pass inheritance **their father to them**.” The words are feminine. There are several suggestions as to why the Hebrew is this way. The common and easiest suggestion is that this is a scribal error. It is recorded in the masculine in this way in other manuscripts, and so – obviously – this must be an error. However, it would make more sense to correct a gender discord than to purposefully leave an error after it was found. That is not a good excuse.

A second possibility is that it is referring to their sons, when they get married and receive the inheritance through their daughters. This must assume that they will actually have sons, which – obviously – their mother and father did not.

A third option is that this is speaking of their husbands, who must be from the same tribe as them, as will be mandated in Chapter 36. Unfortunately, that cannot be the answer. That is putting the cart before the horse. The Lord has not yet given those instructions, because what brought them about has not yet been addressed.

A fourth reason is that because they are now regarded as the inheritors, they are regarded as sons as reflected in the Hebrew masculine. There is nothing, other than an obvious rejection of the intentional use of the masculine, that would preclude this.

If it is so, then it looks not to the permanent consideration of them as males, because it reverts to the feminine in the second half of the verse, but rather to a theological point about inheritance which is stated in Galatians 3 –

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3:26-29

Those verses must be taken in the proper context, which they usually are not. People use them to state that the Jews are no longer considered Jews, or that Gentiles are now Jews, because of Paul’s words. But that is as nutty as a football bat.

In the same set of verses, Paul writes of there being neither slave nor free, and yet he writes acknowledging that there are both elsewhere in his epistles. He also writes of their being neither male nor female, and yet – unless I am preaching in an Episcopal church today – I’m pretty sure there are both males and females present. I bet we could stop and I could identify which are which too. Well, at least with most of you.

What this verse in Numbers, and what Paul in Galatians, refers to is the concept of an equal position in Christ, regardless as to cultural identity, status before human law, gender, or whatever other distinction one can think up in their heads concerning how things are now.

Yes, there are still Jews and Gentiles, and it will continue to be so, just as there are males and females. However, our position in Christ makes no distinction despite the difference. This is certainly why it speaks of the daughters of Zelophehad in the masculine first, and then in the feminine. Their inheritance is positionally equal (distinction) despite their female gender (difference).

⁸ And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying:

The Lord, having resolved the matter for these five wise virgins, decides to continue to clarify it so that other such possibilities, which arise along similar lines, will be taken care of as they come.

As we go through these, He ensures that the bases are covered by this subject matter, but he leaves other issues related to them unresolved. This is particularly what comes about in Numbers 36. In this, the matters will again have to be decided.

However, when that time comes, it won't say that Moses went to ask the Lord for clarity. Rather, it will be Moses simply stating, "This is what the Lord commands." Whether Moses went back in a second time, or whether he is told these things now, but it is only recorded later, isn't revealed to us.

The Lord's word is recorded in methodical steps, and it slowly reveals things, whether categorically, chronologically, or for whatever other reason. As each thing is revealed, the wisdom of its being disclosed at that time always becomes evident.

8 (con't) 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.

As has occurred in this chapter with the daughters of Zelophehad, so the precedent is set for all such future occurrences in Israel and under the Law of Moses. The sons were to receive the inheritance from the father.

This would be in accord with any other inheritance provisions, such as the right of the firstborn to inherit a double portion. In accord with those other provisions, it is the sons, who bore the name of their father, that were to receive the inheritance. Of this, the Pulpit Commentary rightly states –

"Upon the land was to rest the whole social fabric of Israel, and all that was valued and permanent in family life and feeling was to be tied as it were to the landed inheritance. Hence the land was in every case so to pass that the name and fame, the privilege and duty, of the deceased owner might be as far as possible perpetuated."

So thorough is this framework now being set forth that scholars note that the feudal law of Europe followed the same lines as are given here. Rather than the passing of inheritance by will or by grant, the parameters were carefully followed which reasonably mirror this code found in Numbers.

It was to the sons first, followed by daughters if there was no son. From there, the next parameter is given...

9 If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.

The owner is now said to die without any children, either male or female. In this, his labors and his land will be transferred to any surviving brothers. This is appropriate, because if he didn't exist, they would have received what he possessed. And it is true even if he died early before the inheritance was set forth. It is logical and appropriate. But...

¹⁰ If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers.

This is, obviously, assuming that his father has died, and that is why he obtained his inheritance in the first place. However, exception is noted in Scripture where the father was still alive and yet an inheritance was handed out.

The Jewish law in the Mishnah actually says that if the father is alive, he would be preferred before the father's brothers in this verse. However, the Bible does not make that statement. It would logically follow, but as far as the Bible, it only deals with a person that has no children and no brothers. After that, the father's brothers are the recipients. From there, their children, meaning the dead man's cousins, would be the eventual recipients. However...

¹¹ And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it."

Supposing that all of the aforementioned possibilities failed, the nearest close relative was to be sought out and granted the land. This is seen in the book of Ruth. However, though not stated, it would be within the family on his father's side. The family of the wife is not family in the sense spoken of within this context.

No matter how far distant, the records would eventually indicate someone within the father's family who would be considered the closest relative and it would be to that person that the inheritance would be granted. Because of this provision, found here in Numbers 27, the Jewish scholar Maimonides said that an Israelite is never without heirs.

^{11 (con't)} And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment,

The term *l'khuqat mishpat*, or "for a statute of judgment," is only found here and in Numbers 35:29 which deals with cities of refuge in relation to a man-slayer. The idea of both is a statute of the Lord that entails a fixed, permanent, and authoritatively established judgment. It defines and determines a legal right.

^{11 (fin)} just as the Lord commanded Moses.

Moses had sought the Lord's guidance, and the Lord provided that same guidance. The wisdom of the statute of judgment, along with the other land rules – such as the return of a possession at the Year of Jubilee – kept the Israelite society harmoniously living in the land, for almost fifteen hundred years.

Though there was punishment and exile, the understanding concerning family inheritance was set and fixed, eliminating countless problems which could otherwise have arisen in that ancient agricultural society.

*An inheritance awaits us that is sure and true
It is waiting for all who will come forward and receive
It was secured for us by what Christ Jesus did do
And it is ours for the taking, if we just believe*

*God has spoken that this thing we ask for is right
It belongs to us, though we did nothing for it to receive
With it comes an eternal life, dazzling and bright
And it is ours for the taking, if we just believe*

*Don't fail to come forward; hear my plea
It is waiting for you if you will but receive
You and all the saints will be there around the glassy sea
It is yours for the taking, if you will just believe*

II. Wisdom in the Words

There are five possibilities of inheritance seen in the verses today.

- 1) Sons receive the inheritance.
- 2) If no sons, daughters receive the inheritance.
- 3) If neither sons nor daughters, then the brothers receive the inheritance.
- 4) If no brothers are to be found, then the father's brothers are to receive the inheritance.
- 5) If no father's brothers are to be found, then the nearest close relative is to receive the inheritance.

There is no need to go past these five degrees of family structure because all families fell under the divisions within the tribes. And so, as long as a tribe existed, there would

never be a lack of a close relative. One could continue all the way back to the last division before one of the twelve sons of Israel and still find a relative.

Five, being the number of grace, is perfectly revealed in the grace of these inheritance laws. An inheritance is something one does not deserve. It comes to them apart from merit, and this is exactly what is seen here. The Lord says of the land of Canaan –

“The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land *is* Mine; for you *are* strangers and sojourners with Me.” Leviticus 25:23

The land belongs to the Lord. He gave it to Israel as an inheritance, but it remained His in the ultimate sense. The grace of this land-inheritance statute of judgment was intended to keep the land carefully aligned with the families within the tribes, and to protect all in those families as they lived out their lives.

As the land is the Lord’s, it reminded them that they were the Lord’s possession. There is no way to separate the people from the land and still have both be true. When Israel was exiled for their rejection of Christ, they were also rejected by the Lord.

This was prophesied by Hosea where the Lord said, “You are not my people” (Hosea 1:9). However, He later said of them –

“Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth,
And I will have mercy on *her who had* not obtained mercy;
Then I will say to *those who were* not My people,
‘You *are* My people!’
And they shall say, ‘You *are* my God!’” Hosea 2:23

This is built upon by both Paul and Peter in the New Testament. The Lord has had mercy on Israel, and He has planted them back in their land. They are ready, once again, to be called the people of God. But that will only happen after they call out to Jesus, “You are my God.”

Together, Jew and Gentile have been brought into the family of God through Christ. Someday, that will extend to all of Israel. As Matthew Henry says of this passage –

“God himself gives judgment. He takes notice of the affairs, not only of nations, but of private families, and orders them according to his will. The petition is granted. Those

who seek an inheritance in the land of promise, shall have what they seek for, and other things shall be added to them.”

Zelophehad, or Tselophekhad, means “Shadow of Fear.”

Mahlah, or Makhlah, means, “Infirmity.” It is akin to the name of one of the sons of Elimelech and Naomi in the book of Ruth – Makhlon.

Noah signifies, “Shaky Girl,” or “Wandering.” Her name comes from the word *nua*, which gives the sense of quivering, wavering, or tottering. However, it is used when speaking of Cain in Genesis 4 where he is sentenced to be a vagrant; a wanderer upon the earth.

Hoglah, or Khoglah, means, “Turning in joy.” It is akin to the word *khag* which is a festival.

Milcah means, “Queen.”

Tirzah means, “Well-pleasing,” or “Delight.”

Together, this family gives us a broad and general brushstroke of salvation as it occurs in Christ Jesus.

First, in general type concerning their actions, they have come forward to the lawgiver and the high priest, among others, in order to claim their right to an inheritance in the Promised Land. That inheritance is first secured for man through the work of the Lord, and then it is the right of those who call on Him to obtain their own inheritance. That is seen, for example, in Ephesians 1 –

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...”

-Ephesians 1:11

As there are five unmarried daughters of Zelophehad, they can loosely be equated – as noted earlier – to the five wise virgins who anticipate their inheritance through the coming of Messiah in Matthew 25. Though dealing with Israel, under the law, the anticipation is that of their inheritance in Messiah.

As they are without a father, and with nothing said of their mother – whether living or not – they are as those who have no inheritance, and yet are sure that they have their own right to one. The law then provides for it by the word of the Lord.

That same Lord secured the inheritance through His own work, fully and completely rendered for the payment of the inheritance. And he grants it to those who – seemingly deprived of the inheritance – are exalted to the obtaining of it.

Sin ended their father's life, but the law provided the path for his name to be continued and to ensure that the inheritance would not fail. This is seen in their names. Zelophehad who died in his sin represents those born in sin, in the "shadow of fear." As Hebrews says –

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15

This state of fear of death, brings forth Mahlah, or the sickly, infirm person, bound in sin. There is a state of pain because the fallen condition in which man exists in this state. Such a person, like Cain, is left in a land of wandering, represented by Noah. This lasts until the person confronts Christ.

At that time, Hoghlah or turning of joy, enters into the picture. And in that turning of joy at obtaining the inheritance, royalty is bestowed upon that soul, represented by Milcah, or Queen. In Revelation 1, this is recorded –

"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him *be* glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Revelation 1:5, 6

In this state, and as inheritors of the divine promises of God found in Christ, we are found "well pleasing" to God, represented by Tirzah. These five daughters names are otherwise superfluous to the narrative unless their meanings are intended to convey a thought which the Lord intends for us to see. If not, He would have simply said, "the five daughters of Zelophehad," and left it at that.

However, by stating their names both in the previous chapter and here, He is asking us to consider them and contemplate their meaning. And in contemplating their meanings, we see what the Lord intends for us to see.

There is an inheritance awaiting any and all who are willing to receive it. And this is what these five wise daughters of Zelophehad did. They came forward and asked for that which already actually belonged to them, though it was only at that time in the mind of the Lord.

And this is what we are asked to do as well. Let us not fail to heed the call. There is, in fact, an inheritance awaiting us if we will simply come forward and receive it as such. It is already ours, if we will but act.

Closing Verse: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:3-5*

Next Week: Numbers 27:12-23 Hip Hip Hoorah! (The Inauguration of Joshua) (53rd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Daughters of Zelophehad

Then came the daughters of Zelophehad
The son of Hopher, the son of Gilead

The son of Machir, the son of Manasseh
From the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; for sureza
And these were the names of his daughters:
Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah

And they stood before Moses
Before Eleazar the priest, with words to be conveying
And before the leaders and all the congregation
By the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying:

“Our father died in the wilderness
But he was not in the company of those; no, not of those ones
Who gathered together against the Lord, in company with Korah
But he died in his own sin; and he had no sons

Why should the name of our father

Be removed from among his family, this isn't our druthers
Because he had no son?
Give us a possession among our father's brothers

So Moses brought their case before the Lord
To obtain from Him the appropriate word

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words to him He was then relaying

"The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right
You shall surely give them a possession, without haw or hem
Of inheritance among their father's brothers
And cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them

And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying:
'If a man dies and has no son
Then you shall cause his inheritance
To pass to his daughter, so this shall be done

If he has no daughter, if not any others
Then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers
If he has no brothers, no other sons of his mother's
Then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers

And if his father has no brothers
Then you shall give his inheritance, so I submit
To the relative closest to him in his family
And he shall possess it

And it shall be
To the children of Israel
A statute of judgment
Just as the Lord commanded Moses; as He to Moses did tell

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 27:12-23 (THE INAUGURATION OF JOSHUA)

The passage today deals with two different subjects. The first is that of Moses being told that his life is coming to an end, and a reminder of the reason for that. The second is that of the inauguration of Joshua to succeed Moses.

Despite these being recorded now, there is still quite a bit more to go in Numbers, and there is another book, Deuteronomy, coming from Moses as well. It may seem like a lot, and that the inauguration of Joshua should be kept till later, but all of the events between now and the end of Deuteronomy form a very short period of time, months at best, possibly much less.

It would make no sense to wait until the last minute to accomplish the things in this passage today any later than they are now occurring. There needs to be a time of transition which prepares both the leadership and the people for what lies ahead.

As for Moses, the passage today gives the highlights, but it skips some of the details of what occurs between the Lord and him when he is told he is to die. We'll look at those things from Deuteronomy today, and we'll go over them in detail when we get there. But the point is, in both instances, that Moses resigned himself to the fact that he wasn't going into Canaan, and that another would have to assume his position in order for Israel to take that giant step forward. For Moses, he is told to go up the mountains and see what he would not attain. His life was a pilgrimage that ended before receiving the promise...

Text Verse: *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Hebrews 11:13*

For us, there are two parts to the promise we have been given. The first is that we have obtained the promise in Christ. It is ours, actual and whole, but it is not yet realized. The second part is when it is realized. Too often, we separate the two, as if we might not actually obtain the promise, even though it is ours.

People fret over their salvation, they believe that they can lose it, and they second-guess what they have heard, wondering if it is all just some type of hoax that they once believed. That is a sad state to be in, but it doesn't change the reality of the situation. If one is in Christ, the promise is his and it comes with a guarantee.

The way to not fall into doubt, worry, or frustration is to keep in the word, understand what you have received, and simply hold fast to it. The promises of God are sure, and they are verifiable. We will talk about that at the end of the sermon, after we have looked over the verses in today's passage.

Let us take comfort in our faith, hold fast to it, and not forget that the second part of our promise – the realization of entry into the inheritance – could come at any moment. The Lord may come and take His church home, or He may come and gather us to our fathers as has happened to so many before us.

Either way, we are going to be with Him. This is a great and perfect hope which is to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. You Also Shall Be Gathered to Your People (verses 12-14)

The last portion of Scripture we looked at last week dealt with the inheritance rights of the people of Israel, particularly the division of inheritance to someone who had no sons. With that matter settled, the Lord speaks to Moses once again about his not being one to enter into Canaan. Moses, or He Who Draws Out, would not be the one to bring the people in to receive their inheritance. The picture is obvious. Moses drew out the people from Egypt, but the law also came through him. The law draws out sin in man. It does not resolve the sin problem; it highlights it, as Paul explains –

“But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead. ⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.” Romans 7:8-10

Moses, who represents the law, cannot enter the promised inheritance. Rather, the law must die prior to granting salvation (pictured by entry into Canaan). Aaron, the high priest of the law, has already died. Moses must also die outside of the inheritance to fulfill the picture. But in the death of Moses, there must be another to lead the people. Today's narrative will continue the picture...

¹² **Now the Lord said to Moses:**

The Lord has set the parameters of all things, and the Lord has made the determinations contained within them. For Israel, one of those parameters is that the law will not lead the people into glory. It will lead the people to glory, but only “to,” not “into.” To meet one of the determinations contained within that parameter, the Lord continues by saying...

¹² (con’t) **“Go up into this Mount Abarim,**

aleh el har ha’abarim hazeh – “Go up into Mount the Abarim the this.” Moses is instructed to go into the mount of the Abarim. The word comes from *abar*, meaning to pass over, by, or through. The “im” at the end is a plural marker, like our “s.” Thus, it is “The Crossings Over” or “The Regions Beyond.”

They are in the regions beyond Canaan, and so it is Canaan which is the point of reference. The instruction for Moses to go up is anticipatory. In other words, he is to do this, but the actual event doesn’t occur until Deuteronomy 31-34.

And so, this is not two different stories, as some scholars claim. Rather, it is an often-used literary tool found in Scripture. An event is spoken of, and the details are filled in later. It was what occurred with the creation accounts in Genesis 1 & 2, and it is something we have seen repeatedly in Numbers.

The reason for including this now, as seen, is to show that the law, typified by Moses, is not a part of the inheritance. It is also to reveal that a new leader must be identified and commissioned to lead the people into Canaan. This will continue to be revealed in the verses ahead.

The timing of the ordination of Joshua is actually later in the chronology of events in the book of Numbers, but the record of it now is necessary to establish the idea that he is the one to assume the role of leader after Moses. This will become more evident when we get to Chapter 31. For now, along with a new leader, a new generation – typified by the daughters of Zelophehad – will enter and receive the inheritance. Thus, the words of Paul concerning the law are seen here –

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the

covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.” Galatians 3:16-18

The generation of the law, meaning those who received it, died prior to entry into Canaan. But those of the promise – meaning their offspring – would enter. We are being given typological representations of what God would do in Christ who is the fulfillment of the law. His seed will, in fact, obtain the promise.

The words, “Go up into this Mount Abarim,” are general. However, they will become more specific as the narrative is expanded upon in Deuteronomy. Abarim will be defined as Pisgah, and then Pisgah will be further defined as Mount Nebo. To continue with the typology of the law’s inability to bring Israel in, the Lord continues with his words to Moses...

¹² (con’t) **and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel.**

The land of Canaan is the Lord’s land. This was stated explicitly in Leviticus 25:23. However, he has given it to the children of Israel as an inheritance. As Moses is left east of the Jordan, he is not given that inheritance. Again, one can see the law bringing the people to, but not into, the inheritance.

The law performs its work, and it is then terminated upon its completion. The typology here in Numbers shouts out aloud anticipating those doctrines which are set forth in the gospels and which are then explained in the epistles. It cannot be said enough, for those under law, there is no inheritance. Again, this is seen...

¹³ **And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people,**

The term “gathered to your people” goes back even to the time of the death of Abraham in Genesis 25:8. It obviously doesn’t mean to a specific place, because Abraham was buried in Canaan and Moses will be buried outside of Canaan. It also does not mean that he is cut off from any future promises. This is obvious for several reasons, the main one of which is recorded in the gospels. There, it shows that Moses did, in fact, appear in Canaan with Jesus –

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; ² and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. ³ And behold,

Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴ Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'" Matthew 17:1-4

Everything that is recorded of Moses in his earthly life is given to show us hints and pictures of Christ and His redemptive work, including the time and place of his death. It is outside of Canaan that he will be gathered...

¹³ (con't) **as Aaron your brother was gathered.**

kaasher neesaph aharon akhikha – “as was gathered Aaron your brother.” These words could have gone unstated and nothing would be lost in the detail. It is already a known fact that Aaron had died. Further, Miriam had died, and she isn't mentioned.

Therefore, the words are a poignant reminder of past misdeeds for Moses to reflect on. Further, they are a continued reminder to us of the insufficiency of the law – or those under it – to obtain the inheritance. If there is anything that we should learn from this passage, it is that.

It begs for us to come to Jesus, trust in Him alone, and be reconciled to God apart from our futile attempts to live out our lives in hopes of personal merit instead of what God offers apart from our efforts.

¹⁴ **For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation,**

kaasher meritem pi b'midbar tsin – “as you rebelled against *my* mouth in the Wilderness of Zin.” Using the word *kaasher*, or “as,” the Lord just said in the previous verse “as Aaron your brother was gathered.” Now, he again uses the word *kaasher*, or as, concerning his rebellion in the wilderness of Zin – “as you rebelled.” The repetition of the word is not saying one is the cause of the other. Rather, it is being used in a comparative sense. The word translated as “you rebelled against” is plural. It speaks of both Moses and Aaron. And so, in essence, the Lord is saying, “As Aaron has been gathered, so you will be gathered. You both rebelled and you are both to receive the same fate.

¹⁴ (con't) **you rebelled against My command**

As we just saw, the Lord doesn't say, “My command.” He says, “My mouth.” Though it can be used figuratively to mean “command,” when the Lord speaks as He does, it is to be taken as authoritative.

He should not have to say, “I command you to do this Moses.” Rather, His word bears all of His authority. Moses disregarded that precept, and it cost him. But it had to happen in order to maintain the typology. The account of this matter is recorded in Numbers 20:1-13. If you didn’t see that sermon, you now know what you must do tonight when you are at home.

^{14 (con’t)} **to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes.” (These *are* the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)**

Again, as I said a moment ago, the words here follow from what was recorded in Numbers 20. It is an amazing passage that needs to be explored in order to understand all of the beauty that was presented there. If you missed the sermon, or if you forgot the details, be sure to go back and watch it.

As a quick reminder, the name Meribah comes from what occurred. There was *riv*, or strife, and so the name of the place was called Merivah, meaning Place of Quarreling. Likewise, the name Kadesh comes from the verb *qadash*, meaning to hallow or set apart. Moses and Aaron failed to hallow the Lord, and the place was named based on that. Along with that, however, there are other puns in the three verses we have looked at so far. The name Abarim is the same as what was said to the people when they rebelled in Numbers 14. There it said –

“And Moses said, “Now why do **you transgress** the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed.” Numbers 14:41

There, Moses said, *lamah zeh atemoberim eth pi Yehovah* – “why this you transgress *the* mouth of Yehovah.” Abarim and *oberim* are the same word, meaning to pass over.

By telling Moses that he is to go up into the Abarim to die, it is a reminder to him that – like the people who *overstepped*, or transgressed, the mouth of the Lord and were condemned to die in the wilderness – he too overstepped that same mouth, and he too is condemned to die outside of Canaan.

But more, the word Abarim is also identical to the plural word for Hebrew, *ivrim*. The Hebrew people are those who have crossed over to the Lord, and yet they continue to cross over (meaning transgress) the word of the Lord.

The act of burying Moses in the Abarim signifies this. As long as Israel, the Hebrew people, trust in the law, they will overstep their boundaries, and they will be judged by that same law.

The filler information, necessary to understand a better picture of what is so briefly spoken to Moses here, is found in Deuteronomy 32 where it says –

Then the Lord spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: ⁴⁹ “Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; ⁵⁰ and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; ⁵¹ because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel. ⁵² Yet you shall see the land before *you*, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.” Deuteronomy 32:48-52

*Moses, My servant, you shall be gathered to your people
It is now time for you to come home
Though many will mourn ‘neath that steeple
Your time of rest has come; no more to roam*

*Another must now take your place
While you are gathered to a new home
But you shall rise to again see My face
But for now you shall rest; no more to roam*

*You have fulfilled your mission and you have done well
And you shall be remembered always after I gather you home
Until you are raised again after a short spell
But until then you shall rest; no more to roam*

II. Set a Man Over the Congregation (verses 15-23)

¹⁵ Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying:

The vast majority of sections which deal with a conversation between the Lord and Moses begin with the words, "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying." The words here are reversed. It is Moses who initiates this conversation, and it is based on the news he was just given. He shall not lead Israel into Canaan. Based on this, the first thing that comes to his mind is a concern for the people...

¹⁶ "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation,

Moses appeals to the Lord on behalf of the people, but he does it in a manner similar to what was said in Numbers 16 during Korah's rebellion. In their distress, Moses and Aaron fell before the Lord and exclaimed –

"O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?" Numbers 16:22

Here, he doesn't say, "O Yehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, please set a man over the congregation." Instead of calling the Lord by His name and then stating his words, he uses the Lord's name in his statement – "Let Yehovah."

There is purpose to this. The name Yehovah comes from the verb *hayah* which signifies to come to pass, or to be. In essence, he says, "Let the One who Is, the God of the spirits of all flesh."

He is making a contrast between the Lord, who is self-existent, and who knows all things, to himself, and indeed to all others as well. The "God of the spirits of all flesh" signifies that He is the Creator of them. They came into existence, and they will go the way of all flesh in death at some point.

Even apart from the obvious defect of sin in man, in all men there is a deficiency of knowledge, experience, and wisdom. In God is found only the perfection of each of them. No matter what choice Moses made, he would be incapable of determining who was the most capable person to assume the leadership of the people.

When the sanctuary was to be constructed, the Lord knew the exact person who had the proper skills to oversee the project. And so He called out for Bezalel the son of Uri. The construction of the sanctuary was a matter of the highest importance, and the choice of the overseer required the knowledge of the Lord in order to select the right man. The leadership of Israel was no different. Even with all of the wisdom of the elders joined together, they could not look at the hearts of the men to determine who was

most fit. The spirit of man is known but to God alone. Only the Lord could search each out.

This is what Moses is relaying in his words now. His petition is that the all-knowing God alone was capable of making the right selection, and so he defers to Him to do so. The people needed someone...

¹⁷ who may go out before them and go in before them,

The words concerning a person going out and going in speak of the common, private life of the man. It is what man does. He goes out in the morning to work, and he comes home at night exhausted from the labor. Or, he goes out to carouse, and he comes in drunk. Maybe he goes out to commit adultery, and he comes in with syphilis.

Moses knows that the Lord will pick someone who is reliable. Jesus uses this same thought in John 10 –

“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

Who is it that will go out and come in according to the will of the Lord? Moses defers to the Lord to decide.

¹⁷ (con’t) who may lead them out and bring them in,

Moses’s words now speak of the public, official life of man. What type of a leader will he be? The words speak of a shepherd who leads sheep out, and then leads them back in again. He cares for them and will be a faithful leader over them. Again, Jesus refers to this when speaking of Himself in contrast to false shepherds –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” John 10:1-5

Surprisingly, Jesus said these words to the people of Israel, who claimed to be followers of Moses, and yet John next says of them that “they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.” No wonder Moses deferred to the Lord to make the choice.

¹⁷ (con’t) **that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep which have no shepherd.”**

Moses’ concern for his people was because he knew the faithless character of man. Few could be trusted with the leadership of the Lord’s people, as is evidenced throughout the Old Testament, and as is witnessed by Matthew at the time of Jesus’ advent –

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. ³⁶ But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Matthew 9:35, 36

One can see how heavily the New Testament relies on the Old for its symbolism and terminology. As far as the sequence of events which are now being relayed, before we get to the next verse, the words of Deuteronomy 3 must be seen to understand the full context of what occurs.

“Then I pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying: ²⁴ ‘O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your mighty hand, for what god *is there* in heaven or on earth who can do *anything* like Your works and Your mighty *deeds*? ²⁵ I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.’

²⁶ “But the Lord was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me. So the Lord said to me: ‘Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter. ²⁷ Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift your eyes toward the west, the north, the south, and the east; behold *it* with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. ²⁸ But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.’” Deuteronomy 3:23-28

The Lord told Moses he would be gathered to his fathers. Moses then petitioned the Lord for mercy. The Lord rebuked him as if he would waffle on such a matter. Moses then petitioned the Lord for the people, and only then did the Lord respond, as is now seen...

18 And the Lord said to Moses: “Take Joshua the son of Nun with you,

Joshua is selected, and the Lord commands that he be ordained. Joshua, or “Yehovah is Salvation,” is a type of Christ. He came under the law, and yet he prevailed over the law. He demonstrated faith in the Lord and was granted freedom from the curse of the law which came upon all others except Caleb.

Whereas Moses led the people *to* the land of promise, Joshua will lead them *into* the land of promise. The typology of Christ is obvious. Jesus was born under the law, a law waiting to be fulfilled. It brought the people to the land of promise, but it could not bring them in.

Only when Christ came, born under the law, and who died in fulfillment of the law, could the people be brought in – by faith in what He did. Joshua, or “The Lord is Salvation,” looks to Yeshua (Jesus), meaning “Salvation,” and who is the Lord.

The name Nun means “to propagate” or “increase.” God the Father, through the Son, propagates his offspring. The typology is set, and it all points to what God does in Christ.

18 (con’t) a man in whom is the Spirit,

Of the twenty-eight versions I checked for this sermon, only one gets this right. There is no article in front of the word “spirit” in the Hebrew. It simply says, “a man in whom is spirit.” The meaning is explained later in Deuteronomy 34 –

“Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.” Deuteronomy 34:9

18 (con’t) and lay your hand on him;

This is an outward consecration of the man. It is a public act which is intended to convey to the people that the transfer of leadership has been decided, and that it is ordained by the Lord through Moses. In typology, the law laid its hand upon Christ.

The transfer was made, and in His death, the law found its end. A new covenant was established, just as a new leader is now inaugurated. But all things must find their proper place, and so this is to be done publicly, before others as well...

¹⁹ set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight.

We saw in Numbers 20 that the transfer of the priesthood from Aaron to Eleazar pictured the transfer of the priesthood from the Aaronic line to that of Christ. Here we see the acknowledgment of the priesthood in the ordination of Israel's new leader.

Though under the law the two offices were separate, under the New Covenant, they are both found in Jesus. And it was not done in a corner. Rather, it was done before all the congregation. Nothing about Christ's authority was kept from the people, even if they kept separate from Him.

²⁰ And you shall give *some* of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

A new word, translated as "authority," is seen here, *hod*. It signifies splendor, majesty, or vigor. This is its only use in the books of Moses. It is usually used when referring to the Lord. It comes from a root signifying grandeur, such as in an imposing appearance.

In the inauguration, Moses is associating Joshua with his own majestic office. One can see Christ bearing the majesty of the law which was transferred to Him as He hung on the cross. Moses is about to die; Joshua is about to be elevated as the new leader. The law died when Christ died, but Jesus came forth as the new Leader. Each thing that occurs is given in small hints of something much greater which was coming in Christ.

²¹ He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire before the Lord for him by the judgment of the Urim.

Moses talked to the Lord face to face, whereas Joshua receives the judgment of the Lord through the Urim, or lights, via Eleazar. This shows the greatness of Moses in all of the Old Covenant.

And yet, in type, because Jesus is both the Leader of the people of God, and the High Priest of the New Covenant – filling both roles stated here – He is superior to Moses. This is explicitly stated in Hebrews 3. In Him is also the true Source of light as stated in John's gospel. The naming of the Urim here looks to the light of Christ to come.

^{21 (con't)} At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation."

This is speaking of the direction of the Lord, not Joshua or Eleazar. It further reads, “at his mouth they shall go out, and at his mouth they shall come in.” In other words, the shepherding of Israel is by Joshua, but only at the direction of the Lord.

This is why the calling by the people for a kingship was so repulsive to Samuel, and considered such a transgression by the Lord. The people had rejected their true Head, and called for a human to take the reigns instead. But it also shows the greatness of king David who understood the truth of his own position when he said, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

David did not shun his selection as king of Israel, but he understood that his kingship was one which was still rightly as a sheep before its shepherd. It also shows the boldness of Christ to proclaim to the people, “I am the good Shepherd.”

There are only two possibilities to His words. The first is that He was a blasphemer who rejected the authority of the Lord, and the second is that He is, in fact, the Lord. Taken in the context of what is said here and throughout the rest of Scripture, no other option is left for man to consider when evaluating who Christ Jesus is.

²² So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation.

The words here are to show the obedience of Moses to every detail spoken to him. This is an often-repeated word concerning him. He is given directions, and he meticulously follows through with them. With only the exception of the waters of Meribah, Moses was faithful in all his house.

He stood Joshua before Eleazar and, as it says, before all the congregation. It is a public ceremony intended to leave no doubt at all who the successor to Moses will be. The high priest standing with him shows the alliance between the two offices.

Moses performing the rite demonstrates his approval of the Lord’s selection, and the congregation are all witnesses. No person could question the authority granted to Joshua, because all were witnesses to it.

And the same is true with Christ. The high priest witnessed Christ’s work, the law testifies to Christ’s work, and the people throughout Israel also were witnesses to what they saw. There is no more excuse for Israel’s rejection of Jesus than there would have been if they had rejected Joshua at some point after he was so inaugurated.

²³ (fin) **And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.**

The words here are simple and direct. With the authority and approval of the Lord, and by the hand of Moses, Joshua was inaugurated to the office of leader of the Lord's people. A fuller set of details of this inauguration are found in Deuteronomy 31 –

““Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. ² And he said to them: “I *am* one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, ‘You shall not cross over this Jordan.’ ³ The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said. ⁴ And the Lord will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. ⁵ The Lord will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. ⁶ Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He *is* the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.””

“Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, ‘Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. ⁸ And the Lord, He *is* the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.’” Deuteronomy 31:1-8

Later in that same chapter, it again says –

“Then He inaugurated Joshua the son of Nun, and said, ‘Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land of which I swore to them, and I will be with you.’” Deuteronomy 31:23

What is recorded here about Joshua is not at all unlike that which is spoken by Peter about Jesus. Joshua was imparted the *hod*, or splendor of Moses at his inauguration. Peter says that Jesus bore the same splendor as the Father. He repeats the substance of the account of the transfiguration in his epistle with these words –

For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice

came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 2 Peter 1:16, 17

The patterns between Moses and Joshua and that of the law and Jesus were recorded about 1400 years apart, and yet they show marvelous similarities between the two accounts in order to let us know that what is recorded about Jesus isn't just arbitrary or happenstance, but it is purposeful.

Further, if these similarities were purposefully manufactured they would have been called out as such from the moment they were written. But there could be no argument at all that what was recorded was exactly what happened.

If someone in the congregation of Israel had said, “Moses never ordained Joshua,” he would have been locked up as a lunatic. Moses stood and openly ordained him. Eleazar was there. The leaders were there, and indeed, the entire congregation was called to witness it. And further, the account was written down to ensure that it would be remembered properly.

Likewise, the same thing happened in regards to Jesus. Those things which were only seen by the apostles might have been dismissed as nonsense, *except* that the apostles were willing to die for what they proclaimed. Nobody in their right mind would purposefully die for what they knew was a lie.

As you defend your faith in Christ, remember the lessons concerning what is recorded, not just from the New Testament, but even from the Old. In Acts 17, the saints at Berea were called more noble than the saints at Thessalonica because they not only accepted the word, but they searched the Scriptures to see if what they were told was true and accurate.

The Scriptures which are spoken of were not the New Testament, but the Old. They heard the gospel, and of the things accomplished by the Lord, and they went back to their own Scriptures in order to determine if the things they were told matched the things they should anticipate from the Law and the Prophets.

And guess what? They do. Be assured and reassured that what you are told about Christ in the New Testament is sufficiently well-documented in the Old to validate the faith you have placed in Him. And more, the New Testament is so perfectly woven together between the books that we can have a complete assurance that what we have received, is exactly what the Lord intended for us to have.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Hear, have faith, and be confident in the faith you have professed.

Closing Verse: *“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.*

³⁴ *“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:*

‘The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

³⁵ *Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” ’*

³⁶ *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts 2:32-36*

Next Week: Numbers 28:1-10 Detailing these most important profferings... (The Daily and Sabbath Day Offerings) (54th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Inauguration of Joshua

Now the Lord said to Moses:

“Go up into this Mount Abarim, as to you I now tell

And see the land which I have given

To the children of Israel

And when you have seen it

You also shall be

Gathered to your people

As Aaron your brother was gathered, as now directed by Me

For in the Wilderness of Zin

During the strife of the congregation

You rebelled against My command

To hallow Me at the waters before their eyes

———yes before the whole nation

These are the waters of Meribah, where you did sin
At Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin

Then Moses spoke to the Lord, saying:
These words to the Lord he was relaying

“Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh
Set a man over the congregation
Who may go out before them and go in before them
Who may lead them out and bring them in, yes before this nation

That the congregation of the Lord, as I petition You this day
May not be like sheep which have no shepherd
— — —-hear my petition I pray

And the Lord said to Moses:
“Take Joshua the son of Nun with you
A man in whom is the Spirit
And lay your hand on him, so you shall do

Set him before Eleazar the priest
And before all the congregation
And inaugurate him in their sight
Yes, in the site of the whole nation

And you shall give some of your authority to him
That all the congregation
Of the children of Israel may be obedient
Yes, so shall it be among the nation

He shall stand before Eleazar the priest
Who shall inquire before the Lord
For him by the judgment of the Urim
According to My word

At his word they shall go out
And at his word they shall come in; yes, the whole nation
He and all the children of Israel with him
All the congregation

So Moses did as the Lord commanded him
He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest
And before all the congregation
Yes, before them all, from greatest to least

And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him
— — —-as we now understand
Just as the Lord commanded by Moses' hand

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 28:1-10

(THE DAILY AND SABBATH DAY OFFERINGS)

I'm going to be honest Charlie and admit that coming to this chapter made me go kind of "huuuuuh." We have gone through sacrifices and offerings in Exodus, in Leviticus (well, a few in Leviticus), and then more in Numbers.

I wasn't so winded by the thought of more offerings, but by the thought that there would be nothing new – or at least refreshing – as a reminder, that would keep me plugging along at a steady pace as I researched and typed.

And it especially appeared that way for two reasons – both dealing with the scholars I read for each sermon. First, some of them give almost no comments at all on both Chapter 28 and Chapter 29. You could read everything they had to say in a couple minutes. If they couldn't drum up some notes, then they were obviously winded too. That made things look bleak for anything exciting to jump out at us today.

Secondly, the opening comments of two of the references I read – Cambridge and the Pulpit Commentary – were dismissive of the content here. We can expect that from Cambridge. Their Old Testament commentaries are rather pathetic, leaning towards demeaning of what the Lord has bestowed upon us.

But even the Pulpit Commentary went down this path a bit. First, Cambridge said concerning two of the nine types of offerings we will see in these chapters, "Nos. (7) and (9) shew that the list is post-exilic, for neither was observed before the time of Ezra." In other words, and without any proof of their claim, they say that some content for the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles was added some time after the Israelites returned from captivity in Babylon. Never mind that it says in verse 1, "And the Lord spoke to Moses saying." To them, this treasure given to us by God is a haphazard compilation of a bunch of Jews who needed to correct God on what He intends for us to guide our lives by. In a similar fashion, the Pulpit Commentary says –

"It is impossible to say with any assurance whether the law of offerings contained in these two chapters was really given to Moses shortly before his death, or whether it was ever given in this connected and completed form. It is obvious that the formula with which the section opens might be used with equal propriety to introduce a digest of the

law on this subject compiled by Moses himself, or by some subsequent editor of his writings from a number of scattered regulations, written or oral, which had Divine authority.”

They then later say –

“It cannot, therefore, be said with any special force that the present section finds its natural place here. All we can affirm is that the system itself was of Divine origin, and dated in substance from the days of Moses. In any case, therefore, it is rightly introduced with the usual formula which attests that it came from God, and came through Moses.” Pulpit 28:1

So what we have here, according to them, is a compilation of stuff from here and there, later edited and reorganized, and yet they claim that it came from God and came through Moses. How can it be that God’s word needs to be compiled, edited, and reorganized in order to become God’s word? That makes as much sense as voting democrat and expecting lower taxes.

Text Verse: *“The words of the Lord are pure words,
Like silver tried in a furnace of earth,
Purified seven times.
7 You shall keep them, O Lord,
You shall preserve them from this generation forever.” Psalm 12:6, 7*

Fortunately, we can know that we have a sure word. This is because Jesus argued over its perfection. He spoke of the absolute sure nature of the word, and that it would remain that way. We don’t have to wonder if what we look at today was compiled later or not. It speaks for itself. You will see this. Everything we will look at today caught my attention. It took away the blues I had been feeling, and it made me wonder how so few scholars even bothered to comment in-depth on it. We have ten verses and a full sermon of detail to go through.

As I know what most of you think about the word of God, when we are done, I am positive you will go home blessed and built up in your faith, and once again amazed at the amount of Christological detail that we will see. Get ready! It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Daily Offerings (verses 1-8)

¹Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

In Chapter 25, Israel's harlotry with the women of Moab was seen. From there, a second census was recorded. That was followed by inheritance laws which needed to be resolved based on the census. And then Joshua was selected as the next leader of Israel. It is he who would lead Israel into Canaan, the land of inheritance.

Each step has followed a logical, orderly path to ensure that there would not be a breakdown of things after the death of Moses and entry into Canaan. Now, for the next two chapters, details concerning offerings are recorded.

These are given to ensure that the people, once in the land, will continue to acknowledge the authority of the Lord, and that their daily, monthly, and annual cycle of life is centered on Him.

Almost all of what is recorded here is a repeat of what has already been stated elsewhere. However, this is a new generation, and they have been raised without observing most of these rites, in part or in whole. Indeed, they could not. Many require offerings which were not available to a migratory people.

Therefore, to ensure the new generation is aware that they are expected in Canaan, and to ensure that they are not overlooked, the details are given again. And, the location of the passage is not at all arbitrary, but purposeful. Each step is preparing Israel for *entry* into Canaan, and how they will live once they arrive there. Understanding that, the Lord now says to Moses...

²“Command the children of Israel, and say to them,

Here Moses is told to command “the children of Israel.” The instructions, going directly to the people instead of the priests, show that the priest had no say in the offering, but rather he was to follow through with his part in the process, inspecting the offering for type, perfection, and conducting the associated work in transmitting the offering to the Lord.

What is mandated here is of the Lord. It was not to be changed by anyone. The priests could not arbitrarily set their own parameters for the offerings to be made. Among other things, this is what the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas did, and it cost them their lives.

^{2 (con't)} ‘My offering,

The word for “offering” here is *qorban*. It is used 82 times in the Old Testament, and almost all of them are in Leviticus and Numbers. It has already been used 36 times in Numbers and it will only be seen again here and in verse 31:50. It is mentioned one time in Nehemiah and twice in Ezekiel, and that is it.

It comes from the verb *qarav* which means “to come near,” or “approach.” The idea is that in order to approach near to the Lord, there must be an offering presented at that time. No person or people could draw near to a king or a royal without presenting an offering. How much more to the Lord who was Israel’s true King.

Understanding this, we can see how this points to Christ. We cannot draw near to God without an offering, and yet, we as believers are told that we can, in fact, draw near to God. This is through the work of Christ, which is our offering. This is spoken of by Jeremiah in the 30th chapter of his book –

“Their nobles shall be from among them,
And their governor shall come from their midst;
Then I will cause him to draw near,
And he shall approach Me;
For who *is* this who pledged his heart to approach Me?’ says the Lord.
²² ‘You shall be My people,
And I will be your God.’” Jeremiah 30:21, 22

Jeremiah states that One would come who would be allowed to draw near to the Lord God. In the next chapter, it is revealed how this will be accomplished, which is through a New Covenant.

When Jesus came, He established that New Covenant in His blood as is recorded in all three synoptic gospels, and which is confirmed by Paul in his writings, such as in 1 Corinthians 11 when speaking of the Lord’s Supper. This is followed up and explained in detail in the book of Hebrews.

In Christ, we make our offering to God which has been deemed as proper and perfect, and thus He is our *qorban*. He is our offering by which we draw near to God. This is a voluntary offering in the sense that we must choose to use it, and yet it is mandatory in that if we choose to draw near to God, it must be through Him and Him alone. This is explicitly stated by the author of Hebrews which explains the New Covenant in Christ’s blood –

“For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Hebrews 7:18, 19

As long as we continue to think about how each detail points to Christ, these repetitious offerings here in Numbers will flow properly, it will be interesting, and it will reaffirm our own Christian walk which is far superior to these rites and rituals which only foreshadow His great work.

² (con't) **My food**

lakhmi – “my bread.” The word *lekhem* used here signifies food in general because bread is representative of that which nourishes. It looks to Christ who said in John 6:48, “I am the bread of life.” The food here is the Lord’s food, and in Christ is found the fulfillment of that which is offered to Him.

² (con't) **for My offerings made by fire**

The cycle of offerings, which include various sacrifices, all point to what Christ would do. The Lord here says that these offerings are made by fire. These then are offerings which are consumed in the fire. The symbolism is that of Christ. His life was wholly consumed as an offering to the Lord, symbolized by the burning.

² (con't) **as a sweet aroma to Me,**

reakh nikhokhi – “aroma, sweet to me.” Again, we look to these words and find Christ. In the offering of His life – His works, His perfection, and His sacrifice in fulfillment of the law, He was considered as a sweet aroma, pleasing to God the Father. This is explicitly stated by Paul in Ephesians 5 –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1, 2

Everything that is to be instructed in these coming verses is the same. It points to Christ and what He would do for us. The people of Israel were living out a parable of what was

to come in Him, so that when He came it would be understood that He was the fulfillment of it all. It is His life alone which is truly the offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

² (con't) **you shall be careful to offer to Me**

The word translated as “to offer” is *l’haqriv*. It signifies “to bring near.” It is that which is pleasing to the Lord and which can be brought near and presented to Him. Again, it looks to Christ. The people could only draw near to God through offerings. Christ is the fulfillment of them, and the author of Hebrews showed us a moment ago of the fulfillment of the picture in Hebrews 7.

² (con't) **at their appointed time.'**

All that we will see in the many verses of these two chapters hinges on, and is arranged according to, the number seven. There are daily offerings which lead to the seventh-day, or weekly, Sabbath offering. These lead into the monthly offerings which are then highlighted by the seventh-month offering. And those then lead into the annual offerings. In all, the number seven is predominant in these feasts and in the other cycles of time noted elsewhere. It is the number of completeness and spiritual perfection.

These *moedim*, or appointed times were to be meetings between the people and the Lord in anticipation of Christ's fulfillment of each of them. In just this one verse, we have seen half a dozen, or more, pictures of what God would do in Christ. Though the words so far repeat thoughts already presented in earlier passages, it is no less astonishing how minutely God is detailing in picture what would come in Him.

³ **“And you shall say to them, ‘This *is* the offering made by fire which you shall offer to the Lord:**

Again, these words are spoken to all of the children of Israel. These things are a standard, given by the Lord, and the words are not to be amended by priest, prophet, or king. The first offerings to be detailed are the daily offerings. These were first instituted in Exodus 29. Now they are being re-explained and built upon here.

³ (con't) **two male lambs**

kebasim – “male lambs.” The word “two” is actually stated later in the verse as a qualifier of the offering. The word *kebes*, or lamb, is used more than 105 times, and all but less than 20 are used in connection with sacrifices.

The word comes from a root which means “to dominate.” It thus symbolizes Christ’s domination over sin, and so this offering is a twice-daily reminder of the sinless Christ who came to give His life in exchange for ours. In these lamb offerings, we hear the words of John the Baptist ringing out –

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” John 1:29

In Revelation 13:8, Jesus is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The daily lamb offerings were a reminder of that which had been ordained before man had ever stepped foot on the earth from which he was created. Sin would be the problem, and Christ would be the answer – known to God from the very foundation of the world.

³ (con’t) **in their first year**

These lambs were to be of the first year to denote innocence. Anyone who has seen a young lamb knows that they reflect the epitome of this quality as they bounce about and bleat with joyous sounds. Likewise, Christ was innocent before the law, and He stood innocent before His accusers. The picture of the first year lambs is fulfilled in Him. In like fashion, they were to be...

³ (con’t) **without blemish,**

These, like all other sacrifices presented to the Lord, were to be *tamim*, or without blemish. The word signifies sound, without spot, perfect, etc. It comes from *tamam* which signifies to be complete, or finished. It looks to Christ who, as Peter says in his first epistle –

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-1 Peter 1:18, 19

In His perfect life, He completed what the law demanded, fulfilling it, and opening the door for the full and final redemption of man. These lambs without blemish look to Christ our Lord, the perfect Lamb of God.

³ (con't) **day by day,**

sh'nayim la'yom – “two each day.” The reason for there being two will be seen in the next verse. But that they were daily was to show not just the perfection of Christ, but the unceasing perfection of Christ. He wasn't just born perfect, but He also lived perfectly, day by day, in an unceasing manner – never deviating from the Father's will. As He said –

“And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” John 8:29

³ (con't) **as a regular burnt offering.**

olah tamid – “burnt offering continually.” The *olah*, is a whole burnt offering. The word comes from *alah*, meaning “to ascend,” and so the idea of the offering ascending in smoke is what is conveyed. The *olah* in the Bible goes all the way back to Genesis 8:20. After the flood, Noah offered such an offering. There it said –

“Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered **burnt offerings** on the altar. ²¹ And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

²² “While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease.” Genesis 8:29-22

The last time such an offering is mentioned in the Bible is actually in the New Testament. There in the Greek it is known as *holokautoma*. As you can hear, the word finds its origin in the Hebrew *olah*. However, if you listen carefully, you can also hear where our word holocaust comes from. Thus, one can see where the concept of our modern term is derived.

In the use of the modern term, the meaning is applied differently based on the user. For those who burnt the Jews, they act as if it was a sacrifice *to God* which would supposedly please Him because they had done away with His enemies. For the Jews, it was as if

a sacrifice to God had been made *of their lives* in order to please Him. Either way, these are incorrect uses of this word. No such idea should rightly be connected to what occurred at the hands of the Nazis – from either viewpoint.

There is but one truly acceptable offering which this burnt offering pictures. That is detailed in the Bible's final use of the burnt offering in Hebrews 10 –

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

⁶ In **burnt offerings** and *sacrifices* for sin
You had no pleasure.

⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’”

⁸ Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin
You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*” (which are offered according to the
law), ⁹ then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away
the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰ By that will we have been sancti-
fied through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.”

-Hebrews 10:5-10

The second word here is *tamid*, or continually. It carries much the same thought as the offering being presented, day by day. However, it looks to the actual impact of that offering. It is explained by the author of Hebrews –

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God
through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Hebrews 7:25

Thus, the *olah tamid*, or burnt offering continually, looks in type and picture to the coming Christ and all that He would do for His people. He always pleased His father in His earthly life, and the effects of that are that He always lives to make intercession for His people through His one-time and for-all-time sacrifice.

⁴ The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer in the evening,

eth ha'kebes ekhad taaseh ba'boqer v'eth ha'kebes ha'sheni taaseh ben ha'arbayim –
“the lamb one you shall offer in the morning, and the lamb the second you shall offer

between the evenings.” It is a marvelous picture of Christ’s final day in fulfillment of the law.

In this, the two lambs are combined as one day of offering. The first is at the time of the morning offering, which is noted in historical writings as nine o’clock in the morning. The second is said to be offered *ben ha’arbayim*, or “between the evenings.”

At first, it seems like a perplexing phrase, but it is one that is based on biblical time. In the Bible, a day is divided into “evening” and “morning.” Thus there are actually two evenings to be reckoned. The first began after twelve and runs through until sunset. The second evening begins at sunset and continues till night, meaning the whole time of twilight. This would, therefore, be between twelve o’clock and the termination of twilight.

Between the evenings then is a phrase which speaks of the three o’clock sacrifices at the temple. They were considered as the evening sacrifice even though to us it would be deemed as an afternoon sacrifice. It is a phrase used only eleven times in the Bible and it always points to the timing of the death of Christ, which the gospels record as three o’clock in the afternoon.

To understand why the two lamb offerings are equated as a single day’s offering and thus symbolically one offering, we must go to the book of Mark. There it first says –

“Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.” Mark 15:25

It then next says –

“Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’

³⁵ Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that*, said, ‘Look, He is calling for Elijah!’³⁶ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.’

³⁷ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.” Mark 15:33-37

Mark, who is in agreement with the other gospel writers, shows that Christ was crucified at the same time as when the morning offering was being made – 9am. He then says that Christ died at the same time that the evening offering was being made – 3pm. Thus, the two lamb offerings encompass, and stand representative of, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, from beginning to end. The type of offering, the timing of the offering, and every detail associated with the offering looks ahead to the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Along with the lambs, the children of Israel are also instructed...

⁵ and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour

The number ten in Scripture signifies the perfection of divine order. It implies that nothing is wanting and that the number and order are perfect, and the whole cycle is complete. The tenth part is given as representative of the whole. In this case, it is one-tenth of an ephah of *solet*, or fine flour.

Solet is from an unused root meaning to strip; flour, as chipped off; and thus fine. It is generally considered, even when not specifically stated, that wheat was the flour used in such an offering. It would be the best of things offered to the greatest of Beings, meaning the Creator. In this, it is a picture of Christ.

The tenth part, representing the whole, shows that nothing is wanting and that His offering is perfect, and through His work, the whole cycle is complete. He is the perfection of divine order.

That it is *solet*, or the finest flour of wheat, looks to His purity. It is a fitting emblem of Christ who is the Bread of life, and the One who thus provides everlasting life to those who partake of Him. It is an acknowledgment of this to God. As it says, it is...

⁵ (con't) as a grain offering

l'minkhah – “for a grain offering.” The word *minkhah* signifies a gift or an offering. In this case, it is a grain offering. It represents Christ who offered His life as a pure offering – the Bread of Life – to God.

But, it should be noted that the grain which is offered came from God. And yet, it has been modified by man in the grinding process. Thus a type of work is involved in the picture. In this offering is then seen the work of Christ which remained pure and undefiled throughout His ministry. Along with that, the offering is...

⁵ (con't) **mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil.**

Here, *shemen*, or oil, is said to be *balal*, or mixed, into the grain. The oil pictures the Spirit of God. Though Christ is a Man, He is fully endowed with the Holy Spirit. The fourth of the hin stands representative of the whole. The number four speaks of creation and signifies material completeness. The fourth part of oil is mixed with the body which was prepared out of creation for Christ. That is referred to in Hebrews –

“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:

“Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.

⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin
You had no pleasure.

⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.’” Hebrews 10:5-7

A body was prepared from the created order for Christ, and that body is fully endowed with the Spirit of God. That is referred to by Isaiah –

“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

² The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” Isaiah 11:1, 2

Finally in this verse, the word used to describe the oil, and translated as “pressed,” is *ka-thith*. It is used just five times. This is the fourth and last in the books of Moses. It will be seen one more time in 1 Kings 5.

It indicates something beaten. It is only used in connection with the olives that have been made into oil. The process of beating the olives is what the adjective implies. The oil which is expected would usually come from unripe fruit. It would come out clear and without color.

After the gentle beating to break the skin, the full olives would be placed in a strainer of some sort, like a wicker basket, in order to allow their juice to drip through by gravity alone. The liquid would simply run through that and into a bowl. From there, the purest

oil would float to the top and be skimmed off. Out of this, the anticipated result would be oil with no impurities at all, and thus the very finest possible.

Everything about this grain offering looks to Christ. It is He who has the full measure of the Spirit intermixed into His perfect humanity. There is nothing impure in Him, and therefore the Spirit mingles perfectly in Him and radiates perfectly through Him.

⁶ *It is a regular burnt offering which was ordained at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.*

The Hebrew doesn't say this was ordained at Mount Sinai. Rather, it reads that the burnt offering was "made" at Mount Sinai. What appears to be the case, is that after leaving Sinai, the people were to travel rather quickly to Canaan and enter the land. Upon entry, the offerings could then be picked up and resumed.

However, due to their disobedience, they were stopped during the following thirty-eight years. Now, the people are being reinstructed in what is expected concerning these offerings because they are soon to enter Canaan. This appears to be the reason for the question asked in Amos 5 –

“Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings
In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?” Amos 5:25

The answer is, apparently, “No.” And thus, this fits the typology we have seen perfectly. The people of Israel rejected Christ, they did not offer to God what these offerings here look forward to, meaning Christ, and they went into extended exile, just as Amos prophesied to them.

Now they are about to enter Canaan where they would again be offered, picturing Israel's coming acceptance of Christ, who is the fulfillment of these types and shadows. The fact that it says these offerings were *made* to the Lord for a sweet aroma at Mount Sinai, which pictures the cross of Christ, is a nice touch in packaging all of the symbolism up into one beautiful picture of how redemptive history has unfolded since.

Every detail in these few verses has looked to Christ. Israel missed this, and they failed to offer that offering to God. But now, they are beginning to gravitate towards Christ more and more each day.

⁷ *And its drink offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb;*

Now we turn to the *nesek*, or drink offering. It is to be one-fourth of a hin. The fourth stands for the whole. A drink offering is one to be offered in the Land of Promise, a land of defeated enemies. Thus it is a land of rest. Only when rest is provided, would the Lord accept these libations. All during the time of the wilderness wanderings, they were not offered.

Further, a drink offering is poured out in its entirety to the Lord. No part of it was drank by the priests or people. This signifies that the people were partially excluded from the full blessings of the Lord while still under the Law of Moses. In picture, it looks to the complete pouring out of Christ's life.

The fourth part carries the same meaning as in verse 5. It speaks of creation and signifies material completeness. The human aspect of Jesus (that which is of the created order) was poured out in its entirety as an offering to God. Paul speaks twice of his own life as a drink offering. In both instances, it is referring to the pouring out of his life in death.

^{7 (con't)} **in a holy *place* you shall pour out the drink to the Lord as an offering.**

ba'qodesh hasek nesek shekar l'Yehovah – “in holy you shall pour out drink offering intoxicating drink to Yehovah.” The offering itself is holy and it is to be poured out on the offering at the brazen altar. Thus, it is considered a holy place.

The type of drink is *shekar*. It signifies intensely alcoholic liquor. Whereas wine is normally mentioned for a drink offering, this more intense drink is named. As this is an offering to go with the lambs which picture Christ's crucifixion, the use of this word looks to the trial which Jesus faced. In Proverbs, it says this –

“Give **strong drink** to him who is perishing,
And wine to those who are bitter of heart.” Proverbs 31:6

And Isaiah says this –

“They shall not drink wine with a song;
Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.” Isaiah 24:9

There is an intensification of the imagery in this passage for the audience to contemplate. It was Christ who was perishing for their sins, and the bitterness He faced was for their redemption. The cross is God's holy place of propitiation, and we are asked to stop and contemplate the enormity of what He accomplished for us.

⁸The other lamb you shall offer in the evening; as the morning grain offering and its drink offering,

This is now the last of eleven times that the term *ben ha'arbayim*, or between the evenings, is seen in Scripture. Each and every instance looked forward to the time of Christ's death on the cross. As both the morning and the evening sacrifice are to be offered in the exact same manner, they are united in thought as one event.

From the time that the nails entered Christ's body, until the time He died, the imagery seen in these verses concerning these two lamb offerings, with their associated accompanying offerings. It is as one offering to God. The morning offering would be incomplete without the evening offering, and the evening offering would make no sense without the morning offering.

Only in the crucifixion and death of Christ do the two offerings –morning and evening – become united in meaning. And the significance of that is seen with the words...

^{8 (con't)} you shall offer *it* as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.

The words are substantially repeated from verse 2, and were also partially stated in verse 6. In verse 2, it said, "as a sweet aroma to Me." Here it says, "a sweet aroma to the Lord." The repetition is given to settle in the minds of the people how good and pleasing these daily offerings were to the Lord.

As they picture the death of Christ, the passage would be incomplete without showing how the Lord perceives His crucifixion –

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days,
And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.
¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.
¹² Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,

And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.” Isaiah 53:10-12

*A Lamb, spotless and pure – without any defect
Will be sacrificed in my place
And looking at that Lamb, I can certainly detect
The greatest love and grace... this I see looking upon His face*

*Oh! That I could refrain and not see Him die
Oh! If there could be any other way
How could this Lamb go through with it for one such as I?
Oh God! This perfect Lamb alone my sin-debt can pay*

*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
Behold the sinless One, there on Calvary’s tree
He has prevailed and the path to heaven has been unfurled
The Lamb of God who died for sinners like you and me*

II. The Sabbath Day Offerings (verses 9 & 10)

⁹ ‘And on the Sabbath day two lambs

The words here are the second set of offerings for the people to consider. They are national offerings even if they are only offered by the priests. They are made on behalf of all of the children of Israel, and they are weekly offerings, occurring each week on the Sabbath.

This is the first mention of these Sabbath offerings, and they are made *in addition* to the daily offerings. In other words, the daily offerings are not replaced by the Sabbath offerings. Rather, the Sabbath offerings are made in addition to these daily offerings.

^{9 (con’t)} in their first year,

These are to reflect the innocence of Christ, just as before.

^{9 (con’t)} without blemish,

These are to reflect the sinless and unblemished nature of Christ, just as before.

^{9 (con't)} **and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering,**

The two-tenths are for both lambs together, one-tenth for each lamb, not two tenths for each. The grain offering is to reflect the purity of Christ, just as before.

^{9 (con't)} **mixed with oil,**

The oil is representative of the Spirit, just as stated above.

^{9 (con't)} **with its drink offering—**

It can only be assumed that this drink offering is the same as that mentioned above, *shekar*, or intensely strong drink, and not *yayin*, or wine, as with other drink offerings. This would continue the same typology as was seen above, if so.

It seems unlikely that it would be any different, because if it was, it would more probably state that the Sabbath offering was wine. As nothing is stated, the same type of drink offering as the daily offering *appears* to be what was offered.

¹⁰ **this is the burnt offering for every Sabbath,**

Nothing is stated concerning the time of these offerings. Were they offered at one time together? Were they offered separately? If they were offered separately, were the individual Sabbath offerings offered along with the two daily offerings – one in the morning and one in the evening. It does not explicitly say, but the last option seems likely based on our final words of the day...

^{10 (fin)} **besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering.**

The verse says *al olat ha'tamid v'niskah* – “upon the burnt offering the continual and drink offering.” In other words, each Sabbath offering is laid upon the morning or evening offering. This would then provide a beautiful completion to what these offerings picture in Christ.

The two daily offerings form one continual reminder of Christ's work by which we are brought near to God and accepted by Him. The two Sabbath offerings form one weekly reminder of what that means for the believer in Christ.

That is minutely explained in Hebrews as the author explains the meaning and purpose of the Sabbath in relation to God's seventh day, which follows the creation account. In particular it says in Hebrews 4:3, "For we who have believed do enter that rest."

The Sabbath of Israel was only a type and shadow of the rest which would be granted to those in Christ. We who believe now enter into God's rest. This is why we no longer observe a Sabbath. Instead, we live our lives in the rest which Christ has provided.

The laying of the Sabbath lamb upon the daily lamb signifies that. In Christ, there is full redemption, in Christ there is rest, in Christ we are brought near to God, and in Christ all is accomplished. What was anticipated by Israel is realized in Christ – for any who will simply reach out, and by faith accept His offer. He has done the work, we need to do the believing. Have faith and rest in Christ.

Closing Verse: *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." Colossians 2:16, 17*

Next Week: Numbers 28:11-15 *Another set of important profferings...* (The New Moon Offerings) (55th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Daily and Sabbath Day Offerings

Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words to him He was relaying

"Command the children of Israel, and say to them
'My offering, My food for My offerings, ever-so prime
Made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me
You shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time

"And you shall say to them, 'This is the offering made by fire
Which you shall offer to the Lord; such shall be the proffering
Two male lambs in their first year without blemish

Day by day, as a regular burnt offering

The one lamb you shall offer in the morning
The other lamb you shall offer in the evening. It really is no toil
And one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering
Mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil

It is a regular burnt offering
Which was ordained at Mount Sinai, according to this word
For a sweet aroma
An offering made by fire to the Lord

And its drink offering shall be
One-fourth of a hin for each lamb; so shall it be
In a holy place you shall pour out the drink
To the Lord as an offering. Yes, an offering to Me

The other lamb you shall offer in the evening
As the morning grain offering and its drink offering
You shall offer it as an offering made by fire
A sweet aroma to the Lord shall be this proffering

'And on the Sabbath day two lambs in their first year
Without blemish, and two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour
— — — as a grain offering, mixed with oil, with its drink offering
This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath
Besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering
— — — such shall be the Sabbath's proffering

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 28:11-15 (THE NEW MOON OFFERINGS)

When speaking of a right relationship with God, idolatry is one of the biggest problems that man faces. Man has found every possible thing in heaven and on earth to worship. We worship mountains, we worship forests, we worship stars, and we worship women or men. Some people worship their pets. The list is long and sad.

Paul writes about this in Romans 1, there is the creation, and there is the Creator. Because we can't see the Creator, we may steer away from worshipping lest we look silly at worshipping something we can't see, even if the evidences for His existence are plain and obvious.

As a species, we don't tend to think clearly. Much of the reason for that is because we are infected with sin. That clouds our understanding. But we also just don't want to expend the energy to think about things. Thinking, contemplating, and studying can be hard work, and it can drain us.

It is a lot easier to just do other, less challenging things. But, ironically, some people actually spend more energy trying to challenge what is obvious than they ever would in coming to a full understanding of those obvious things.

For example, evolutionists spend all kinds of time and energy attempting to disprove the very evidences that God has left of His hand in creation. Bible scholars have been known to spend countless hours attempting to tear apart the Bible instead of studying it as it is intended. Oh my.

Text Verse: *"Sing aloud to God our strength;
Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.
² Raise a song and strike the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the lute.
³ Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon,
At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.
⁴ For this is a statute for Israel,
A law of the God of Jacob." Psalm 81:1-4*

Why is there a New Moon? Why is there a full moon? And how do we know exactly when they will be? Why is there an equinox or a solstice that can be easily determined,

year by year, even hundreds or thousands of years into the future? Why is it that men who sleep with men cannot bear children?

Why is it that a person was able to identify the makeup and properties of elements which had not yet been discovered, so that when they were discovered, the properties and makeup of them matched what the person had already figured out?

The answer to these things, and to an almost infinite number of related questions, is that it is because there is order and harmony in the creation. If the universe started in chaos, the universe would still be in chaos. No matter how long the chaotic continues, it will never become organized.

Reading about the offerings to the Lord which were required of Israel is a study in order. There is harmony in them, there is wisdom in them, and there is structure in them. When we read passages such as the one today, we should try to look beyond the simple words themselves and attempt to figure out why the Creator placed them here, and what He is attempting to show us through them. That is where real treasure can be found. We have come across so much in the past, and we will come across more today. This is certain, because great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Monthly Offerings (verses 11-15)

¹¹ 'At the beginnings of your months

u-b'rashe khadeshekem – “and in heads your months.” Here the word *rosh*, or head, signifies the first or beginning. The word now turns to the third mandated offering which is given for a specific time, that of the beginning of the month.

Thus, the required offerings have gone from the daily in verses 1-8, to the weekly, meaning that of the Sabbath, in verses 9 & 10, and now they go to monthly offerings. This monthly event is something which has only been mentioned in an incidental way so far. In Numbers 10:10, it said –

“Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I *am* the Lord your God.”

Nothing else has been said of this to explain why the beginning of the month is singled out. The reason for it being later called the “New Moon” is because the Hebrew Calendar was based on the cycle of the moon. It is a 30-day calendar, commencing each month at the time of the New Moon.

As the beginning of the month is the time of the New Moon, that means that the 15th of the month is the time of the full moon. Thus, the Passover occurring on the 14th of the month – as stated in Exodus 12 – means that the Exodus of the people occurring on the 15th of the month was the most propitious time for them to depart.

Moses and Aaron were called for by night, and they were ready when the moon was full. The departure would have allowed them the most light possible for their escape. The fifteenth also corresponds to the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is mandated in Leviticus 23 –

“And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. ⁷ On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. ⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day *shall be* a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work *on it.*” Leviticus 23:6-8

The exact offerings which are mentioned there to be made by fire for that feast will be outlined later in this same chapter, in verses 17-25. This beginning of the month, also known as the time of the New Moon, is now noted as having a mandated offering which is to be associated with it. That begins with the words...

¹¹ (con’t) **you shall present a burnt offering to the Lord:**

Here, an offering is to be made *l’Yehovah*, or “to the Lord.” As nothing has yet been specified concerning the New Moon, such as was specified, for example, in the giving of the Sabbath, it begs the question, “What is the significance of this time of the month?” There must be a reason why the beginning of the month, or the “New Moon,” requires a mandatory offering. Oddly, the Bible never explicitly says. Thus, an explanation can only be inferred. The fact that the day was to be announced by the blowing of the silver trumpets certainly elevated the respect the day received. Four basic reasons for blowing of the silver trumpets were given –

- 1) For the gathering of the people;
- 2) For the advancement of the people from their camps;

- 3) For remembrance in battle; and
- 4) As a memorial before God at various times.

The only one which applies here would be “as a memorial before God.” The silver of the trumpets pictured redemption. That there were two of them pictured the proclamation of God’s word, given in two testaments. Thus, blowing these trumpets at the time of the New Moon was to be as a memorial before God at a particular time of life which points to Christ.

As the blowing of the trumpets was to coincide with the offerings to be presented, then they are calling forth a remembrance of what the offerings represent in typology as they anticipated Christ.

But not all offerings were to be called out in order to be remembered. For example, the sin offerings, which pictured Christ’s life as a sin offering, did not have the trumpets blown over them. It would be as if calling sin to remembrance.

Rather, sin is expiated and gone. The trumpets, according to Numbers 10, show they were only to be blown over the burnt offering mentioned here. Those burnt offerings consisted of...

¹¹ (con’t) **two young bulls,**

parim bene baqar shenayim – “bulls sons of ox two.” The *par*, or bull, comes from the word *parar* which carries the meaning of defeat, or make void, although it can be variously translated. In this is a type of Christ who defeated the devil, making void that which the devil had wrought.

Baqar comes from a word meaning to inquire or seek out. Being a son of such an ox looks to Christ who seeks out those He would redeem, just as the Lord is said to seek out His sheep in Ezekiel 34.

This is the first time that two bulls, instead of just one, are offered. No explanation is given for it. And so we must think it through. The number two signifies that there is a difference. In one, there is no difference, but in two there is a difference; there is another. Bullinger notes that in two things, the second may be included for help and deliverance. Such would make sense for the reason of having two bulls. The first looks to the work of Christ accomplished for the people. The second anticipates help and deliverance in the month ahead.

As the first day of the month stands as representative of the entire month, the one bull looks to Christ's accomplished work, and the second looks to the work Christ continues to accomplish. In other words, he has defeated the devil and the one is a remembrance of that, but we still look to Him to deliver us from the devil, of which the second is given in anticipation of that.

11 (con't) one ram,

v'ayil ekhad – “and ram one.” The word *ayil* comes from a word denoting strength. The ram reflects the total commitment of Christ who offered all of His natural strength to His Father. He is fully sufficient to redeem all.

11 (con't) and seven lambs in their first year,

kebasim bene shanah shivah – “lambs son of year seven.” The lamb, or *kebes*, signifies “to dominate.” The type of animal looks to Christ who dominated over sin. Seven of them pictures Christ. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection, emblematic of His spiritually perfect work.

The first year signifies innocence, just as Christ was innocent. Through His innocence, He prevailed over the law, dominated over sin, and destroyed it. This is what we are to see in these seven lambs of the first year. And in them, as with the other animals, they were all to be...

11 (con't) without blemish;

temimim – “perfect.” As with all animals presented as burnt offerings to the Lord, they were to be without spot, without blemish, and perfect. Again, the quality looks to Christ who bore no sin before God. As seen last week, Peter provides exactly this explanation –

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-1 Peter 1:18, 19

12 three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering,

As seen in the previous sermon, the number ten in Scripture signifies the perfection of divine order. It implies that nothing is wanting and that the number and order are perfect, and the whole cycle is complete.

The tenth part is given as representative of the whole. In this case, it is three-tenths of an ephah. The reason this specific amount will be mentioned is in this same verse. The grain offering is to be of *solet*, or fine flour.

As seen last week, *solet* is from an unused root meaning to strip; flour, as chipped off; and thus fine. It is generally considered, even when not specifically stated, that wheat was the flour used in such an offering. It would be the best of things offered to the greatest of Beings, meaning the Creator. In this, it is a picture of Christ.

First, is that it is a division of a tenth, it represents the whole, showing that nothing is wanting and that His offering is perfect, and through His work, the whole cycle is complete. He is the perfection of divine order.

That it is *solet*, or the finest flour of wheat, looks to His purity. It is a fitting emblem of Christ who is the Bread of Life, and the One who provides everlasting life to those who partake of Him. Thus the offering is an acknowledgment of this to God. It is to be...

12 (con't) **mixed with oil,**

The *shemen*, or oil, is said to be *balal*, or mixed, into the grain. The oil pictures the Spirit of God. Though Christ is a Man, He is fully endowed with the Holy Spirit. It looks to Christ, the God/Man.

12 (con't) **for each bull;**

The amount, three-tenths, is given based on the size of the animal. This was seen in Numbers 15, and the amounts mentioned here are consistent with what is presented there. As this is the largest animal offered, the grain offering is sized accordingly. For the next offering, it is less...

12 (con't) **two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram;**

A tenth division is again made, representing divine perfection, but this time it is smaller to correspond with a smaller animal. And then once again, the amount decreases with the third animal offering...

¹³ and one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with oil, as a grain offering for each lamb,

The same grain offering, mixed in the same manner, and carrying the same symbolism, is again repeated, but this time, the amount is one-tenth in order to correspond with the size of the animal. All of these together are to be...

¹³ (con't) as a burnt offering of sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.

Again as with the daily and weekly offerings, we look to these words and find the same symbolism of Christ. In the offering of His life – His works, His perfection, and His sacrifice in fulfillment of the law, He was considered as a sweet aroma, pleasing to God the Father. This is explicitly stated by Paul in Ephesians 5 –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1, 2

Everything points to Christ and what He would do for us. The people of Israel were required to give these monthly offerings as a sort of parable in anticipation of what was to come in Him.

These went on, month by month, as a memorial before God that His covenant stood firm until the time Christ would come, fulfill it, and initiate a New Covenant through His perfect work and life. It is His life alone which is truly the offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

As with the daily and weekly offerings, along with these monthly burnt offerings, with their grain offerings, there were also to be drink offerings presented...

¹⁴ Their drink offering shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, one-third of a hin for a ram, and one-fourth of a hin for a lamb;

The drink offering amounts are the same as were recorded for the same type of offerings in Numbers 15. However, unlike the daily drink offerings we looked at last week which were said to be *shekar*, or strong drink, here these are to be *yayin*, or wine.

First, the *nesek*, or drink offering, comes from a word meaning “cover.” The idea is that when the drink offering is poured out, it will cover that onto which it is poured.

The drink offering of *yayin*, or wine, looks to the merging together of cultural expressions into a result. The thing that ought to happen can happen, symbolized by wine. In the drink offering, it signifies rest and celebration. Such a drink offering is only offered after entry into the Land of Promise, which is a land of defeated enemies. It is a land of rest. Only when rest is seen, would the Lord accept the wine libations.

And more, a drink offering is poured out in its entirety to the Lord. No part of it was drunk by the priests or people. It signifies that they were partially excluded from the Lord’s full blessings while under the Law of Moses. Jesus referred to this in Matthew –

“Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.” Matthew 9:17

He was speaking of the law and grace. The new wine is the new dispensation of grace to come. The old wine was the dispensation of the law. Introducing the new concept into the old would not work because they are incompatible.

Only when putting the new wine into the new wineskins is the mind changed. Only in Christ does man truly enter into God’s victory and rest. This is what is seen in the wine drink offering, and it is why Paul could say in Philippians 2 –

“Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” Philippians 2:17, 18

Paul’s labors in the vineyard anticipated his victory and rest in Christ. It is confirmed in his words to Timothy –

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the

Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:6-8

¹⁴ (con't) **this is the burnt offering for each month throughout the months of the year.**

The three types of animals, along with the grain and drink offerings that accompanied them, unite to form a unit which is the burnt offering for each month, on the first of each month, each year. As it says, *b'khadesho l'khadeshe ha'shanah*, or “in the month, for the months the year.”

Each burnt offering represented the month, and together they united to form the required monthly burnt offerings. Over these burnt offerings would be blown the silver trumpets, thus making them a memorial before God concerning the promise of the coming of Messiah and what He would do in fulfillment of these mere types and shadows. Along with the burnt offerings there is...

¹⁵ **Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering to the Lord shall be offered,**

It is notable that this sin offering is mentioned only after the burnt offering. As with the Day of Atonement, and at various other times, it is a *sayir izzim*, or a hairy goat. Hair in Scripture signifies awareness. In this case, it is awareness of sin. This is a monthly reminder of the sinful state of the people.

Despite having other sin offerings when sin is committed and recognized as such, or which were to cover the sins of the people for the year, meaning on the Day of Atonement, this sin offering is given as a reminder that the people were not free of sin, and that they needed continual atonement for it.

It was to be for their constant awareness of that fact, and that they were wholly dependent on the Lord for His mercy, not just annually, but from month to month. They were to be aware of their sin and seek its atonement.

This monthly hairy goat sin offering was given to represent the human life of Jesus, taking on our nature, but without sin, and yet then taking on our sin in His crucifixion. It is seen in Paul's words to the Corinthians –

“For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:21

^{15 (fin)} **besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.**

What is probable, although unstated, is that the sin offering would be the first offering to the Lord. The precedent of following this order has been seen numerous times already. Sin must be first dealt with, and then – when the sin of life is atoned for – the offender is considered acceptable before God once again.

Though these offerings look to Christ and His work, they are offerings of the people in acknowledgment of their state before God. The regular daily and Sabbath offerings were sufficient to make the picture of a people living in a holy manner before the Lord. However, the addition of this monthly sin offering reminded the people that they were never truly detached from sin, and that they required an offering for that state.

Unlike the daily and Sabbath day offerings which did not mandate any sin offering, the monthly offerings did. The idea seems to be that the people were to daily offer themselves to the Lord, and they were to do so in anticipation of the coming rest of the Lord each week. But beyond these very short intervals, more was needed.

Although most people realize that their life on any given day was not perfect, and for others, they could reflect on the Sabbath that they certainly had offended God in the week gone by, there are some who probably felt that they were acceptable to God even beyond their daily and weekly lives.

But the mandating of this sin offering was certainly intended to quash any such thoughts in their heads. The Lord is telling the people, month by month, of the impossibility of being right before God without atonement.

Though less formal than the annual Day of Atonement rituals, this monthly sin offering was to carry the same mental idea for the people to consider. It is certainly because of this sin offering being included as a part of the monthly requirements, that this first day of each month observance became so prominent in Israel.

Though it is not given any great detail in the Law of Moses, the beginning of months, or New Moon observance, is seen quite a few times in both the Old and even in the New Testament. We will look over some of those noted times after a short poetic break...

*The New Moon has come at last
From waning to waxing goes the light*

*A new month has started, the old has passed
From here on out, things will be getting bright*

*But on this day, we will observe a rest
And we need to contemplate our state before God
In the past month, we have failed to be our very best
And our walk at times has been quite flawed*

*And so, a sin offering to the Lord we will make
To cover over the misdeeds that we have done
He shows mercy to us for His name's sake
For the Lord our God is the great and merciful One*

*Yes, the silver trumpets blow forth their customary tune
They now blow forth for the burnt offering of the New Moon*

II. The New Moon

The term, “the beginnings of your months,” is seen twice in the Bible, in Numbers 10:10 and in Numbers 28:11. After this, the simple term *khodesh*, or “month,” will be used to speak of this day.

As the word *khodesh* can mean a month, or a day during the month when singled out – such as “the tenth of the month” – many translations, will use the term New Moon when it is clearly referring to the first of the month. In the NKJV, there are 22 times in the Old Testament and 1 in the New where the term is used. Of this day, the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary, says –

“The beginning of the month was known, not by astronomical calculations, but, according to Jewish writers, by the testimony of messengers appointed to watch the first visible appearance of the new moon; and then the fact was announced through the whole country by signal-fires kindled on the mountain tops.” Jamieson-Fausset-Brown

This is still taught today in rabbinic circles, and among Christians who follow that thinking, and it is completely unscriptural. This is a problem with reading and accepting Jewish commentaries at face value. They often dismiss what is clearly taught in Scripture. For example, a verse from 1 Samuel 20 shows that this is not the biblical way of determining it –

“And David said to Jonathan, ‘Indeed tomorrow *is* the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third *day* at evening.’” 1 Samuel 20:5

If the Jewish tradition were true, then David would have had to wait until the evening of the next day to see if the New Moon had arrived or not. This same thought is expressed in 2 Kings 4 as well.

Secondly, to rely on this type of calculation would mean that it was up to man to determine when the month began. If there was cloud cover or a heavy haze over the land due to a dust storm, one could not be obedient to Scripture concerning these offerings on the actual New Moon because the people had not sighted it.

These types of commentaries are both unreliable, and they lack the logic and order which the Bible both reveals and demands.

There are two types of moon cycles. The first is known as the sidereal month. That is measured by how long it takes for the moon to complete one full orbit around the earth. That takes 27 days, 7 hours, and 43 minutes. That is measured by the moon’s position relative to distant fixed stars. This is not what the Bible refers to.

The second period is that of the moon’s cycle phases, meaning from New Moon to New Moon. That takes about 29.5 days. Anybody who knows this, and it would be anyone who lived during those times – and who needed to comply with the Law of Moses – could simply count on their fingers, as David probably did, and come up with the date of the New Moon observance.

As far as the New Moon observances, other than what is given in Numbers 10 and here in Numbers 28, nothing else is mandated. And yet, other things are seen as being observed later in Scripture.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown does note this which appears likely –

“The new-moon festivals having been common among the heathen, it is probable that an important design of their institution in Israel was to give the minds of that people a better direction; and assuming this to have been one of the objects contemplated, it will account for one of the kids being offered unto the Lord (Nu 28:15), not unto the moon, as the Egyptians and Syrians did. The Sabbath and the new moon are frequently mentioned together.”

More directly, the Pulpit Commentary says –

“There can be no doubt that this (unlike the sabbath) was a nature-festival, observed more or less by all nations. As such it did not require to be instituted, but only to be regulated and sanctified in order that it might not lend itself to idolatry, as it did among the heathen.”

That is certainly the case. Just as the solstices and equinoxes were known to the ancients, which then became nature festivals, so the monthly moon cycles would too. This could become problematic if not properly dealt with. In Deuteronomy 4, in a warning against idolatry, it says –

“And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.” Deuteronomy 4:19

Having a New Moon observance mandated by the Lord would help the people from making the moon into an idol, simply because the observance was when the moon was at its least strength. Instead of worshiping a full moon, the people would be observing a New Moon to the Lord. It would be as a reminder that He had set the lights in the heavens, and that He was the one who regulated the timing of their appearances, and that He did so with precision.

Unfortunately, the people didn't heed, and worshiping the heavenly bodies became a customary occurrence in Israel. Jeremiah speaks the word of the Lord concerning this –

“‘At that time,’ says the Lord, ‘they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves. ²They shall spread them before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven, which they have loved and which they have served and after which they have walked, which they have sought and which they have worshiped. They shall not be gathered nor buried; they shall be like refuse on the face of the earth.’”

-Jeremiah 8:1, 2

That is just one of the many such instances noting the people's idolatry in worshiping the heavenly bodies. However, as seen in 1 Samuel 20, the time of the New Moon was

considered a day of particular social gathering. David was expected to sit at a meal with the king. That continues on in 1 Samuel 20:24-26 –

“And when the New Moon had come, the king sat down to eat the feast. ²⁵ Now the king sat on his seat, as at other times, on a seat by the wall. And Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul’s side, but David’s place was empty. ²⁶ Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, ‘Something has happened to him; he *is* unclean, surely he *is* unclean.’”

In 1 Samuel 4, the New Moon is brought to a level commensurate with that of the Sabbath in regards to visiting a prophet of God. It implies that such a thing was most commonly done on one of those two special days. Later in Isaiah, it becomes evident that the New Moon wasn’t just something that was only observed at the sanctuary by the priests, or by the king. Rather, what Isaiah says, shows that it was something observed by all people –

“Bring no more futile sacrifices;
Incense is an abomination to Me.
The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—
I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.
¹⁴ Your New Moons and your appointed feasts
My soul hates;
They are a trouble to Me,
I am weary of bearing *them*.” Isaiah 1:13, 14

The New Moons are elevated here to the same level as the Sabbaths, calling of assemblies, and appointed feasts. Each of these involved the common people as well as the leaders. And even more, in Amos, the New Moon can be seen to be not only a day of observation to the Lord, but a day of rest among the people –

“When will the New Moon be past,
That we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
That we may trade wheat?
Making the ephah small and the shekel large,
Falsifying the scales by deceit,
⁶ That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of sandals—
Even sell the bad wheat?” Amos 8:5, 6

The implication here is that the New Moon was a day, like the Sabbath, when selling was not allowed. Despite not being mandated by the Lord directly, it was considered a day set apart in a unique way, just as the Sabbath was. But, because of the people's attitude toward the Lord, and because of the abuse of their relationship with Him, including their defilement of these sacred days, the Lord told the people of Israel this through Hosea –

“I will also cause all her mirth to cease,
Her feast days,
Her New Moons,
Her Sabbaths—
All her appointed feasts.” Hosea 2:11

Paul then uses this same thought in the book of Colossians to show that all of these things are now obsolete in Christ –

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” Colossians 2:16, 17

It is a part of Paul's standard warning. Israel failed to properly observe their own Lord-directed observances. They failed to honor Him and to obey the precepts of the law. They fulfilled the imagery that Paul lays out in Galatians.

The law was not an end in and of itself, but a means of showing Israel how desperately they needed something else, something far better. It was merely a tutor to take them by the hand and to lead them directly to the foot of the cross. They could not fulfill the law, but Christ Jesus could. And in His fulfilling, he brought to an end the Law of Moses.

Paul's words in Colossians are a warning against anyone attempting to bring you back under the same failed system that they themselves cannot live by. The New Moon, along with the dietary laws, the feast days, and the sabbaths were simply shadows of what would come in Christ. He is the Substance, and He is to be our constant reminder of God's love for us.

By following the Bible through the various times the New Moon is mentioned, we can see that it was a day which was set apart to the Lord. There are twelve months in a Hebrew calendar, and thus there were twelve New Moon observances each year. Twelve, is the number of perfection of government.

It is the monthly sin offering which makes this picture come alive. Three signifies the divine, heavenly number. Four signifies that of creation. Multiplied, they speak of organization. The government of the Lord comes together for man through these monthly reminders of man's sin, and of what Christ would do to atone for it.

Christ died for our sins only once, but the monthly reminders come together in an organized way to show what that one sacrifice would accomplish – a government not based on the effects of sin, as is the Law of Moses, but a government based on freedom from sin, as is the New Covenant of grace.

The heavenly unites with the earthly in a restored, eternal kingdom because of His perfect offering for sin. For those who have put their faith in Christ, we have received this in the church. Someday Israel will understand this as well. In the book of Ezekiel, we read this –

“Thus says the Lord God: ‘The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened.’” Ezekiel 46:1

Someday Israel will observe these things not as a means of being right with God because of self, nor as anticipatory of Messiah. Rather, they will be observed as commemorative of what Christ has done, and of an imputed righteousness because of His work. Both the Sabbath and the New Moon, and indeed all of these now-fulfilled aspects of the Law of Moses will find their proper place in the realization that Christ has done it all, and it is all done in Him.

Closing Verse: *“For as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I will make shall remain before Me,’ says the Lord,
‘So shall your descendants and your name remain.*

²³ And it shall come to pass

That from one New Moon to another,

And from one Sabbath to another,

All flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the Lord.” Isaiah 66:23

Next Week: Numbers 28:16-31 Here come more profferings... (Passover, and the Unleavened Bread and Weeks Offerings) (56th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is

there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The New Moon Offerings

'At the beginnings of your months you shall present

— — — a burnt offering to the Lord:

Two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs without blemish

— — — in their first year

Three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering

Mixed with oil, for each bull, please listen and hear

Two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour as a grain offering

Mixed with oil, for the one ram according to this word

And one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with oil

— — — as a grain offering for each lamb

As a burnt offering of sweet aroma, an offering

— — — made by fire to the Lord

Their drink offering shall be half a hin of wine for a bull

One-third of a hin for a ram, and for a lamb one-fourth of a hin

This is the burnt offering for each month

Throughout the months of the year. As each month does begin

Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering to the Lord

Shall be offered, besides the regular burnt offering and its drink

— — — offering according to this word

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness

And we are wanting to be led by You

Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess

And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land

May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy

Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand

And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone

We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 28:16-31 (PASSOVER, AND THE UNLEAVENED BREAD AND WEEKS OFFERINGS)

Today, we continue on with the offerings of the timed redemptive events found in the annual Hebrew calendar. As we have seen some of these events numerous times before, it might seem dull or even tedious to revisit them.

Passover has been mentioned again and again since it was first introduced in Exodus. This is true with Unleavened Bread as well. Even Weeks has been seen several times, and it will be seen again before we leave the books of Moses.

You might say, “Why doesn’t the Lord just give us all of the information on these things once and move on?” Like the Sabbath, however, we find that the Lord is progressively revealing His intent through these repetitions.

This is because they are not merely rote repetitions, but they are concepts which are repeated, and yet they are also being built upon. In each step we take under one of these subjects, we see a beautiful order and harmony develop.

By the time we get through with them, we – if we are willing to study them as they are given – find that everything makes complete sense. To have compiled all of the information at one time would have been to rob us of the incredible tapestry which the Lord has woven together.

Text Verse: *“The end of a thing is better than its beginning;
The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” Ecclesiastes 7:8*

As soon as I finished the sermon work for these verses, this verse came to mind. The introduction is generally the last thing I type before being finished, and the verse seemed to fit very well.

As usual, there was a lot of study and mulling things over during the verses, but nothing that seemed overly complicated – just more mentally laborious than anything else. However, upon arriving at the last verse, things changed.

The matter went from mentally laborious to mentally challenging. If I had known in advance that the last verse would take as much time to consider as many of the other

verses combined, I would have quoted the text verse to myself at the beginning of typing. Yes, the end of a thing is better than its beginning.

Translations vary into one of two major ways the verse is translated, and they both then will result in a different way of perceiving other things that are found in the rest of the verses. Would I have to go back and edit what I had typed? Were my initial thoughts correct?

When faced with a problem like this, what should I do? Do I lick my finger and hold it up to see which way the wind is blowing. Do I cast lots in hopes of resolving the matter? Should I just pick one and go with it?

Rather, I called Sergio. That's always a good way of resolving things. Two minds work better than one. When he first looked at the verse, he tended towards the opposite conclusion that I had come up with. That's when I showed him all the study I had already done in Chapter 28 and 29 in hopes of finding an answer.

After that, he agreed that my initial thoughts were probably correct. Whew. Now I don't have to fudge anything, I don't have to correct anything, and I have material for the sermon introduction. Yes! It's good to have a friend to sort difficulties out with. I recommend you find one in whatever your life needs are, and learn to lean on one another. It sure makes things go more smoothly.

For now, let's get into the sermon. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verses 16-25)

¹⁶ 'On the fourteenth day of the first month *is* the Passover of the Lord.

The offerings of Chapter 28 have gone from the daily, to the weekly (meaning the Sabbath) to the monthly (meaning the beginning of the months, or the New Moon), and now they go to the annual offerings.

The progression has been logical and orderly. Of the annual offerings, the Passover is mentioned first because it is the first annual feast of the first month, and it is said to be *pesakh l'Yehovah*, or "Passover to Yehovah."

It is a commemorative celebration which is not properly translated as “of the Lord,” but rather “to the Lord.” At the original Passover, the Lord struck all the firstborn of Egypt, but all who participated in the Passover lamb were spared. The lamb died so that its blood could be applied, saving those who participated in that act.

The killing of the Passover Lamb anticipated the death of Christ. Thus, it is the Passover “to the Lord.” This was first instituted in Exodus 12:1-21. Before that, the first month of the year was what later became the seventh month of the year in the redemptive calendar. That is spoken right at the beginning of Exodus 12 –

“Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ²‘This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.’” Exodus 12:1, 2

In reality, Israel would use two different calendars throughout their years. The first is the creation or civil calendar, and the second is this one instituted by the Lord which would be the “redemptive calendar.” This is because it details the timing of the redemptive events associated with the work of the Lord, the first being Passover. This was to be on the fourteenth day of the first month.

The fourteenth day is the day just before the full moon which would occur on the fifteenth day. As the biblical day goes from evening to evening, as soon as the fourteenth day ended, and the fifteenth started, the full moon would be expected to arise. It was at this time that...

¹⁷ And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days.

This now details what is considered a separate feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is one of the three pilgrim feasts, meaning a feast where all males were required to appear before the Lord at the place of His dwelling. This is stated in Exodus 23, 34 and also in Deuteronomy 16 –

“Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.” Deuteronomy 16:16

Though a pilgrim feast, it is joined to the Passover. The two are separate appointments, but they unite because they follow one after the other. Unleavened Bread was first stated in Exodus 12 as well –

“In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land. ²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.” Exodus 12:18-20

In that set of verses, it says, “on the fourteenth day of the month at evening.” This means “the beginning of the fifteenth day.” Hence, Unleavened Bread is a seven-day feast affixed to the Passover. It began on the 15th day, and it continued through the 21st day.

It should be noted that the first day of Unleavened Bread is not a Sabbath. Rather, it is a holy convocation. Meals could be prepared on it, but no regular work was to be done. On a Sabbath, not even meals could be prepared. Understanding this will help to avoid confusion concerning the actual crucifixion date of Christ Jesus.

Eventually, the two feasts, Passover and Unleavened Bread, became united in terminology. This is seen in Luke 22:1 –

“Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.”

Luke says that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is called the Passover. This is not saying that they are one feast according to the model laid out in the books of Moses. What it is saying is that it is one feast according to the common language of the people.

To understand this, we can think of what we might call the Christmas Holiday. Although there are two actual holidays during the school break, Christmas and New Years, we will call them both by the one name. This is common terminology, just as Luke was using. Thus, this cannot be considered an error in the Bible. It is a misunderstanding in Luke’s intention, which is to describe the Feast time which the Jews were gathering to celebrate.

In this verse, the word “feast” is not the same as that used elsewhere concerning the Passover. One word is *moed*, which signifies an appointed time, or meeting. The other is *khag*.

The word *khag* comes from *khagag*, which in turn, indicates “to move in a circle” or specifically “to march in a sacred procession.” From there you have the implication of being giddy; to celebrate, dance, and feast. It is to be a time of worship, celebration, and sacrifice. It is a pilgrim feast.

Unfortunately, translations normally use one word to describe the two thoughts. All eight feasts listed in Leviticus 23 are *moed*, or appointed times, but only three are *khag*, or actual feasts – Unleavened Bread, Weeks, and Tabernacles. That is why the verse we are looking at right now specifically calls it a feast. It is a feast in the truest sense. It is a time of celebration.

As I noted a minute ago, and which is now explicitly stated...

¹⁸ On the first day you shall have a holy convocation.

This is the fifteenth day of the month, and the mandate was first noted with these words in Exodus 12 –

“On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but *that* which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. ¹⁷ So you shall observe *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.” Exodus 12:16, 17

The holy convocations are two. One as noted here and one will be noted in verse 25. Both are mentioned together in Exodus 12. As it says in Exodus, “No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you.” This is further defined as...

¹⁸ (con’t) You shall do no customary work.

The scholar Keil, along with others, says “that on the first and seventh day there was to be a Sabbath rest and holy meeting.” This is incorrect, and it has led to faulty conclusions over the years concerning what day the Lord was crucified. Some say it was a Thursday, or even a Wednesday.

These are incorrect. As just noted, food could be prepared on these holy convocations. But, on the Sabbath, the instructions are clear –

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. ¹¹For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:8-11

This builds upon Exodus 16 where the preparing of meals was strictly forbidden on the Sabbath. Thus, these holy convocations cannot be equated to a Sabbath.

¹⁹ And you shall present an offering made by fire as a burnt offering to the Lord:

In Leviticus 23, in the instructions for this feast, it said, “On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. ⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day *shall* be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work *on it.*”

At that time, the “offering made by fire to the Lord” was not specified. Only now, just prior to entering Canaan, is that given. It is argued that the Passover was not observed during the time in the wilderness under punishment because only now are these required offerings mandated.

That is faulty logic. The Sabbath was certainly observed during the entire time they were in the wilderness, but the Sabbath offerings are also only mandated here in this chapter. Whether those who had been circumcised before the time of punishment continued to observe the Passover or not is unknown, but it is known that those born in the wilderness did not.

According to Exodus 12, one must be circumcised in order to observe the Passover. However, in Joshua it says –

“For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.”

-Joshua 5:5

It seems hard to imagine that Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and etc. would fail to observe the Passover. However, the matter is left unstated. All that matters is that now the offerings for all of these appointed times are being given.

It is an indication that they will, in fact, enter Canaan, and that they will be a society with sufficient grain, wine, and animals to make the required offerings, something that could not be done while in the wilderness. From this point on, and for the daily offerings during this feast, they are to offer...

¹⁹ (con't) **two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year.**

This is the exact same animal offerings as were required for the New Moon celebration. First were *parim bene baqar shenayim* – “bulls sons of ox two.” As we have seen, the *par*, or bull, comes from the word *parar* which carries the meaning of defeat, or make void. In this is a type of Christ who defeated the devil, making void that which he had wrought.

Baqar comes from a word meaning to inquire or seek out. Being a son of such an ox looks to Christ who seeks out those He would redeem, just as the Lord is said to seek out His sheep in Ezekiel 34.

In offering two bulls, the first looks to the work of Christ accomplished for the people. The second anticipates help and deliverance in the year which lies ahead.

The one bull looks to Christ’s accomplished work, and the second looks to the work Christ continues to accomplish. In other words, He has defeated the devil and the one is a remembrance of that, but we still look to Him to deliver us from the devil, of which the second is given in anticipation of that.

The reason for offering one each day of the feast is what this seven-day period signifies. As a feast, it follows directly after Passover, and it signifies the life of the believer who is in Christ. The unleavened bread signifies a life without sin.

In the instructions for the people they were given a positive command to eat unleavened bread during the entire feast. This goes in picture to what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:8, “let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”

Not only are we to *not* partake of sin, but we are to actively live our lives in “sincerity and truth.” It is not that we can abstain from the whole if we abstain from one; it is that we are to abstain from one while partaking in the other. Thus, the offering of the second bull anticipates our relying on Christ to keep free from sin even though we have been freed from sin.

Next, the offering included one *ayil*, or ram. That comes from a word denoting strength. The ram reflects the total commitment of Christ who offered all of His natural strength to His Father. He is fully sufficient to redeem all.

And thirdly, the people were to offer seven lambs of the first year. The lamb, or *kebes*, signifies “to dominate.” The type of animal looks to Christ who dominated over sin. Seven of them pictures Christ. It being the number of spiritual perfection, emblematic of His spiritually perfect work.

Being of the first year signifies innocence, just as Christ was innocent. Through His innocence He prevailed over the law, dominated over sin, and destroyed it. And in all of these animals, it then says...

¹⁹ (con’t) **Be sure they are without blemish.**

temimim yihyu lakem – “perfect to be them.” It is a stern note expecting compliance. As with all animals presented as burnt offerings to the Lord, they were to be without spot, without blemish, and perfect.

The reason for the stress is that these animals were presented in anticipation of Christ who would have no sin before God. As seen already, Peter provides exactly this explanation –

“...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

-1 Peter 1:18, 19

The typology was expected to be maintained because every offering to the Lord was in anticipation of the perfect Christ who was coming. To offer a defiled or blemished animal was to disgrace the notion of the glory which lay ahead in Him.

²⁰ Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah you shall offer for a bull, and two-tenths for a ram;

This is the same grain offerings as for the bulls and the ram of the monthly offering. The same symbolism is seen here as was seen there. If you forgot from last week, you can go brush up. The size of the grain offering corresponds to the size of the animal.

²¹ you shall offer one-tenth of an ephah for each of the seven lambs;

And again, it is the same grain offering, mixed in the same manner, and carrying the same symbolism, but this time, the amount is smaller in order to correspond with the size of the animal.

In the instructions here, there is no drink offering mentioned. This will be the same as for the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is assumed by some that a drink offering was made along with each of these animals, but unless the text says so, it is better not to jump to such conclusions.

Why it fails to mention them in these places is rather curious. The instructions are so precise that not mentioning them seems intentional, but is otherwise unexplained. Despite that, along with these burnt offerings, there was...

²² also one goat as a sin offering,

A goat was also required for the New Moon offering. Like there, it is a *sayir*, or a hairy *goat*. As we have seen, hair signifies awareness. As it is a sin offering, it is awareness of sin. This *sayir* is a reminder of the sinful state of the people.

In picture for us, despite Unleavened Bread looking to our being in Christ and living as unleavened, or sinless, this tells us that we actually are not so. We still need Christ's covering to free us from the sin which we do commit. Is it not that we do not sin in Christ. Rather, it is that we do sin, but sin is not imputed to us. That is recorded in 2 Corinthians 5 where Paul says, "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them" (NIV).

Christ is our offering for sin, but he is also our continued offering for sin through the non-imputation of sin once in Him. This is what is now pictured in this *sayir*. As the verse continues to say, it is...

²² (con't) **to make atonement for you.**

l'kapper alekhem – “to make atonement for you.” The word *kapher* signifies “to cover over.” This is what Christ does for us when we are in Him. And so, before going on, let us think it through logically. If we are in Christ, then our past sins have been atoned for. They are covered over. Thus, they are no longer counted against us. This is salvation. But in 2 Corinthians 5, it says that in Christ, God is not counting our sins against us – meaning the sins we commit after coming to Christ. Those sins are also covered over. Can someone please explain to me how a person can lose his salvation if it is sin that separates us from God, and yet our sins are covered over and continue to be covered over? Anyone?

The Old Covenant sacrifices point to New Covenant truths. If anything, our walk with Christ, and our confidence in what Christ has done – and is doing – for us should only be strengthened by studying these otherwise ignored, or at least overlooked, verses.

²³ **You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a regular burnt offering.**

This refers to the morning offering mentioned in verses 3-8 of this chapter. There it spoke of both a morning and an evening offering which were to be offered each day. What it is then implying is that these offerings of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to be offered separately from the morning offering, and also after the morning offering. All offerings were cumulative. One did not replace another.

These different offerings were not to be mingled together, because each bears its own picture of the Person and work of Christ. The symbolism of Christ’s marvelous work was always to be maintained. Understanding this, we can take an example directly from the gospels to see what would have occurred on a particular day. In John 19:31, it says –

“Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.”

-John 19:31

On the day after the cross, meaning the day after Passover, or as John here calls it “Preparation Day,” it was a Sabbath that year. Thus, the day of the cross, being Passover, was a Friday on the 14th of the first month. The next day, the 15th (a Sabbath day), would have had the following sacrifices:

First, the regular morning offering. Next, the regular Sabbath-day offering. After those, it would have then had the offering for the first day of Unleavened Bread which we are looking at right now. Finally, the day would be complete with the evening offering which included the second Sabbath offering as well. Each and every offering was being conducted at the same time that Christ, who is the fulfillment of all of them, was lying in the grave. After His marvelous work, He rested, and in Him we now rest.

John calls that particular Sabbath a “high-day.” It is not because it was a special day which was set apart as a Sabbath. Rather, it was a regular Sabbath that coincided with the holy convocation which is the first day of Unleavened Bread. That special offering on the first day was to be continued throughout the feast. As it next says...

²⁴ In this manner you shall offer the food of the offering made by fire daily for seven days,

In other words, what has been detailed since verse 18 is to be conducted on each and every day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. From the 15th day of the month, until the 21st day of the month, these same offerings were to be made...

²⁴ (con’t) as a sweet aroma to the Lord;

As Unleavened Bread pictures our time in Christ, and as all of the offerings picture Christ, we can go to Ephesians 5 to see how we should conduct ourselves and why that is so –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1, 2

We are to imitate God, and we are to walk as Christ walked because He is our offering and sacrifice, fulfilling these pictures from the Old Covenant. Paul’s words are a great summary of what this feast pictures.

²⁴ (con’t) it shall be offered besides the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

These words tell us explicitly that the offerings of the feast are made in addition to the other daily offerings. One did not replace the other, but they were cumulatively added according to the day or particular feast. The mentioning of the drink offering here, but not at any point during the offerings for the Unleavened Bread offerings, is a clue that there were no drink offerings presented with those Unleavened Bread offerings. It seems to be an error to assume that the offerings included a drink offering. The words are too precise to make such an assumption.

²⁵ And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

As with the first day of Unleavened Bread, so is the final day. Both are to be holy convocations. They are not Sabbaths, but days on which customary work was forbidden.

Israel was to not merely abstain from work, but they were to actively celebrate the work of the Lord. The entire week was to be a feast, but the seventh day was to be a feast unto itself as a festive termination to the entire feast.

The two holy convocations bracket the feast. They stand as representative of the entire period of it. And the feast itself is a picture of our time in Christ in this earthly life, from the day of our adoption as sons of God until the day we go home to glory. The offerings on each day of the feast were to be markers pointing to Christ and what He would accomplish for His people.

*Holy and pure is how you are to conduct your life
Abstaining from all malice and from wicked ways
Keeping yourselves from backbiting and from strife
Instead, living out your lives properly all your days*

*Because you truly are unleavened in My eyes
Having called on Jesus, you are free from your sin debt
You reached out in your need and took hold of the Prize
Receiving Jesus as your Savior, all My conditions met*

*Therefore, walk holy just as you are already reckoned
Walk in a manner worthy of your heavenly call
For you responded when My Spirit beckoned
Because My Son Jesus has broken down the wall*

II. Offerings for the Feast of Weeks (verses 26-31)

²⁶ **‘Also on the day of the firstfruits,**

In the Feasts of the Lord, there are two times firstfruits are mentioned, the first is the appointed time of Firstfruits. That is seen in Leviticus 23:9-15. That pictured Christ’s resurrection. It is not what this is speaking of here.

Rather, this is what is mentioned in the Feast of Weeks which comes fifty days later. The first firstfruits was on Sunday, the day Christ arose. The next firstfruits was fifty days later, again on a Sunday. One firstfruits leads directly to the next and is seven weeks later. That is explicitly stated next...

^{26 (con’t)} **when you bring a new grain offering to the Lord at your *Feast of Weeks,***

The Hebrew reads, “in your weeks.” It is at this time, seven weeks later, on the fiftieth day, that this new grain offering is brought. That is recorded in Leviticus 23:16, 17 –

“Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. ¹⁷ You shall bring from your dwellings two *wave loaves* of two-tenths of an *ephah*. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. *They are* the firstfruits to the Lord.”

This is one of only two times in the Bible that leaven was to be offered to the Lord. If you don’t remember, those two loaves signified the presentation of Jew and Gentile to the Lord, both with sin, but both accepted because of the work of the Lord.

This feast in the New Testament is known as Pentecost, and it pictures the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who come to Christ. The feast was, like Unleavened Bread, one of the three pilgrim feasts where all of the males were required to meet before the Lord. On this day, it says...

^{26 (con’t)} **you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.**

Again, as with the holy convocations which bracket Unleavened Bread, this particular day was a day to refrain from work and to actively celebrate with the Lord. However, it is not considered a Sabbath Day. On this special day of gathering and celebration...

²⁷ **You shall present a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the Lord:**

This is the special offering for the day. It is another cumulative offering, not intended to replace other mandated offerings. That special offering is now stated as...

²⁷ (con't) **two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year,**

Here again is the same type and number of animals as with the New Moon and Unleavened Bread offerings. They carry the same meaning and picture concerning Christ's work as before. As you just heard the symbolism a few minutes ago, I won't repeat it now. If you were napping when I gave it, shame on you. Go home and watch this sermon again.

²⁸ **with their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for each bull, two-tenths for the one ram,**

It is the same grain offering mentioned in verse 20 which we just reviewed, and it carries exactly the same symbolism. Further...

²⁹ **and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs;**

And again, it is the same offering with the same symbolism for the grain offering for the lambs. Each grain offering is based on the size of the animal. This is what the Lord expects for this holy convocation offering. However, this then seems to contradict Leviticus 23. There, it says a different number of animals –

“And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord.” Leviticus 23:18

First, there is only one bull mandated in Leviticus 23. Here it says two bulls. There, it says two rams, and here it says only one ram. And both say seven lambs. Further, in Leviticus 23 it mentions a drink offering is to be made with each. However, none is mentioned here in Numbers.

Because of this, some scholars see that error has crept into the text. That is not correct. The difference is plain and obvious to the reader, and it would be more so to those who conducted the rituals. Especially when this feast was celebrated year by year.

There is no contradiction. Rather, these offerings are distinct from those in Leviticus. The ones there belong to the loaves. The ones here in Numbers are for the day of the feast itself. In other words, as has already been seen, these are cumulative offerings.

There would first be made the daily offerings. Then would follow the offerings for the feast itself as outlined here. And only then would the offerings for the two loaves be made. This will be confirmed beyond a shadow of a doubt when we arrive at the Day of Atonement offerings of Chapter 29 which are completely different from those of Leviticus 23.

The only reason to erringly assume a contradiction is because of the seeming similarity between the offerings peculiar to the festival and the additional offerings mandated here now. That is shown false by those Day of Atonement offerings coming up in the next chapter. Rather than having error, these passages are so meticulously arranged that they are shown to be incredibly intricate and which demonstrate marvelous order and harmony.

This is all the more evident because here in Numbers, no drink offering is mentioned along with the animal offerings, but those of Leviticus 23 do mention the drink offerings. One should not lightly assume that drink offerings are implied when not explicitly stated.

³⁰ ***also one kid of the goats, to make atonement for you.***

In Leviticus 23, after the other festival offerings, it says this –

“Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering.” Leviticus 23:19

Once again, this very clearly shows there is no contradiction. There is a separate goat offering for the festival, and then also two male lambs for it as well. Here in Numbers, there is an additional goat offered for atonement. Why would the Lord do this?

It is the same reason as before. Every offering and every occasion is to be kept separate in order to maintain the typology of what Christ would do. In one way He fulfills this, and in one way He fulfills that. Everything is to be kept separate and distinct so that the fullness of what Christ has done is revealed in individual passages.

This particular goat offering again looks to the same symbolism as was seen in the corresponding goat offering of Unleavened Bread. And then finally...

^{31 (fin)} **Be sure they are without blemish. You shall present *them* with their drink offerings, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering.**

The verses and the chapter end on an extremely complicated set of words. The Hebrew is so difficult that I called Sergio in Israel and we talked about it for some period. The NKJV, along with some other versions, changes the entire structure of the Hebrew to show what the Hebrew would grammatically say under a best guess.

However, from a contextual reading of all of the other feasts mentioned in Chapter 28 and 29, it appears that their translation is completely wrong.

The NKJV makes the drink offering appear to apply to the festival offerings, not the daily burnt offerings. However, at the end of every other section in these two chapters, the drink offering is explicitly said to be offered to the daily burnt offerings. In the Hebrew, there are three individual clauses –

- 1) Besides *the* burnt offering, the regular, and with its grain offering, you shall present them.
- 2) You shall present without blemish to them.
- 3) And with their drink offerings.

The question is, does the third clause apply to the first, meaning the burnt offerings, or to the other offerings already named in earlier verses? Based on the context of all of the other major passages of these two chapters, it must be speaking of the daily burnt offering.

But then why add “You shall present them without blemish” in the middle? No matter how it is translated, it calls out for the emphasis to be on the thought of everything offered is to be without blemish.

When reading the Hebrew, anyone who was concerned about being accurate in their offerings would have to admit that the unusual structure of the verse is calling out for that to be perfectly understood. The reason for this takes us to the last book of the old Testament. In Malachi 1, the Lord severely rebukes the people for profaning His name by offering animals that were stolen, lame, and sick. He repeats it at the end of the chapter by saying –

“But cursed *be* the deceiver
Who has in his flock a male,

And takes a vow,
But sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—
For I *am* a great King,
Says the Lord of hosts,
'And My name *is to be* feared among the nations.'" Malachi 1:17

The Lord expected the very best of His people because He is the best of all beings. And in His asking for the best, it was because His incarnation in Christ, the greatest and best of all beings, was being pictured in these offerings.

Regardless of anything else, this is what Israel was expected to know. When Christ came, they were to recognize Him for who He is, and they were to submit to Him. But, just like the defiled offerings they brought to the Lord, they treated their Messiah with the same reviling contempt. And they have suffered because of it.

We dare not make the same mistake, and yet we do. A thousand times a day and in ten thousand different ways, we treat the honor of the Lord carelessly. We do it in our lives, we do it in our churches, and we do it in the deep recesses of our hearts.

But God is a great God, and the giving of His Son was the greatest of His acts. Let us reflect on this, take it to heart, and treat Him with the highest honor and the greatest respect. We will fail, and that is to be expected as symbolized by the goat offering of atonement.

But when we fail, let us be grateful for our continued salvation, despite what we have done. And then, let us brush ourselves off, and go forward in the grace which has already been given, which is the eternal salvation found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Closing Verse: *"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."* Ephesians 1:13, 14
(Saved, in Christ, and sealed – Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost)

Next Week: Numbers 29:1-40 *It is a big title for the sermon concerning these profferings...* (The Day of Acclamation, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles Offerings)
(57th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Passover, and the Unleavened Bread and Weeks Offerings

'On the fourteenth day of the first month
———-is the Passover of the Lord
And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast
Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days
On the first day you shall have a holy convocation
———-from the greatest to the least

You shall do no customary work
And you shall present an offering made by fire
As a burnt offering to the Lord: two young bulls, one ram
———-and seven lambs in their first year
Be sure they are without blemish as I require

Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil:
Three-tenths of an ephah you shall offer for a bull
———-and two-tenths for a ram, so you shall do
You shall offer one-tenth of an ephah for each of the seven lambs
Also one goat as a sin offering, to make atonement for you

You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning
So this you shall do
Which is for a regular burnt offering
As I am now instructing you

In this manner you shall offer the food of the offering
Made by fire daily for seven days, so shall be this proffering
As a sweet aroma to the Lord
It shall be offered besides the regular burnt offering
———-and its drink offering

And on the seventh day you shall have a holy convocation
You shall do no customary work throughout the whole nation

'Also on the day of the firstfruits
When you bring a new grain offering to the Lord
At your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation
You shall do no customary work, according to this word

You shall present a burnt offering as an aroma to the Lord
— — —-so sweet
Be sure that the offering is complete

Two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year
With their grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil
— — —-(so you shall do)
Three-tenths of an ephah for each bull, two-tenths for the one ram
— — —-and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs
Also one kid of the goats, to make atonement for you

Be sure they are without blemish
You shall present them with their drink offerings as I say
Besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering
They shall be offered in this way

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 29:1-40

(THE DAY OF ACCLAMATION, DAY OF ATONEMENT, AND TABERNACLES OFFERINGS)

Due to the high number of verses, our intro will be short today.

Text Verse: *"Hear the word of the Lord,
You rulers of Sodom;
Give ear to the law of our God,
You people of Gomorrah:
¹¹ 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?'
Says the Lord.
'I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams
And the fat of fed cattle.
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
Or of lambs or goats.'" Isaiah 1:10, 11*

The Lord mandated the sacrifices and offerings mentioned in our text verse, and yet it says he had enough of them, and that He had no delight in them. How can that be when they were mandated by Him?

It is because the people's hearts were wicked and their conduct was abominable. And yet, they purposed to come before Him as if nothing was wrong. The sacrifices took care of their guilt, and so the guilt didn't matter, did it?

This is the attitude of many of us... well, all of us to some extent. "I am saved by Christ, so this particular sin doesn't matter. I'm already forgiven." Some sects even take the doctrine of grace to mean that we can live however we want. But both the law and grace say exactly the opposite.

We should live in a more holy manner, not less so. Israel failed, and the Lord tired of them and their offerings. The church is failing, the Lord is removing lampstands from churches and He is tiring of the people in them. Just because the offerings are mandated and made, it doesn't mean that everything is AOK.

And just because Calvary saw the death of Christ for us, it does not mean that we can take that sacrifice and then weary our God with how we use it. May it never be so. Such precious lessons as this are found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious

word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Offerings for the Day of Acclamation (verses 1-6)

So far, the required offerings have followed a logical and orderly pattern. The first mentioned were the daily offerings, then the weekly, or Sabbath, offerings, then the monthly, or New Moon offerings.

From there, the offerings at the annual observances have been named. First came Passover and Unleavened Bread, and then the Feast of Weeks. These have come in order on the annual redemptive calendar which starts in the springtime, around March/April. Now, the annual observances continue with those which are observed in the fall, around Sep/Oct, beginning with...

¹And in the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month,

You may remember that the original calendar, that of creation, began in the seventh month. This continued until the time of the Exodus. In Exodus 12, the Lord said this to Israel. This was in the spring, when the Lord proclaimed the institution of the Passover –

“This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.” Exodus 12:2

What was the seventh month of the creation calendar became the first month of the redemption calendar, and what was the first month of the creation calendar became the seventh month of the redemption calendar.

The original Hebrew name of this month is Ethanim. The name Ethanim is prefixed by an article, *ha'ethanim*, and it means, “the permanent flowings.” That name is found only in 1 Kings 8:2. After the Babylonian exile, the Aramaic name, Tishri, was brought into use, and that continues to this day.

The first day of this seventh month was already set aside as a special feast day in Leviticus 23:23-25. There, these instructions were given –

““Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month, you shall have a sabbath-

rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. ²⁵ You shall do no customary work *on it*; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.”””
-Leviticus 23:23-25

As was seen there, and as is now repeated here in Numbers...

^{1 (con't)} **you shall have a holy convocation.**

miqra qodesh yihyeh lakem – “convocation holy shall be for you.” The entire day was to be a festive occasion. As this is the first of the month, it would coincide with the New Moon celebration mentioned elsewhere, including in the previous chapter where the offerings for each New Moon were detailed. By proclaiming a holy convocation, it means that...

^{1 (con't)} **You shall do no customary work.**

meleket avodah lo taasu – “work servile no shall you do.” This then is not a Sabbath. It is a day on which customary work, meaning the labor of one’s profession, was not to be engaged in. However, meals could be prepared on such a day, and it is therefore not a Sabbath. One can think of any of our special holidays. We don’t normally work our regular jobs, but we have barbecues, picnics, and the like. We rejoice in what the day signifies. The same is true here.

In Leviticus 23:24, which we just cited, it said, you shall have a sabbath-*rest*, a memorial of blowing of trumpets. The word translated as “sabbath-*rest*” there is *shabathon*. It is used 11 times in the Bible, all in Exodus and Leviticus, and all but 3 are conjoined with the word *shabath*, or “Sabbath.” That would then indicate a sabbath of complete rest. Because this is not conjoined with the word Sabbath, it is not a Sabbath per se, but rather simply a rest. It would better be translated as a “solemn rest.”

The people were to rejoice in the Lord, and have a special day off. As seen in the previous sermon on the monthly offerings, however, because this feast coincides with the New Moon, it was elevated to a special place, comparable to a Sabbath. And even more, in Amos, the New Moon can be seen to be not only a day of observation to the Lord, but a day of rest among the people –

“When will the New Moon be past,
That we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,

That we may trade wheat?
Making the ephah small and the shekel large,
Falsifying the scales by deceit,
⁶That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of sandals—
Even sell the bad wheat?” Amos 8:5, 6

The New Moon was a day, like the Sabbath, when selling was not allowed. This is not mandated by the Lord directly, but eventually it was considered a day set apart in a unique way, just as the Sabbath was. Therefore, because this feast day coincides with the New Moon, it was to be considered a very special day – not a Sabbath, but like a Sabbath in some ways.

¹ (con't) **For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets.**

yom teruah yihyeh lakem – “Day acclamation shall be for you.” This verse is where the term *yom teruah* comes from, and this day is often called that. The words “of blowing the trumpets” gives a false sense of the Hebrew.

The noun *teruah* is singular, and it signifies a shout, or a blast of war, alarm, or joy. It comes from the verb *rua* which means to raise a shout or give a blast. Certainly this would include trumpets, but the idea is celebrating with all kinds of noise. Thus, I call it “Day of Acclamation.” It is my term, but it fits the intent of the Hebrew.

Today in Israel, because they do not use the redemption calendar, people call this day, Rosh Hashana, or the head of the year. This is carried into Christian commentaries on the day, but it is an inappropriate term from a biblical perspective when speaking of this feast day.

This is not the head of the redemptive year, but rather the seventh month of it. When reading, studying, or watching a video about this day, remember – “no Rosh Hashana.” For this day, Yom Teruah, or the Feast of Acclamation, Israel is now given further instructions...

² **You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the Lord: one young bull, one ram, *and* seven lambs in their first year, without blemish.**

In Leviticus 23:25, which was cited a couple minutes ago, it said, “You shall do no customary work *on it*; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.” The Lord

specified that an offering by fire was to be made to Him, but no details were provided. Now, that offering is detailed. One can see, as we have seen before, the people who are now about to enter the land of promise are given the necessary details that had not yet been provided. What may seem haphazard, or out of place, is actually logical, orderly, and perfectly placed in anticipation of the days ahead when the people will receive their inheritance.

In this offering, there is a slight change from the other offerings where a bull has been mandated. In the monthly offerings, as well as in the Unleavened Bread and Weeks offerings, two young bulls were required. Here, only one is.

The explanation of the significance of a bull offering, and why there were two, was given then. Here, only one is required, probably because of what this day anticipates, the day of the birth of the coming Messiah. He is the one who would come to defeat the devil. As everything in His work is future at His birth, the offering of one bull on this day, makes complete sense.

The symbolism of the two bulls is still seen on this day though. Because this day is also a New Moon celebration, there would first be the normal daily offerings. Then, the regular monthly offerings, and only then would these special Feast-day offerings be made. The symbolism of the one ram and the seven lambs has already been explained a few times, and if you have forgotten, just head back to one of the sermons from Chapter 28 and brush up.

And again, as with all of such animal offerings, they are to be *tamim*, or without blemish. As always, the perfection of the animal looks ahead to the perfection of God in Christ, making a suitable offering of Himself for what these offerings pictured.

³ Their grain offering *shall be* fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths *of an ephah* for the bull, two-tenths for the ram,

These are the same amounts for the previous bull and ram offerings, and they carry the same meaning here as they have in those. Everything looks to the Person and work of Christ.

⁴ and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs;

This is the same amount as with other lamb offerings, and it carries the same pictures of Christ as in those.

⁵ also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, to make atonement for you;

This is the same type of sin offering as previously detailed in the monthly offering, and for that of the Passover and for the Feast of Weeks. It carries the same symbolism as at all other times. If you don't remember, receive one demerit and go brush up.

Here is something which is not fully explained. As this is a festival which occurs on the same day as a New Moon celebration, and as there is already a goat sin offering made, then does this sin offering replace that of the New Moon celebration, or are there two sin offerings – one for the New Moon, and one for the annual feast?

The next verse, which speaks of the daily and monthly offerings, does not mention a sin offering. Because of this, one might assume that only one goat sin offering would be made, but the text does not answer the question either way.

If two were made, and this is speculation based on a lack of information, it would tell us that either sin offering is not merely for the general and overall atonement of the people, but that one is for atonement of the month's sins, and the other is for atonement to be acceptable for the feast itself.

Without clarification, it is hard to be certain. Nothing else is stated concerning this. As noted, at least the New Moon and daily burnt offerings are explicitly detailed next...

⁶ besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.

These words are given, as before, to ensure that the regular prescribed offerings are conducted in addition to the feast day offerings. One does not replace the other, but all are required. As I said though, nothing is said here concerning the mandatory New Moon sin goat sin offering. Was that required, or does the Feast day sin offering suffice? I wish I could give you an answer, but the word does not say explicitly either way.

*Shout out to the Lord! Shout with acclamation
It is He who is our King, and He who rules over us
Shout out to the Lord you holy nation
Shout out to the King, our Lord Jesus*

*Let the sound be loud, shout out joyfully
Let the land be filled with noise to herald the King
Don't sit and be silent, don't act so coyfully
Get up people! Raise your voices and sing*

*It is He who has created, and He who has redeemed us
It is He who sits as King upon the throne of heaven
It is He who rules, even our King Jesus
So shout aloud at the beginning of month number seven*

II. Offerings for the Day of Atonement (verses 7-11)

⁷'On the tenth *day* of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation.

The second annual Feast of this sacred seventh month is what is considered to be the holiest day in the redemptive calendar year. The feast, like Passover, is given a specific calendar day to be observed, which is the tenth day of the seventh month.

And so, it was to commence at evening of the ninth day of the month, and continue until the evening of the tenth day. It being in the seventh month is not because it has a future fulfillment in Christ, as so many incorrectly claim, but because of what it signifies in Christ.

Having gone through the Day of Atonement passages in Leviticus 16 and 23, we know that this day was fulfilled in Christ's crucifixion. That did not occur on the tenth day of the seventh month. Rather it occurred on the fourteenth day of the first month.

However, atonement logically follows redemption. A person is redeemed, and then the sins are atoned for, even if these things happen simultaneously in God's mind.

No reason is given here, or anywhere else, as to why the tenth day of the month is selected for this special day. Jewish tradition, and it is only a tradition, is that this is the day that Moses received the second set of tablets containing the Ten Commandments. The Day of Atonement comes logically prior to the Feast of Tabernacles, which commences on the fifteenth day of this same month. Tabernacles pictures Christ dwelling in a tabernacle of flesh, and His people dwelling with Him. This could not be realized, in its fullest sense, until after the sins of the people are atoned for. Thus, this feast precedes that of Sukkoth.

These things are important to remember because, as was explained when we went through the Feasts of the Lord, it is a common claim that the three fall feasts are not yet fulfilled in Christ, and they will only be fulfilled in His second advent.

This is false, and it is heresy. To say that Christ has not fulfilled these feasts is to say that Christ did not fulfill the law, because the feasts are a part of the law. If this is true, then the law would still be binding on us. But in Christ the law is annulled. There is no future fulfillment of these feasts, even if there are continuing applications of them. Christ died once for all sinners, but each sinner's Day of Atonement comes on whatever day he comes to Christ. It is great error to say that these feasts are yet to be fulfilled.

^{7 (con't)} **You shall afflict your souls;**

v'initem eth naphshotekhem – “And you shall afflict your souls. These words are exactly repeated four times in Leviticus and here in Numbers. All refer to the Day of Atonement. It is generally accepted that “afflict your souls” means to fast.

The people were to deny themselves food. However, it certainly also included refraining from any other pleasures, and also an active affliction of remembering the sins of the past year and mourning over them.

In Acts 27:9, this day is referred to as *tēn Nēsteian*, or “the Fast,” thus signifying the manner in which this day was conducted. But the word has a greater meaning in Christ where it twice says in Isaiah 53 that He was *anah*, or afflicted, on our behalf.

As Christ was so afflicted, the people were to anticipate that august life and atoning sacrifice with the afflicting of their own souls. They were not to do any work of any kind as well, acknowledging that they were in a state of affliction. Nothing regular was to be done, but rather this was to be a special Sabbath. Because of this...

^{7 (con't)} **you shall not do any work.**

This is also repeated in both Leviticus 16 and 23. In fact, there is a high stress on this in Leviticus 23, repeating it several times in just a few verses. The picture there is that *the Lord did the work*, and we are to rest in what He has accomplished.

In this day of remembrance, like the other annual feasts mentioned in this chapter, special offerings were to be made...

⁸You shall present a burnt offering to the Lord *as* a sweet aroma: one young bull, one ram, *and* seven lambs in their first year. Be sure they are without blemish.

These are the same offerings given as for the Day of Acclamation – one bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, and all without blemish. We can surmise that the one bull, instead of two, again points to Christ in a unique way. As He came to defeat the devil, the offering of Himself points to the absolute completion of that fact for each person who comes to Him. Although there is an on-going aspect to Christ's work in our lives, His one-time offering sufficiently sums up everything else.

⁹Their grain offering *shall be of* fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths *of an ephah* for the bull, two-tenths for the one ram,

This is word for word, and letter for letter, identical to verse 29:3. These are the same amounts for the previous bull and ram offerings, and they carry the same meaning.

¹⁰and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs;

And, once again, this is the same amount as with the other lamb offerings, and it carries the same pictures of Christ as in those.

¹¹also one kid of the goats *as* a sin offering, besides the sin offering for atonement, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

Here, a goat for a sin-offering is required, along with the sin offering for the rites so specifically detailed in Leviticus 16. Both goat offerings were still required, which makes the lack of specificity from the previous section even more difficult. Were two required, as here? It's hard to know for sure.

*An offering for sin to restore the peace
I come to petition my God at the brazen altar
Until I do, the enmity will never cease
But knowing He will forgive, in this I will not falter*

*At the altar, and by the door of the tent
The animal is slain, its life ebbs away
In that exchange, God's wrath is spent
Harmony is restored, and has come a new day*

*Innocent and pure, no fault of its own
The death truly touches my heart
But in this exchange, I am clearly shown
That only through death, can there be a new start*

*Thank God that Another can die in my place
In His death I can again look upon God's face*

III. Offerings for Tabernacles (verses 12-40)

¹² 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation.

This, like Unleavened Bread, commences at the time of the full moon. However, where Unleavened Bread follows the Passover, the main day connected to this feast is the final day, eighth day. Thus, the two great days form bookends on the redemptive calendar's annual feasts.

¹² (con't) You shall do no customary work, and you shall keep a feast to the Lord seven days.

Again, this indicates a time of rest, but not Sabbath rest, except for the Sabbath, or Sabbaths, which would naturally occur during the days of the feast.

¹³ You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord: thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year. They shall be without blemish.

We will go through these offerings with minimal comment. It is enough to say that there are a greater number of offerings made **here** than at any other time during the **year**. All of the offerings probably point to gratitude to the Lord for the great harvests of the people in that year's harvest cycle, which was now ending. The offerings begin with a large number of bulls, thirteen. It has two rams instead of the customary one, and fourteen lambs instead of the customary seven.

¹⁴ Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams,

These are the same amounts as for all of the other grain offerings. What is puzzling, is that on this first day of the feast, nothing is said about drink offerings with the bulls. Every other day, it is explicitly mentioned, but on this day, nothing is said of it.

¹⁵ and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs;

It is the standard amount for the lamb offerings.

¹⁶ also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

Again, a sin offering is required, and also the regular daily offerings and Sabbath offerings, if applicable, were to be made.

¹⁷ ‘On the second day *present* twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,

The number of bulls diminishes by one from thirteen to twelve.

¹⁸ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;

The grain offerings were to be just as with all other bull, ram, and lamb offerings.

¹⁹ also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

Just as with day one of the feast, so with the next. What is curious about this verse, is that it mentions “their drink offerings” in the plural. All other times throughout the feast it is in the singular.

²⁰ ‘On the third day *present* eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,

The number of bulls diminishes by one from twelve to eleven.

²¹ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;

The standard offering for each type of animal is required here.

²² also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

A goat is required as a sin offering as on each day. Here is a curiosity. On day one, two, and four, it mentions the *sayir izzim*, translated as kid of the goats. On day three, five, six, seven, and eight, it mentions the *sayir*, translated as goat. It is the same animal, but no reason is stated for the change from *sayir izzim* to *sayir*.

²³ 'On the fourth day present ten bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year, without blemish,

The number of bulls diminishes by one from eleven to ten.

²⁴ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;

The standard offering for each type of animal is required here.

²⁵ also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

A sin offering and the regular offerings are required as always.

²⁶ 'On the fifth day present nine bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,

The number of bulls diminishes by one from ten to nine.

²⁷ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;

The standard offering for each type of animal is required here.

²⁸ also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

A sin offering and the regular offerings are required as always.

²⁹ ‘On the sixth day *present* eight bulls, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,

The number of bulls diminishes by one from nine to eight.

³⁰ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;

The standard offering for each type of animal is required here.

³¹ also one goat *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

A sin offering and the regular offerings are required as always.

³² ‘On the seventh day *present* seven bulls, two rams, *and* fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish,

The number of bulls diminishes by one from eight to seven.

³³ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;

The standard offering for each type of animal is required here. Two oddities are found in this verse. The first is that the same words are used here as in verses 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 33, and 37. However, in this one verse, the word translated as “drink offerings” is spelled differently, leaving off the fifth letter, a yod. The second oddity is that in those same verses, the word “ordinance” is singular, except here, where it is plural.

³⁴ also one goat *as* a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

A sin offering and the regular offerings are required as always. As you saw, the number of bulls decreased each day from thirteen to seven. Thus, in total, there were seventy bulls offered. And so the number seven plays a prominent role in the festival. As the Feast of Tabernacles looks to our time in Christ, one can see that.

The number thirteen in Scripture carries the sense of rebellion, corruption, apostasy, revolution, and so on. It is a negative number. By starting with that and then ending with

seven, one can see a picture of our lives in Christ going from our point of rebellion, to one which brings us to spiritual perfection. The seventy bulls of this feast are given to show us of the intent of keeping us here in these temporary tents. It is so that we can grow and become spiritually mature in Christ... hopefully. Let us endeavor to do so.

³⁵ ‘On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly. You shall do no customary work.

In this is a word seen only twice, here and in Leviticus 23:36, *atsereth*, or sacred assembly. The word comes from *atsar* which signifies to shut, restrain, etc. Some scholars say that this eighth day doesn't specifically belong to the feast, but it is rather the solemn close of the whole circle of yearly feasts, and so it is appended to the feast. This is not wholly correct. It is recorded as an ending portion of the feast in Nehemiah 8:18, 2 Chronicles 7:9, and John says the following about this eighth day of the feast –

On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” John 7:37, 38

It both belongs as an addendum to the feast, and it also closes out the festal year of Israel. From there, the people would have to wait for the Passover until this set cycle would begin again.

Later however, the Feast of Purim would be added at the time of the exile recorded in Esther. This would occur in the twelfth month. And then after that the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, was instituted for the ninth month of the year. That occurred during the intertestamental period, but it is recorded in John 10.

³⁶ You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord: one bull, one ram, seven lambs in their first year without blemish,

This offering is the same as the feast offerings seen already on the Day of Acclamation and on the Day of Atonement. It thus carries a similar meaning.

³⁷ and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance;

The standard offering for each type of animal is required here.

³⁸ also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

A sin offering and the regular offerings are required as always.

³⁹ ‘These you shall present to the Lord at your appointed feasts (besides your vowed offerings and your freewill offerings) as your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, as your drink offerings and your peace offerings.’”

These words sum up the entire set of offerings that were mandated since verse 28:1, and they also include any voluntary or vowed offerings of the people, and any other such offerings that the people would bring forward to the Lord.

^{40 (fin)} So Moses told the children of Israel everything, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

This passage, consisting of two chapters, closes out with words which confirm the command given at the beginning. In 28:2 it said, “Command the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.’”

After this, Moses recorded the details according to the word of the Lord, and from there it was presented, as directed, to the children of Israel.

Despite being a ton of information, quite a bit of it which has been seen already in other passages, the inclusion of this now is an important step in ensuring that the people would know what was expected of them upon entry into Canaan. Unfortunately, these offerings were supposed to establish a link between the Lord and His people, and to bring them together in fellowship as the people honored the Lord. But as we saw in our text verse today, and as we will see in our closing verse, the people lived unholy lives and yet expected these animal offerings to cover over their disobedience.

Eventually, the Lord tired of them to the point where these very laws He mandated wearied Him. There was nothing of value behind the offerings they made. The comparison to our own lives should not be overlooked. Are we bringing rote sacrifices, offerings, and prayers to the Lord? Or is our heart behind what we present to Him? Let us consider this. What the Lord desires goes beyond the words of command to the heart which is obedient to it.

For those who don't know Christ, the first step in fixing that is to direct your heart to Him. Only then can God look upon you with favor. What these sacrifices and offerings picture are found fulfilled in Him. Come to the cross and yield yourself to God through Christ Jesus.

Closing Verse: *"When you come to appear before Me,
Who has required this from your hand,
To trample My courts?
¹³ Bring no more futile sacrifices;
Incense is an abomination to Me.
The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies—
I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.
¹⁴ Your New Moons and your appointed feasts
My soul hates;
They are a trouble to Me,
I am weary of bearing them."* Isaiah 1:12-14

Next Week: Numbers 30:1-16 For His Bride, Christ's blood was spilt... (He Shall Bear Her Guilt) (58th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Day of Acclamation, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles Offerings

'And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month
You shall have a holy convocation – maybe serve tea and crumpets
You shall do no customary work
For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets

You shall offer a burnt offering
As a sweet aroma to the Lord:
One young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year
Without blemish, according to this word

Their grain offering shall be
Fine flour mixed with oil, as directed by Me

Three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the ram
And one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; so shall it be

Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering
To make atonement for you; such shall be the proffering

Besides the burnt offering with its grain offering
— — —-for the New Moon
The regular burnt offering with its grain offering; heed My word
And their drink offerings, according to their ordinance
As a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord

'On the tenth day of this seventh month
You shall have a holy convocation
You shall afflict your souls
You shall not do any work, none throughout the nation

You shall present a burnt offering to the Lord
As a sweet aroma: one young bull, so shall it be
One ram, and seven lambs in their first year
Be sure they are without blemish when presented to Me

Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil
Three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, as I instruct you
Two-tenths for the one ram
And one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; so you shall do

Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering
Besides the sin offering for atonement, as to you I say
The regular burnt offering with its grain offering
And their drink offerings, so I do relay

'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month
You shall have a holy convocation
You shall do no customary work
And you shall keep a feast to the Lord seven days
— — —-throughout the nation

You shall present a burnt offering

An offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord
Thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen lambs
— — — in their first year
They shall be without blemish, according to My word

Their grain offering shall be of fine flour mixed with oil:
Three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls it shall be
Two-tenths for each of the two rams
And one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs, accordingly

Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering
This you shall offer as I instruct to you
Besides the regular burnt offering
Its grain offering, and its drink offering too

'On the second day present twelve young bulls
Two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish too
And their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls
For the rams, and for the lambs, by their number
— — — according to the ordinance; so you shall do

Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering
This you shall offer as I instruct to you
Besides the regular burnt offering
With its grain offering, and their drink offerings too

'On the third day present eleven bulls
Two rams, fourteen lambs in their first year without blemish too
And their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls
For the rams, and for the lambs, by their number
— — — according to the ordinance; so you shall do

Also one goat as a sin offering
This you shall offer as I instruct to you
Besides the regular burnt offering
Its grain offering, and its drink offering too

'On the fourth day present ten bulls
Two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year

— — —-without blemish too

And their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls

For the rams, and for the lambs, by their number

— — —-according to the ordinance; so you shall do

Also one kid of the goats as a sin offering

This you shall offer as I instruct to you

Besides the regular burnt offering

Its grain offering, and its drink offering too

'On the fifth day present nine bulls

Two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year

— — —-without blemish too

And their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls

For the rams, and for the lambs, by their number

According to the ordinance; so you shall do

Also one goat as a sin offering

This you shall offer as I instruct to you

Besides the regular burnt offering

Its grain offering, and its drink offering too

'On the sixth day present eight bulls

Two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year

— — —-without blemish too

And their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls

For the rams, and for the lambs, by their number

According to the ordinance; so you shall do

Also one goat as a sin offering

This you shall offer as I instruct to you

Besides the regular burnt offering

Its grain offering, and its drink offering too

'On the seventh day present seven bulls

Two rams, and fourteen lambs in their first year

— — —-without blemish too

And their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls

For the rams, and for the lambs, by their number

According to the ordinance; so you shall do

Also one goat as a sin offering
This you shall offer as I instruct to you
Besides the regular burnt offering
Its grain offering, and its drink offering; so you shall do

'On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly
You shall do no customary work, according to this word
You shall present a burnt offering
An offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord

One bull, one ram, seven lambs in their first year without blemish
And their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull also
For the ram, and for the lambs, by their number
According to the ordinance, as you now know

Also one goat as a sin offering, besides
This you shall offer as I instruct to you
The regular burnt offering, its grain offering
And its drink offering; so you shall do

'These you shall present to the Lord at your appointed feasts
(Besides your vowed offerings and your freewill offerings)
———thus you shall do
As your burnt offerings and your grain offerings
As your drink offerings and your peace offerings too

So Moses told the children of Israel everything
Just as the Lord commanded Moses, so he did this thing

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand

And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 30:1-16 (HE SHALL BEAR HER GUILT)

Long before we got to this chapter, my friend Sergio emailed me with a thought about what is going on here in Numbers 30, that was on August 15, 2018. I had never taken the time to really look over the verses, and thought, “Well, isn’t that the cat’s meow.”

I saved his thought under my sermon notes which are for future sermons and eventually on the 29th of July of this year, I got to sit down and type an evaluation of today’s passage. Until then, I wasn’t going to commit one way or another to his thoughts.

We have to go where the word leads. Advance guessing leads to presuppositions, and presuppositions more often than not lead to faulty doctrine. But within the first five or six hours of sermon typing, it was pretty evident that his speculation was spot on. I would like to say, “Oh yeah, I would have figured that out,” but I’d better not. Instead, “Thanks Sergio. Great insight.”

Text Verse: *“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’³⁴ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” Matthew 5:33-37*

Jesus’ words here do not negate the requirements of the law which are partially revealed in our verses today. Rather, they uphold them and further refine what the Lord expects. This is so certain, that James substantially repeats Jesus’ words in his epistle. He says –

“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.” James 5:12

Our words reflect what is on our mind, they reflect what we hold sacred, and they reflect the state of our heart – all at the same time. Sometimes our minds and hearts get out of whack, and we make rash statements that we might later regret.

The best option is to listen a lot, think carefully, and speak little. If we get those out of order, or if we don't apply one or any of these, we are sure to fall into error. And with error comes judgment.

Another thing we will be judged on is how we treated God's word. Normally, the Pulpit Commentary does a pretty sweet job of evaluating Scripture. But whoever was assigned the latter portion of Numbers has shown a rather liberal streak. Here are his comments on verse 1 –

“The statement, peculiar to this passage, that these instructions were issued to the ‘heads of the tribes’ itself serves to differentiate it from all the rest of the ‘statutes’ given by Moses, and suggests that this chapter was inserted either by some other hand or from a different source.”

That really riles me up. The guy who made this commentary must have been on the board at Cambridge. Let's just make stuff up, tear the Bible apart, and call ourselves “Bible scholars.” We'll explain what this person couldn't figure out, and we'll continue to hold to the truth that this word isn't a hodgepodge from various sources, nor is it a word which has arbitrary inserts in it.

Rather, it is a marvelous, intricate, and divinely-inspired source of marvel and wonder. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Vows and Binding Agreements (verses 1-16)

¹Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel,

Here is something rather unusual. Quite often the Lord's words through Moses will be to all the children of Israel, or to the whole congregation, or something similar. Here, in a unique occurrence, Moses is said to speak to the *rashe ha'matot*, or “heads of the tribes,” concerning the children of Israel.

This unusual address is certainly given based on the nature of what will be explained in the chapter. What is to be presented is similar to that of the redemption or disposition of things dedicated or devoted to the Lord which was recorded in Leviticus 27.

However, this goes beyond that to the act of making the vow in the first place, and who has the authority to override such a vow, and who is obligated to such a vow without the chance of being released from it.

Addressing this to the heads of the tribes shows that it is something which enters into the sphere of family life itself. The heads of the tribes speak for those under them, and they are to be aware of the commands and always be ready to convey what is laid out here to all under them. What is presented here is actually followed closely by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. Moses now begins his words to these heads of the tribes...

^{1 (con't)} **saying, “This is the thing which the Lord has commanded:**

zeh ha'dabar asher tsivah Yehovah – “this the word which has commanded Yehovah.” Moses' words are not merely cultural precepts which Moses is conveying from his own perspective, but they are the word of the Lord as commanded by Him.

The reason for what will be presented being placed here is probably two-fold. First, the issue of a female receiving her father's inheritance was resolved in Numbers 27 when the five daughters of Zelophehad came forward concerning their father's inheritance. Secondly, immediately after that came the required offerings of Israel throughout the calendar year – the daily, Sabbath, monthly, and annual offerings. At the end of those two chapters, it said –

“These you shall present to the Lord at your appointed feasts (besides your vowed offerings and your freewill offerings) as your burnt offerings and your grain offerings, as your drink offerings and your peace offerings.” Numbers 29:39

There are required offerings, and there are vowed offerings. This section now deals with vows, and so it must be considered who has the responsibility in determining if the vow stands or not. The final verse of Chapter 29 said, “So Moses told the children of Israel everything, just as the Lord commanded Moses.”

In the Hebrew Bible, that verse actually begins Chapter 30. The connection is obvious. A matter concerning the rights of women was presented, the matter of presenting vows has been raised, and so the matter of the binding nature of the vow must be addressed. It may even be that the heads of the tribes wanted to know what to do if this situation arose. Now that women were explicitly allowed to be inheritors, how would the matter of vows within a family be resolved? Whatever precipitated it, Moses begins with...

² If a man

The first consideration is the sex and age of the one being spoken of here. First, it is a male. The same matters concerning females will be addressed later. Secondly, this is speaking of a man, not a child too young to be involved in what will be presented.

^{2 (con't)} **makes a vow to the Lord,**

There are now two separate things which are to be addressed. The first is *ish ki yidor neder l'Yehovah*, or "Man if vowing a vow to Yehovah." A vow to the Lord consists of a promise to give something to Him. Such an offering was usually made during times of danger or special needs.

This is exactly what Jephthah is said to do in Judges 11:30. There he vowed to make a burnt offering of whatever first came out of the doors of his house if the Lord would give him victory in battle.

There it says, *v'yidar yiphtakh neder*, "And vowed Jephthah a vow." Unfortunately for him, what first came out of his doors wasn't a chicken or a goat. Rather, it was his own daughter. He had vowed, and the Bible says he fulfilled his vow to the Lord.

Philo says that such a rash vow was never to be kept because "he who commits an unjust action because of his vow adds one crime to another." The Bible does not state this, nor does it appear to agree with this, particularly in the case of Jephthah.

One must consider which is of more import, refusing to fulfill a bad vow which was made to the Lord, or following through with a bad vow because it was, in fact, made to the Lord. Guilt is incurred either way, but which is the most important to accomplish? For the man, the Lord expects the vow to be fulfilled.

^{2 (con't)} **or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement,**

The second matter is *hishava shevuah lesor isar al naphsho*, or "swears oath to bind a binding on *his* soul." In this is a new word, *isar*. It is a noun coming from the common verb also in this verse, *asar*, which means to tie, bind, or even imprison. Thus, this is a bond or a binding obligation.

When one makes a vow, he binds himself to it. It is as if he is imprisoned by the obligation and he cannot get himself free from it from that point on. Amazingly, this word will be used eleven times in Scripture, but all eleven are here in Chapter 30 of Numbers. The word's root is found seventy times, such as the imprisonment of Joseph while he was in Egypt, and it is found in the wonderful words of release described by Isaiah –

“The Spirit of the Lord God *is* upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound. Isaiah 61:1

This would be an oath or an agreement which would be placed upon oneself, or it would be between a person and another person, or even an oath to God (see Ecc. 8:2). Such an oath is made in the presence of the Lord, and it is binding. It is as if the Lord is a party to the matter either directly or indirectly. In such a case...

² (con't) **he shall not break his word;**

lo yakhel debaro – “No shall he profane his word.” John Lange notes that the form of the verb “seems to imply the desecration of the subject itself, not the mere treating it in a profane way. The broken word is desecrated.” This can be seen in such an oath as is recorded in Nehemiah 10 where the word *shevuah*, or oath, is used.

The exiles had returned to Israel and they made a covenant before the Lord concerning their intentions to be faithful to Him. There it says –

“these joined with their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes:” Nehemiah 10:29

If the people broke this oath, they would desecrate themselves. This is why when this word is used by the Lord in Scripture, we can be absolutely assured that the oath will come to pass. A perfect example of this is the Lord's *shevuah*, or oath, concerning the land of Israel –

He *is* the Lord our God;
His judgments *are* in all the earth.
⁸ He remembers His covenant forever,
The word *which* He commanded, for a thousand generations,
⁹ *The covenant* which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
¹⁰ And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel *as* an everlasting covenant,
¹¹ Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance.” Psalm 105:7-11

This oath is referred to in Jeremiah 11:5. The oath is made, but there are conditions upon it. The land is the Lord’s. He has given it to Israel. When they are obedient, they may dwell in it. When they are not, they may not, but the oath stands. So it is to be with the people...

² (con’t) **he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.**

When the vow or oath is made, the Lord says that it shall be accomplished. The word itself is to be considered authoritative and binding. In our text verse, we saw that Jesus took this one step further, He told the people that they were to have every word that came from their mouths be as sure and as fixed as this law. When someone says, “Yes,” it is to be followed through with. No word which issues from the mouth is to be allowed to fail.

³ **“Or if a woman makes a vow to the Lord, and binds *herself* by some agreement**

This now turns from the male, who is obligated and who must perform, to the woman. Here, she makes a vow to the Lord. It could be a Nazirite vow, as described in Numbers 6, for example. In this, she would be binding herself to the vow according to the word spoken. However, there is a caveat now presented...

³ (con’t) **while in her father’s house in her youth,**

This is a female, under authority of her father, and at an age where she is not yet considered in a position to speak for herself. The responsibility for her vow belongs to him...

⁴ and her father hears her vow and the agreement by which she has bound herself, and her father holds his peace, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement with which she has bound herself shall stand.

The father is the head of the house in this situation. She is dependent upon him, and he is responsible for the conduct of the house, the operation of the house, the finances of the house, and so on. When such a female under his authority makes a vow, any of these could be affected because she is dependent on him.

If he hears such a vow which would bind her, even if it could affect him, and he says nothing about the matter, then what she has vowed or agreed to will stand. His silence is its own voice, and it bears its own binding authority.

In essence, the father has a legal right to authority in such matters. When he does not exercise that right by negating the vow, he has granted her an acquired right which now has legal standing. She has become legally obligated to what has been vowed. But, importantly, so has he.

What is implied is that this is speaking of the father's knowledge. This does not apply to a vow which was spoken, and of which he is unaware. At the time he becomes aware of it, and if he says nothing, it is then binding. On the other hand...

⁵ But if her father overrules her on the day that he hears, then none of her vows nor her agreements by which she has bound herself shall stand; and the Lord will release her, because her father overruled her.

Here is a new word, *nu*. It signifies to refuse, forbid, neutralize, etc. The girl has spoken a vow, and her father hears of it and overrules what she has said. The vow is not considered binding and it is rescinded. He has exercised his legal right in this matter and, as it says, "*v'Yehovah yishlakh lah*, "and Yehovah will release her."

What is painfully obvious here is that the Lord has set a hierarchy within the house, and He defers to that hierarchy in such matters. This is the same premise as that which Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 11, and he says this same family hierarchy stands within the Christian community. John Lange, a Bible scholar of the 1800's, disappointingly notes – "It is only an emasculated modern liberalism which would reverse this divinely appointed order of nature, and constitute woman the mistress, give her control of the household in things of religion." John Lange

One can see the frustration in Lange's words at the state of the church as it was already, two full centuries ago, as it was casting off this God-ordained hierarchy. Today there is very little of the biblical propriety of male spiritual authority within the church left. Indeed, it is considered improper by much of the church.

One thing which seems obvious is to question why only daughters are discussed here. It says nothing of young men who might still be in the house. What seems logical is that because young males, at some point, would become masters of their own house, they would not transfer to the authority of another.

Whereas a young woman would pass from the authority of her father to a husband. Any vow they made could then affect the state of the future husband. The father would have to consider this in allowing such a vow in a daughter. If she vows and the father says nothing, that vow will remain in full force when she transfers to a husband. However...

⁶ "If indeed she takes a husband,

Care of translation here is important to understand what is going on. The Hebrew reads, *v'im hayo tihyeh la'ish*. "If being she be to a man." This is not speaking of a woman who is married and in her husband's house. That will be addressed later. This is speaking of a woman who is still in her father's house, but she is now betrothed to a man. Though still under her father's care, she is – for all intents and purposes – bound to her betrothed. Anything she says which could affect him from that point on is given to him for consideration. This law of betrothal is found in regards to another circumstance in Deuteronomy 22 –

"If a young woman *who is* a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you."

-Deuteronomy 22:23, 24

This is the same law which is tenderly considered in Matthew 1 where Joseph was betrothed to Mary, and yet she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit. It is this state which is next spoken of concerning vows...

⁶ (con't) while bound by her vows or by a rash utterance from her lips by which she bound herself,

u-nedareha aleha o mibta sephateha asher aserah al naphsah – “and her vows shall be upon her, or a rash utterance of her lips, by which she has bound her soul.” The idea is that while in a state of betrothal, she vows or makes a rash utterance by which she has become bound.

Here is a new and rare word, *mibta* or rash utterance. It will be only seen here and in verse 8. It is from *bata*, meaning to speak rashly or thoughtlessly. She has babbled out something rash. However, she is duly considered under the authority of this man due to the betrothal. Therefore, he has the legal rights over her.

⁷ and her husband hears *it*, and makes no response to her on the day that he hears, then her vows shall stand, and her agreements by which she bound herself shall stand.

The betrothed husband hears what has been said and says nothing when he hears about it. In this, and because he had the legal right and conceded it to her, what she says now becomes legally binding. It cannot be reversed, and she must follow through with the vow. After their marriage is consummated, he cannot change it...

⁸ But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears *it*, he shall make void her vow which she took and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound herself, and the Lord will release her.

As was the case with the father, so is the case with the betrothed husband. The authority over her has transferred to him, and he may override the vow, and the Lord will release her. Again, and for the second and last time in Scripture, the word *mibta*, or rash utterance, is used. She babbled out something unwise, and she is overridden.

What is seen here, and that which will continue to be seen, is that the one designated to be the head of the house is given the discretion to determine the propriety of those things which fall under his authority. He could accept them or reject them. But once accepted through verbal acknowledgment, or through silence, the matters stood and were to be carried through to their fulfillment.

⁹ “Also any vow of a widow or a divorced woman, by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her.

Verse 16 will sum up the entire passage, noting the examples where a woman’s’ vow can be accepted or overturned by whatever authority she was under. These words here still fall under that premise. What is said is in the perfect tense. She has bound herself.

It is, like verse 1, a statement of certainty. When a woman who is widowed or divorced has made any type of vow, it is binding upon her, and it shall stand. This would include a woman who was divorced or widowed who would then return to her father's house. That is noted elsewhere, such as in Leviticus 22:13.

Because she was freed from her father's authority to a husband, and because she was freed from her husband's authority through death or divorce, any vow she has made, even if in her father's house, remains binding. This includes if it was made while under her husband, it still stands even if her husband dies or he divorces her. This is seen in the next words...

¹⁰ "If she vowed in her husband's house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath,

The words are in the perfect tense – "And if in house of her husband she vowed." This then is explaining the previous verse. Divorce or widowhood does not negate a vow she has made. The husband had the same authority over the woman as the father had over her. If a woman made a vow or bound herself by an agreement with an oath...

¹¹ and her husband heard *it*, and made no response to her *and* did not overrule her, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand.

The oath was made while the marriage was in effect. The husband heard, and he did not overrule what she uttered. The verbs are in the perfect tense. These things happened. If so, the vows stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself is binding.

As it says it "shall stand." What occurred in the past is fixed and firm into the future. The idea here could be something vowed for any reason at all. To give a simple example, a woman may have tired of her husband and thought, "I know how to get away from him for a while."

And so she says, "Dear husband, I vow to go to church every Thursday for Bible class and every Sunday to listen to Charlie's prophecy updates and sermons. Unless I'm sick or have some other reason that absolutely keeps me from going, I vow to do this."

The husband, thoroughly relieved to get some peace on Thursday and Sunday, and wishing Charlie had more classes throughout the week, simply says nothing. Her vow would stand. It has become the law for her. However, when her husband dies or divorces her,

she might think, “I really am tired of going to church. There is so much more I can get done now that I have the house all to myself.” It is tough bananas for her. She had made the vow, and despite her new situation, the vow stands. Despite this...

¹² But if her husband truly made them void on the day he heard *them*, then whatever proceeded from her lips concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her, it shall not stand; her husband has made them void, and the Lord will release her.

v'im haper yaper otam isah – “and if annulling he annuls them her husband.” A different word is used than of the father overruling the daughter in verse 5. Here, it is a word which means to break, as in a covenant, or to annul it. In this case, it is to annul what is said.

If he takes this action, then whatever she said would not stand. As it says then a third time using the same word, he “has annulled them.” In this annulment of her words, the Lord will release her from them, demonstrating that He has allowed the husband authority over the wife’s words.

The hierarchy which the Lord deems is correct and proper is maintained. She may still wisely choose to come to the Bible classes and weekly sermons, but she is under no obligation to do so, both during the life of her marriage and afterwards.

¹³ Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void.

Here again, both types of interactions are referred to which are described in this chapter – the vow and the binding oath. Whatever she utters in either case, her husband may confirm it, meaning cause it to stand, or he may *parar*, or annul it.

This word *parar*, now used again, is the source of the word *par*, or bull which is described numerous times as being used in the sacrifices offered to the Lord. In type, that bull consistently looked forward to Christ who would defeat the devil, making void – or annulling his power – over man.

¹⁴ Now if her husband makes no response whatever to her from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her; he confirms them, because he made no response to her on the day that he heard *them*.

Here, as has been the case several times, it speaks in the plural of *kal nedareha* and *kal esareha*, or “all vows and all agreements.” It is a way of saying that the overriding of any vows, or the agreeing to any vows come as individual instances. Any that are annulled are not binding. Any that were not annulled are binding.

The annulling of one vow does not annul any others. And the confirming of one vow does not confirm all. And in all cases of vows, the husband has the authority over the woman to annul, or he cedes his authority to her over whatever matter is concerned when he stays silent or agrees to her vows.

An example of what we have seen in these verses is found in 1 Samuel 1 where Hanna, the wife of Elkanah, made a vow to the Lord to give her child to the Lord for all the days of his life. Elkanah is never seen to have overruled her, and thus the vow is binding. Because of this, we read the following –

“Hannah did not go and explained to her husband, ‘After the child is weaned, I’ll take him to appear in the LORD’s presence and to stay there permanently.’

²³ Her husband Elkanah replied, ‘Do what you think is best, and stay here until you’ve weaned him. May the LORD confirm your word.’ So Hannah stayed there and nursed her son until she weaned him.” 1 Samuel 1:22, 23 (Holman CSB)

The word *isar*, meaning to tie or bind, was introduced in verse 2. This is now its eleventh and last time to be seen in Scripture. The heavy stress upon this word shows that such agreements are binding, meaning there are consequences for making them, and it is the authority of the father or the husband to determine what will be done concerning the matter in order to finalize it.

¹⁵ But if he does make them void after he has heard *them*, then he shall bear her guilt.”

v'im haper yaper otam ahare shameo v'nasa eth avonah – “And if annulling he annuls them after he has heard and shall bear her guilt.” Well, doesn’t that just set the whole passage into its proper place. If the husband annuls them, after he has heard, he shall bear her guilt. Here the word *parar*, or annul, is again used, twice. If there is an annulling after the vow is made, the husband bears the guilt. Of this, Cambridge says –

“If, after tacitly consenting at the time that he heard of the vow, he compels her at a later time to break it, then Jehovah will not (as in the foregoing cases) forgive, but the iniquity will rest upon the husband and not upon the woman.” Cambridge

The premise is correct, but the analysis is flawed. So is true with the Pulpit Commentary which closely mirrors that of Cambridge –

“...if he tacitly allowed the vow in the first instance, and afterwards forbad its fulfillment, the guilt which such breach of promise involved should rest upon him.” Pulpit Commentary

Their analysis is further off. It doesn't say, “forbad its fulfillment.” Instead, it says “annulled.” Further, it isn't a single vow that is spoken of. The words refer to the plural – them. It doesn't say, “And if he annuls a vow after he has heard it.” And it doesn't say, “And if he annuls each agreement after he has heard it.” Rather, it speaks of them in the plural.

After that, the words say *v'nasa eth avonah*, “And he shall bear her guilt.” She was the one to receive guilt for not performing the vow, and her performing or not performing the vow isn't even mentioned. She is completely left out of the equation from this point on. Instead, by hearing the vows of the wife, and by later annulling the vows, the husband bears the guilt of the wife. Sound familiar?

^{16 (fin)} **These *are* the statutes which the Lord commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, and between a father and his daughter in her youth in her father's house.**

The hierarchy is set, and it gives the right to the father of the daughter to make decisions concerning vows and oaths in regard to his daughter, and it gives the right and responsibility to the husband concerning the same.

There is nothing demeaning in this, and there is every reason to see the marvelous wonder of what God would do in Christ in it. The law is given, and what the law says must be adhered to, including the bearing of guilt by the husband for the annulling of the vows and oaths of the wife.

*I am your Husband, and you are My wife
I have chosen you to always be by My side
We are joined together as one in life
And for you I shall always be your life's guide*

*When you make a vow that you should not make
Or when you make a vow that I find AOK*

*The appropriate action, I will take
I will make the decision on that very day*

*And if a vow that you make I allow to stand
And if I see that you cannot bear up under it
I will take the consequences the Lord does demand
I will bear your iniquity so that you He will acquit*

II. Annulling of the Vows

Chapter 30 of Numbers is one of those places in the Bible that modern women certainly hate. To them, the God of the Bible is an ogre who wants to subjugate women, and a male-oriented conspiracy is set in place to perpetuate this concept.

The verses here never mention a son, even when it should apply. The rash vows of a little boy are never mentioned, but the vows of a daughter, and even a wife – a fully developed woman are. And, the vows of a woman that were made binding while she was under her husband’s authority continue to be binding even after his death or divorce. “Ha! I don’t think so” they would say.

What the Lord is teaching us here is a lesson first in authority. God is God and He has established the levels of authority. These are His choices, and it is His sovereign right to define them. He is also teaching us of the necessity of keeping one’s vows, no matter how absurd they are.

If we make a vow to the Lord, nothing here suggests that the vow is not binding, even if it was a nutty one. Although scholars continuously teach this, it is not a precept found in Scripture. One of the reasons for the Lord’s being adamant in this is because He has spoken vows which are recorded in Scripture. His nature demands that they will be upheld, despite the failings of those He has vowed to. In Daniel 9:11 it says –

“Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.”

-Daniel 9:11

The word there translated as “oath” is one used in this passage, *shevuah*. The Lord made a covenant with Israel, and Israel agreed to it with their own mouths. Thus, this oath

goes two ways. The Lord has made His own promises and guarantees – which include the curses for disobedience – to Israel, and Israel agreed to the Lord’s words.

“So Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words which the Lord has said we will do.’” Exodus 24:3

Those words *kol asher dibber Yehovah na’aseh v’nishma*, are properly translated as “All which the LORD has said we will do, and we will hear.” They agreed, in advance, to do what He would say, even before hearing all that He would say – “We will do, and we will hear.”

The Book of the Covenant that was presented to the people in Exodus 24 is not the entire body of the law. It is what the entire body of the law is based on. From that time on, everything which was explained to them was a part of their oath to the Lord.

The covenant continued to be agreed upon as Moses renewed it in Deuteronomy 29:1. Later, for example at the time of Joshua, the people again agreed that they would serve the Lord. They made an oath and Joshua set up a pillar as a witness to them. As he said –

“Behold, this stone shall be a witness to us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord which He spoke to us. It shall therefore be a witness to you, lest you deny your God.” Joshua 24:27

At the time of King Josiah, it says –

“Then the king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all *his* heart and all *his* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people took a stand for the covenant.”

-2 Kings 23:3

And again, this was repeated after the exile by the people in Nehemiah 9 & 10 when they called out that they were making a sure covenant with the Lord.

These and other such times indicate a wife who made vows to her Husband, the Lord. It is a title used of Him toward Israel several times, either directly, or as an analogy. The Lord was a Father to the people until the time was right.

Eventually, the people, the congregation of Israel, became a wife in a covenant relationship with the Lord. They vowed, He heard the vows, and He allowed them to stand. The words were binding on them, and to not fulfill their words brought *avon*, or iniquity – meaning guilt – upon them.

However, the Lord would not allow this to continue forever. Eventually, He stepped into the relationship in a new way. He Himself came forward to meet the demands of the oaths and to live the life that Israel is convincingly shown to have failed to measure up to, time and again. One failed vow after another. The power of the law stood over Israel, and as the author of Hebrews says –

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Hebrew 2:14, 15

It is through law that sin is imputed, and it is through sin that the devil has power over the people. But this is where Christ steps in. He is the true High Priest. In Israel, when the High Priest sacrificed for his sins each year on the Day of Atonement, he would offer a, *par*, or bull for his sin.

That *par* is derived from the same word, *parar*, used 7 times today to indicate the annulling of the vow. It is that bull, in type of Christ, who defeated the devil, making void His power of death.

In Christ’s assuming the position within the covenant people, He became a part of the bride. Imagine that. He was of the people. They were under the sentence, they were bound in the prison of the oaths that *they* had made, and He joined them there.

And in living out those oaths, He also annulled them. The same Lord did both. He fulfilled them and He took the consequence of annulling them. This is why the final verse of the passage says, “And if annulling he annuls them after he has heard, and shall bear her guilt.” He annulled all of the oaths – from Exodus through Nehemiah and on, plural, and He assumed their guilt.

He could be released from the guilt through performance. However, the body of people, His bride, could not be. And so He assumed the penalty that the law said would come upon the husband if the vows she had spoken with her mouth were agreed to. In this, He bore her *avon*, or iniquity. That is stated explicitly three times in Isaiah 53 –

“But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He *was* bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
⁶All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:5, 6

“He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.” Isaiah 53:11

Modern-day feminists are angry for absolutely no reason at all. The Lord placed Himself under the same supposedly oppressive state that they claim they are under in the law, and He did it for them. Those Jews who accepted the premise have become a part of His true Bride, and for those Gentiles who accept this premise, they too are brought into this amazing New Covenant relationship.

Some don't understand what God is doing in the world. They claim the term “the bride of Christ” is never mentioned in the Bible. It is, just not with those words. Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 11:2 –

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.”

So much for the idiotic doctrine known as Hyperdispensationalism. We – Jew and Gentile – are the Lord's betrothed, meaning we stand in exactly the same relationship as the woman who was promised to a husband in verses 6-8 of the passage today. We are betrothed to Christ, and thus we are His bride.

We are being prepared for our presentation to Him, and unlike the Old Covenant relationship, we do not have a humongous and impossible body of laws to observe. Rather, we have one primary responsibility which is to be joined to the Lord.

All other responsibilities after that fall under that which is pleasing to Him, or that which displeases Him, but none fall under the category of incurred guilt. No! The Lord has borne our guilt and freed us from it. Rather, we are His from the moment we join to Him, and so let us be sure that we are – in fact – joined to Him. The gospel tells us how to make that happen.

Closing Verse: *“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—⁵ Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.” Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5*

Next Week: Numbers 31:1-11 Another of Israel’s warring fights... (Take Vengeance on the Midianites) (59th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

He Shall Bear Her Guilt

Then Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes
Concerning the children of Israel, saying,
“This is the thing which the Lord has commanded:
These word to you from Him, I am now relaying

If a man makes a vow to the Lord
Or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement
— — —-maybe to some sort of deeds
He shall not break his word
He shall do according to all that out of his mouth proceeds

“Or if a woman makes a vow to the Lord
And binds herself by some agreement
— — —-by making that agreement sound
While in her father’s house in her youth
And her father hears her vow and the agreement
— — —-by which she has herself bound

And her father holds his peace
Then all her vows shall stand
And every agreement with which she has bound herself
So it shall stand; this is what the law does demand

But if her father overrules her on the day that he hears

Then none of her vows nor her agreements
— — —-by which she has bound herself shall stand
And the Lord will release her
Because her father overruled her; it's the rule of the land

"If indeed she takes a husband
While bound by her vows or by a rash utterance from her lips
By which she bound herself
And her husband hears it, to his ears the sound drips

And makes no response to her on the day that he hears
Then her vows shall stand
And her agreements by which she bound herself shall stand
Such is the rule of the land

But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears it
He shall make void her vow which she took, for sure
And what she uttered with her lips
By which she bound herself, and the Lord will release her

"Also any vow of a widow or a divorced woman
— — —-be aware of this for sure
By which she has bound herself, shall stand against her

"If she vowed in her husband's house
Or bound herself with an oath by an agreement
And her husband heard it, and made no response to her
And did not overrule her, after out of her mouth it went

Then all her vows shall stand; it is the rule of the land
And every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand

But if her husband truly made them void
On the day he heard them; yes he voided them for sure
Then whatever proceeded from her lips
Concerning her vows or concerning the agreement binding her

It shall not stand; her husband has them void made
And the Lord will release her, the vows have been stayed

Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul
———-which she has employed
Her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void

Now if her husband makes no response whatever
———-to her from day to day
Then he confirms all her vows or all the agreements that bind her
He confirms them, because he made no response to her
On the day that he heard them, she is bound to them for sure

But if after he has heard them he does make them void
Then he shall bear her guilt, because he has this tactic employed

These are the statutes which the Lord commanded Moses
Between a man and his spouse
And between a father and his daughter in her youth
In her father's house

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 31:1-11 (TAKE VENGEANCE ON THE MIDIANITES)

What is it that breaks our hearts? And why does it happen? I would suggest to you that the main driver of our sadness comes from one thing – familiarity. I know people that love to hunt. They will shoot bears, wild cats, wolves – whatever. They never blink an eye when shooting, and what they shoot becomes a trophy to them.

And yet, I have seen them weep over the death of a family pet, literally mourning over it. And I could go so far as to say that if one of my friends who has many such trophies lost them in a fire, he would mourn over the loss. He didn't bat an eye when shooting the animals, and yet he would feel loss over the same stuffed animals.

We don't care diddly about mice – get out the rat trap and get rid of them! And yet, we may have a little mouse cage for our children, and when the mouse dies, we will feel bad for it.

Take this to anything we have around us. Who cares about a mug? You can buy 10,000 different mugs in any store in town. If we go to buy one and drop it in the aisle and it breaks, it means nothing to us. But, we may have a mug that we especially love and have used for years. If we drop it, we will be especially upset over it.

And, though it sounds cold, when a catastrophe happens, and we hear of many deaths, it is separate and dispassionate for the most part. We don't just break down and mourn over those people. There is no personal connection to them.

But, if we lose our best friend, our father, our brother, or whatever, the loss is personal because there is familiarity. What would happen if we had a brother we never knew? If we read in the paper that Jo Schmo died, and we didn't know he was our real brother, we would go on to the next obituary without a care.

It is familiarity that brings about closeness, and also a sense of loss. "My car! I've had that since I was 16." And the tears flow...

Text Verse: *"O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed,
Happy the one who repays you as you have served us!
⁹ Happy the one who takes and dashes
Your little ones against the rock!" Psalm 137:8, 9*

That may be the most disturbing and depressing text verse we will ever encounter. How could someone be happy about such a thing? It is a hard verse for us to think about, but it is a part of God's word. The commentaries on that verse go to every possible extreme that one can think of.

But the verse is no less striking than what will come up in some of the verses found in Numbers 31. We won't go through them today, but we will go through them. What is the difference to God of a man killed in battle or a child that dies in an avalanche?

The answer is not, "One is a child and the other is a man?" Nor is it, "One is innocent and one is not." The same man who died in battle was once a child. The life of that person, from beginning to end, is known to God. Is the size of the person what brings him value? Does age, or the lack of it, bring inherent value? Does God know one person more or less than another? No, no, and no.

We must remember this, and then consider all things from God's perspective. A cute chihuahua has no more value as an animal than a horse or a lizard. We assign value to things arbitrarily without considering what God has done. Is He less satisfied with a spider than He is with an elephant? Both are magnificent in what they represent – the wisdom of God and the intricacy of His handiwork.

We should never let our emotions drive our theology. Rather we should allow our theology to drive our emotions. When we do this, we will see the world from its proper perspective. And please, never impute wrongdoing to God. That is dangerous waters. Such things as these are to be found in His superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Take Vengeance (verses 1-4)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The account now resumes the narrative which ended six chapters ago. In Numbers 25, the people of Israel are said to have committed harlotry with the women of Moab. These women invited them to the sacrifices of their gods, and those of Israel are said to have eaten with them and bowed down to their gods.

From this came the saddening and terrible words, "Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel." In that account, the hero Phinehas

arose and turned back the wrath of the Lord from the children of Israel. As that chapter closed out, the final verses said –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁷ ‘Harass the Midianites, and attack them; ¹⁸ for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor.’”

-Numbers 25:16-18

From there, the book has dealt with 1) the second census of Israel (Chapter 26); 2) inheritance laws brought before the Lord because of the daughters of Zelophehad, and then the ordaining of Joshua as Israel’s next leader (Chapter 27); the daily, weekly, monthly, and festal offerings of Israel (Chapters 28 & 29); and then the laws concerning vows (Chapter 30).

Each of those matters was rightly placed into the on-going narrative at that point because each of them dealt with matters which would be needed for the people to know prior to entrance into Canaan.

As Moses is the lawgiver, and the one to ordain his replacement, their placement at that point was necessary before the Lord was to speak out his words, initiated here by verse 1, and which leads directly into the thought of verse 2...

² “Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel.

neqom niqmat bene yisrael me-et ha’midyanim – “Avenging vengeance sons Israel on the Midianites.” As was spoken at the end of Chapter 25, so the act of vengeance is now required. This explains the words of Chapter 25.

There, the Hebrew basically said, “Treat them as enemies because they treated you as enemies.” They were instructed to attack them, and that attack is as vengeance for what they did. Their schemes brought about the disgraceful conduct of Israel, and it brought about the death of twenty-four thousand. Now, they were to be repaid with destruction. It is questioned why Moab was not included in the destruction which has been pronounced. This is especially so because it was their women who had been the ones to seduce Israel, and it was their gods whom Israel bowed down to.

What has been, and continues to be, apparent is that Midian ruled over Moab to some extent, and it is they who were behind the actual planning of the seduction of Israel.

This, however, doesn't give a full and satisfactory answer for why Moab wasn't also destroyed.

The answer will be seen more completely in a few verses, but there are purposes beyond the moment for sparing Moab. The Lord is the One who has established the nations, and He is the One who allows them to continue, or to end, according to His plans and purposes.

There is a need for Moab to continue as a people. To destroy them now would change all of redemptive history. Moab will interact with Israel throughout the generations ahead, and those interactions would be in accord with what the Lord has laid out, to include the movement of a family of Judah to the land of Moab during a time of famine.

In that move, one of them would marry a woman of Moab named Ruth. He would die, but Ruth would return to Israel with her mother-in-law and become the wife of a man of Bethlehem named Boaz. From that union would descend David, and from David would come the Messiah, Jesus.

If Moab were exterminated now, this would not occur, but it takes us back to the faith of the two daughters of Lot many centuries earlier who had anticipated the coming of Messiah and did what was otherwise considered unthinkable. But the story of Lot and his daughters led to the very events which are now unfolding before Israel, and to the reason why Moab, despite being a part of the turning of Israel from the Lord at Peor, is spared from destruction.

As far as the timing of the Lord's words to Moses now, whether they are spoken within days after those which ended Numbers 25, or whether they were weeks later, the time between the two is not long. In Numbers 20, Aaron died on Mount Hor. This was on the 1st day of the 5th month of the 40th year.

The people then mourned for him for 30 days before moving on. That takes them to the 6th month of the 40th year. Moses' death occurred before the first date noted in Joshua when the people crossed the Jordan on the 10th day of the 1st month of the 41st year. The people also mourned for him for 30 days as is recorded in Deuteronomy 34:8. And before that, this is recorded –

“Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first *day* of the month, *that* Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them, ⁴ after he had killed Sihon

king of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who dwelt at Ashtaroth in Edrei.” Deuteronomy 1:3, 4

That accounts for all of the specifically recorded dates from the death of Aaron to the crossing of the Jordan, and it means that everything which has occurred since the death of Aaron, and the coming death of Moses, including the speaking out of the entire book of Deuteronomy, had to have occurred within less than five months.

That includes Israel’s travels around Edom, their battles with Sihon and Og, their settling into the area where they now are across from Jericho, and Balak’s request for Balaam to come and curse them. That alone would have taken weeks because he had to be summoned twice before coming.

Therefore, it is not inconceivable that the account of Numbers 25 with the harlotry of Israel, and the order to now destroy Midian, occurred almost immediately after the census of Chapter 26, just a very short time after the people’s transgression. However, you will see below that it was certainly at least seven days after the incident of Peor. When we get there, we will give a defense as to why this is so.

With the battle’s successful completion, however, there will come a great change in the course of events in the narrative – both for Moses and for the people of Israel...

^{2 (con’t)} **Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.”**

The idea of being gathered to one’s people doesn’t mean burial itself. Moses is going to be buried in a location that nobody would be aware of. It means to die, but it also means that there is a state of consciousness in death for those redeemed by the Lord.

This is certain based on what it says concerning Samuel after his own death. When he was brought up by the witch of En Dor in 1 Samuel 28, he questioned as to why Saul had disturbed him. He further had an awareness of the ongoing events and even of what would occur.

It would not be right to establish a complete doctrine over such an account, but Jesus noted the fact that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Whatever the state of those who have been gathered to their people, it is certain that there is potentially some type of awareness among them, even if in a state of restful sleep.

As for the timing and the reason for the Lord's words to Moses now, this was previously explained to him just prior to the account concerning the inauguration of Joshua –

“Now the Lord said to Moses: ‘Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. ¹³ And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. ¹⁴ For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes.’” (These *are* the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.) Numbers 27:13

Moses and his brother Aaron were judged for their having rebelled against the command of the Lord. They failed to hallow Him before the children of Israel, and they were sentenced to die outside of the promised inheritance. However, we have seen that this was necessary to maintain the typology of the dispensations of law and of grace, and how they relate to the work of Christ.

The law, meaning the Mosaic Covenant (represented by Moses and Aaron) cannot bring anyone into the true inheritance and the presence of God. Only Christ, who fulfilled and embodies the law, and Who is the One to establish a New Covenant, can do so.

God used their rebellion as justification to keep them from the inheritance, but they would not have entered even if they had not rebelled. The typology is set, and it must be maintained. Each story has been carefully placed into the chronology of events to show us exemplary truths of how God is working in Christ to reconcile the world to Himself.

³**So Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm some of yourselves for war,**

Moses was just instructed that after the battle, he would be gathered to his fathers. There is no record here or in Deuteronomy that Moses then said, “Weeeelllllll, we need to whip the men into shape and get them ready for what lies ahead. Let's plan this for August a year from now.” Rather, without delay – and in obedience to the command despite what that means for him after it is duly fulfilled – he goes to the people and tells them what to do – prepare men for war.

An interesting word is used here, *khalats*. It means to draw off. If one were to tear stones from a wall, they would be drawn off from their normal purpose. One can draw off his sandal as well. Here, that word is used when speaking of having men drawn off for war.

They are being detached from their regular purpose within the community and they are being assigned to battle duties. Instead of saying, “Arm some of yourselves for war,” it would more understandably say, “Draw some of yourselves out for war.”

^{3 (con't)} **and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the Lord on Midian.**

latet niqmat Yehovah b'midyan – “give vengeance Yehovah in Midian.” In verse 2, the Lord spoke of imposing the vengeance of the children of Israel on the Midianites. Here Moses speaks of giving the vengeance of Yehovah in Midian.

An act against Israel is an act against the Lord. When Israel was seduced, the dignity and the honor of the Lord was violated. Therefore, the vengeance of Israel is the Lord's vengeance. The state of Israel is the Lord's interest. There is no disconnect between the two unless it is one brought about by Israel.

This is why the Lord could send a plague against Israel, and yet could – at the same time – determine to destroy those who precipitated the need for the plague in the first place. The plague was a religious war against the disobedient within the community, and yet, the calling of Israel to battle is a religious war against those who had caused the violation to occur.

As I say from time to time, Israel means, “He strives with God.” Israel either strives with God, against God, or he strives with God, for God. But either way, Israel strives with God. In this coming battle, there will obviously be people on the side of Midian who probably weren't even aware of what the leaders had done to invite the coming destruction. This is true with those enlisted for service in any situation.

People were pulled out of the woods of Tennessee and from the fields of Kansas in World War II, and other than whatever they were told concerning the enemy, they may not have not had a clue as to what their role was or why they were to go and possibly die.

The same is true with those in Japan or Germany. Some bore no part in what the leaders began and what the populace approved of. But they became guilty of the offense because of the nationality they bore and the language they spoke. The nations have been ordained by God, and the people born into them are a part of them, for good or for ill. The sin of a nation transfers to the people of the nation, regardless as to their own personal guilt. Likewise, the responsibility to live in, participate in, defend, and possibly die for one's nation is what God has ordained.

Unless it is against the will of God to render unto Cesar what belongs to him, then the people of a nation are obligated to – in fact – render unto Cesar. For Israel, the call is made to defend the honor of the Lord...

⁴ A thousand from each tribe

eleph la'mattheh eleph la'mattheh – “A thousand for a staff a thousand for a staff.” The tribe is represented by the staff of its leader. Each tribe is to draw out one thousand from its number.

⁴ (con't) of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war.”

Levi is a tribe, but it is not a tribe of war. There are twelve tribes reckoned as designated for war. Levi is not, but Joseph is reckoned between Manasseh and Ephraim. Thus, a thousand from each tribe is a force of twelve thousand to be drawn away from the total and prepared for battle. That is next explicitly stated (after a poem)...

*Vengeance is mine, says the Lord
I will repay as I see fit
I will put forth my destroying sword
And those whom I cut will go down to the pit*

*Israel is my vengeance-taking sword
And with them I shall destroy those set for the pit
In this is nothing unreasonable or untoward
I am the Lord, and I will repay as I see fit*

*For those who fail to come to Me
Through My Son, Christ the Lord
There lies ahead a time of great calamity
I have offered grace, and they have rejected My word*

*Come to the Fount now while blessing is at hand
Before the time comes when I sweep clean the land*

II. Vengeance Taken (verses 5-11)

⁵ So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel

va'yimaseru me-alphe yisrael – “And were set apart from *the* thousands of Israel.” It is a new word, *masar*, which will only be seen here and in verse 16 in the Bible. It comes from a primitive root meaning “to sunder.” Thus, it means “to set apart.”

Interestingly, here, it will be the setting apart of the people from the others and *to the Lord* for battle. Whereas in verse 16, it will refer to the people of Israel who trespassed against the Lord. In this, they were set apart *from the Lord* in apostasy.

The only two uses of the word, found in all of the Bible, show a curious and sad contrast between obediently following the Lord, and disobediently turning away from Him. The results of the two are highlighted in Scripture. One has been seen, the other will be seen before the end of the chapter.

As a side note to this special word, the nimwits at Cambridge say that it must be an incorrect reading, otherwise it is a later composition because the word is only found much later in post-biblical Hebrew. But, as the word is used again in verse 16, they say that word must also be an incorrect reading.

The stupidity of that is first seen in the contrasting of the two uses of the word, which is obviously intentional. The Lord is making a theological point concerning separation to Him or from Him based on the word in the context it is presented. This would be entirely lost unless the two different uses Cambridge appeals to were used. And secondly, the use of an ancient word at later times in history is not an unknown event. When someone needs a word to fit a situation, and they find one in an old text or book that suits, that word is brought forward into modern usage.

This short diversion into the foibles of the Cambridge commentary has been brought to you as a public service warning. Please do not simply accept what you read or hear because it comes from a seemingly legitimate source.

^{5 (con't)} **one thousand from *each* tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.**

If Levi was reckoned for war, there would be thirteen thousand mustered, but that issue was settled long before in the narrative. The word *tsaba*, or war was used numerous times in the early chapters of numbers concerning the tribes, other than Levi, who would be counted for war.

The warfare of Levi was defensive only. They were responsible for the service and defense of the sanctuary, even in regards to people from other tribes of Israel. Levi was the line of defense for this purpose, but not as a force to go forth to engage in battle.

The word *tsaba* was again used in Numbers 26:2 during the second census when counting the men to be considered ready for war. However, Levi was – again – not counted among Israel for that purpose. Now, the first calling of the people for war is made, and twelve thousand are selected. Levi is not considered in this mustering of men.

⁶Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from *each* tribe;

The number here, twelve thousand men, is obviously a rather small force in comparison to the force they will face. The number of virgins who will be taken as plunder is thirty-two thousand. The number of non-virgins would take the total up much, much higher. Thus, the total number of men in Midian would have been a sizable force. But the small number of men set apart now, with the guarantee of success, was to embolden the people before their entry into Canaan.

They were to see that it is the Lord who ultimately fights and wins the battle for them when they are aligned with Him in obedience. When this is so, great things will occur. This will be evident based on the details seen later in verses 48-50.

However, this is now given to contrast what will be seen on the other side of the Jordan when Israel chooses a group of men to face a small and insignificant city, but it is after a time when they have been disobedient to the Lord. In this, they will be beaten down by their enemy.

Jonathan, son of king Saul, understood this when he decided to single-handedly engage a larger force in battle in 1 Samuel 14:6 –

“Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, ‘Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.’”

It is the Lord who wins the battles, or who stands against His people in their own attempts to do so.

⁶(con’t) he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand.

Curiously, the name of the leader of the battle is not given. One would assume it was Joshua, but that is left unstated. The point is that the Lord is their Head, regardless of a human leader. However, Phinehas is sent to carry out the priestly function of ministering for the people and before the Lord in regard to the holy articles.

This term, *u-kele ha'qodesh*, or “and articles the holy,” leaves a bit of a problem to be resolved. If the ark went, it would have said so. The ark is never referred to except as a proper name – the ark; the ark of the covenant of the Lord; the ark of the Testimony, etc. It also cannot be speaking of the Urim and Thummim which were kept in the breastplate of the high priest. As he is not going to battle, that leaves them out. But even if they were taken, there would be no need for them. The matter is decided, and they were used for deciding matters.

There are no other articles which would qualify as “holy articles” which would be necessary for Phinehas to take for the purpose of war. However, the way the Hebrew is structured, it is argued that the words say, “and the holy articles, to wit: the signal trumpets.” In other words, it isn't saying there are holy articles and signal trumpets, but that the signal trumpets are the holy articles. These are, in fact, holy articles, and they were used for holy purposes. The same use of the Hebrew, where the word “and” is used in this way is found elsewhere, and so this is certainly what is being said.

These *khatsotheroth*, or trumpets, were described in Numbers 10. They are two silver trumpets which were to be used at various times when the congregation moved, or when the assembly was to be gathered together. And during feasts and over offerings as a memorial before the Lord. But they were also specifically given to be sounded before war. There it said –

“When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the Lord your God, and you will be saved from your enemies.” Numbers 10:9

Outside of that passage where they are described, this is the only time they are mentioned in the books of Moses. They will not be mentioned again until the times of the kings.

The name *phinehash*, or Phinehas means “Mouth of Brass,” and thus, “Mouth of Judgment,” because brass signifies judgment. Eleazer means, “Whom God Helps.”

As the trumpets are to be blown by Phinehas, his name finds a literal fulfillment in what occurs. Mouth of Judgment blows for the call to judgment by the Lord. And it is against Midian, or Place of Judgment. The picture of the impending defeat of God's enemies is clearly seen in the names given in the narrative.

As I said in verse 2, and which I promised at that time to explain, the battle now ready to be conducted is at least seven days after the plague which came upon the camp because of the matter of Peor. Can anybody here explain why that must be so? The reason is because of what it says in verse 19 of this chapter –

“And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day.” Numbers 31:19

The law of the water of cleansing, described in Numbers 19, extended to purification of anyone who had killed any person. Phinehas had killed two people, Zimri and Cozbi. Thus, he would have been unclean until he had been purified on the seventh day. He could not take the holy objects in his hand until he was purified from defilement. Only after that, could he go forth in this manner.

⁷ And they warred against the Midianites, just as the Lord commanded Moses,

The note here is a confirmation of what has already been stated. The war is a holy war, and it is as directed by the Lord through Moses. This cannot be equated with any other supposed holy war in history, because there is one God. If the Lord is God, then His word is set, and it is to be obeyed.

But this also means that any claims to a holy war apart from what Israel conducted, cannot be a valid claim. First, this is because there is no other God who directs the nations. Secondly, because no other group or nation has been given explicit instructions to wage war by the Lord, although it has been claimed by some –

“Have I now come up without the Lord against this place to destroy it?
The Lord said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it.’” 2 Kings 18:25

Sennacherib claimed that the Lord had sent him, but his words were proven false when the Angel of the Lord went out and killed one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians in a single night, thus effectively defeating the army and causing the king to depart and return to Nineveh.

The Lord allowed other nations to come and defeat Israel, but these were not their holy wars. Rather, this was the Lord's discipline upon His holy people. Therefore, no guilt can be imputed to Israel in their obedience to the Lord's commands...

⁷ (con't) **and they killed all the males.**

Of this, the nimwits at Cambridge state that it is –

“An imaginative description of success. If it were historically true, Midian would have disappeared from history; but they are found not long afterwards as one of Israel's most troublesome neighbours (Judges 6-8).”

Thus, they call into question the truth and accuracy of God's word without simply thinking the matter through. Israel fought Midian. It never says they fought all of Midian. Many people fought and defeated Israel, but none fought and defeated all of Israel. The Midianites that Israel fought in this battle were defeated, and all of the males were killed. Imagine standing before the Lord on the day of judgment when you spent your life belittling God's word. If they are saved, there will be a lot of burning up of their insufficient works. If they are not, there will be lots of additional punishment to go with their trip into the fiery pit.

As far as what it says about all the males, the reason for this clause being stated is because of what will be said by Moses concerning the women in verses 16 & 17. It was the women who actively participated in the seduction of Israel. And therefore, to kill only the males is to complete only half of the necessary task.

It was not at Israel's discretion who should be slain and who should be saved. The order for annihilation was given and all should have been annihilated without mercy. However, they failed to consider this and thus failed to act.

When God determines that sinners will be destroyed, it will come about. His kingdom is one which will exclude all who have sinned. As all have sinned, and as only those in Christ have been forgiven of their sins and no longer have sin imputed to them, then only those in Christ will enter His kingdom.

God's judgment is without regard to sex or age. All who are not of Christ will find their end apart from God. The sparing of the virgin females later in this chapter is a concession, not a set precept. When Israel enters Canaan, all with the breath of life – even the virgin females will be devoted to destruction.

⁸They killed the kings of Midian with *the rest of* those who were killed—Evi, Re-kem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian.

What the Hebrew seems to be saying is that these kings were killed after the battle, in addition to those slain during the battle. These five are only mentioned here and in Joshua 13:21 –

“...all the cities of the plain and all the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, whom Moses had struck with the princes of Midian: Evi, Re-kem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, who *were* princes of Sihon dwelling in the country. ²²The children of Israel also killed with the sword Balaam the son of Beor, the sooth-sayer, among those who were killed by them.” Joshua 13:21, 22

There in Joshua they are called princes of Sihon. Thus, we can see a hierarchy which existed until the death of Sihon. He was obviously the ruler over a large area, including Midian, and these five were apparently set over their own people and over Moab. Their names as best as can be determined mean – Evi – Desirous; Requem – Many Colored; Tsur – Rock; Khur – White; Reva – Fourth. Tsur was the father of Cosbi, the woman who was impaled by Phinehas in Numbers 25. His end did not come much later.

It’s hard to determine why the special detail is given to these five kings, including their names, unless there is some future battle which will apparently be a typological match to what occurred here in Numbers. There isn’t much to go on, and the speculation could go on and on. Suffice it to say that Israel was completely victorious over all, including the kings of Midian.

^{8 (con’t)} Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.

From this, it is obvious that Balaam either went back to his home country and then returned, possibly at the request of these kings, or he got on his donkey to go home and then decided to swing by Midian’s camp and try another tact in hopes of destroying Israel.

One way or another, he wound up with these five kings and was successful in influencing them that though a curse against Israel would not be effective, tempting them through seduction would be. In this, and as these five kings were over not only Midian but also Moab, they then took Balaam’s doctrine, passed it on to Balak, and thus Moab drew Israel into the incident at Peor. This is without a doubt, because in Revelation 2, Jesus says this –

“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.”

-Revelation 2:14

Despite not being mentioned here, Balak returned to the picture through the counsel of Balaam. And for his wicked conduct, Balaam was killed with the sword. In his first oracle over Israel he proclaimed, “Let me die the death of the righteous.” Such was not to be. He died the death of the wicked, and he is remembered as such throughout the rest of sacred history.

⁹ And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods.

It was already said that all the men were killed, here, to set up what will follow in the verses ahead, he notes the various categories of those who were not killed, and that which was not destroyed. The men of war were all destroyed, as were the kings over them.

However, the women, virgins and otherwise, were spared and taken captive. Along with them, the Israelites took as plunder all the *taph*, or little ones. The word comes from *taphaph*, meaning to take small quick steps. This means these are just small children.

Further, all forms of livestock, meaning both large dumb animals and herding animals, were taken as plunder, and finally it says *kal khelam bazazu*, or “all wealth was plundered.” Everything of any value at all was gathered up and taken as spoils of war for Israel.

¹⁰ They also burned with fire all the cities where they dwelt, and all their forts.

Two things are mentioned here. The *iyir*, or cities, and the *tirah*, or forts. The cities are the commonly referred to dwellings of people. The *tirah*, or forts, is a much rarer word. It comes from a word meaning “rows.” It could be towers, forts, camps, battlements, or some other thing.

This is stated here to show the remarkable desolation of the area after Israel was done. Midian, as a people, was not completely destroyed, but only this portion of them, this

would make others coming in and settling have to go through the laborious task of rebuilding from scratch. They could not just move in and immediately use the area for living or for waging wars. And finally, for today, it says...

¹¹ (fin) **And they took all the spoil and all the booty—of man and beast.**

Here again two different things are noted, the *shalal*, or spoil, and a new word, *malqowakh*, or booty. It comes from the word which begins the verse, *laqakh* or “took.” Thus, it signifies “the takings.” It is an all-encompassing thought that anything of any value was taken in the campaign. Midian was completely destroyed, and Israel’s vengeance was complete, and thus the vengeance for the Lord as directed in verse 3 was attained.

Due to the length of the passage, 54 verses long, we have to stop here and pick up with the narrative next week. Until then, continue to remind yourself about the precept that this is the Lord’s war, and thus it is a holy war.

We cannot speak against what God has ordained without falling into sin. Without having read the commentaries on the coming verses at this point, I can imagine that the liberal commentators will, in fact, find fault with what Moses is going to command in the verses ahead.

But that shows their own inability to perceive God as He is. And it is a giant defect in their understanding of His sovereign right to dispose with all life as He determines. Let us not fall into such error, but let us rather take the word of God as it is written, accepting the Lord’s judgments as they are given.

We are not God, nor can we speak for Him. And that goes with the very personal and solemn obligation of each person to receive His offer of peace which is found in Christ Jesus, or to reject it and suffer the consequences of our choice. God is God, and we must be obedient to His will if we are going to be included in what that will has in store for His redeemed.

Closing Verse: *“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” Romans 9:22-24*

Next Week: Numbers 31:12-24 This passage will make some leftie's blood boil... (The Captives, the Booty, and the Spoil) (60th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Take Vengeance on the Midianites

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words to him He was then relaying

“Take vengeance on the Midianites
For the children of Israel
Afterward you shall be gathered to your people
Remember when you did rebel?

So Moses spoke to the people, saying
“Arm some of yourselves for war
And let them go against the Midianites
To take vengeance for the Lord on Midian
———remember what they did at Peor!

A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel
You shall send to the war, as to you I now tell

So there were recruited
From the divisions of Israel, not less or more
One thousand from each tribe
Twelve thousand armed for war

Then Moses sent them to the war
One thousand from each tribe, so we understand
He sent them to the war with Phinehas
———the son of Eleazar the priest
With the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand

And they warred against the Midianites

Just as the Lord commanded Moses; as He did tell
And they killed all the males
For the Midianite males, things didn't go so well

They killed the kings of Midian
With the rest of those who were killed, as directed by the Lord
Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian
Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword

And the children of Israel
Took the women of Midian captive; so they did do
With their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle
All their flocks, and all their goods too

They also burned with fire all the cities
Where they dwelt, and all their forts as well
And they took all the spoil and all the booty
Of man and beast; so much spoil for Israel

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 31:12-24 (THE CAPTIVES, THE BOOTY, AND THE SPOIL)

The first seven verses of this passage are difficult for many to read and to accept. They don't seem to fit their idea of a loving God. However, they do fit the concept of a just, holy, righteous, and – yes – even a merciful God. Of verses 15-18 in particular, the commentators at Cambridge frightfully state the following –

“All male children and all women who are not virgins are to be killed in cold blood. This cruel command ascribed to Moses dates from an age when the Jews were approaching their narrowest and hardest state of exclusiveness, when piety consisted in rigid separateness from everything foreign. It need cause no difficulty to Christians who have received the command ‘Love your enemies.’” Cambridge

There are several points to be made about this. First, they call what is mandated here by the Lord through Moses cold-blooded killing. If, in fact, the Lord commanded this, and they have then penned this commentary, then they have accused the Lord of being a cold-blooded killer.

Whether He actively did the killing, or whether He used His instrument of judgment, meaning Israel, to carry out His command, it makes no difference. It is a rather uncomfortable position to be in when you stand before the Lord after having accused him of such.

Secondly, they say that this wasn't the Lord or Moses at all, but rather Jews who were at a point of narrow and hard exclusivism. If this is true, then why would Bible scholars even bother with being Bible scholars. If this isn't the word of God, then it is the word of man and it is not worth commenting on it in such an analysis.

And that brings us to the third point. They have said that this, “need cause no difficulty to Christians who have received the command ‘Love your enemies.’” Why would Christians care about the command “Love your enemies,” if this isn't the word of God?

At what point do we say, “This part is the word of God, and this part isn't?” Who decides that? As it is an arbitrary decision left up to man, then the message of Christ is unreliable. And if the message of Christ is unreliable, then the words of Christ are equally as unreliable. Everything stands or falls on whether the command of Moses in these verses is in accord with the word of God or not. If it's not, we are wasting our Sunday morning.

Text Verse: *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*
Psalm 51:5 (NIV)

Translations of this verse vary, some of which completely obscure what David is proclaiming under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but the essential point he is making is that he inherited sin. It is not that he had to do anything to be considered a sinner. It was done for him by being conceived. When he was brought fourth, he was already sinful. If we can get that simple point of theology correct, then what we see in today’s verses is not at all cruel or unloving. It is what any and all can and should expect from God. He is just, and our inherited sin demands justice.

He is holy, and we are born in an unholy state. Therefore, our just due would be to remain separate from Him for all eternity. He is righteous, and that demands that a payment is due for our simply being conceived; a payment of death.

These things aren’t mere speculation. They are what Scripture teaches. But God is also loving, and He gave of Himself to pay the penalty. He is also merciful, and so He does not always give us what we deserve.

The young virgins deserved exactly what the others who were brought to the camp got, but they were given mercy. Why did God allow that, and what picture was He making for us in that act?

Before we accuse God of wrongdoing, we should have our theology straight. If we are wrong, it will be a sad meeting when we finally stand face to face. In our world today, there are religions which condone what we would call murder – of men, women, and children.

Is there a difference between what they do and what is relayed here in Scripture? The answer is, “Yes.” There is a world of difference. One is sanctioned by the true God, and for very specific reasons, and the others are sanctioned by false gods.

We cannot impute wrongdoing to the Lord and come out unscathed, so let’s look at our verses within their proper context. It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Defiled by Peor (verses 12-18)

¹² Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil

Here, three separate designations are made. The first are *ha'shviy*, or “the captives.” This was explained in verse 9 as the women and their little ones. The second are *ha'malqoakh*, or “the booty.” This signifies “the takings.”

It is an all-encompassing thought that anything of any value was taken in the campaign including the cattle and flocks that were plundered. And finally, are *ha'shalal*, or “the spoil.” This is anything else that was plundered from Midian. Such types of things will be described in verses 20 and 22. All of this was brought...

¹² (con't) to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel,

The words are certainly intended to give the sense of a great military victory where the men of war are heroes who are presenting the rewards of their efforts to the people. Moses, as the leader, is mentioned first. Eleazar is mentioned second, naming his official capacity as “the priest.”

And then “the congregation” signifies the leaders of tribes and heads of families who represent the entire assembly. This will be seen in the next verse. This is a formal presentation of the victory spoils which have been brought...

¹² (con't) to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho.

The words *el ha'makhaneh*, or “to the camp,” mean only to the location of the camp, but not into the camp. Due to defilement, the warriors and their booty would first have to pass through a ritual of purification. Because of this, it next says...

¹³ And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp.

There are two reasons for this. The first is, as already stated, that there is defilement of the people and the plunder which must be purified before it can come into the camp. But this could have been conveyed to them by a messenger. Therefore, this is a mark of both respect and congratulations to the fighting men for their efforts.

The meeting probably contained a threefold aspect. First, there would have been words fitting to the victory by Moses, then a blessing spoken over the people by Eleazar, and

then something like our modern “hip hip hooray” shouted out by the leaders of the assembly. It is both a reward for their efforts, and an encouragement and a stimulus to continue on in the same manner in future battles.

14 But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds,

One can see that just as Moses, Eleazar, and the leaders had come forth from the camp, these three groups had also come forward from the army. They include the *pequde* or overseers, and the *sare*, or captains of the larger and smaller divisions.

This would be comparable to the generals and the division and brigade leaders, all coming forward in a modern army. It is they who were responsible for the conduct of the army. It is, therefore, these men to whom Moses shows his displeasure.

14 (con't) who had come from the battle.

The translation leaves the sense of the verse lacking. There is a noun, *tsaba*, which is not fully translated. Instead of “who had come from the battle,” it should say something like, “who came in from the host of the battle.”

There are the hosts of Israel, numbering twelve thousand men. Out of these hosts were brought forth those who commanded the force according to their level of authority. It is they who bore the responsibility of ensuring the battle was conducted properly. Moses next verbalizes the reason for his anger...

15 And Moses said to them: “Have you kept all the women alive?”

Rather than “women,” it says “females.” “Have you kept all the females alive?” The word is *neqevah*, and it signifies the sexual form of the female, inclusive of all ages. The instructions from the Lord were *neqom niqmat bene yisrael me-et ha'midyanim* – “Avenging vengeance sons of Israel on the Midianites.” Moses passed this on to the people with the words *latet niqmat Yehovah b'midyan* – “give vengeance Yehovah in Midian.”

By keeping the women alive, they failed to do the very thing that was expected of them. It was the women who had been used to seduce Israel. This was a matter of just retribution because of an offense against the Lord which, by default, must include killing the women who brought about the offense, as Moses next explains...

¹⁶ Look, these *women* caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor,

The words are exactly spoken by Moses. He begins with the word *hen*, or “Behold!” He is establishing an excited tone to convey the rest of his words. His next words then set these females in contrast to the children of Israel. They were in the wrong, and they caused the Lord’s people to follow them into the wrong.

He then notes that what they did had been counseled by Balaam. They had taken the advice of a soothsayer in an attempt to pit their god, Peor, against the Lord. The intent is obvious. Balaam looked at Yehovah not as the One all-powerful God, but as a lesser “God of the Jews,” just as the god of Peor was a localized god.

The name Peor comes from the verb *paar*, meaning “to open wide.” Thus, it means, “The Opening.” As was described before, that verb yields no nouns. Thus, Peor is based on the verb itself, suggesting that this god is one who works out of a hunger or desire. Thus, he can be seen as a god of desire, yearning, and lust.

What Moses is doing by using the term *neqevah*, or females, is showing that **they** are the very instruments of lust which then caused Israel to fall into sin. They were the weapon (the opening) of Peor, which brought them to the lust of Peor (the Opening). He is using the female form to describe what the female form brought about in the men. Through Balaam’s counsel, he thus caused the sons of Israel *limsar maal Yehovah* – “to set apart treachery against Yehovah.” This is the second and last use of the word *masar*. It was first seen in verse 5. It comes from a primitive root meaning “to sunder.” Thus, it means “to set apart.”

In verse 5, it was the setting apart of a portion of people from the others and *to the Lord* for battle. Whereas here, it speaks of those who trespassed against the Lord. In this, they were set apart *from the Lord* in apostasy. They had taken their affections from the Lord and set them on Peor. As a result...

¹⁶ (con’t) and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.

This is the outcome of what was instigated by the women. It ended in a plague where 24000 had died. The point being made is that the Lord took vengeance against His own people, to defend His own honor, because of Peor. It was, therefore, fully expected that His own people would take full vengeance, to restore that state of honor, against Midian who brought this about.

17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones,

The number of failed commentaries on these words goes on and on. We saw one during the introductory comments, and there are plenty more from the hands of those who don't understand either the fallen nature of man – meaning the inheritance of original sin – nor the holy and righteous nature of God who allowed Moses to speak forth this command.

The Lord determined that Midian should be destroyed. If the males were allowed to live, the nation would be perpetuated through them. This is not so with the females, whose children would be reckoned through the line of the father.

Further, being identified as Midianites, and because they would remain Midianites, they would carry that name and custom with them. How can we know this? Because the man now giving forth the command to Israel was not an Egyptian, but a Hebrew.

Despite having been taken and brought up as a son of Pharaoh's daughter, and having been schooled in the wisdom of the Egyptians, Moses first and foremost identified himself with His people, Israel. He was spared and look at what he accomplished.

The evidence of, and justification for, the need to kill every male among the little ones was the Lord's chosen leader of Israel who stood there before them. And yet, there is more bad news for the captives...

17 (con't) and kill every woman who has known a man intimately.

Again, we can read this and say, "What a terrible thing to command." But if there is a war and females are a part of that war, they are reckoned as soldiers to be killed. This was, in fact, a war. Twenty-four thousand of Israel had died because of these women, and they had forfeit their lives because of their active participation. Matthew Henry rightly states –

"The sword of war should spare women and children; but the sword of justice should know no distinction, but that of guilty or not guilty. This war was the execution of a righteous sentence upon a guilty nation, in which the women were the worst criminals." Matthew Henry

However, Moses makes a fixed guideline by saying, *v'kal ishah yodaat ish l'mishkav zakar harogu* – “and each woman known of a man by lying of a male you shall kill.” The idea here is that they are the opening.

They have been with a man, and they, therefore, bear a resemblance to Peor – “The Opening.” They cannot be allowed to live because of this. Understanding the concepts behind the words reveals the reason for the decision. Of these words, however, Adam Clarke bizarrely states –

“Of the women killed on this occasion it may be safely said, their lives were forfeited by their personal transgressions; and yet even in this case there can be little doubt that God showed mercy to their souls.” Adam Clarke

In other words, “Because they are women, they get to go to heaven after getting whacked.” Sorry ladies, though it might sound like a sweet deal, it doesn’t work this way. Be sure to check your theology from Scripture, not a from a sentimental old guy.

This is as far from the reality of Scripture as anything you might ever hear. God is no respecter of persons, and he doesn’t give a pass to anyone based on age, sex, culture, color, or for any other reason – apart from being in Christ. Moses’ words are not arbitrary, they are not inappropriate, and they are perfectly in line with the honor of the Lord. But, those who are to be spared are next noted...

¹⁸ But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately.

This command is not because they were to be used as sex slaves, it is not because they were of value for resale, nor for any such reason that someone might casually toss out which would indicate some benefit for Israel. Rather, the reason for this is two-fold. First, it is no different than the edict of Pharaoh in Exodus 1 –

“Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.” Exodus 1:22

The females would be assimilated into Israel. They would not become avengers of blood, nor would they bear the family line of the natural father to the next generation. Instead, their children would become citizens of Israel through the father.

And secondly, they were spared for exactly the opposite reason that the other women were killed. They *lo yadeu mishkav zakar* – “not have known intimately male.” They remained unopened and thus they did not yet bear the image of the false god Peor. The command makes perfect sense when it is compared to the surrounding text.

*What is it that we have done to offend the Lord?
What sin have we committed before His face?
Surely payment for our sins we cannot afford
We are left ashamed, abandoned, and disgraced*

*What we deserve is death for the things we have done
Our lot is rightly to be cast into the pit of hell
But God made the payment; He sent forth His Son
Such a wonderful story for us does the Bible tell*

*We have pursued other gods; following after them hard
We have not been faithful to the awesome and terrible Lord
But when He died on Calvary; bearing the scent of nard
Peace between us and God has mercifully been restored*

II. The Rites of Purification (verses 19-24)

¹⁹ And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days;

The words are second person plural. It is referring to all those who had come from the campaign. It is explicit but general. All were to remain outside of the camp for seven days. A state of defilement existed because of the battle, the proximity to the pagans, being around unclean things, and so on.

This would have been the unstated standard for any similar future campaigns. No distinction is made for any person. All are together considered as unclean. However, there are different states of defilement for which further action may be required...

¹⁹ (con't) whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain,

Unlike the previous clause, which was explicit but general, this is explicit and specific. It is directed to any who had killed another person, or to anyone who had touched a slain person. The act of killing, regardless as to whether the person actually died at that moment or not, is considered to bring about a state of defilement.

Further, it may be that someone didn't kill anyone, but he was still a part of the burial team. Picking up the dead to toss them into a grave would also bring about defilement. But what about the person who didn't kill anyone, and who didn't have to bury anyone? Why did he have to remain outside the camp?

It is because he was a part of the campaign and would have been defiled by simply being around someone who was directly defiled. He would be required to remain outside the camp. For these defiled people, Moses says...

19 (con't) purify yourselves and your captives

tit-khateu – “unsin yourselves.” The Hebrew actually places the words “and your captives” at the end of the clause. In other words, it reads, “unsin yourselves on day the third and on day the seventh; you and your captives.”

The words, “unsin yourselves,” do not mean that they had committed some type of moral transgression. Rather, what they had done was at the command of the Lord. But by coming in contact with death, they had incurred guilt and required purification. To understand this, and what their purification fully entailed and pointed to, one would have to watch the two sermons from Numbers 19 concerning the Red Heifer and the Water of Purification.

In short, the entire process looks to the purification offered by Christ. The people of Israel, even when acting in obedience to the Lord's command, incurred guilt. In this, we can then understand the typology in how it points to our state before God, and how that is cleansed by Christ. In a classic misuse of Scripture, the Cambridge commentators say of these words –

“The Hebrews had not yet received the higher teaching that only ‘the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man’ (Mark 7:15).”

Jesus was speaking about foods, not defilement through death, disease, or the like. The Lord, through the Law of Moses, declared these people unclean and were kept separate from the camp because the camp is where the Lord dwelt among the people. The laws were given to fit the typology, which points to Christ.

This is not an issue of eating foods, but of maintaining purity in the presence of the Lord. It is true that the law was given as a tutor to lead us to Christ, but the same principle applies now. Those who are stained with sin cannot enter the presence of the Lord.

It is Christ who purifies from sin; it is Christ who covers us with His righteousness, and it is Christ who therefore keeps us from the imputation of further sin when we are in Him. For those who are not so covered, they are – and will be – excluded from the presence of God. To purify these people in a manner typical of that of the purification of Christ, Moses next says...

¹⁹ (con't) **on the third day and on the seventh day.**

This is based on the words of Numbers 19. There it says –

“He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. ¹² He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; *then* he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. ¹³ Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness *is* still on him.” Numbers 19:11-13

All who were in the campaign, and all of their captives, would have been so defiled. The blood of the dead would have been on hands, on garments, and on articles taken from the dead. Captives might have touched the dead in mourning. None were free from the effect of the sin of death, and thus all required purification.

²⁰ **Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' *hair*, and everything made of wood.”**

The actual means of purification is stated in verse 23, meaning the water of purification. But because of the defilement of the battle, which permeated everything, all things were to be purified. The list includes every garment. This means the garments of the soldiers as well as the garments of the captives. It would extend to any garments taken from the dead, or out of the homes of the people.

It next says, *v'kal keli ovr* – “and every vessel skin.” This could be a wineskin, some type of purse, or whatever else. The law for this was given in Numbers 19:15 –

“and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, *is* unclean.”

The idea is that the vessel is unclean and requires purification. However, the word, *keli*, or vessel, can extend to anything made of skin – sandals, parchment, tents, saddles, and

so on. It next says, *v'kal maaseh izzim* – “and all worked goats.” Tent coverings, garments, blankets, and so on would all require purification. But this may even be inclusive of other items made from goats, such as horns, bones, hoofs, and the like.

And then it says, *v'kal keli ets* – “and all vessels wood.” This could be pretty much anything from spoons, bowls, and cups, to beds, boxes, and wagon wheels. Whatever was made of wood was to be sprinkled for purification. Or, as it more literally says again, they are to be “unsinned.”

21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle,

Now Eleazar speaks out. What he will say is based on words given in Numbers 19. There it said, “Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying” (19:1). The law was spoken to Moses as the Lawgiver, and to Aaron who was the priest responsible for these priestly functions.

As the law has been given, it is now the priest who speaks forth what has been received. However, it is now Aaron’s son who stands as the high priest of Israel. Therefore, it is he who addresses the men of war who had gone to the battle...

21 (con’t) “This is the ordinance of the law

zot khuqat ha'torah – “this, enactment of the law.” It is a very rare phrase which combines two common words – *khuqat*, or “statute,” and *torah*, meaning “law,” or “instruction.” The two words together in this manner are only seen here and in Numbers 19:2 where this particular type of purification was also the subject. For this combined form, John Lange provides a general meaning –

“We would read: an ordinance for securing the Torah. Without this expedient, for instance, the law of purification would have occasioned endless offences on the right hand and on the left.” John Lange

In other words, the word *torah*, or “law,” here is an all-encompassing statement concerning not any given law, but the Law of Moses itself. In order to secure the law and keep it free from constant defilement in the people, this statute that was given is now being enacted.

21 (con’t) which the Lord commanded Moses:

asher tsivah Yehovah eth Mosheh – “which commanded Yehovah Moses.” Now the *khuqat ha’torah*, or “enactment of the law,” is said to have been, *tsivah*, or commanded, by the Lord. There is a definite importance which is ascribed to what Eleazar conveys to the people.

It is binding on all people because it is a part of the mutually agreed-to covenant between the Lord and His people. The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron concerning the guidance that He commanded. Eleazar now conveys that word to the people. The reason for this is because the typology looks to Christ.

The Pulpit Commentary finds it extraordinary that Eleazar would stand and proclaim this while Moses was standing right there –

“This is the earliest instance of the high priest declaring to the people what the law of God as delivered to Moses was, and then applying and enlarging that law to meet the present circumstances. It is no doubt possible that Eleazar referred the matter to Moses, but it would seem on the face of the narrative that he spoke on his own authority as high priest.” Pulpit

The reason for this is that he will speak next of the cleansing of items by fire and water, something which was never explained before. They are so surprised by this that they also say that verses 21-24 were probably added after the death of Moses.

But that completely undermines the purpose of having a high priest. Moses was the one who received and gave out the law. Once the law was given, it was set. There was no need for Moses to interpret a law which was already passed on and in effect.

And further, if someone later inserted these verses, they would have done it without the instructions from Moses. Their interpretation would be no more valid than that of Eleazar, and it would also then have been added, after the fact, into the word of God which was for Moses to receive.

What they propose makes no sense, and it damages the integrity of Scripture. Rather, Eleazar’s coming words stand as appropriate, and their inclusion in the word confirms that it is so.

²² **Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead,**

Six metals are named, one of which is new to Scripture, *bedil*, or tin. The word comes from *badal*, meaning to separate, and thus it signifies an alloy, and then – by analogy – tin. The word will be used six times, but one of them, in Zechariah 4:10, will speak of a plumb line, because a plumb line separates that which is considered plumb, or upright, and that which is not.

These metals are capable of withstanding fire, a marvelous source of purification, and so it is no surprise that Eleazar would make his proclamation, and so he now continues...

²³ everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean;

This precept has been seen numerous times. When a sin offering is made for the congregation, parts of it were burned on the altar and the rest was burned outside the camp, implying that purification and destruction comes through the fire. In another example, which most poignantly points to purification through fire, it says this in Numbers 16 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ³⁷ ‘Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. ³⁸ The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel.’” Numbers 16:36-38

Eleazar was personally aware of the purifying effects of fire. These unholy men, with their unholy offerings, were burnt in the fire. The censers withstood it and were purified, and so for him to interpret the law in this way is not only right, it is proper for him to do so.

However, this was not fire on the altar which was holy fire. It is fire outside the camp used for cleansing the items. Once they were declared “clean,” they still required a final purification...

²³ (con’t) and it shall be purified with the water of purification.

Translations vary here, but the Hebrew indicates that despite being clean after passing through the fire, the metals still had to be purified or “unsinned” with the water of purification.

Unlike the items that were purified with holy fire, these were only considered clean. They still required the purification which points to Christ – meaning the water of purification which contained the ashes of the red heifer.

²³ (con't) **But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water.**

This now speaks of all of the other non-metallic items – skins, goats' hair, wood, or whatever else that could not withstand the fire had to be washed in water. What is implied, though not stated, is that it would then be purified with the water of purification. This is because this water was required on such things in Numbers 19:18.

²⁴ (fin) **And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp."**

These words are similar to those of Numbers 19:19, with some changes. The people were required to wash their clothes as noted there. It then says, "and be clean." This is probably an abbreviated way of saying that the individual was also to bathe, thus becoming clean, as also required there in Numbers 19. After this, they could again enter the camp. This is then what is alluded to in Hebrews –

“...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

-Hebrews 10:22

The people, despite having been commanded to destroy Midian, may have had hearts that were timid, hateful, covetous, or remorseful over the actions they experienced in battle. And they also bore the defilement of the death they participated in. In the time of purification and cleansing, they were used as a picture of what would come in the true cleansing found in Christ.

And for those who were brought into the camp from outside of Israel, meaning the young virgins, they were cleansed and brought into the community from that point on. The water of purification was sprinkled on them. After the required time and cleansings, they became a part of the community.

They certainly could have refused this, even at such a young age. It was a voluntary action to do so as was seen in Numbers 19. To refuse to receive the sprinkling meant to be cut off from the assembly because, as it said, the person had “defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.”

For one of the girls, they would have then met their fate like the others of Midian. The chances of that would have been unlikely, but if so, it is no different than what happens to people who hear the gospel today and who then reject it. They remain apart from the covenant, and they are destined to be destroyed along with all others who fail to come to Christ for whatever reason.

It is to be remembered from the instructions detailed in Chapter 19, that the people who did the sprinkling of those requiring purification were also made unclean by their duties. They were considered unclean until evening. In fact, every person associated with the process of making and transmitting the water of purification became unclean in the process.

The reason was that everything associated with the red heifer pictured Christ in His death. It is Christ who cleanses from all unrighteousness, but uncleanness had to come from His dead body – a real human body that died – in order for that to come about. That is why there is no sprinkling with blood in this purification. The blood cleansing is accomplished in Christ's death. It is the death and the body of death which is dealt with in the water of purification. It is that which defiles. The red heifer is the only sacrifice where the blood was burned with the body.

From there, the ashes were mixed with living water. That furthered the picture of Christ. He didn't die and stay dead, He rose to provide living waters, but that can only be appropriated through His death, even though His dead body brought defilement under the law of Moses.

The truth we found in Numbers 19, and which is seen again here, is that one cannot get to the Living Water until he is first cleansed by the blood, even though the death associated with that blood defiles.

Romans 6:3 says that we are baptized into Christ's death. Only through that can we be cleansed. His death, however, was for man's sin. Without Christ becoming sin we could not become the righteousness of God in Him.

Though we were baptized into His death, we are raised to new life through the power of His resurrection. That is the Living Water with which the ashes were mixed. And it is that which ultimately cleanses us wholly and forever from the defilement of death that we carried in our bodies, even since the first moments of our human existence.

It is an amazing thing that God has done in Jesus Christ. And it is found in this passage which is given to show the effectiveness of the command which was first detailed in Numbers 19.

The lesson is, come to Christ and be freed from the sin of death, and you will be granted life. You will be accepted into the sanctuary of the Lord, and you will be there in the presence of God – the God who loves you enough to do this for you – for all eternity. Come to Christ.

Closing Verse: *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”*
-Colossians 3:1-4

Next Week: Numbers 31:25-54 *We see this now and we will see it again with Gideon...* (The Spoils of Midian) (61st Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Captives, the Booty, and the Spoil

Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil
To Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation
— — — of the children of Israel, thus they did so
To the camp in the plains of Moab
By the Jordan, across from Jericho

And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders
— — — of the congregation
Went to meet them outside the camp, probably filled with elation

But Moses was angry with the officers of the army
With the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds too
Who had come from the battle
And Moses said to them: “Have you kept all the women alive?”

— — —-Now let me speak to you...

Look, these women caused the children of Israel
Through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord
In the incident of Peor
And there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord
— — —-you yourselves saw that terrible sword

Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones
And kill every woman who has known a man intimately
— — —-yes, do this as stated by me
But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls
Who have not known a man intimately

And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days
Whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain
Purify yourselves and your captives
On the third day and on the seventh day, once again

Purify every garment
Everything made of leather, be sure this is understood
Everything woven of goats' hair
And everything made of wood

Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war
Who had gone to the battle; to them these words he handed
“This is the ordinance of the law
Which the Lord to Moses commanded

Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead
Everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire
— — —-and it shall be clean
And it shall be purified with the water of purification
But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water
— — —-this cleansing shall be seen

And you shall wash your clothes and be clean on the seventh day
And afterward you may come into the camp, as to you I say

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 31:25-54 (THE SPOILS OF MIDIAN)

In the doctrinal and ethical portion of his commentary on this passage, John Lange equates what we see in Numbers 31 with what the Christian should be involved in at all times, meaning a battle against the foe. He says –

“As Jehovah is Israel’s God, who has bound Himself with them, so every attack upon Israel is an attack upon God. The analogy which holds between the war of Israel against the Midianites and the Christian warfare of all the people of God against His foes and theirs, is suggestive and instructive.”

It is certain that he is not referring to a war against non-believers, such as the crusades. What we see in Israel is an earthly nation selected to be the people of God, and who are to be obedient to Him in all ways. As He directs, they are to comply.

At times, what the Lord directs in the Old Testament may hurt our modern sensibilities, but the Lord is God and His judgments are His alone. Our possible dislike of what He has commanded does not negate that what He commanded is right, and that what His people did in the execution of His commands was also right.

Last week we saw that Midian was to face vengeance for what they did, and they indeed received the full measure of it. This week, we will see the rewards for Israel’s obedience to the call. And, along with their rewards, they display something quite often neglected by the Lord’s people – both in the Bible and in our daily life.

Text Verse: *“I will remember the works of the Lord;
Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.
¹² I will also meditate on all Your work,
And talk of Your deeds.” Psalm 77:11, 12*

The psalmist said that he would remember the works and wonders of the Lord, and that he would also meditate on them and... talk of them. It is a note of gratitude for the Lord’s hand upon his life. It is the sin of ingratitude which must most fill the hearts of Christians in general. Maybe not at first, but as the years go by, we forget that the debt we were forgiven, and the mercies we were shown, were not just small things, but that they bear infinite weight.

Of ingratitude, Benjamin Franklin said, “Most people return small favors, acknowledge medium ones and repay greater ones – with ingratitude.” That is certainly true with the Christian.

When we pray about our sick dog, we are grateful when it gets better and we decide to do something good to return to the Lord the favor. Maybe by praying for another person’s sick dog. That seems fair. When we have something pretty big happen in our life, we will generally acknowledge it. “The Lord sure pulled me out of that fire. I could have died, but the cancer was cured. Maybe I’ll go to church on Sunday. Well, just one Sunday.”

But of the greatest favor of all, that of being forgiven of all of our sin and granted new life in Christ, it is sadly true that most Christians repay the Lord with a state of complete ingratitude. Really think about the lives of those believers we know and see if how they conduct themselves is as if they are truly, truly grateful.

I think that for the most part, you will see that we really don’t demonstrate a level of gratitude commensurate with the size of the favor that was bestowed upon us. Obviously, we can never repay an infinite, but at least we have an infinite amount of time to try. The problem is, that it’s easier to put it off until sometime later. And later is, after all, an infinite all by itself.

Israel demonstrates gratitude in today’s verses, and when they do, Moses and Eleazar take the sign of that gratitude and lay it up before the Lord as a memorial. The word there is *zikaron*. That comes from *zakar*, or “remember,” which is the exact word the psalmist used in our text verse, saying that he would *remember* the works of the Lord. Let us remember the works of the Lord, and let His works be as a memorial to us so that we never forget, and never fail to be grateful for what He has done for us. Let the eternal “later” not be found on our lips or in our actions.

Instead, may we be grateful right now and forever, and let us do so through the holy war that we engage in. Not an earthly, fleshly battle, but a spiritual one that we have been charged to fight. And, in the conduct of our war, then our deeds of faith in that battle can be stored up as their own memorial before God of our faithfulness to His kind hand upon us.

This is a precept which has been given to us in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Much Plunder (verses 25-47)

²⁵ Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The translation is incorrect. In fact, very few translations caught the change. Such an introductory phrase normally says, “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying...” Here it says the much rarer, “And the Lord said to Moses, saying.”

The Hebrew words for “spoke” and “said” carry essentially the same idea, that of conveying a message, but “said” is more concise. It usually means the task is complex and it requires a partnership and people working together.” This is what will be seen...

²⁶ “Count up the plunder that was taken—of man and beast—

sa eth rosh malqoakh ha’shevi – “Lift up *the* head *of the* plunder *of the* captive.” It is a way of saying that each head is to be counted of the living prey. That is further defined as *ba’adam u-ba’behemah*, or “of man and of beast.” All that was taken as a living prey is what is spoken of here.

²⁶ (con’t) you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation;

These are certainly required so that no one could later say that an unfair counting was made. The leader, the high priest, and all of the *rashe*, or heads, of the congregation would be included in the counting. Thus, it would be a fair and unbiased counting.

²⁷ and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation.

The idea here is that all of the living spoil was gathered in one whole, and then it was divided equally into two parts. The division would be without partiality so that no one could say, “They got the better half.” From there, one half would go to those who went to battle, a small portion of the whole number of Israel.

As there were over 600,000 counted as ready for battle in the recent census, and as only 12,000 of those were selected, the division seems hugely one-sided and unfair, but it is not. By dividing it this way, it would spur those who were battle capable in the future to willingly go out to fight.

These 12,000 represented the whole, and they had earned what was won in battle. But the congregation was still entitled to a half because they were represented by their fighting men who had gone to war. For any who died in battle, a portion would naturally be set aside for the tribe as an honor of their fallen hero. What comes later in this passage does not negate this division. Rather, it highlights it.

28 And levy a tribute for the Lord on the men of war who went out to battle:

v'haremota mekes l'Yehovah – “And raise a computation to Yehovah.” The verb is *rum*, it signifies to lift up or raise. It is the basis for the word *terumah*, or heave offering. This is what is being conveyed. It is to be as a heave offering to the Lord.

The word translated as “tribute” is a new word, *mekes*. It signifies a computation or a tax. It will be seen six times in this passage and nowhere else. This first *mekes* is to be taken from the half set apart for those who went out to the battle.

28 (con't) one of every five hundred of the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep;

Here it says, *ekhad nephesh*, or “one soul.” It defines the beings as living. Of the living beings, one of every five hundred of each category is to be raised up to the Lord.

29 take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering to the Lord.

The idea here is that this 1/5th of a percent would be the Lord’s portion as acknowledgment that the victory was ultimately His. This was to be given to Eleazar who represented the Lord and who stood as representative of all of the priests who would be included in the reception of the offering.

30 And from the children of Israel’s half you shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep, from all the livestock,

Instead of 1/5th of a percent which was drawn out from the warrior’s half, here 2 percent is drawn from the people’s half. There is the obvious reason that because their risks were less, their taxed portion should be greater. Secondly, it is because of who receives what is drawn off in this 2 percent portion...

30 (con't) and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the Lord.”

Whereas there are few priests, there are many Levites. Therefore, as a suitable offering to them for their service between the priests and the people, they were given a larger percent from the people's half.

One can see here how the troops who went to battle were reckoned as the Lord's army. Phinehas the priest went with them, thus they represented the Lord in battle. The people who remained at camp, remained under the service of the Levites. Thus, the portions which have been levied from the two halves reflect these divisions.

As it says, the Levites are those who "keep the charge of the tabernacle of the Lord." This is the fifth of nine times that the term *mishkan Yehovah*, or "tabernacle of the Lord" is used. When the term is used, it anticipates the Person of Christ because every part of the tabernacle reflects Him and His work.

The Levites are those who minister, standing in place of the firstborn of the congregation, and thus they represent Christ, the Firstborn of God. Each thing we are seeing anticipates Christ in one way or another. The offerings made anticipate offerings made to God in Christ.

³¹ So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.

It is the standard note of compliance. The Lord has commanded, and the command is attended to according to His word.

³² The booty remaining from the plunder, which the men of war had taken,

What these words mean is not clear. It could mean that what is going to be detailed here is besides the other plunder not included in the living beings, some of which will be detailed in verse 50. Or, it could be the plunder that was left after the women and boys had been killed, and any animals eaten by the army during the campaign. Either way, after whatever is being referred to, the following amounts of plunder to be divided are given...

^{32 (con't)} was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep,

With a total of sheep at 675,000, this would mean 337,500 for the soldiers, and 675 from that to the Lord, meaning to the priests. It would mean that each soldier got 28 sheep as well. The people's half would also be 337,500, and the Levites would receive 6,750 from that.

³³ seventy-two thousand cattle,

A total of 72,000 cattle means 36,000 for the soldiers, and 72 from that to the Lord, meaning to the priests. It would mean that each soldier got 3 cattle as well. The people's half would also be 36,000, and the Levites would receive 720 from that.

³⁴ sixty-one thousand donkeys,

A total of 61,000 donkeys means 30,500 for the soldiers, and 61 to the Lord, meaning to the priests. It would mean that each soldier got 2 donkeys, but there would be 6,500 extra that would need to be divided in some fair way between them. The people's half would be 30,500, and the Levites would receive 610 from that.

³⁵ and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of women who had not known a man intimately.

A total of 32,000 young virgins means 16,000 for the soldiers, and 32 to the Lord, meaning to the priests. There would be one virgin for each soldier, but there would be about 4,000 extra that would need to be divided in some fair way between them. The people's half would be 16,000, and the Levites would receive 320 from that.

³⁶ And the half, the portion for those who had gone out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep;

This is the warrior's half. As noted, it would mean that each soldier got 28 sheep. Also...

³⁷ and the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five.

The priests, being small in number, fared very well.

³⁸ The cattle were thirty-six thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was seventy-two.

This is the warrior's half. As noted, it would mean that each soldier received right at 3 cattle, with the priest's 72 being taken out first.

³⁹ The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which the Lord's tribute was sixty-one.

This was the warrior's half. As noted, it would mean that each soldier got 2 donkeys, but there would be about 6,500 extra that would need to be divided in some fair way between them, but the Lord's tribute of 61 would be taken out first.

⁴⁰ The persons were sixteen thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty-two persons.

This is the warrior's half. As noted, it would mean that each soldier got one virgin, but there would be about 4,000 extra that would need to be divided in some fair way between them, but the Lord's tribute of 32 would be taken out first.

In all, each soldier who went to war came out with a bit more than 28 sheep, 3 cows, 2 donkeys, and one virgin. And that was only of the living beings. The other plunder is not even reckoned in the total. Thus, being a soldier was a very profitable deal, and the great amount they received would be a huge impetus for all able fighting men to volunteer for such battles.

⁴¹ So Moses gave the tribute which was the Lord's heave offering to Eleazar the priest, as the Lord commanded Moses.

The priest's portion totaled 675 sheep, 72 cows, 61 donkeys, and 32 virgins. This was considered the Lord's heave offering, and it was accepted on His behalf by Eleazar the priest. As a side note to keep you interested, the word *mekes* or "tribute" was introduced in verse 28. It was seen five more times since then. This being the last time it will be seen in the Bible. Hello and goodbye to *mekes*.

⁴² And from the children of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who fought—

The numbers for those who did not go out to battle – meaning all of the rest of Israel – is detailed as follows...

⁴³ now the half belonging to the congregation was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep,

Of this, the Levites would receive 6,750 from that.

⁴⁴ thirty-six thousand cattle,

Of this, the Levites would receive 720 from that.

⁴⁵ thirty thousand five hundred donkeys,

Of this, the Levites would receive 610 from that.

⁴⁶ and sixteen thousand persons—

Of this, the Levites would receive 320 from that.

⁴⁷ and from the children of Israel's half Moses took one of every fifty, drawn from man and beast, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

In all, the Levites received 6750 sheep, 720 cows, 610 donkeys, and 320 virgins.

*We bear the shield and by faith head in
We gird ourselves with truth as we seek the reward
We have a helmet of salvation for the battle to win
And in our hand, we carry the Spirit's sword*

*Yes, the word of God is the instrument by which we fight
And prayer is the line to our side's Head
Upon our feet is the gospel of peace, as is right
And we have prevailed in the battle; the enemy lies dead*

*The spoil is piled high from the battle of which we fought
There is great reward for those who entered the fight
On behalf of the Lord, the battle was wrought
And the rewards piled high are a beautiful sight*

II. Not a Man is Missing (verses 48-54)

⁴⁸ Then the officers who were over thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, came near to Moses;

This would be 12 captains of thousands and 120 captains of hundreds. Coming as a united whole, and after the division of living beings having gone so favorably in their direction, this would not be to submit a grievance at their unfair treatment. Rather, they

must be amassing for something positive, gratitude perhaps. Or, maybe something even more wonderful...

⁴⁹ and they said to Moses, “Your servants have taken a count of the men of war who *are* under our command, and not a man of us is missing.

It is a rather astonishing statement, which – of course – some in history have called out as a fabrication of the truth. However, the very fact that they will make the offering they are about to make stands as a testimony to the truth of the account. Stalin once said that “If only one man dies of hunger, that is a tragedy. If millions die, that’s only statistics.”

This is, unfortunately, a true way of looking at death. If a single soldier had died, the entire army would have come together to mourn that one loss – especially standing so close to entry into Canaan. Each and every living soldier would have taken that single loss as a personal failure.

But, if many had died, they would have taken it as a loss expected in a battle, written a warrior’s song of remembrance, and gone back to prepare for the next battle. There would have been personal mourning for friends, but overall, it would be a time of celebration for the victory.

However, neither occurred. Instead, they have come forward in acknowledgment of what is a true miracle. It doesn’t matter if they attacked before sunrise, or if it was a special Midianite holiday to sleep in all day, the expectation is that there would be losses. Based on the number of virgins and animals that were taken as plunder, the scholar Keil estimates that the number of Midianites would have been about 130,000 to 150,000 people, of whom there would have been about 35,000 fighting-capable men.

That would make the odds about 3 to 1. Even with the advantage of surprise, the battle would have been an uphill one with many expected casualties. Instead, however, there was not only a rout of the enemy, it was a complete rout and an absolute victory. Only this can explain the next words...

⁵⁰ Therefore we have brought an offering for the Lord, what every man found of ornaments of gold: armlets and bracelets and signet rings and earrings and necklaces,

Five types of gold ornaments are named here, the identification of which is difficult for some. The bracelets and signet rings are pretty certainly identified, but the other three

are debated due to the rarity of the words used. Five is the number of grace, and this offering is based on the grace granted to the warriors.

All are rare, and two are new words. The first is the *etsadah*. It will only be seen twice. It comes from *tseadah*, or “a marching,” and thus it is a type of chain, translated here as “armlets.”

Another new and rare word is *agil*, or ring. This comes from *agol*, meaning round, and thus it is believed to be a hoop-style earring. It too will be seen just twice – here and in Ezekiel 16:12.

And finally, this verse contains the second and last use of the word *kumaz*, translated here as “necklace.” It is some type of gold ornament, though the identity is not certain. These five types of gold ornaments are brought forward. It is debated whether only the captains brought them forward from their own booty, or whether all of the soldiers gave of what they had to the captains who then brought it all forward. Either way, they state that they are bringing this offering forward...

⁵⁰ (con't) **to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord.”**

The word *kaphar*, or atonement, simply means “to cover over.” In this, it extends to the idea of appeasing, or covering over for wrongdoing, and thus to make atonement. Scholars suggest that this was brought forward to make atonement for not having killed the women and male children, but that is not what they are tying the offering to.

Rather, they are connecting the giving of the offering to the fact that no loss of life occurred. It can be assumed, then, that if there was a loss of life, they would not have felt impelled to bring this offering forward. Therefore, the covering, or appeasement, seems to be proactive, not reactive.

They are gratefully acknowledging the Lord’s care over them. If they failed to do this, then they would be sinning against the Lord. Ingratitude is one of the greatest offenses man is guilty of. How much more in a situation as rare as this!

⁵¹ **So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all the fashioned ornaments.**

The words of the previous verse, along with these words, shows that all of what is presented is of gold. And further, it is gold which is *maaseh*, or worked. It is not merely gold,

which was kept as money, but gold which was fashioned through works, or deeds, of effort. Of this gold, the record then says...

⁵² And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the Lord, from the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels.

Scholars vary in what they believe the weight of a shekel was. The Pulpit Commentary assumes that a shekel equals 66 of an ounce. If that is so, then the total amount of gold presented as an offering to the Lord would have been about 11,000 ounces. As of 19 August, the day I typed this, that would equal at current gold prices about \$16,613,850.

Some scholars say that the five kings of Midian alone would be expected to possess that much gold. If so, then it is not an outlandish amount which would make the account implausible, but rather it would confirm the account is accurate and reliable.

Further, in Judges 8, Gideon asked the men of Israel to give him a gift of the earrings alone which had been plundered from the battle against Midian at that time. These were only men who fell in battle, meaning soldiers, and so they would not bear all the gold of the family with them.

The weight of only the earrings given by each man in his army came out to 1700 shekels. Therefore, the amount here is not at all outlandish. It included all of the wealth of the houses and people, and that of the kings as well.

⁵³ (The men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.)

Although debated, as is usual, this seems to indicate that all of the men of war had gone about taking spoil, and that each of them gave from his spoil for this offering to the Lord. Others argue that it is telling exactly the opposite, and that only the officers gave of their spoil and everyone else gathered for himself without adding to the offering. The verses, as written, don't really answer the matter well enough for a fixed stand one way or the other.

⁵⁴ (fin) And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of meeting as a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord.

This final verse of the chapter says that the gift that was offered up to the Lord was then brought into the tent (not tabernacle) of meeting to be a memorial before the Lord. The idea here is that of the faithfulness of the people to show appreciation for the great deliverance He had wrought.

It is certain that thanks and appreciation wax and wane through time and circumstance, and so this memorial was to be a reminder that at one time, the people were grateful, and that the Lord would hopefully remember this and be merciful during those times when appreciation was lacking.

It would also bear the remembrance that Israel had complied with the word of the Lord to take vengeance on Midian. They had mustered men and sent them out in faith that they would be victorious, despite the small force which had been selected to carry out the task.

And further, it is probable that some of the gold had even come from some of the women who had been brought as captives to the outskirts of the camp, and yet who were then sentenced to die without being assimilated into the people of Israel.

It could be that as many as 50,000 women were ordered to be executed, and it could be argued that if there were 32,000 virgins who were spared, there may have been as many as 32,000 young boys who weren't. That would be over 80,000 destroyed.

Supposing those numbers were high, what number could we reduce it to and still have the soldiers not care about what they needed to do? If the total number was an impossibly low 24,000, that would still mean that each soldier would have to execute two non-combatants.

The offering of the gold was gratitude for the sparing of their souls, but it would also be as a memorial to the Lord that their souls were spared in order to complete the duties they were assigned, and of which they certainly accomplished.

The military force of Israel was the Lord's arm of judgment for an attack against His people. This meant that it was an attack against Him. If the Lord wished to send a plague among the people, they would have been no less dead, but He chose this time to use Israel to defend the honor of Israel and the honor of His name.

The gold presented to Him had no more intrinsic value to Him than anything else that could have been presented. But it carried the value of a sign of both obedience and of

gratitude to Him. King Saul would later fail to show either to the Lord, and it would cost him his kingship.

Saul may have looked back on what occurred here at Midian and thought he was justified to have killed every Amalekite human and to have spared the animals as Israel did here with the Midianites. But that was a different time and his were different orders. Maybe he thought that the gold of Midian still stood as a memorial which would atone for his failure to obey, but he was mistaken. Instead, Samuel spoke out his words of rebuke to Saul –

“Has the Lord *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
He also has rejected you from *being* king.” 1 Samuel 15:22, 23

The obligation of God’s people, at any time in history, is to be obedient to the Lord in accord with His word as it applies to that point in history. We cannot go back to the Law of Moses, for example, and attempt to be righteous before God by adhering to it.

That is to demean the work of Christ who lived out the law and who then offers to us His righteousness as demonstrated in His fulfillment of the law. We cannot use the examples of either war against Midian or war against Amalek as examples of how we are to engage in holy war. Those were earthly battles of Israel, by Israel, and for the honor of Israel’s God.

Today, we may engage in earthly battles as citizens of the nation we are born into, but those are not holy wars. The holy war of the Christian is one which is outlined by Paul in the New Testament. Paul is explicit that our holy war is not against flesh and blood. Rather, it is a spiritual battle.

There is no longer a need for earthly holy wars because Israel’s ultimate battle, that against sin, was won by Christ. We now follow suit in that same battle. And its rules for conduct are not optional. Just as Israel obeyed the Lord and destroyed the women and male children of Midian, we are to obey the precepts of the Lord as He has outlined them to us.

If you are not actively participating in the war we have been charged to conduct, you are not being faithful to the Lord who has so charged you. Church on Sunday morning is only meant to be a place of preparation for you to be ready to conduct your warfare throughout the week. Although Paul's words in Ephesians 6 are not the total of our obligations in this battle we are to conduct, they do give us a good summary statement of what we are to do –

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:10-20

Let us be prepared, let us be willing, and let us be obedient to the calling. Israel was told to take vengeance on Midian and a force of men went forward to do so. Their rewards were felt among all of the people of Israel.

Likewise, when we are obedient to the charge set before us, our rewards will be great, and the entire body will prosper because of it. But, just as those young virgins were brought into the nation of Israel as an act of grace and mercy, so we must come into the body of believers in the same way.

We must come with nothing in our hands, but the simple petition to be granted life. The physical purity of these Midianite women is to be likened unto our spiritual purity in order to be accepted. And the only way that can come about is through a new birth. And that can only come about by coming to God through Christ Jesus.

So, today you are admonished to first get right with the Lord through faith in Jesus, and then to prepare yourself daily to be right with the Lord through adherence and obedience to His word. May it be so for each one of us who desires to have our *maaseh*, or deeds of faith, brought before the Lord as a memorial.

Closing Verse: *“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” 1 Corinthians 3:12-15*

Next Week: Numbers 32:1-19 *Are they acting as if it is a prison and Moses is the Warden? ... (Do Not Take Us Over the Jordan) (62nd Numbers Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Spoils of Midian

Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:
These words to him He was then relaying

“Count up the plunder that was taken—of man and beast
— — —-hear now my oration
You and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation

And divide the plunder into two parts
Between those who took part in the war, where my fury was spent
Who went out to battle, and all the congregation
And levy a tribute for the Lord on the men of war
— — —-who out to battle went

One of every five hundred of the persons
The cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep; according to this word
Take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest
As a heave offering to the Lord

And from the children of Israel's half
You shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons
The cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep
From all the livestock and give them to the Levites who the charge
———of the tabernacle of the Lord keep

So Moses and Eleazar the priest, as was demanded
Did as the Lord to Moses commanded

The booty remaining from the plunder
Which the men of war had taken, in the war
Was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep
Seventy-two thousand cattle. But wait! There's more

Sixty-one thousand donkeys
And thirty-two thousand persons in all
Of women who had not known a man intimately
Thus by the sword they did not fall

And the half, the portion for those who had gone out to war
Was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand
———five hundred sheep
And the Lord's tribute of the sheep
Was six hundred and seventy-five; that's a whole heap

The cattle were thirty-six thousand
Of which the Lord's tribute was seventy-two
The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred
Of which the Lord's tribute was sixty-one, whoo-hooo!

The persons were sixteen thousand, there in plain view
Of which the Lord's tribute was persons thirty-two

So Moses gave the tribute
Which was the Lord's heave offering, according to His word
To Eleazar the priest
As had commanded Moses the Lord

And from the children of Israel's half, as was brought

Which Moses separated from the men who fought

Now the half belonging to the congregation
Was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep
Thirty-six thousand cattle, thirty thousand five hundred donkeys
And sixteen thousand persons. Once again, that's a whole heap

And from the children of Israel's half
Moses took one of every fifty, drawn from man and beast
And gave them to the Levites, who kept charge
— — — of the tabernacle of the Lord
As the Lord commanded Moses, then the dividing ceased

Then the officers who were over thousands of the army
The captains of thousands and captains of hundreds too
Came near to Moses
And they said to Moses – their words to Moses did ensue

"Your servants have taken a count
Of the men of war who are under our command; hear our word
And not a man of us is missing
Therefore we have brought an offering for the Lord

What every man found of ornaments of gold
Armlets and bracelets and signet rings. (So much we have scored!)
And earrings and necklaces
To make atonement for ourselves before the Lord

So Moses and Eleazar the priest, those two fine gents
Received the gold from them, all the fashioned ornaments

And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the Lord
From the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds too
Was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels
That's a whole heap, I'm telling you

The men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself
And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold
— — — according to their word

From the captains of thousands and of hundreds
And brought it into the tabernacle of meeting as a memorial
— — —-for the children of Israel before the Lord

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 32:1-19 (DO NOT TAKE US OVER THE JORDAN)

In the verses today, it is readily apparent that Moses becomes almost enraged at the words brought to his ears. He was eighty years old when he last stood this close to entering Canaan. Now he is one hundred and twenty, and except for Joshua and Caleb, he has seen the death of every adult around him since that time.

And even though he will not enter into Canaan, he wants the assurance in his heart that his beloved people will. His appeals to God over these many years have constantly been on their behalf. He has led them like a shepherd and petitioned the Lord for them on his face many times.

But now a possible obstacle has arisen once again that puts their entrance into the promise in jeopardy. It is apparent that he is ready to go to battle to ensure this will not be the case. What will be the outcome? And what is it that has him so upset that he would immediately scold those who have come before him?

Text Verse: *“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ²⁹ Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰ since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.” Romans 3:27-31*

Moses is Israel’s lawgiver, and yet he saw the very thing which kept Israel from entrance into the land of promise forty years earlier. It wasn’t an infraction of the law at all. It was a lack of faith in the promises of the Lord.

Moses came to understand that the law had a particular purpose, but it was not that which got the people into Canaan. Rather, their faith in the Lord is what got them in or kept them out. Moses discovered this, and he added it onto what has already been said about his predecessors.

This is a certain truth which is revealed in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Brood of Sinful Men (verses 1-15)

¹Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, that indeed the region *was* a place for livestock,

The Hebrew of this first verse of the chapter sets the tone for what is coming. The way it is laid out, there is an emphasis on the word “livestock” which begins and ends the verse. It says, “And livestock many (*rav*) had sons Reuben and sons Gad mighty very (*atsum meod*). And when they saw land Jazer and land Gilead – and behold – the place *a* place *for* livestock.”

Because of the great amount of livestock, which is especially highlighted by the use of the two descriptions – many and mighty very – and because of the nature of the land being especially suited for livestock, the stage is set for what lies ahead.

It is to be noted that according to Numbers 2, both Reuben and Gad were situated on the south of the camp, along with Simeon. Thus, for almost 40 years these people had grown up together, lived together, and probably shared a very close bond through marriage and the like.

Simeon is probably not included in this joining because they had the largest reduction of men in the second census. They were at this time a small clan and thus their destiny is tied in with the majority of Israel, not a group who desires to branch out from the whole.

Jazer means Helpful, or He Shall Help. In Numbers 21:32, it was seen to be a city of the Amorites which was taken by Israel. Gilead means Perpetual Fountain. When Gilead is referred to, it is more of a great area which extends to both the north and south of the Jabbok River. Here it is identified with the area south of the river.

The area was said to have been taken from Sihon, king of the Amorites in Numbers 21. From there, it said that Israel took possession of the land and dwelt in the cities. It is possibly during those wars that the greatness of the livestock was obtained by Reuben and Gad.

As far as the terrain, scholars noted that even during the time of the desolation of the land for the past 2000 years, it was always an area that remained rich and fertile. During

that time, it was known as the Belka, and Arabs had a saying, “You cannot find a country like the Belka.” It was such an enticing place to Reuben and Gad that...

² the children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the leaders of the congregation, saying,

Reuben is both the firstborn and the larger of the two tribes. He is also the main tribe of the southern divisions, and yet Gad is placed first in this verse. It indicates that it was probably they who were the chief instigators of what follows. This appears to be borne out in verses we will see next week.

Gad means both “Troop,” meaning a large group, and “Fortune.” It could be that using Gad as the main tribe being referred to is to show that these people are seeking their fortune, represented by Gad, instead of seeking the Lord’s will. Reuben means, “See A Son.” Together, they come forward to the leadership of all of the congregation with words to consider...

³ “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Shebam, Nebo, and Beon,

They are the names of nine cities. In the Bible, nine is the number of finality or judgment. The names don’t appear to form any pattern, and this is especially so because the meaning of several of them are almost impossible to determine. They are listed again later in this chapter, with some being named slightly differently.

For a best guess – Ataroth – Crowns; Dibon – Pining; Jazer – Helpful; Nimrah – Place of Leopard or Clear Water; Heshbon – Intelligence; Elealeh – God ascends; Shebam should read Sebam – Spice (?); Nebo – Interpreter or Foreteller (?); Beon – May be a contraction of Baal Meon – Master of the House (?).

⁴ the country which the Lord defeated before the congregation of Israel,

ha’arets asher hikah Yehovah – “The land which struck Yehovah.” After naming the towns, they note that it is the Lord who struck the country. This is true, and it is probably intended to show that they expect all such conquests to end in the same manner, but what is also true is that it is Israel who is the Lord’s arm for striking the nations in warfare.

The Lord didn't just strike them with a plague or send hailstones down on the Amorites. Rather, the battles which defeated Sihon and Og were waged by Israel. This is again attested to in Deuteronomy 2:33 where it says, "And the Lord our God delivered him over to us; so we defeated him, his sons, and all his people."

⁴ (con't) ***is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock.***"

It is apparent already that their proposal is based on the fact that they desire this land as their own. The Lord defeated it, and now it is at the disposal of the leaders of Israel to do with it as they best determined. How far their desire goes is what is next stated...

⁵ **Therefore they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession.**

The words are in the singular, and thus the address is to Moses alone. They have noted that the Lord gave the land to Israel, and Moses is the one to speak on behalf of the Lord. And so they say, "If we have found grace in your eyes."

It is a common expression first introduced when Abraham spoke to the Lord in Genesis 18. Its meaning is obvious. "We have a request, and we look to you for approval if it is your will to favor us in the matter." In this case, it is for their own possession east of the Jordan instead of in the land of Canaan.

⁵ (con't) **Do not take us over the Jordan."**

ha'yarden, or the Jordan, meaning the Descender, is the dividing line between the hope of the promise and the realization of it. It gets its name from the great descent it makes. It goes from the top of Mount Hermon all the way down to the lowest elevation on earth, the Dead Sea.

In typology, the Jordan pictures Christ who descended from the heights of heaven to come to earth, and who even descended to death itself. Passing over the Jordan means to pass over to what God has promised.

To Israel, it is an earthly inheritance. To those whom Israel look to in type, it is restoration and fellowship with God. Moses probably had no idea about the typology, but he certainly had an idea about rejecting the promise, and doing so at the expense of others...

⁶ And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben:

As occurred in verse 2, and as will continue throughout the chapter, Gad is again placed first. The text appears to be showing that it is Gad who is the main tribe behind the plan, and thus the main tribe to be addressed first in the incident. For them, there is the seeking of a fortune east of the Jordan to which Moses now responds...

^{6 (con't)} "Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?"

There is a rather sharp dividing line between what scholars see as the intent behind this request by Gad and Reuben. Some see it in the negative. They are cowardly and self-seeking, or at best uncaring about the plight of the other tribes who must go in and subdue Canaan.

Others see it as a trust in the fact that the Lord won all of the battles so far for them, and thus the conquest of Canaan is a foregone conclusion, of which they need not even be present in order for it to come about.

We can only speculate on which is correct, and we can't even know if what transpires later in the passage was already considered by them and is something they would have voluntarily acted upon. It is certain, however, that they are content with what they possess.

We have seen how profitable it is to have men of war win in battle. The amount of plunder that came to the soldiers as it was divided would have been an enormous enticement to join all of Israel in each battle. If they did not intend to assist in the battles, it means that they felt what they had was sufficient for them.

But two things are for sure to Moses. The first is that Israel is a collective whole, and secondly, Moses takes their words in the most negative light possible. Rightly or wrongly, he sees this as an act of cowardice and/or uncaring greed.

Because what they have said so far is at best vague as to any other intentions, he takes their request as basically asking for land that has been subdued by the entire congregation of fighting men while they can sit and enjoy the spoils of others' efforts. At the same time, the rest of Israel still has to fight its way through its inheritance. And there is good reason for his attitude. And so he begins with...

⁷ Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them?

Here Moses uses a word, *nu*, seen only four times in Numbers 30. That was concerning a father or a husband forbidding a vow which was made by a woman under his authority. It would appear that it should be taken in a similar way.

It is as if these two tribes have the authority to forbid the hearts of the children of Israel from going over the Jordan. It isn't just that they would merely discourage the hearts of the people, but that they would be the force behind them being incapable of going over. Moses even says that it is "the land which the Lord has given them." It is their possession, but he acts as if these two tribes are actively forbidding Israel to enter. To support this, he says...

⁸Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land.

This goes back to the last time that Israel was at the door of Canaan. They had arrived at the Wilderness of Paran, and Moses had sent men to spy out the land. Here, he calls them "your fathers."

He is directly tying Gad and Reuben into the family that transgressed against the Lord, showing that they are of the same seed that brought about great woe to the people. Upon their return, they brought back a bad report, thus causing the people to turn their hearts away from advancing into Canaan.

Here, the spot is called Kadesh Barnea for the first time. Before, it was called simply Kadesh, or Holy, and the reason for that was that while in that spot Moses had failed to hallow the Lord before the people's eyes. Now it is called Kadesh Barnea which means either "Sacred Desert of Wandering," or maybe in the active sense, "Holy Purifying Wanderings."

The reason for using the term Kadesh Barnea now for the first time seems to be an indictment on the attitude of the people which caused them to become fugitives, wandering in the desert for thirty-eight years. Moses is reminding them that this was the result of Israel's previous disobedience while standing right at the door of entrance into Canaan.

His words are intended to wake them up to the severity of the situation and to remind them of the consequences of the actions of the people. With this in mind, he continues with...

⁹For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land,

Moses could have chosen any point among the journeys of the twelve spies, but his words single out the Valley of Eshcol. And so it needs to be re-explained what *nakhal eshkol*, or the Valley of Eshcol, means.

The word *nakhal* signifies a wadi where water would flow through during the seasons of rain. That word comes from *nakhal* meaning, “to take possession,” or “inherit.” Eshcol means “cluster.” But that comes from the word *eshek*, meaning testicle.

As we learned, this pictured Christ’s work. Once having been accepted, He took possession of that which proceeds from the spot where man is generated from. In other words, it is a picture of the overriding of original sin in man.

Sin transfers from father to child. The semen, which is generated in man, is what transfers that sin. Christ has, through His work, taken possession of that in all who move from Adam to Him. It is the realization of the kingdom for His people through this act.

This, however, was rejected by Israel, just as the spies who went into the Valley of Eshcol had rejected the promises of the Lord. The Lord, through Moses’ words to these men, is giving us a recounting of what brought them to the disaster that followed – both for that generation, and for the generation who would come and reject the work of Christ. For the wilderness generation...

^{9 (con’t)} **they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel,**

Moses again uses the word *nu*, to forbid, which he used in verse 7. This is its last use in the books of Moses, and he is essentially saying, “...they forbid the heart of the children of Israel.” The word “heart” is in the singular. The people are a collective whole with one undivided heart.

The spies had discouraged that heart, forbidding it to have faith in the promises of the Lord, and causing them to instead disbelieve. One can clearly see the parallel which caused Israel to disbelieve in the work of Christ which is found in Matthew 28 –

““Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. ¹² When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ saying, “Tell them, ‘His disciples came at night and stole

Him *away* while we slept.’ ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will appease him and make you secure.” ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.””

-Matthew 28:11-15

The spies in the wilderness, leaders among the people, forbid the people to trust in the Lord through their negative report, and the leaders of Israel at the time of Jesus did the same. They spread a bad report which caused their own extended punishment.

Moses’ final two uses of this word *nu* here, after its introduction just two short chapters ago, is intended to show us this. It isn’t just that the collective heart of the people was discouraged, but that it was forbidden from faith by the actions of the leaders. This is also exactly repeated by the author of Hebrews.

In Hebrews 4, which is a book directed to the end times Jews, those who are exactly being pictured in these Numbers sermons, we read this in Hebrews 4:1-13 (Please read these verses). Because of this, Moses continues with...

⁹ (con’t) **so that they did not go into the land which the Lord had given them.**

The word that Moses uses here, though not uncommon, is one which is stronger than simply not doing something. It is a failure to do something. One might paraphrase this as, “so that they failed to go into the land.”

Moses is recounting what occurred before directly speaking what is on his mind concerning the request of Gad and Reuben in order to set the stage for why it is on his mind at all. The spies forbid the hearts of Israel, and therefore Israel failed to obtain the promise.

This is what Paul speaks of concerning Israel in Romans 11, where he calls Israel’s rejection of Christ – meaning the promise – a failure, which in turn meant riches for the Gentiles.

The pattern is obvious. Israel’s earthly rejection of Canaan here in Numbers is a direct picture of Israel’s rejection of Christ and thus a spiritual rejection of restoration with God. Canaan the land is representative of restored paradise and fellowship with God. This is seen in the next words...

¹⁰ **So the Lord’s anger was aroused on that day,**

v'yikhar aph Yehovah ba'yom – “And burned nostril Yehovah that day.” The imagery is that of Yehovah’s nostrils flaring with anger and shooting forth flames.

Imagine the anger of the Lord at the faithless people who had seen all of His great wonders covering at the report and rejecting the Lord and His promises there in Kadesh Barnea. It was a faithless act which brought them punishment, exile, and rejection.

Now imagine the anger of the Lord at the faithless people who had seen all of the miracles and wonders of Christ the Lord, and then rejected Him and His promises. And so...

¹⁰ (con't) **and He swore an oath, saying,**

The word of the Lord is an oath in and of itself. He does not need to say, “I swear,” for His word to be confirmed. But when He does, it is a sign to the people that what He says will come about.

In Numbers 14, He added an extra confirmation to what he will next say in verse 11 with the words, “‘As I live,’ says the Lord.” It was His way of saying that what He was to utter would be performed. The substance of what He then said in Numbers 14 is repeated by Moses now...

¹¹ **‘Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt,**

Here Moses speaks to them concerning those who “came up from Egypt.” They were redeemed from Egypt. Egypt pictures bondage to sin. The Lord, in fact, redeemed Israel from their sin through His work. But there is a difference between being redeemed potentially and being redeemed actually.

Jesus redeemed Israel potentially, but they had to accept His redemption to be redeemed actually. In this, Moses calls them *ha'anashim ha'olim*. The word *olim* is a verb. Thus it reads, “the men, the ‘coming uppers’ from Egypt.” They were brought up, but they would not continue on the trek into Canaan...

¹¹ (con't) **from twenty years old and above,**

Twenty is the number of expectancy. Those who expect have not yet attained. In this case, they never would. Theirs was to be an expectancy which will end in futility.

It is a curse upon the people which was then executed, day by day and step by step through the wilderness. For thirty-eight years, they suffered under the curse, leaving none of that generation left to enter into the inheritance.

11 (con't) shall see the land

Here Moses uses the term *ha'adamah*, or the land, when speaking of the land the Lord promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, in Genesis 12, 13, and 15, and elsewhere when the promises were spoken to Abraham, the Lord used the term *ha'aretz*, the land. It is also used by Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and etc.

This is not without purpose. *ha'aretz*, or "the land," speaks of the area. *ha'adamah*, or "the land," speaks of the soil; the ground. However, the word comes from the same source as "Adam." This is an obvious picture of the coming Christ. Paul calls Jesus "the last Adam" in 1 Corinthians 15:45.

Moses' use of the word *ha'adamah* here is a picture of Christ, the last Adam. He was the hope of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Messiah to come was their anticipation. The Lord, through the inspiration of these words spoken by Moses, is prophetically looking forward to the generation who would reject Jesus and He is saying that "none of these shall see the Messiah."

This doesn't mean they wouldn't see Jesus. They saw Him, rejected Him, and crucified Him. It is saying that they wouldn't see what He offered them – meaning Himself. They rejected Jesus and they did not see the last Adam.

It is then reminiscent of what the Lord promised to Israel if they rejected His coming Messiah in Malachi 4. At the end of that chapter, as the Old Testament closes out, He told the people –

"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant,
Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel,
With the statutes and judgments.

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

⁶ And he will turn
The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:4-6

The people turned away from the Lord and He sentenced them to die in the wilderness over the next thirty-eight years. The people rejected Christ, and the Lord struck their land with a curse, exiling them for the next two thousand years. Their expectancy would end in futility.

¹¹ (con't) of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me,

This is the only time in the book of Numbers that Abraham or Isaac is mentioned. It is also the only time that Jacob is mentioned as the man, Jacob. Seven other times Jacob is mentioned, but in those instances, it is speaking of Jacob the people who are Israel. There is an important reason for naming Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob here.

The question that must be asked is, “When did the Lord swear the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Was it before the giving of the law, or after?” It was not after, but before. Therefore, the promise is not of the law, but of grace. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob wholly followed the Lord, because they believed the Lord. They demonstrated faith. The law is not of faith, but of works. However, those under law can still demonstrate faith. It is by faith, and by faith alone that the promise is obtained. That is why Paul said this in Galatians 3 –

“And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.” Galatians 3:17, 18

Abraham was given the promise. He believed. Isaac received the promise. He believed. Jacob received the promise. He believed. Israel received the promised, and they failed to have faith in the promise.

This is why Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned here, and only here, in the book of Numbers. Moses is reminding the people of their responsibility as they stand at the very borders of Canaan. Nobody of that faithless generation was to enter the promise...

¹² except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun,

The Lord uses the same word as in verse 9 where it said they did not go into the land. They failed to do so. Here, he uses the same word with an attached preposition, translated as “except.” Where Israel failed, they are the exception.

Here, Caleb, or “Dog,” is named first. He is identified by his father’s name Yephunneh, or “He will be beheld.” He is also identified here as a Kenizzite, a descendant of Canaan, or a son of Kenaz, which is an Edomite name. Later in Joshua, his brother Othniel is identified as a son of Kenaz.

Thus, it is likely that he was of foreign birth and brought into the people of Israel and the tribe of Judah. The emphasis on him being a Kenizzite is to show his Gentile heritage. Next Joshua, or “The Lord is Salvation,” is named. He is identified as the son of Nun, or “To propagate” or “Increase.” These two then, as was seen in Numbers 14, picture both Gentiles and faithful Jews who would receive the inheritance in Christ, even while collective Israel was in their time of punishment.

This is not to say that Caleb himself was a Gentile, but the identification of him as a Kenizzite is given to show this in typology. Where Jews regarded Gentiles as dogs, seen in Caleb, the Lord accepted them because of Christ. His father’s name further shows this, “He will be beheld.”

For those faithful Jews who have come to Christ, they are represented by Joshua, or “the Lord is Salvation.” Naming his father, Nun, shows that the Lord, would propagate, or increase His offspring through these faithful Jews. As always, the typology is given to show Christ and His redemptive plans for His people. This is because His people are represented by them. As He says...

12 (con’t) for they have wholly followed the Lord.’

Moses now takes the words he just cited from the Lord in the previous verse and turns them. Quoting the Lord, he said, *ki lo milu aharai* – “for no fully followed after Me.” But of Caleb and Joshua, he says, *ki milu ahare Yehovah* – “for they fully followed after Yehovah.”

The question is, “How did they fully follow after the Lord?” The answer is simple – They *believed in Him*, and they *believed Him*. They demonstrated faith in the promise of the Lord, just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did. They were men of faith, and it is by their faith that they would receive the promise. Those of the law are shown to be excluded from the promise because the law is not of faith, but of works.

13 So the Lord’s anger was aroused against Israel,

Moses repeats the same thought as in verse 10. There he said, “And burned nostril Yehovah that day.” Now he says, “And burned nostril Yehovah in Israel.” The spies discouraged the heart of the people which caused the people to not wholly follow Him. The one action led to the other, and the Lord’s anger was aroused...

13 (con’t) and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years,

The number forty in Scripture points to a period of probation, trial, and chastisement. Israel failed to believe, and they were judged for that, receiving the Lord’s chastisement for their unbelief. The pattern follows through with Israel’s rejection of the Lord.

Though Israel could be considered to have been punished, they were not destroyed. God had promised to never forsake His covenant with them, and He has kept that promise. Though chastised, they were not destroyed. Instead, they died off...

13 (con’t) until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone.

The question must be asked, “What evil did they do which brought about their state?” The fact is that Israel did a lot of evil, but the specific evil that the Lord, and now Moses, imputes to them is the evil of unbelief. Whereas Caleb and Joshua demonstrated faith, Israel was faithless. It is that simple. One is deemed right through belief, or he is deemed as out of the Lord’s favor through unbelief.

And it is not enough to simply *believe in God*. That is something most people do. One must also *believe God*. When He speaks, His word is to be accepted. Israel failed with the exception of Caleb and Joshua.

14 And look! You have risen in your fathers’ place,

v’hinneh qamtem takhat abotekhem – “And behold! You have risen up under your fathers.” Moses’ words in verse 14 are direct, specific, and powerful. The meaning of this clause is that they have now risen up in the same way as their fathers did who came before them. The God’s Word Translation paraphrases this as, “You’re just like your parents!” Or, as John Gill says, “Like fathers, like sons.”

14 (con’t) a brood of sinful men,

tarbut anashim khataim – “an increase of men – sinners.” God’s Word Translation again gives a resounding paraphrase – “You’re a bunch of sinners...”

The idea here is that just as their fathers were sinners, so they have risen up in place of their fathers and are simply adding more sinners to that heap of sinners who came before them. It is evident that Moses is severely upset with these people. He is even beside himself. And so he goes on...

¹⁴ (con't) **to increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel.**

lispot od al kharon aph Yehovah el Yisrael – “to scrape up still more upon *the* burning nostril of Yehovah towards Israel.” The words must have been like arrows coming off of Moses’ lips.

The word he uses, and which is translated as “increase,” is *saphah*. It comes from a root meaning to scrape or to shave. Thus, there is an increase of what is scraped, or there is a removal of what is scraped. In this case, it is combined with the word *od*, or “again,” and so it is an increase.

Moses has already twice mentioned the burning nostril of Yehovah. Now, his words show that the anger has not gone away. It is still alive from the actions of the faithless men almost forty years earlier. And now, the action of Gad and Reuben is adding fuel to that fire, which has been – and will be – directed towards Israel. This is so certain that Moses continues with...

¹⁵ **For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people.”**

The words take them back to the time when the spies returned from Canaan. The people awaited word about the land, and the spies gave a bad report. In this, they caused the people to turn away from following the Lord.

Moses is saying that exactly the same thing will happen. The people will get disheartened by the display of cowardice on Gad and Reuben’s part, and they will turn from following the Lord. In this, He will again consign them to their fate in the wilderness, and the people will again wander until they are destroyed. Moses speaks out the general substance of Ecclesiastes 1:9 –

That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun.

Moses hopes to avoid that through his rebuke of what has come before him.
The Lord desires to show His favor to you

*He will open the Door and lead you to glory
This is what He is set to do
If you will but believe the gospel story
In fact, the door is open if you will just but believe*

*And through that Door, you can enter into glory
All He asks is that His Son you will receive
Yes, He asks you to accept the truth of the gospel story
And when you do, the Door will never again be shut*

*Your access through Him is a guarantee of glory
This is His promise without an “if,” “and,” or “but”
It is yours forever because you trusted the gospel story*

II. The Proposal and Promise (verses 16-19)

¹⁶ Then they came near to him and said:

It says, “And they came near him.” It seems to be that they may have shrunk back from Moses at his rebuke, or they retired from him to talk the matter over, or something such as this.

Whatever the intent is, they had either already determined to take this course of action and had not been given the chance to speak, or they decided on the course of action they will present, and they now bring it forward as a proposal for Moses to hear.

¹⁶ (con’t) “We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones,

The Hebrew term translated as “sheepfolds” is *gidrot tson*. It means, “walls livestock,” and thus an enclosure of stones which livestock would be led into when they were not grazing.

It is interesting that they mention building the sheepfolds even before mentioning cities for their families. The chapter began with the thought of the tribes possessing much livestock, and that the land was a region for livestock. It seems that these people are almost possessed by their possessions.

In his response to them in verse 24, Moses will place the little ones first before the livestock. After that, in verse 34, it will confirm that they built the cities, along with the sheepfolds following the order of Moses' words.

Here, the term *taph*, or "little ones," normally speaks of children, but in this case it extends out to any who are weak or defenseless.

And finally, the word translated as "build," signifies the process of building. It can be from scratch, or to fortify. In this case, it is probably the latter. They had gone into a land already occupied and subdued it. They would simply need to repair that which was broken down. It is a process that would not take a great deal of time if so. Once the task was complete, or as it was ongoing...

17 but we ourselves will be armed,

In contrast to the families who are secured in cities with their livestock, the males promise to instead stand withdrawn from them, implying armed for battle. And to show their determination in the matter, they then say...

17 (con't) ready to go before the children of Israel

Here is a new word, *khush* which is certainly an onomatopoeic expression. It means to make haste. Figuratively, it means to be eager with excitement.

To prove they had no intent on cowardice, they show that they are, in fact, eager to go forward with Israel. And so, they will hasten to be set so that there will be no delay for Israel because of them.

They further state that they are ready to go *liphne*, or "before" them. The word can mean "before," "in the presence of," and so on, but it surely indicates "before," as "in front of." They have been accused of cowardice, and their response is to indicate that they are exactly the opposite. They will set the pace of the battles for all others to emulate. And this will last...

17 (con't) until we have brought them to their place;

This means they will be with them during the entire campaign. They will not break ranks with their brothers until the land is subdued. But they must first put up fortifications in the land...

^{17 (con't)} **and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.**

With the cities being fortified, they could be defended. It is certain that a large portion of the fighting men stayed for that purpose, and neither Moses, nor anyone else, found that unreasonable. The census of the tribes showed that Reuben had 43,730 fighting-aged men. Gad had 40,500, and Manasseh had 52,700. Half of Manasseh would be about 26,350 men. In total, they then had about 110,580 men of battle age, and yet we read this in Joshua 4 –

“And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. ¹³ About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the Lord for battle, to the plains of Jericho.” Joshua 4:12, 13

Therefore, almost two thirds of the fighting aged men stayed behind, continued to build, defended the people, and so on. These probably rotated in and out of the battles during the campaign to conquer Canaan.

The same would be true for the families of the other tribes west of the Jordan, and it is almost to be understood without being mentioned to or by Moses now.

¹⁸ **We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance.**

Again, like the previous verse, these words mean the tribe as a whole. It cannot mean that individuals would not return home for a vacation, a family death, or the like. The campaign to subdue Canaan is to last seven years.

Gad and Reuben as tribes of fighting men will remain until all the tribes also have what they are now about to possess. This is their word of assurance to Moses now because of their hope of what the future will provide...

^{19 (fin)} **For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this eastern side of the Jordan.”**

The words here are given a precision that actually confuses some scholars. The men now speaking state that they will not take an inheritance *me'ever*, or on the side of the Jordan. It does not mean specifically, "on the other side." The term simply means, "on *the* side," and it can mean, "on this side," or, "on the other side."

In this case, the verse itself twice explains the meaning when they say, "on the side of the Jordan and beyond." This indicates that the land on the side of Canaan may be extended beyond the original boundaries, towards Lebanon perhaps.

They then say – using the same expression – that their inheritance will fall *me'ever ha'yarden mizrakhah*, or "on side the Jordan, eastward." The land of Canaan is the reference point in both. It makes no difference which side is being referred to as long as the point of reference is understood.

However, in an astonishingly inept comment, the normally sound Pulpit Commentary says of this –

"All we can say is, that the awkward use of the phrase in two opposite meanings, with words of clearer definition added, points more or less strongly towards a probability that the passage as it stands was written or revised at a later date." Pulpit Commentary The entire point of revision is to fix that which is broken, not to further muddy the waters. The commentator must have slipped in his bathtub and then passed out under the water too long, depriving him of oxygen, to make such a statement. Comparing the term *me'ever* elsewhere makes the meaning here plain and obvious.

They state that the inheritance of Israel is in Canaan, but their inheritance shall be east of the Jordan. Whether their words are presumptuous, or whether they are in the form of a petition for approval, they (and thus we) will now wait for Moses' response.

The important point to understand in our verses today is that of what was seen earlier. It is the exemplary note of the Bible concerning a relationship with God, which is that we are to come before Him without adding anything to our request for restoration apart from what He has done in Jesus Christ.

We cannot come to Him saying, "I received Jesus and continued to obey the law to make sure that You would accept me." Such a presentation does not give God the glory. Rather, it robs it from Him by saying that what He did is insufficient for our restoration.

We also cannot come to Him and say, "I waited for you to regenerate me before receiving Christ." That puts an onus on God not found in Scripture. The Bible says that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. However, if God regenerating man first is true, then it means that He must make a second move beyond the giving of His Son, a concept not taught in Scripture. Rather, He has given His Son, and He expects us to receive Him. Israel failed at that; we must not fail unless we too are set to perish.

God has opened the doors of restoration, and He has paved the way to paradise. Be wise and discerning and receive what He has done. Come to Christ and be reconciled to God through Christ's precious shed blood.

Closing Verse: *"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."*

-Galatians 2:15, 16

Next Week: Numbers 32:20-42 *This is the land they will for themselves be a'gainin'...* (A Possession East of Canaan) (63rd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Do Not Take Us Over the Jordan

Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad
Had a very great multitude of livestock
And when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead
That indeed the region was a place for livestock
———of the herd and the flock

The children of Gad and the children of Reuben
Came and spoke to Moses, with words to be conveying
To Eleazar the priest
And to the leaders of the congregation, saying

“Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon
Elealeh, Shebam, Nebo, and Beon – nine cities in which to walk
The country which the Lord defeated
— — —-before the congregation of Israel
Is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock

Therefore they said
“If we have found favor in your sight
Let this land be given to your servants as a possession
Do not take us over the Jordan; we think this is right

And Moses said to the children of Gad
— — —-and to the children of Reuben: Let me get this clear...
“Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?

Now why will you discourage the heart
Of the children of Israel
From going over into the land
Which the Lord has given them? Please do tell!

Thus your fathers did when I sent them away
From Kadesh Barnea to see the land; listen now, I pray

For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land
They discouraged the heart of the children of Israel
So that they did not go into the land
Which the Lord had given them. That didn't go so well

So the Lord's anger was aroused on that day
And He swore an oath. Here's what He did say...

‘Surely none of the men who came up from Egypt
From twenty years old and above, yes from twenty
Shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
Because they have not wholly followed Me

Except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite
— — —-and Joshua the son of Nun, according to His word
For they have wholly followed the Lord

So the Lord's anger was aroused against Israel
And He made them wander in the wilderness forty years
Until all the generation that had done evil
In the sight of the Lord was gone, wandering on a trail of tears

And look! You have risen in your fathers' place
A brood of sinful men
To increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord
Against Israel once again

For if you turn away from following Him
He will once again leave them in the wilderness
And you will destroy all these people
We're talking here one giant mess

Then they came near to him and said:
"We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock
———-as to you we now tell
And cities for our little ones
But we ourselves will be armed, ready to go
———-before the children of Israel

Until we have brought them to their place
And our little ones will dwell, please now understand
In the fortified cities
Because of the inhabitants of the land

We will not return to our homes, no not even by chance
Until every one of the children of Israel
———-has received his inheritance

For we will not inherit with them
On the other side of the Jordan and beyond
Because our inheritance has fallen to us
On this eastern side of the Jordan of which we are fond

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You

Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so, be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 32:20-42 (A POSSESSION EAST OF CANAAN)

Of the first five verses of Chapter 32, Matthew Henry draws a parallel to the things of the world and the life which is found in Christ. He says –

“Here is a proposal made by the Reubenites and Gadites, that the land lately conquered might be allotted to them. Two things common in the world might lead these tribes to make this choice; the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. There was much amiss in the principle they went upon; they consulted their own private convenience more than the public good. Thus to the present time, many seek their own things more than the things of Jesus Christ; and are led by worldly interests and advantages to take up short of the heavenly Canaan.” Matthew Henry

This comparison is not unfounded, but to be fully understood, there has to be a parallel to the men who are noted in today’s verses who do, in fact, go over Jordan to help the rest of the tribes secure their inheritance in Canaan.

It’s not good to arbitrarily make comparisons in the Bible unless other parts of the narrative fit as well. And so, if these tribes who are making a claim east of the Jordan compare to people who reject what God offers in Christ, then who do the men armed for war who must go in to help subdue Canaan represent?

Text Verse: *“So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses.” Joshua 22:9*

Once the land of Canaan was subdued, the men of war who fought the battles along with the inheritors of Canaan went back to their possession outside of the land of promise. They were happy to walk away from what God had promised and get about the earthly life they had hoped for.

The only reasonable parallel that I can think of for such people are those who filled the synagogues of the past until Christ’s coming, and those who fill the church today. They are of the same caliber because they fail to simply have faith in God and receive His inheritance.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:15, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”

These were people supposedly set to fight the Lord’s battles, and yet they had only this world as their inheritance. Paul was one of them until he was called out of that and into the light of Christ. But those types of people didn’t go away.

There are innumerable pastors, priests, and preachers who have led many to Christ, bringing them to their allotted inheritance, and yet they have already secured their inheritance in this earthly life. They do not believe, and indeed, they desire what this world offers far more than what God promises. What a sad, hollow existence.

John Wesley went as a missionary to Georgia in 1735. He was an ordained priest in the Anglican Church, and yet he knew nothing of the salvation found in Christ. In his journal he wrote, “I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me?” Until he finally came to know Christ, his lot was in this world. He fought battles for the people to come to Christ, and yet he remained an earthly man, outside of the promise himself. Eventually, that changed. He crossed the Jordan and received his place in God’s promised inheritance, but countless others failed to do so.

Think on such people as we go through our verses today. Think on your own state as well. Have you truly entered into the promise that God offers in Christ? Or are your efforts simply helping others to get there while you remain apart from Him altogether? Only you and the Lord know. May your efforts be for others because you already have your inheritance, not despite lacking one yourself.

Such things need to be evaluated, and the place to do that is found in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. If... (verses 20-30)

²⁰ Then Moses said to them: “If you do this thing,

The excited anger of Moses from the previous verses begins to abate by the words of the children of Gad and the children of Reuben. This is apparent because he changes his tone from direct assault to a more subdued proclamation – “If you do this thing.”

Here, he is speaking directly to the leaders. He expects that what he will next say will apply to them personally. They will not be exempt from the overall directive given to the tribe as a whole. This is apparent from the words of verse 21.

Here, it is seen that he is willing to consider the request and grant these tribes what they desire, but his approval is conditional, and so he continues with...

20 (con't) if you arm yourselves

He uses the same word they used in verse 17, *khalats*, translated here as “armed.” It is the same word used in 31:3 and 31:5 when speaking of arming men for the battle against Midian. The word comes from a primitive root signifying “to pull off.” And so, it gives the sense of being pulled off or separated. One could paraphrase Moses’ words as, “If you separate yourselves.” And this separation is to be...

20 (con't) before the Lord for the war,

Again, this is the same preposition they used in verse 17 where it said, “before the children of Israel.” One can see that their term, “the children of Israel” is being equated by Moses to the Lord’s instrument for *milkhama*, or war.

The obvious meaning is to leave their homes and families and join the forces for battle, thus “arming” themselves. One concept directly leads to the next.

This term, “before the Lord,” is seen by some as meaning according to the order of the tribes as they marched in the wilderness. Numbers 2 showed that Reuben and Gad were under one banner, and that as they marched, it was in front of the most holy objects. Thus, they were literally “before the Lord.”

However, this is probably not what is being referred to. There is no reason to assume that the entire sanctuary was carried into battle. The term “before the Lord,” has two references. The first is that of verse 22 of this chapter where Moses spoke of the land being subdued “before the Lord.” It is a general expression.

The second reference is in Joshua 4, which says that the priests stood in the midst of the Jordan with the ark as the children of Israel crossed over. At that time, it says –

“And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. ¹³ About

forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the Lord for battle, to the plains of Jericho.” Joshua 4:12, 13

This is what Moses is referring to. The leaders of these tribes would cross over first before the children of Israel, which means that they crossed over first before the Lord, because Israel is the Lord’s instrument of war. With it understood that he is not exempting the leaders from the directive, he next continues with...

²¹ and all your armed men cross over the Jordan before the Lord

Though most translations have the word “all” qualify the word “men,” it only qualifies those men who do go. The Hebrew reads, “And cross over your *men*, every-armed.” The Hebrew is even hyphenated to ensure that this mistake is not made, and yet most translations fail in this. This is important because it takes us back to what we saw last week, and what we just saw in the quote from Joshua.

Actually, only a portion of the men crossed over, about forty thousand out of almost one hundred and eleven thousand. Thus, one can see the importance of proper translation. A small change from “all men” to “all armed” makes a large difference in intent.

As you can see, the words of this verse were literally fulfilled in Joshua 4. However, it can still be debated whether the men of these tribes actually went first across the Jordan, or whether the term *liphne Yehovah*, or “before the Lord,” is being used, even there, in a general sense.

It is best to not get overly dogmatic because even though Israel let slip the dogs of war on Canaan, it is only a poetic term, and real dogs were not employed in their battles. No matter what, we have a sure record of the fulfillment of Moses’ words in Joshua. These tribes would go into battle, and that would last...

^{21 (con’t)} until He has driven out His enemies from before Him,

Here, Moses uses the common word *yarash*, or dispossess. The idea is that Israel’s inheritance, meaning Canaan, involves the disinheritance of the Canaanites. Further, he makes this statement in the third person, singular – “until He (meaning the Lord) has dispossessed His (meaning the Lord’s) enemies from before Him (meaning the Lord).

The land is the Lord's, and He has given it to Israel. The significance of this is not to be missed. Their inheritance, and their continuance in their inheritance, is completely conditional. The Lord is giving the land to Israel. They may dwell in it when they are obedient, and they may not when they are disobedient.

That this is certain is because here the inhabitants of the land are called *oyevav*, or "His enemies." But Jeremiah, using the same word, *oyev*, says this in Lamentations –

“Standing like an enemy, He has bent His bow;
With His right hand, like an **adversary**,
He has slain all *who were* pleasing to His eye;
On the tent of the daughter of Zion,
He has poured out His fury like fire.
⁵The Lord was like an **enemy**.
He has swallowed up Israel,
He has swallowed up all her palaces;
He has destroyed her strongholds,
And has increased mourning and lamentation
In the daughter of Judah.” Lamentations 2:4, 5

The Lord dispossessed His enemies, meaning Israel, sending them into captivity, some by the Assyrians, some by the Babylonians, and some by the Romans. But unlike the Canaanites, the Lord made a covenant with Israel.

Were it not for His faithfulness to that covenant, there would not be a single Hebrew left. Moses' words concerning the Lord's conquest, rather than Israel's, is actually a stern warning to Israel. This continues to be seen next...

²² **and the land is subdued before the Lord,**

This is the first time since Genesis 1 that the word *kabash*, or subdue, has been seen. It is a possible choice for the root of kibosh, as in "putting the kibosh on something." It signifies to bring into bondage or subdue. The Lord told man to subdue the earth and fill it. Now, Moses speaks of the land of Canaan being subdued before the Lord.

Here, it is apparent that Israel is the Lord's instrument of warfare. It is to these tribes of Israel that the word from Moses is given. And yet, what they will do is ascribed to the presence of the Lord. When the land is subdued before the Lord...

22 (con't) then afterward you may return and be blameless before the Lord and before Israel;

Moses has said that the land is to be subdued before the men of war from these tribes can return. Once that is accomplished, then they will be *neqiyim m'Yehovah u-mi'Yisrael*, or “innocent from Yehovah and innocent from Israel.” It is only upon completion of the conquest of Canaan that their innocence will be established. Technically only once that occurs will the next words be true...

22 (con't) and this land shall be your possession before the Lord.

It would be unfair for Gad and Reuben to have the final granting of their possession proclaimed before the land of the other tribes was subdued. They are given it now, they are allowed to build on it now, but it only becomes a true possession at the end of the matter.

23 But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.

The idea here is of the personification of sin. Their promise is that they would go before the children of Israel until every one of them had received his inheritance. To not keep this promise would be sin, and it would overtake them and come upon them in the form of guilt. And with the guilt of sin will come punishment. With this understanding, Moses concedes to their request...

24 Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what has proceeded out of your mouth.”

Moses substantially repeats the words of Numbers 30:2 –

“If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.” Numbers 30:2

Their words in verses 16 & 17 were, “We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, ¹⁷ but we ourselves will be armed, ready *to go* before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place.”

Moses reprioritizes their words, placing the people above the animals, but he otherwise leaves them unchanged. And then he reminds them that the words of a vow are binding. They must be fulfilled.

²⁵ And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying: “Your servants will do as my lord commands.”

Here, their voices are united as one. It says, “Your servants (plural noun), will do (3rd person plural) as my (singular noun) lord commands.” One is probably speaking for the group, and so he affirms the vow for all.

²⁶ Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock will be there in the cities of Gilead;

Here both “wives” and “flocks” are mentioned for the only time in the chapter. Before, they were lumped into the general thought of “little ones” and “livestock,” but now they are separated.

The only thing I can think concerning this is that until this point some betrothals or anticipated marriages may have been at stake. Without the approval of Moses, other tribes may not have wanted to allow their daughters to marry into these tribes. But now, that will no longer be the case.

Also, the Hebrew doesn't say Gilead, but rather, “the Gilead.” The term is being used to express the entire area where the tribes have been allowed to settle. The term then is synonymous with what was said in verse 1 – “the land of Gilead.” This land, the Gilead, has been granted as their future possession.

²⁷ but your servants will cross over, every man armed for war, before the Lord to battle, just as my lord says.”

As in verse 21, the Hebrew specifically says, “every-armed.” It is only referring to those men who are separated for war. And again, as in verse 26, the voices are united. One person speaks for the whole. Here, he again finishes with “my lord” in the singular.

Also, in verse 17, these men said they were ready to go “before the children of Israel.” Since then, Moses has said, “before the Lord,” or “before Him,” meaning the Lord, six times. He also noted one time that they would sin against the Lord if they did not comply.

Now, these men acknowledge that they will go before the Lord. Their thinking has been corrected, their priorities have been corrected, and also their theology has been corrected.

²⁸ So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel.

The decision is made by the Lord. This is certain based on verse 32. However, it is Moses who then passes the command on to the leaders who would be affected by it.

This is because he already knows he is not to enter Canaan. And so, the verse is given to show that there would be no confusion after that time. Israel was to allow these tribes the land, but these tribes were expected to fulfill their obligation first, as is next seen...

²⁹ And Moses said to them: "If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben cross over the Jordan with you, every man armed for battle before the Lord, and the land is subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead as a possession.

Again, as has been seen twice already, Moses uses the same term, "every-armed." The precise wording is needed to show that not all men will go, but every man that goes will be armed. Otherwise, after Moses died, a dispute could arise that Moses intended for every man to go, thus leaving the women and children to build and defend the cities. It would immediately force these tribes to give up this grant.

However, it is now a given that some will stay while others will go to battle. After the faithful service of these men, drawn off from the whole, they would then have earned their right to return and possess, with their brothers, the homes and lands which had been tended to during their time of war.

³⁰ But if they do not cross over armed with you,

Here, the verb "armed" is plural, *khalutsim*. The plural is speaking of the very separation that we have been noting. As the word signifies "to draw off," we could paraphrase these words as, "But if they do not cross over, drawings off, with you." Those "drawings off" imply those that will be armed for war.

³⁰ (con't) they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan."

The words here are passive. If they don't actively go out to battle with the other tribes, they will be settled among the tribes in Canaan. John Lange argues that this means they would be settled among the inheritances of the other tribes, meaning that they would not be settled "as two separate and independent tribes."

Whether that is correct or not is debatable. But if it was so, it would mean they would eventually be swallowed up and lose their identity. If that is a correct assumption, it would be a huge motivating factor for them to uphold their part of this vow.

³¹ Then the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying: "As the Lord has said to your servants, so we will do.

This shows that it is the Lord who gave the command, unless it is implying that Moses made the decision because he speaks for the Lord. But it seems unlikely that Moses would decide this without the Lord's approval. Canaan was the land of promise and the goal to be obtained. For Moses to decide such a matter without the Lord seems quite out of place, but it is also not out of the question.

³² We will cross over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance *shall remain* with us on this side of the Jordan."

The agreement is made, but the inheritance is conditional based on fulfillment of the promise. The land is theirs, if. And again, the word "armed," is plural like in the previous verse. A group of the whole will be drawn off to cross over before the Lord.

*Take note if you sin against the Lord
If you speak out a vow and do not follow through
The sin that you commit, for it wrath is stored
And He will repay trouble back to you*

*When you sin, your sin will find you out
And what you deserve will be catching up with you
Be sure of this; you need have no doubt
The Lord will require it, and He will follow through*

*But there is also grace with the Lord
And so, when you come to Christ, mercy is waiting there for you
The wrath will abate, every bit that was stored
When you heard the word of truth, you also followed though*

*Peace with God is found in Christ, so it is true
Come to God through Christ; yes, in this please follow through*

II. Request Granted (verses 33-42)

³³ So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben, and to half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph,

With the approval of the agreement, Moses at this time gives the land as it was requested. However, it is a conditional grant. Along with the request of Gad and Reuben, something new is introduced.

For the first time, the half tribe of Manasseh is suddenly brought into the narrative. Their inclusion, though, is based on what has already occurred, but which is not recorded until verse 39 where it notes that some from Manasseh were instrumental in subduing Gilead.

Going back to the second census in Chapter 26, we noted that Manasseh bore Machir to a concubine from Aram. From there, Machir named his son Gilead. It is this same area which is now under discussion, and which they had valiantly subdued, probably because of their heritage.

When the request was granted by Moses, this half tribe of Manasseh either came forward hoping to obtain what they had won in battle, or Moses simply gave it to them before they even asked about it. Either way, the ironic element is that the same place from which Machir's son was named based on his mother being from this location – Gilead – has become their possession.

^{33 (con't)} the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land with its cities within the borders, the cities of the surrounding country.

The land of these two kings was subdued by Israel as is recorded in Numbers 21. That area, which Gad and Reuben so desired, and which Manasseh so valiantly strived to subdue, is now their grant. The inheritance of areas within this larger area are now described in order. First Gad, then Reuben, then the half tribe of Manasseh...

³⁴ And the children of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer,

Dibon probably means “Pining.” Ataroth means “Crowns.” Aroer means “Stripped,” “Bare,” or “Naked.”

³⁵ Atroth and Shopan and Jazer and Jogbehah,

There is no “and” between Atroth and Shopan. It is more likely one location called Atroth-Shopan. It means something like “Surrounded by the Rock Badger,” or maybe “Crowns of the Rock Badger,” or something entirely different. Jazer means “Helpful,” or “He Shall Help.” Jogbehah means “Lofty,” or “Exalted.”

³⁶ Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep.

Beth Nimrah means “House of the Leopard,” or “House of Clean Water.” Beth Haran means “House of the Lofty,” or maybe “Mountain House.” These cities are all said to be fortified cities. Along with them *gidrot*, or folds for the sheep, were constructed.

Much of the building, or rebuilding, of these cities probably occurred while the men of war were fighting the campaign. The other two-thirds of the men remained behind and built.

³⁷ And the children of Reuben built Heshbon and Elealeh and Kirjathaim,

Heshbon means something like “Intelligence.” Elealeh means “God has ascended.” Kirjathaim means “Twin Cities,” or “Double Cities.”

³⁸ Nebo and Baal Meon (*their* names being changed) and Shibmah;

Nebo means Interpreter or Foreteller (?). Baal Meon means Master of the House (?). The name Shibmah should read Sibmah, and it may mean “Spice.”

^{38 (con’t)} and they gave *other* names to the cities which they built.

The Hebrew more closely reads, “and they called in names, names *of* the cities.” It means they renamed the cities. A reason for this is because the conqueror or builder of a city has the right to name it what he wishes. And secondly, some of the city names are of pagan gods. And so, to adhere to the law of not invoking the names of other gods (Ex 23:13), the names of the cities would be changed.

³⁹ And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it.

This verse speaks of what occurred in the battles against Sihon and Og in Numbers 21, and which was explained earlier. It is the reason that the half tribe of Manasseh has been granted this land...

⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he dwelt in it.

The meaning of this is that the land was given to the family of Machir, not specifically to Machir. Machir was Manasseh's son, and was long since gone. But being the head of the family, he is remembered in this way. The Gilead is granted by Moses to this family, and so this is where they settled.

⁴¹ Also Jair the son of Manasseh

Here, Jair is introduced as a "son of Manasseh." This means that he is a descendant of Manasseh. 1 Chronicles 2:21, 22 shows that he is a descendant of Manasseh, Machir, Machir's daughter, her son Segub, and then came Jair. Thus, Manasseh is his great, great, grandfather. Yair, means "He enlightens."

The surprising part of his genealogy is that he is reckoned as a son of Manasseh, rather than a son of Judah, despite Machir's daughter having married Hezron, a grandson of Judah. This could be because Hezron was old when he married her and already had other children. He may not have wanted this son to interfere with the inheritance rights of his other children, so their son was reckoned through Manasseh.

^{41 (con't)} went and took its small towns, and called them Havoth Jair.

This person, Jair, is said to have taken these small towns, and renamed them after himself. The word Khavoth is the plural of the name Khavah, or "Life." It is the same name as Khavah, or Eve, Adam's wife. It is often translated as "the towns of Jair," probably because a town or city is where the bustle of life occurs.

In 1 Chronicles 2, Jair is said to have twenty-three cities. However, in Deuteronomy 3, Moses says there are sixty. People look to this as a contradiction, but that is because they don't see that the term Khavoth Jair is being used in both a wider and a narrower sense. That is next seen with our final verse of the day...

^{42 (fin)} **Then Nobah went and took Kenath and its villages, and he called it Nobah, after his own name.**

Novakh means “To Bark.” He is said to have gone and taken Kenath and its surrounding villages. Kenath means “Acquisition.” In 1 Chronicles 2, it says –

“(Geshur and Syria took from them the towns of Jair, with Kenath and its towns—sixty towns.) All these *belonged to* the sons of Machir the father of Gilead.”

-1 Chronicles 2:23

What this means is that when Moses speaks of the sixty towns of Jair in Deuteronomy 3, he is referring to everything taken by both Jair and Nobah. Here in Numbers, it is used in its stricter sense, meaning only the cities captured by Jair. But the wider sense used in Deuteronomy is inclusive of what Nobah has taken here in Kenath and its daughter villages.

A simple example would be that Tom Thumb has 15 McDonald’s franchises in Sarasota. Those are Tom’s McDonald’s. However, there are 25 McDonald’s in Sarasota. One might say, I’m going to Tom’s McDonald’s for lunch, while actually going to one that isn’t Tom’s. The term is simply used for the whole. This is the case here. And to throw in a monkey wrench, in Judges 10, it says –

“After him arose Jair, a Gileadite; and he judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴ Now he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys; they also had thirty towns, which are called “Havoth Jair” to this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead. ⁵ And Jair died and was buried in Camon.” Judges 10:3-5

There is no contradiction in this. The sons of Jair were given thirty of the sixty towns in this area to rule, and they were called by the name of their father within the wider sense of the term mentioned above. And so, once again, the Bible passage ends with no contradictions. It just takes research to find this out.

What we have recorded here is the first granting of land to any people found in Israel. It seems as if it is a notable thing, and that their decision to stay to the east of Canaan was a good one. They were set in their towns and villages, and did not have to wait any time at all to get started with the work of settling the land.

But what starts well outside of the land of promise is also destined to end badly in the same way. In 1 Chronicles 5, this is recorded –

“And they were unfaithful to the God of their fathers, and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. ²⁶ So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, that is, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria. He carried the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity. He took them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river of Gozan to this day.” 1 Chronicles 5:25-26

The first to settle in their granted land were also the first to be dispossessed from it. The majority of the people of these tribes disappeared into obscurity. Any that were left were assimilated into the last remaining named tribe of Israel, that of Judah.

The people had rejected the promised land of the Lord at the beginning, and they had rejected the Lord, the God of their fathers, after that. The land they thought was fair and nice was only a temporary possession, and without keeping their faith and trust in the Lord, it was taken from them.

The scene is played out in the countless human souls that have heard the message of Christ and determined that life outside of His promise is better than life in it. We might look to the abundance of the fields, the possibilities for wealth and possessions, but we don't stop to consider how temporary and fleeting it all is.

In the passing of a breath, our lives are done, and there is nothing left but death and separation from God, who we have already separated ourselves from. Is this to be your sad lot, or are you looking to the better, eternal inheritance that comes by faith in God and in His provision found in Christ?

The same God who created the land east of the Jordan also created the land west of it. And the same God who offered rest to Israel offers rest to us today. We just have to be wise enough to accept what He has already set apart for us.

In the short term, the hills and pasture lands of the world are certainly enticing, but they require work. However, what God offers requires faith. One seems harder at the outset, and yet it is so much easier in the end. The other seems so rewarding at first, but it leads to a life which can never satisfy. We can work the fields for a thousand years, and yet the fields still need work. But faith in Christ leads us to the restful fields which lay by still waters.

Choose what you will do with Christ, but choose wisely. The work He worked is one-time and for all time. The land of promise is just ahead if you will reach out by faith and receive it.

Closing Verse: *“And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Hebrews 9:15*

Next Week: Numbers 33:1-15 *Israel trekked and trekked, but eventually the trekking was done...* (The Journeys of Israel, Part I – From Egypt to Sinai) (64th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Possession East of Canaan

Then Moses said to them:

“If you do this thing; if you arm yourselves
— — — before the Lord for the war

And all your armed men cross over the Jordan
Before the Lord until He has driven out His enemies
— — — from Him before

And the land is subdued before the Lord, as to you I now tell
Then afterward you may return and be blameless
— — — it shall be as a reward
Before the Lord and before Israel
And this land shall be your possession before the Lord

But if you do not do so, then take note
You have sinned against the Lord
And be sure your sin will find you out
Pay close heed now to my word

Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep too
And do what has proceeded out of your mouth, so you shall do

And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben
Spoke to Moses, saying:
“Your servants will do as my lord commands
Just as you have been conveying

Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock
Will be there in the cities of Gilead, according to your word
But your servants will cross over, every man armed for war
Before the Lord to battle, just as says my lord

So Moses gave command concerning them
To Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun as well
And to the chief fathers of the tribes
Of the children of Israel

And Moses said to them:
“If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben
———cross over the Jordan with you in your procession
Every man armed for battle before the Lord
———and the land is subdued before you
Then you shall give them the land of Gilead as a possession

But if they do not cross over armed with you
They shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan too

Then the children of Gad and the children of Reuben
———answered, saying
“As the Lord has said to your servants, so we will do
We will cross over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan
But the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us
———on this side of the Jordan, our word shall be true

So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben
———and to half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph
The kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites
———and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan
The land with its cities within the borders
The cities of the surrounding country
———which they had set their hopes on

And the children of Gad built Dibon and Ataroth and Aroer
Atroth and Shophan and Jazer and Jogbehah too
Beth Nimrah and Beth Haran
Fortified cities, and folds for sheep, so they did do

And the children of Reuben built Heshbon and Elealeh
And Kirjathaim, Nebo and Baal Meon also
(Their names being changed) and Shibmah
And they gave other names to the cities which they built
———-as we now know

And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh
Went to Gilead and took it, he kept going and didn't quit
And dispossessed the Amorites who were in it
So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh
———-and he dwelt in it

Also Jair the son of Manasseh went and took its small towns
And called them Havoth Jair, that name he did claim
Then Nobah went and took Kenath and its villages
And he called it Nobah, after his own name

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 33:1-15 (THE JOURNEYS OF ISRAEL, PART I - FROM EGYPT TO SINAI)

In a Bible study some time ago, Mr. Magnuson pulled out a rather appropriate quote for the content of today's verses. He said, "The only freedom each of us possesses is the freedom to choose who or what we will be a slave to."

I didn't ask if that was his quote, or if he was citing someone else, but no matter which, it is reflected in the march of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. The idea of slavery is something we find rather abhorrent, but it is actually something that we all face.

Israel was enslaved in Egypt. That pictured being a slave to sin. But it is by law that comes the knowledge of sin. Paul tells us that explicitly in Romans 3:20. If there is no law, there is no transgression. It is obvious on the surface. It is true that anyone of Israel could have stayed in Egypt. That was their choice to leave.

They were now free from Egypt, but they were not free from either sin or the Lord. He had brought them out, and they became His possession.

Further, anyone in Egypt could have left with Israel. That was their choice, and some accepted it, as the record tells. They left behind Egypt and headed towards Canaan. But on the way, they made several stops, the major one that the word deals with is the last verse of our passage today, the Wilderness of Sinai.

It was there that the law was received, and guess what, the people agreed to it – with their own mouths – several times. But by agreeing to the law, they did not obtain freedom. Rather, they went into another type of bondage. Because, as we have already heard, by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Text Verse: *"Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. ³⁶ Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.'" John 8:34-36*

Jesus is rather clear. When a person commits sin, he is a slave of sin. Sin is a transgression of the law, and therefore, by accepting the law, the people brought themselves into the bondage of the law. They became slaves to it. This is explained by Paul in Romans and Galatians especially.

When people today say we must observe the Law of Moses, they don't obtain freedom, they cling to bondage, and they bring about condemnation. It is Christ who frees us from the law so that we are not imputed sin. Why would anyone want to go back under that slave master?

In Galatians 4, Paul equates the son of Abraham's Egyptian bondwoman, Hagar, to the Old Covenant Law of Moses given at Mount Sinai. He equates Isaac, the son of promise through Sarah, to the New Covenant in Christ given in Jerusalem.

And what does Paul then do? He cites Scripture which says, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman" (Galatians 4:30). In essence, "Cast out the Law of Moses and cling to the New Covenant in Christ."

But we must remember what Mr. Magnuson said, "The only freedom each of us possesses is the freedom to choose who or what we will be a slave to." He is right, you know. So, who is our Slave Master? Paul explains it in several ways, but the one which really sums it up is found in Romans 6 –

"And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves *of* righteousness for holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:18-23

So, as we follow the travels of Israel in Numbers 33, I hope you will consider what they point to. Israel left one type of bondage and got themselves right into another – all seen in today's travels.

They rejected what these things symbolically pointed to, and they continue in the same bondage today that they came under 3500 years ago. What a tragedy. Someday, they will realize this, and they will come to a new type of slavery – to that of righteousness and being slaves of God in Christ.

Which do you prefer? One brings a curse and condemnation; one brings blessing and salvation. Such is what we are to see, starting in today's travels through the wilderness and towards the Promised Land. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Day After the Passover (verses 1-4)

¹These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel,

Here we have a word not used since Numbers 10, *masa*, or "journey." It signifies a departure because of the pulling up of the pegs of a tent. It isn't simply leaving a tent to go on a journey, but the removal of the tent from one place to another.

This breaking up of the camp and setting out has occurred many times in the past 38 years, and some of the locations were already noted. However, we are now to be given a complete list of them, from Egypt right until the border of Canaan, counting them as we go. That begins with the words that it was Israel...

^{1 (con't)} who went out of the land of Egypt

Egypt is the starting point. They were in the land of bondage, and they were heading to their promised possession...

^{1 (con't)} by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The words are well translated. They were structured into armies, or individual forces of fighting men, and they were *b'yad*, or under the hand, of Moses and Aaron. This means that they were under the direction or control of them.

At first, they were led out of Egypt with a word which describes being in orderly ranks, *khamushim*. Later, at Sinai, they were divided into the more defined armies under individual banners and as men prepared for war.

Before going on, one must look at the broader picture of what has happened, how it points to Israel, and how it points to each of us individually. God redeemed Israel out of Egypt at the Passover. No sooner had he brought them out, then they started to complain.

He brought them to Sinai and gave them the law. They failed at that time. Eventually, they headed toward the Land of Promise and they failed every step of the way, eventually being consigned to die in the wilderness. And yet, as a people, God preserved Israel all the way to their promised inheritance.

As we saw, all of that time of wilderness wandering – and the things that happened – picture Israel’s rejection of Christ, their time of punishment, and yet God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises, preserving Israel until they will someday call on Him and enter into the inheritance.

And Israel, as a collective whole, pictures our own individual salvation. We are redeemed from Egypt, our life of sin. We continuously fail the Lord in this life, turning from Him, sinning against Him, and failing to honor Him. And yet, because of His faithfulness (not ours!) He will never leave us nor break His covenant with us.

It was never up to Israel to obtain the inheritance, and it is not up to us to do so either. Despite failure on our part, God will faithfully keep us until we receive the inheritance. The larger picture, both for collective Israel, and for each of us individually, is that of assurance of salvation. It is a doctrine taught all the way through this narrative – from Exodus to entry. Consider this as the many stations are named. Israel was faithfully unfaithful through them, and yet the Lord was ever faithful to them.

² Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord.

Here it speaks of the *motsaehem l’ masehem*, or “the goings out of their departures.” Of these, it says that Moses wrote them down. But it also speaks of the mouth, or command, of the Lord. The question is, is the command of the Lord speaking of the act of writing down the starting points, or is it speaking of the act of departing. Which was as the command of the Lord?

The act of movement was certainly at the command of the Lord. That was explicitly stated in Numbers 9 –

“So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the Lord they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the Lord they would journey.” Numbers 9:20

It can be inferred, however, that this is also speaking of the act of writing down the starting points, simply because they are now recorded in the word. It logically follows that the Lord expected Moses to keep this list due to its insertion here.

² (con't) And these *are* their journeys according to their starting points:

As in the previous clause, the Hebrew signifies, “And these are the goings out of their departures.” This is probably more important than it sounds simply because there are irregularities between what has been recorded, and what is recorded here.

It is probable that the precision of wording is given to show that these are the main stops the Lord wanted recorded as an overall testimony to their travels. Of this record, the Pulpit Commentary says –

“The direct statement that Moses wrote this list himself is strongly corroborated by internal evidence, and has been accepted as substantially true by the most destructive critics. No conceivable inducement could have existed to invent a list of marches which only partially corresponds with the historical account, and can only with difficulty be reconciled with it – a list which contains many names nowhere else occurring, and having no associations for the later Israelites.” Pulpit Commentary

³ They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month;

It follows the account from Exodus 12:37 which said –

“Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.” Exodus 12:37

The name Rameses means “son of the sun” or “child of the sun.” The fifteenth day of the first month coincides with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That day is...

³ (con't) **on the day after the Passover**

The Passover was observed by Israel, and in that observance, none of the firstborn of Israel died. The Lord passed over the houses which had been marked with the blood of the lamb. After that observance, which ended at sundown, the fifteenth day of the

month began, and at some point, the people gathered together in Rameses and departed Egypt. And...

^{3 (con't)} **the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.**

The words here correspond to what was said in Exodus 14:8 concerning the state of Israel –

“And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went out with boldness.”

⁴ **For the Egyptians were burying all *their* firstborn, whom the Lord had killed among them.**

The statement that they were burying their firstborn as Israel left is new to the narrative. However, it is a worthy addition to show the distinction between Israel and Egypt. While all of Israel was marching out in boldness, the Egyptians were busy burying their dead. The Lord had passed *over* the firstborn of Israel, but the Egyptians were consigned to burying their firstborn *under* their own feet. That was the final blow of the ten plagues upon Egypt...

^{4 (con't)} **Also on their gods the Lord had executed judgments.**

This is what was promised in Exodus 12:12 –

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: *I am* the Lord.” Exodus 12:12

The meaning in these words is debated. As a review from Exodus 12, some think that the word “gods” can also mean “princes” and so they say that this means that the nobles equally suffered in the plague. But that is obvious on the surface. Every household with the blood was exempted; every other suffered.

Others say that the term “gods” is explained by the firstborn of the people and the beasts. In other words, the firstborn of Pharaoh was considered the royal heir to the throne and thus he was a deity. And all of the beasts that were worshiped would have their firstborn killed as well. Thus, the judgment is against “all the gods of Egypt” in this sense.

One scholar changed the spelling of “gods” to “habitations” – “against all your habitations” – by reversing one letter in the Hebrew. Instead of *elohe*, it becomes *ahley*. But that is an unnecessary stretch. Another possibility is that as the Lord went through Egypt, he literally destroyed their idols such as He would later do to the false god Dagon of the Philistines.

And others take this statement as the individual plagues being judgments upon the individual gods of Egypt. In other words, the Egyptians worshiped the Nile. And so, in turning the Nile into blood, it was a judgment upon their god. Each plague corresponds to one of the gods of Egypt.

It is true that Egypt worshiped the things that were plagued by the Lord, proving them impotent during the plagues. The plague of darkness was a plague which covered over their sun god Ra. However, this is not what is being referred to here. First, the Nile still flows, and the sun is still in the sky.

Secondly, the ten plagues did not exhaust all of the false gods of Egypt. They had innumerable gods. And thirdly, the promise was that judgment would be executed upon the gods at the time of the Passover. Nine of the plagues had already come to pass. So, this is incorrect as well.

What is being referred to here is that when the plague began, Pharaoh and all of Egypt would petition all their false gods. But none would be able to save the firstborn. Thus, it would be a complete judgment on each and every god of Egypt in one fell swoop.

They were entreated for mercy, but no mercy would come because they had no ears to hear and no power to stave off the plague. Because of this, the gods of Egypt were therefore judged as false gods. This then would be the same type of judgment as when the Lord accepted Elijah’s offering on Mount Carmel.

The god of the worshipers of Baal was judged to be a false god before the Lord, exactly as the people acknowledged after seeing the Lord’s fire come down from heaven. This is the importance of repeating this thought, once again, which was stated in Exodus 12.

*It was a long time, four hundred and thirty years
From Abraham until the exodus out of Egypt the land
But when it came, there were certainly many cheers
As the people beheld the marvel of the Lord’s powerful hand*

*And for all generations thereafter it came to be
That people would each year on that night recall
The marvel of the exodus; and of the Lord's majesty
A Passover Seder each year at the nightfall*

*A solemn observance for the children of Israel
A time to remember the great acts of the Lord
A time to relate the story to the next generation as well
To repeat this marvelous account recorded in His word*

II. From Rameses to the Wilderness of Sinai (verses 5-15)

⁵Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses and camped at Succoth.

This is now the fifth and final time the name Rameses is seen in Scripture. The first movement is from Rameses to Succoth or “Tabernacles.” This was their first place of encampment after departing their place of bondage. Because of this first taste of freedom, this is stated in Leviticus 23 in the instructions for the Feast of Tabernacles –

“...that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the Lord your God.”

-Leviticus 23:43

The translation there, and in pretty much every other version, assumes the name of the feast is given based on the people living in temporary shelters. It is true that they did. But rather, the feast is named because of that fact that the name of the place where they stayed was given, which is Succoth, or Tabernacles.

In Leviticus 23, the Hebrew says, *ki ba'sukkoth hovoshavti eth bene yisrael* – “for in Sukkoth I made to dwell the sons of Israel.” The name was given not so much because they dwelt in temporary booths after leaving Egypt. It was because they *had left Egypt!* Their first stop was named Succoth.

The stop was purposeful to make a theological point and a picture of our state before God. We are redeemed, but we continue to live in temporary bodies – awaiting our final glorified bodies. This is what is being pictured by leaving Rameses or “Son of the Sun” and going to Sukkoth, or “Tabernacles.” In Malachi 4, Christ is called “the Sun of Righteousness.” We become sons of God through adoption because of the work of Christ. The

Passover led the people to gather at Ramses for their departure – the people are now sons of the Sun, meaning Christ.

From there, they move then to Succoth or Tabernacles. The picture is that though redeemed, we continue on in these earthly bodies or tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was given for this purpose. Go back and refresh your minds by watching those Leviticus 23 sermons again sometime. The picture is made, and so...

⁶They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham,

This second movement is confirmed by Exodus 13:20 –

“So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness.” Exodus 13:20

We must now take a moment to review the meaning of the name of Etham from Exodus 13. As I said then, scholars have attempted to define the name based on the meaning of the letters as they are structured – either from a Hebrew or an Egyptian context.

None of them, however, attempted to connect the meaning to the text itself. But, in doing that, the name seems likely. The name Succoth was given to us for a reason. Etham, like Succoth, doesn't have to be the name of the place prior to their arrival, but the name given to the place *upon* their arrival.

They went from Succoth, meaning “Tabernacles” and its meaning was intended to show the state of Israel at the time. Now Etham is mentioned and it was for the same reason. Right after mentioning that Israel came to Etham, it then recorded –

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. ²² He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night *from* before the people.” Exodus 13:21, 22

In that sermon, we noted that Albert Barnes said fire and smoke signals were used by Greeks and Persians in their marches. One ancient papyrus is said to call the commander of an Egyptian army “A flame in the darkness at the head of his soldiers.” As Barnes said, “By this sign then of the pillar of cloud, the Lord showed Himself as their leader and general.”

Israel was at the edge of the wilderness, camped and ready to move on, but there, for the first time, it mentions this new development. The term “Lord,” meaning Yehovah, was now reintroduced into the narrative instead of the word *elohim* or “God.” It is with this marvelous description – the cloud and the pillar of fire – that He was at that time described.

The introduction of the manifestation of the Lord is being tied to the name Etham. The word *oth* means “sign.” And so Etham means “Their Sign” because it was what was being portrayed. He was their *Sign* to move, where to move, and when to move. He was their *Sign* of comfort and reassurance. He was their *Sign* that He was with them.

As Etham was pointing to the manifestation of the Lord, and it means “Their Sign,” then Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians take on a much more meaningful sense –

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2

The people were baptized into the cloud as well as the sea. Thus, it was a *sign* to the people of the process of their redemption. As can be seen, this literal account prophetically pictures the work of the Lord Jesus on behalf of His people. This is with all certainty because Paul says in 1 Corinthians that it is Christ who led them in the wilderness.

⁶ (con’t) **which is on the edge of the wilderness.**

This statement is found in both Exodus 13 and here. The wilderness means an uncultivated area, not specifically a barren desert. It is a place of God’s grace and a closeness to God, but it is also a place of testing.

For some, such as Israel, the testing results in disobedience. For others, such as when Christ was tested, it is a place of fellowship through obedience. The wilderness and the law seem to be closely connected because it is by law that testing is accomplished. All of this is beautifully expressed in Deuteronomy 8 –

“Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. ² And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble

you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.” Deuteronomy 8:1, 2

Mentioning that they were on the edge of the wilderness looks to the fact that they would be brought into it, given the law, tested, given grace, and so forth.

As we know, looking back on later stops, this testing and time of punishment in the wilderness looks to the time of the testing and of punishment of Israel after the coming of Christ. That time for Israel had an end which we have already come to in the book of Numbers, but it also has an end for the people who were exiled after rejecting Christ. Jeremiah speaks of that –

“‘At the same time,’ says the Lord, ‘I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.’

² Thus says the Lord:

‘The people who survived the sword

Found grace in the wilderness—

Israel, when I went to give him rest.’” Jeremiah 31:1, 2

Although getting ahead with that thought, it is helpful to see how these stops are being used to show us truths about God’s workings in and through redemptive history.

⁷ **They moved from Etham and turned back to Pi Hahiroth,**

The fourth movement is from Etham, or “Their Sign,” to “Pi Hahiroth.” The word *pi* means “mouth” and *ha’khiroth* means “The Gorges.” It comes from the feminine plural of a noun which then comes from the word *chor* which means “hole.” Thus, the picture is that they camped in the face of the mouth of the gorges.

The name forms an exciting mental picture of what Israel faced. The Lord directed the children of Israel south with the Red Sea at their left to a place of encampment that has gorges facing them from the west. In other words, they were completely hemmed in. There was no way to escape to the east because of the sea, or back to the north. Being on foot, if they had continued south along the Red Sea, it would have ended in futility as they would eventually run into more mountains and garrisons. They were literally hemmed in with their backs to the ocean. If only they could get through to the place on the other side...

⁷ (con’t) **which is east of Baal Zephon;**

The translation is incorrect. They are on the finger of the Red Sea facing east. Therefore, Baal Zephon is east, not west, of them. However, the Hebrew doesn't even say "east." It says, *asher al pene baal tsephon*, or "which against the face of Baal Zephon." This is not only a translational, but also a scholarly error. And, it is, unfortunately, one followed by several translations. They were at Pi Hahiroth which is west (not east) of Baal Zephon, and they were facing Baal Zephon from across the waters of the Red Sea.

Baal Zephon means either Lord of Darkness, Lord of the North, or Lord of the Watch. The third seems appropriate. The root for this word is *sapha*, which "conveys the idea of being fully aware of a situation in order to gain some advantage or keep from being surprised by an enemy" (HAW).

It is exactly what the Lord was doing there. He was fully aware of the situation and He certainly gained advantage of it. Further, He was in no way surprised by the coming enemy. In fact, He was merely awaiting their arrival...

⁷ (con't) **and they camped near Migdol.**

In Exodus 14, it said that they turned and camped before Pi Hahiroth, "between Migdol and the sea." Here, it corresponds with that saying that they camped near Migdol.

Migdol comes from the word *gadal* which means to "grow up" or "become great." Thus Migdol means "tower." The location for the encampment was between the sea and a place with a large natural or man-made tower.

This would probably have been manned as an outpost and word of their travels would have easily been dispatched from there to Pharaoh. It seems intentional that Migdol was mentioned for this very purpose.

It is meant to show that a report made it back to Pharaoh that this giant contingent of people had taken up camp on the shores of the Red Sea. We all know what happened though. When the time of greatest stress and distress came upon the people, Moses declared to them in their trepidation –

"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

-Exodus 14:13, 14

Relief would come, and it would be the Lord who provided it. And when it came it was directly to Baal Zephon, on the other side...

⁸ They departed from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness,

The fifth movement is from before Hahiroth, or Gorges, to Marah. Think of the symbolism. They were by a fortress, they couldn't go in any direction, and so it seemed as if they would be swallowed up in the gorges, but on the other side from them was Baal Zephon – "Lord of the Watch."

Nothing would swallow His treasured possession, Israel. Instead, He led them through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, a place of His grace and closeness to Him, but also a place of testing. In this area they...

^{8 (con't)} went three days' journey in the Wilderness of Etham,

In Exodus 15:22 it said –

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water."

-Exodus 15:22

What was called Shur is now called Etham. The changing of the name does not imply an error. The names used are given based on the original name, Shur, first. Shur was used to describe this place three times in Genesis. Here, it is given based on what has happened. They followed "Their Sign" in the wilderness – meaning the place of grace and testing – and so they called the place Etham. Here, they were tested with no water.

^{8 (con't)} and camped at Marah.

Marah means "Bitter." The name was given based on the event. In Numbers 15:23 it said, "Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter." Thus, it was named because of the waters which were bitter and undrinkable. But as we saw, there was a small note of grace there.

The name Marah is spelled with a *hey* or "h" at the end of it. *Hey* is the fifth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet; five being the number of grace. It is the same letter that was *added* to Abraham and Sarah's name as a sign of covenant grace.

However in the book of Ruth, when Naomi asked to be called Mara, it is spelled without this *hey*. In calling herself Mara, she was proclaiming her bitterness and it was as if she felt she was outside of the Lord's covenant provision, wallowing alone in her bitterness. This letter, *hey* has the meaning of "look," "reveal," or "breath." And thus, the story took on a greater meaning, a gift of grace was revealed which took the people's breath away. The bitter waters were healed and made sweet. From there...

⁹They moved from Marah and came to Elim. At Elim were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there.

In this verse, Sergio found an interesting acrostic. In the words *elimah u-b'elim shetem esreh enot mayim v'shivim temarim v'yakhanu sham*, or "and at Elim twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees so they camped there," there is a forward running acrostic of the first letter of those words.

It is two words, separated by the letter *ayin*. Taking that letter out, it says, "His death I will redeem." As the account of the waters of Marah pictured the cross of Christ, it is an amazing confirmation of His work. But another interesting thing is that the additional letter *ayin* means "eye." The verse speaks of the *enot mayim*, or "eyes of water," meaning springs of water. So that additional letter seems more purposeful to the acrostic than a failure of it.

It is an interesting curiosity. Next, the sixth movement is from Marah to Elim. This is confirmed by Exodus 15:27 –

"Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters." Exodus 15:27

The name Elim, comes from a root which indicates to protrude or stick out, such as a porch on a house, a ram in a flock, or a large tree. Therefore, we can call it, "The Protruders."

There at Elim the Bible records 12 wells. The words in Hebrew say *enot mayim*, "eyes of water." And so these are springs as noted here, but not really wells as it was translated in Exodus.

There are also seventy palm trees. The word is *temarim*, which is the plural of Tamar, the same name as the daughter-in-law of Judah who bore his children, twins. The name pictures an upright or righteous person. At this location, it is said that the people camped there by the wells.

As we saw in Exodus 15, and which must be repeated again now because the Lord repeats it here in Numbers, there is great specificity in the description – twelve springs and seventy palms. As we saw, it was given to make a marvelous picture for us.

Christ is the Water of Life. It is He who made the bitter waters (Marah) sweet through His death on the cross. The story continued at Elim with the twelve springs.

They pictured those who send out the word of the water of life to the people. In Matthew 10, the apostles were given the power to heal, just as the Lord said that He would be Yehovah Rophekha, or the Lord who Heals, in the previous verse of Exodus 15.

“And when He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.” Matthew 10:1

The seventy palms represented the 70 disciples, or righteous ones, chosen by Christ in Luke 10, to follow suit –

¹“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ... ⁹And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’” Luke 10:1 & 9

Again, like the apostles, they were given the power to heal by Yehovah Rophekha, the Lord Jesus. The name Elim pictures the work of Christ which protrudes out for all to see through these apostles and disciples who spread the message to Israel.

The movement of Israel made a picture of the Lord and His ministry to the people of Israel. It was a ministry which was intended for the healing of the people through the message of the twelve apostles and the seventy commissioned disciples if they would but pay heed to Him and to His words.

¹⁰ **They moved from Elim and camped by the Red Sea.**

This is the seventh movement. From Elim, or, “The Protruders,” they then camped by the Red Sea, or *yam suph* – the “Sea of the Ending.” This stop is not recorded in Exodus as it obviously lacked any Christological significance in the on-going narrative that we followed. However, it is recorded here as an actual stop.

The word *yam* means “sea.” *Suph* comes from the verb *suph* which means, “come to an end,” or “cease.” This sea is where the land of Israel ends, and it is from Israel that the reference point is given. This stop makes a picture of the Protruders – the twelve and the seventy – carrying the message to the end of the land.

¹¹ They moved from the Red Sea and camped in the Wilderness of Sin.

This is the eighth movement. From the Sea of the Ending, they come to the Wilderness of Sin, meaning “Thorn.” All of the contents of Exodus 16 occurred at this place, which in particular, details the giving of the Manna and the introduction of the Sabbath as a statute for Israel. Both of those pictured, in great detail, the Person and work of Christ.

If the stop at Elim pictured the words of the apostles and disciples, and the Red Sea stop pictured the word concerning Messiah going to the end of the land, and Sinai is for the giving of the law – meaning the covenant – then coming to the Wilderness of Sin is given as a precursor to that.

The Manna and the Sabbath point to Christ, our Bread and our Rest. Grace and also testing is found in the Wilderness of Sin, or the Thorn. Will Israel respond and pay heed? First, the law is given, and only then comes the New Covenant.

¹² They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sin and camped at Dophkah.

This is the ninth movement. It is not recorded in the Exodus account. Dophkah comes from the verb *daphaq*, to beat, knock, or press severely. It is used just three times in Scripture. Once it refers to pressing animals too hard so that they could die. Once to pounding on a door, and once to simply knocking on a door.

One can see the coming passion of Christ in this. There is the anticipation of the Bread and the Rest which are provided by Christ’s death. Likewise, the events which led to His death involved His being beaten and driven to the point of exhaustion.

¹³ They departed from Dophkah and camped at Alush.

This is the tenth movement. It is also not recorded in the Exodus account. Alush is not translated by most, but two sources give the meaning as “Mingling Together” or “A Crowd of Men.” One can see in this the crowd which gathered before Pilate and who then gathered again at the cross. And from that act, the judgment and crucifixion of the Lord, Israel moves again to reveal the picture...

¹⁴ They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

This is the eleventh movement. Rephidim is a plural noun which comes from the verb *raphad* which means ‘to spread (a bed).’ And so, by implication it means “to refresh” or “comfort.” It also carries the sense of “support.” At this place where there was no water, but water was brought forth from the rock by striking it.

The picture was that of Christ being struck in order to bring forth the Water of Life. Christ, the Rock was struck, and from Him the waters, in fact, poured forth. Each stop has anticipated what would occur up until the time Christ died. In the death of Christ, a New Covenant was brought forth...

^{15 (fin)} They departed from Rephidim and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai.

This is the twelfth movement. Sinai was where the Law of Moses was given. But that was anticipatory of the giving of the New Covenant in Christ. It was His cross, seen in the granting of the New Covenant, which the time at Sinai pictured.

Everything which occurred at this spot, over the next many months, was typologically representative of Christ. Every detail of the sanctuary, the priesthood, the sacrifices, even the arrangement and structure of the camp looked to Christ and His work.

Amazingly, as this is the twelfth stop, and as twelve represents perfection of government, we see at Sinai the perfection of God’s government, revealed in Christ, in astonishing detail.

All of that detail goes from Exodus 19:2 until the departure of Israel towards Canaan in Numbers 10:11. And yet, of all of that detail, nothing is stated. The next verse we will look at next week will simply state that Israel leaves this spot and heads to its first stop on the way to Canaan.

The details have been given already. In type, they look forward to what Christ accomplished. Israel has a choice to make. Will they accept Him and His work and enter into their promised rest? Or will they reject Him and go into exile and punishment?

History bears out that they rejected the Lord in the wilderness, and they rejected the Lord when He came. The stops will continue to be recorded, bringing us right up to where we are now in both the Biblical narrative, and also, surprisingly, in the course of Israel's history as well.

It is rather amazing that we can be here, evaluating the word line by line, and have seen how it so closely mirrors where we are in human history in relation to Israel. The record of the stops is a snapshot of Israel's history – from being redeemed from Egypt all the way through until the time they are about to enter into their long-missed rest.

And the center and focus of the entire record is that God entered into the stream of humanity and gave us hints of what He would do, and what He continues to do in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *“Behold, the former things have come to pass,
And new things I declare;
Before they spring forth I tell you of them.” Isaiah 42:9*

Next Week: Numbers 33:16-49 *This is what we are going to do, doing all of these verses at once, we will give a stab...* (The Journeys of Israel, Part II, From Sinai to the Plains of Moab) (65th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Journeys of Israel, From Egypt to Sinai

These are the journeys of the children of Israel
Who went out of Egypt the land
By their armies
Under Moses' hand and Aaron's hand

Now Moses wrote down the starting points

Of their journeys at the command of the Lord
And these are their journeys according to their starting points
As Moses did record

They departed from Rameses in the first month
On the fifteenth day of the first month, as was ending the night
On the day after the Passover the children of Israel
Went out with boldness in all the Egyptian's sight

For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn
Whom had killed among them the Lord
Also on their gods the Lord had executed judgments
All in accord with His word

Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses
And camped at Succoth as the word does address
They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham
Which is on the edge of the wilderness

They moved from Etham and turned back to Pi Hahiroth
Which is east of Baal Zephon
And they camped near Migdol
As to us the record makes known

They departed from before Hahiroth
And passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness
Went three days' journey in the Wilderness of Etham
And camped at Marah, so the account does address

They moved from Marah and came to Elim
At Elim were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees
So they camped there
There they found rest and ease

They moved from Elim and camped by the Red Sea
They moved from the Red Sea and camped
———-in the Wilderness of Sin
They journeyed from the Wilderness of Sin
———-and camped at Dophkah

They departed from Dophkah and camped at Alush
— — —-at Alush they temporarily settled in

They moved from Alush and camped at Rephidim
Where there was no water for the people to drink
They departed from Rephidim and camped
— — —-in the Wilderness of Sinai
Of the coming marvels there, who could possibly think!

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 33:16-49

(THE JOURNEYS OF ISRAEL, PART II - FROM SINAI TO THE PLAINS OF MOAB)

In the record here in Numbers 33, from the departure from Egypt to where Israel finally ends, right at the doorstep to Canaan, there are 42 movements of the people. One can then say that there are 43 locations, but one is leaving Egypt.

If one includes entry into Canaan, that would make a final movement and a final stop, thus equaling 44 locations in 43 movements. But the record of Numbers 33 specifically refers only to these 42 movements, and thus it is certainly intended for us to look at where the number 42 may be seen elsewhere in Scripture.

And, indeed, there are a few. Two notable ones are found first in 2 Kings 2 where two bears killed forty-two rascally youths, and in 2 Kings 10, forty-two brothers of Ahaziah got whacked. EW Bullinger says of the Number 42 –

“FORTY-TWO is a number connected with Antichrist. An important part of his career is to last for 42 months (Rev 11:2, 13:5), and thus this number is fixed upon him. ... Its factors are *six* and *seven* ($6 \times 7 = 42$), and this shows a connection between man and the Spirit of God, and between Christ and Antichrist: ... Being a multiple of *seven*, it might be supposed that it would be connected with spiritual perfection. But it is the product of *six* x *seven*. *Six*, therefore, being the number of *Man*, and man's *opposition* to God, *forty-two* becomes significant of the working out of man's opposition to God.”

That actually fits perfectly with the stops of Israel along the way to glory. It seems that at almost every stop, Israel was working in opposition to God, or they were in extended punishment for being in opposition to God. As Israel is a snapshot of the redemption of man from leaving Egypt, picturing life in bondage to sin, to entering Canaan, picturing coming to the place of rest promised by God through Christ, we can see how we stand in opposition to God even after having been redeemed by Him. That shows us of the wonderful marvel which is found in the grace of God in Christ.

For Israel, the last forty-two months of the tribulation period are reflective of this as well. It will take that period to finally break down their opposition and come to the point where they call out to Christ. But it will happen. Though there is opposition, there is still God's powerful hand working through it. There is also one other interesting use of the number forty-two worth looking at today...

Text Verse: *“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.” Matthew 1:17*

The three sets of fourteen generations listed in Matthew 1 come to a total of forty-two generations. A promise was made, and from that time, all the way through until it was fulfilled, man stood in opposition to God.

But God worked all the way through that period to bring man back to Himself. God gives us these patterns so that we can know that He is in control, and despite our opposition to Him – either intentionally or unintentionally, He will bring us to His kingdom.

What He expects from us in the process is faith. Israel has proven that relying on the deeds of the law doesn't work. They continue to prove it through their stubborn reliance on personal deeds of merit, and they will continue to do so right up until the point where the world is at its final stage of destruction. But they will give up on it someday, and they will call out, in faith, for relief.

That is what the Lord asks us to do now... have faith. He has made the promise. He has done the work. And now, He asks us to simply trust that His word is true and that He has made access to heaven open for us by His own work. We just need to do the believing. This is a lesson which is repeatedly found in His superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

From Sinai to the Plains of Moab

¹⁶ They moved from the Wilderness of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah.

This is now the thirteenth movement of the people. The move now described is that which occurred after the extended stay at Sinai. They arrived in this area in Exodus 19:1 and the departure is recorded in Numbers 10 –

“Now it came to pass on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. ¹² And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran. ¹³ So they started out for the first time according to the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses.” Numbers 10:11-13

This chapter is a record of the places of encampment, and very little information about those places is given. But it is still surprising that not a single word is spoken of all that occurred between Exodus 19 and Numbers 10. It does show, however, how purposeful the record is.

The name Kibroth Hattaavah essentially means, *Graves of the Lusting*. It is the location where the people lusted after meat, the Lord gave them quail, and – as it says – “there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.” Without attempting to over-symbolize the passage, there is another passage which matches what occurs here.

If the time at Sinai is given as symbolic of the time of Christ’s cross, then what occurred with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 makes a good parallel to what occurred here. Instead of being satisfied with life in Christ, they lusted after the things of the world, died because of it, and were buried in the *Graves of Lusting*.

As a note, Taberah was mentioned as a stopping place in Numbers 11, but it is not the name of a place of encampment. Here in Numbers 33, no such place is named. Therefore, and as we noted at that time, Taberah is surely a location within the confines of Kibroth Hattaavah, not specifically a separate location.

¹⁷ They departed from Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth.

The fourteenth movement of the people is from Kibroth Hattaavah, or *Graves of the Lusting*, to Hazeroth. *Khazeroth* is the plural of *khatser*, or village. Therefore, it means “Villages.” As we saw in a Numbers 12 sermon, Hazeroth implies a place of many villages, and thus many people. It made a fitting description of the dispersion of Israel around the world among many settlements and a wide range of peoples. Next...

¹⁸ They departed from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah.

The fifteenth movement of the people is from Hazeroth, or “Villages,” to Rithmah. Rithmah comes from *rethem*, meaning a type of broom, or juniper tree. That, in turn, comes from *ratham*, meaning “to bind” or “attach.”

From this point, Charles Ellicott explains many of the difficulties of the stops as recorded earlier, as are recorded now, and as will be recorded later in Deuteronomy. In the end, if you want to know an explanation for many of these difficulties, you can refer to his writings. For now, he notes that –

“...according to Numbers 12:16, the next encampment after Hazeroth was in the wilderness of Paran, from whence Moses, in obedience to the Divine command, sent the spies to search out the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:3). If, then, we compare these two accounts, and take into further consideration the fact that the Wady Abu Retemat is not far distant from Kadesh, and that, according to Robinson (I., p. 279), it abounds with the retem, or broom, and that near it there is a copious spring of water called Ain el Kudeirât, it seems reasonable to infer that the encampment at Rithmah which is recorded in this chapter is the same as that at Kadesh, “in the wilderness of Paran,” as recorded in Numbers 12:16.” Charles Ellicott

In other words, and as we have seen at other times, there are places with names already given that are also given names based on what occurs at those places. As this is the location where in Numbers 14 the people accepted the words of the spies, and rejected the word of the Lord, it may be what the psalmist speaks of in Psalm 120 –

“What shall be given to you,
Or what shall be done to you,
You false tongue?
⁴ Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With coals of the broom tree!” Psalm 120:3, 4

Here, we can see a picture. The root, *ratham*, meaning to “bind” or “attach” as with a yoke, pictures the people attaching themselves to a yoke, meaning the law, having rejected Christ. Paul calls the law a yoke in Galatians 5:1, 2 –

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.”

Because of this yoke, a truth is seen in the next words...

¹⁹ They departed from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon Perez.

The sixteenth movement is from Rithmah, or “Place of the Broom” to Rimmon Perez. Rimmon is a pomegranate, *perets* signifies a breach. Therefore, it is “Pomegranate of the Breach.” The word *rimmon* is associated with the word *rum* – “to be high,” or “exalted.” Thus, the pomegranate carries the connotation of mental maturity and calling to remembrance. Paul says those under the law are under a tutor; they are not mature. On

the contrary, he says in Galatians 3:25 that for those in Christ Jesus, "...after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."

Based on Charles Ellicott's words cited in the previous verse, he makes a logical assumption –

"If this inference be admitted, it is reasonable to conclude further that the seventeen places of encampment which are mentioned in Numbers 33:19-36 between Rithmah and Kadesh are those at which the Israelites pitched their camps during the thirty-eight years of wandering in the wilderness."

And this is exactly what is seen in the naming of this next stop, Rimmon Perez. There was a breach between the coming of Christ and them going on to mental maturity. They instead clung to the yoke of the law. They chose the law and went into exile, perfectly pictured – as we saw in the earlier Numbers sermons – in the thirty-eight years of wandering. The account fits exactly. Next...

²⁰ They departed from Rimmon Perez and camped at Libnah.

The seventeenth movement is from Rimmon Perez, or "Pomegranate of the Breach," to Livnah, or "Whiteness." On the surface, that doesn't seem to indicate anything connected to what we would expect of exile, however, Livnah comes from *lavan*, a verb meaning to make whiter, or make bricks because bricks whiten when they are made.

For those who have followed the use of this word since the early Genesis account where the people made *lavan*, or bricks, to build the tower of Babel, it has consistently been used to picture works-based salvation. Thus, this location follows the rejection of Christ, the breach in the people's mental maturity, and their attempts at being justified by works, and not by faith in Christ.

This isn't an arbitrary made up possibility, it is what *lavan*, or bricks, have consistently pictured, and it is exactly what occurred among Israel since they departed from Christ. Admittedly, from this point on, the pictorial imagery for each stop, at times, is difficult to determine. Some of my analyses concerning the meanings for them are, therefore, my best guess. For the next stop...

²¹ They moved from Libnah and camped at Rissah.

The eighteenth movement is from Livnah, or “Whiteness,” to Rissah. The word comes from *rasas*, signifying to moisten. That, in turn, comes from *rasiys* which is used in Amos 6:11 –

“For behold, the Lord gives a command:
He will break the great house **into bits**,
And the little house into pieces.” Amos 6:11

Rissah thus means Dew, or a Ruin. Thus, one can see the ruin promised upon Israel in the day of the Lord’s wrath.

²² They journeyed from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah.

The nineteenth movement is from Rissah, or “A Ruin,” to Qehelathah, or Assembly. It comes from *qahal*, meaning a convocation or assembly. What appears to be the case for this name, is that despite being under punishment, and also being brought to ruin, the Lord kept Israel as a united people; an assembly. Thus, they move from Ruin to Assembly. It is a note of grace, hope, and promise.

²³ They went from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher.

The twentieth movement is from Qehelathah, or Assembly, to Mount Shepher, or Beautiful Mount. As complete speculation, I would guess that this could follow along with the previous stop as a note of hope and promise. Despite their wanderings in exile, they are given the hope of possessing the beautiful mountain, meaning that of God with Messiah, someday.

It could be the exact opposite though. Israel under exile finds a Beautiful Mount to reside, and yet they are quickly plucked up and moved again. It is speculation.

²⁴ They moved from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah.

The twenty-first movement is from Mount Shepher, or Beautiful Mount, to Kharadah. This comes from *kharad*, meaning Terror, or Trembling. It can be good trembling, such as in Hosea 11:11, or it can be terrified trembling. It is either a continued promise of restoration, or a picture of the state of the people in exile. If the former...

²⁵ They moved from Haradah and camped at Makheloth.

The twenty-second movement is from Kharadah, or Terror, to Makheloth, Place of Assembly(ies). Hosea 11 says the following about the exiles of Israel using the same word, *kharad*, that is the basis for Haradah –

“They shall walk after the Lord.
He will roar like a lion.
When He roars,
Then *His* sons **shall come trembling** from the west;
¹¹ They **shall come trembling** like a bird from Egypt,
Like a dove from the land of Assyria.
And I will let them dwell in their houses,”
Says the Lord.” Hosea 11:10,11

If the imagery follows concerning hope of future restoration, it is a note that, even in a time of exile and punishment, those who tremble will return to their place of assembly. However, the name could mean that in their place of assemblies they will face terror until their time of exile is over. This was certainly the case for the Jewish people over the past two thousand years. That actually seems likely based on the next two stops...

²⁶ They moved from Makheloth and camped at Tahath.

The twenty-third movement is from Makehloth, or Place of Assembly, to Takhath. The name comes from *takhath* which means under or beneath, but it can also signify “in place of” because something that comes from under can replace, such as when Seth is said to have come in place of his murdered brother Abel.

Israel moves to Takhath, or In Place of, from the Place of Assemblies. This was certainly the case for Israel. They were taken out of their Place of Assembly, and they continued to be removed from each place they assembled, wandering from place to place throughout the generations. This is seen in the next move...

²⁷ They departed from Tahath and camped at Terah.

The twenty-fourth movement is from Takhath, or “In Place Of,” to Terakh. The name Terakh is the same as that of the father of Abraham. Its meaning is a best guess, but it appears to come from two words, *tur*, which gives the sense of a broad sweeping motion, and *ravakh* which is to be wide, spacious, unconfined, and so on. Thus, it could signify Wanderer.

It makes complete sense that they were given wandering in place of a home and a place of assembly. Thus, the names suit the pattern of Israel's exile. From there...

²⁸ They moved from Terah and camped at Mithkah.

The twenty-fifth movement is from Terah or Wanderer, to Mithkah. The word comes from *mathoq* – to become sweet or pleasant. Thus, it means Sweetness. Though seemingly unlike something experienced in exile, it may be exactly the opposite.

When in exile, Israel found wonderful, pleasant places to dwell. However, in time, they were uprooted again and forced to move on. That is the case with the move here and then away from here...

²⁹ They went from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah.

The twenty-sixth movement is from Mithkah, or Sweetness, to Khasmonah. It comes from *khashman* which is some type of envoy. That comes from a root signifying wealthy. Thus, it may mean Fertile. Being uprooted from a pleasant place, they find themselves in a new location, a fertile one. But for people under punishment, there is nothing permanent or lasting, and thus...

³⁰ They departed from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth.

The twenty-seventh movement is from Khashmonah, or Fertile, to Moseroth. It is the plural of the same place, Moserah, which is seen in Deuteronomy 10:6 –

“(Now the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah, where Aaron died, and where he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead.” Deuteronomy 10:6

As it says elsewhere that Aaron died on Mount Hor, it follows that the names Moserah, Moseroth, and Hor are the same place, or that Mount Hor is located near a place called Moserah. Moserah means Bond or Bonds, as in those used on prisoners.

The picture of exile in bonds is obvious, and it is how the people often found themselves. They chose the yoke of the law, bound themselves to it, and in turn they were bound and imprisoned in the lands of their exile.

³¹ They departed from Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan.

The twenty-eighth movement is from Moseroth, or Bonds, to Bene Yaaqan. Bene means sons. Yaaqan comes from a root, *aqal*, meaning to twist. It is used in Habakkuk 1:4 –

“Therefore the law is powerless,
And justice never goes forth.
For the wicked surround the righteous;
Therefore **perverse judgment** proceeds.” Habakkuk 1:4

Thus, Bene Jaaqan signifies Sons of Twisting, meaning perverting. The picture is obvious. It speaks of a people who twist that which is right and proper and follow a contrary path. This continues to be seen, especially in the liberal Jews of the world, to this day. However, it speaks of any who would forsake the truth of God in Christ, which Israel famously did and continues to do.

³² They moved from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Hagidgad.

The twenty-ninth movement is from Bene-Yaaqan, or Sons of Twisting, to Khor Hagidgad. Khor signifies a cavern. Hagidgad is a tough word to be dogmatic about. It is derived from *gadad*, meaning to assemble or to gash. Maybe it means Cavern of the Gatherers. At this point in the narrative, Israel is still under exile. They are still a united people, but they are exiles from their land. Despite having no home, they remain gathered as a people.

³³ They went from Hor Hagidgad and camped at Jotbathah.

The thirtieth movement is from Khor Hagidgad, or Cavern of the Gatherers, to Yotbathah, meaning “Pleasantness.” In Deuteronomy 10:7, Yotbathah is said to be a land of rivers of waters. However, the word for “rivers” there is one signifying a wadi. It receives water at intermittent intervals. That word comes from a verb signifying to take possession or inherit.

Yotbathah is a land of inheritance, but it is not **the** land of inheritance. There is nothing permanent there for Israel, and so they move on. Israel is united, and they are being led, outside of their land of inheritance, to their future meeting with destiny...

³⁴ They moved from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah.

The thirty-first movement is from Yotbathah, or Pleasantness, to Avronah, or Passage. It comes from *avar*, meaning to pass. The *nah* at the end is an imperative feminine plural. Thus, it would signify something like “Do Pass Over!”

If someone camps in a place that means “Do Pass Over!”, it means that they will not be staying in the place they have camped. The stops of Israel during their time of exile are temporary stops, as time urges them to continue on...

³⁵ They departed from Avronah and camped at Ezion Geber.

The thirty-second movement is from Avronah, or Do Pass Over, to Ezion Geber. The word Etsyon comes from *atseh*, the backbone. Geber speaks of a man. Thus, it is literally “Backbone of a Man.” As the backbone is the foundation of man, one could logically assume that this means, “Foundation of a Man.”

The location is at the very south of where Israel ends at Elath, just at the Red Sea. It is where the ships of Solomon went out from, and it is where the ships of Jehoshaphat were destroyed without ever leaving. Being this close to the land of Canaan, it is almost begging Israel to consider the Creator and how He has revealed Himself.

The foundation of a man is what he was created from and for. When man gets away from contemplating those things, the Lord works to redirect him so that there will be reconciliation. This was the purpose of Israel’s exile. Even though those in exile were destroyed along the way, the purpose of the exile was to bring the body of people back to Him in a restored relationship. He did this through the cross of Christ, and Israel will come to know that...

³⁶ They moved from Ezion Geber and camped in the Wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh.

The thirty-third movement is from Etsyon Geber, or Backbone of Man, to the Wilderness of Zin, which is at Kadesh. The name Tsin, signifies a thorn or a barb. It was seen several times already, when picturing the cross of Christ. The name Kadesh means “Holy.”

Israel has been confronted with the cross throughout their time of wandering, signified by the Wilderness of Zin. However, the name Kadesh or Holy was given not because the people were holy, but because of Moses’ failure to sanctify the Lord in the people’s eyes. That was seen in Numbers 27 –

“For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to **hallow** Me at the waters before their eyes.”

(These *are* the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)

-Numbers 27:14.

Israel is brought back to this location to remind them that the law is what brought about their exile. Moses struck the rock rather than speaking to it. In this, the sentence was pronounced –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, ‘Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.’” Numbers 20:12

They were sentenced to die in the wilderness with Israel. The Law cannot obtain the inheritance. Israel rejected the Lord’s promise and was exiled. The Law fails to honor the Lord, pictured by Moses, and the law could not bring entry into the inheritance. Thus, all were exiled...

³⁷ They moved from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the boundary of the land of Edom.

The thirty-fourth movement is from Kadesh, or Holy, to Mount Hor, or “Mount of the Mountain.” In a previous sermon from Numbers 20, it was seen that Mount Hor pictured Christ who is the fulfillment of the law. Here Mount Hor is said to be “on the boundary of the land of Edom.”

Edom is given as a picture of Adam, the man who was made from the red soil of the earth. Israel has arrived at this spot, traveling from Holy to the Mount of the Mountain, bordering the land of Edom. It is here at this time...

³⁸ Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the Lord, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first *day* of the fifth month.

As we saw in a sermon from Numbers 20, Aaron’s death signified the ending of the law in Christ’s greater priesthood. It was in the 39th year of the wanderings of Israel, just as the Old Testament ends with 39 books. With the Aaronic priesthood ended, the time of the law was also ending. The pictures which followed this in the Numbers narrative clearly reflected this. With the death of Aaron recorded here, it now says...

³⁹ Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.

This statement is in exacting agreement with Exodus 7:7 which says, “Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.” That then agrees with Deuteronomy 34:7, which says, “Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died.”

The year of Aaron’s death, then, is the year 2554 Anno Mundi, or from the creation of the world. The dates given show the reliability of the entire account concerning the lines of Adam until this point. The Aaronic priesthood has and will find its end in Christ. It is done, but there is still another seven years left for Israel to figure this out before they call on Christ...

⁴⁰ Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel.

This is in agreement with Numbers 21:1 which said –

“The king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South, heard that Israel was coming on the road to Atharim. Then he fought against Israel and took *some* of them prisoners.” Numbers 21:1

All of the details of why this king is mentioned were given minutely in Chapter 21. If you missed that, it is a marvelous passage to go back and get updated on. In short, it was given to show that Israel will, at some point, go from personal works of the law to faith in Christ in order to enter into the promise. It speaks of the age in which we are now, and which will soon come to pass.

Though there have been some difficulties up to this point in the names of the locations, between accounts in Numbers and Deuteronomy, these are only difficulties because different names are used for the same places. Also, the account here is specifically chronological whereas, at times, this has not been the case.

⁴¹ So they departed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah.

The thirty-fifth movement is from Mount Hor, or Mount of the Mountain, to Zalmonah. The name Tsalmonah comes from *tselem*, which means image, or a likeness. When God created man, He did so in His *tselem*, or image. Tselem comes from a root meaning to shade and thus figuratively to make a resemblance. And so, it means Shady or Image.

This name, and because it is mentioned here in the narrative, may indicate the place where the Bronze Serpent was fashioned. It being an image of the serpents which had bit them. That is only conjecture though. For Israel in exile, it is a note that they too will go from the image of the earthy man to that of the heavenly Man, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 –

“The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.” 1 Corinthians 15:47-49

Next, it says...

⁴² They departed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon.

The thirty-sixth movement is from Tsalmonah, or Image, to Punon. This comes from *pun*, meaning “to be distraught.” That is only found in Psalm 88 –

“I *have been* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth;
I suffer Your terrors;
I am **distraught**.” Psalm 88:15

Therefore, Punon means something like “Perplexity.” Despite being prepared for entry into the land, step by step, the people of Israel are, and will remain, in perplexity until they have come to God through Christ...

⁴³ They departed from Punon and camped at Oboth.

The thirty-seventy movement is from Punon, or Perplexity, to Oboth, or Wineskins. This place was seen in Numbers 21:10. The *oboth*, or wineskins pictured the people of Israel. This is based on what Jesus said in the synoptic gospels –

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. ³⁹ And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’” Luke 5:37-39

Jesus was speaking of the law and grace. If one tries to put the grace the Lord provides into the law, the skins couldn't handle it. They were incompatible and both are ruined in the attempt. The people are the wineskins, ready to be filled with the New Covenant grace found in Christ. From there...

⁴⁴ They departed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim, at the border of Moab.

The thirty-eighth movement is from Oboth, or Wineskins, to Ije Abarim. This is recorded in Numbers 21:11. *Iye* comes from *iy*, meaning "a ruin." *Avarim* comes from *avar*, meaning "to pass through." Thus, *iyē ha'avarim* means something like "Ruins of the Passers," or "Ruins of the Crossing-over."

There were some rather magnificent pictures of redemptive history which were recorded in the surrounding verses of Numbers 21. In short, *Iye of the Abarim*, or Ruins of the Passers, speaks of that which is past. In order to get to glory, one must pass through the ruins of his past life. Nobody starts in glory, and this is what is being seen here. The wineskin of grace means passing through that which is ruined. From there...

⁴⁵ They departed from Ijim and camped at Dibon Gad.

The thirty-ninth movement is from Iyim, or "Heaps," to Dibon Gad. Iyim is a shortened form of Iye Abarim. Dibon means "Pining." Gad means "Troop" or "Fortune." Thus, it may mean Pining of the Troop.

Coming to this place appears to be foreshadowing what it says in Zechariah 12. The pining, or mourning, of Israel will be great when they realize what they had missed –

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. ¹¹ In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo."

-Zechariah 12:10, 11

Next...

⁴⁶ They moved from Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim.

The fortieth movement is from Dibon Gad, or Pining of the Troop, to – as the Hebrew reads – Almon Diblathaimah. Almon comes from *alam*, meaning to conceal. Diblathaimah is a plural word coming from *debelah*, or fig cakes. Thus, it is something like “Hidden Cakes of Figs.”

The *debelah*, or fig cakes, are mentioned six times in the Old Testament. They are given to signify nourishment and healing. In the case of healing King Hezekiah, it was actually for the restoration of life itself. What is hidden in Christ is to be revealed to the people of Israel for their nourishment and their healing unto life. Next...

⁴⁷ They moved from Almon Diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo.

The forty-first movement is from Almon Diblathaim, or Hidden Fig Cakes, to the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo. *ha’avarim*, or the Abarim, means the Regions Beyond, or the Crossings. But, remembering from a previous sermon, Abarim is spelled the same as both *ivrim*, or Hebrews, and *oberim*, or transgressions. Both of those bear the sense of crossing over. Nebo means Interpreter or Foreteller.

The mountains of Abarim do not speak of being in the promise, but they are the regions outside of the promise. This is where Moses will die. Those Hebrews who come to Christ must cross over. And only in this will their crossings over of the law, or transgressions, be forgiven.

The law was given to be interpreted as something which foretells the coming Christ. It is not a means to an end. This stop anticipates crossing over from the law to the grace of Christ and into the land of promise.

⁴⁸ They departed from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.

The forty-second movement is from the mountains of **the** Abarim, or the Regions Beyond to the plains of Moab, by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho. Moav means, “From Father.” Jordan means Descender. It is a picture of Christ who descended from the heavens, even to the lowest parts. Jericho means “Place of Fragrance,” or “Place of the Moon.”

Each of these anticipates Christ. It is He who is From Father. He is the Descender, and He leads His people into the Place of Fragrance, the heavenly kingdom. This last movement

of Israel, which was recorded in Numbers 22:1, brings the Israelites to their last stop before entering into Canaan. This location is now further explained with the words...

^{49 (fin)} They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jesimoth as far as the Abel Acacia Grove in the plains of Moab.

The NKJV incorrectly says here Beth Jesimoth. It is Beth Jeshimoth. Beth means "House." ha'yeshimoth means, "The Desolations." Thus, it is "House of the Desolations." Abel means "Meadow," and *ha'shittim* means "the Acacias." Thus, it is "Meadow of the Acacias."

However, *shittim* comes from a word, *shotet*, signifying a "scourge." That root is used only once in the Bible. In Joshua 23:13, it says –

“...know for certain that the Lord your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.” Joshua 23:13

Thus, the scourges are that which draw the people away from faith in the Lord and to that which is false. Everything outside of the land of promise is a House of Desolations, and it is a place which will draw people away from the Lord.

It is at this spot that the Lord will give the people advice concerning their inheritance, in the verses and chapters to come, and it is also here that the Lord will speak out the words of Deuteronomy. After that, Moses will be taken up to the top of Nebo, see the land of promise, and there die.

The travels of Israel have been carefully documented to show us what Israel would do in her exile, and how the Lord would work slowly and methodically throughout the span of years to both punish them, and to also lead them back to Himself.

I will be as honest as I can, and tell you that the pictorial meaning for many of these stops are a best guess on my part, but as we saw with many that are certain beyond a shadow of a doubt, they are all given for the specific purpose of showing us snapshots of Israel's history, including its future. This is absolutely assured.

The patterns we had seen in chapters 14-21 have been relived and expanded on, and yet the names and places carefully follow that same pattern of God's tender care for Israel

due to His covenant faithfulness, despite Israel's deserved punishment for their covenant unfaithfulness.

In the end, and as I have shown you many times in the past, we can look to God's covenant faithfulness to Israel under the Law of Moses, and compare it to us under the New Covenant in Christ's blood. Though He punished them for their misdeeds, He never rejected them as His people.

How good that is to know when we fail to honor Him as we should. He has promised in the book of Hebrews that He will never leave us nor forsake us, and He has promised that any punishment we receive is because He loves us as His sons. What a glorious God we serve. What a faithful, wonderful Father we have.

When we come to this list of stops from Sinai to Canaan, we know this and cherish the thought as we read through the otherwise difficult and even obscure names of places that Israel really traveled through on their way back to the loving arms of their Lord and Father.

Closing Verse: *"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.' ⁷If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?" Hebrews 12:5-7*

Next Week: Numbers 33:50-56 *For this, Israel will forever the Lord bless...* (I Have Given You the Land to Possess) (66th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Journeys of Israel, From Sinai to the Plains of Moab

They moved from the Wilderness of Sinai
And camped at Kibroth Hattaavah, by and by

They departed from Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth
They departed from Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah
They departed from Rithmah and camped at Rimmon Perez
They departed from Rimmon Perez and camped at Libnah
They moved from Libnah and camped at Rissah
They journeyed from Rissah and camped at Kehelathah
They went from Kehelathah and camped at Mount Shepher
They moved from Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah

They moved from Haradah and camped at Makheloth
They moved from Makheloth and camped at Tahath
They departed from Tahath and camped at Terah
They moved from Terah and camped at Mithkah
———-at Mithkah they temporarily did squat

They went from Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah
They departed from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth
They departed from Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan
They moved from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Hagidgad
———-a place worthy of note

They went from Hor Hagidgad and camped at Jotbathah
They moved from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah
———-maybe at Abronah the flowers were fresh
They departed from Abronah and camped at Ezion Geber
They moved from Ezion Geber and camped
———-in the Wilderness of Zin, which is Kadesh

They moved from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor
On the boundary of the land of Edom, so says the word
Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor
At the command of the Lord

And died there in the fortieth year
After the children of Israel
Had come out of the land of Egypt
On the first day of the fifth month as the record does tell

Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old

When he died on Mount Hor. He lived a good long spell
Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South
———-in the land of Canaan
Heard of the coming of the children of Israel
So they departed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah
They departed from Zalmonah and camped at Punon
———-according to the order
They departed from Punon and camped at Oboth
They departed from Oboth and camped at Ije Abarim
———-at Moab's border

They departed from Ijim and camped at Dibon Gad
They moved from Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim
They moved from Almon Diblathaim
And camped before Nebo in the mountains of Abarim
They departed from the mountains of Abarim
And camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan
———- across from Jericho
They camped by the Jordan, from Beth Jesimoth as far as
———-the Abel Acacia Grove
In the plains of Moab, as we now know

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 33:50-56 (I HAVE GIVEN YOU THE LAND TO POSSESS)

In today's passage, the people have the surety that they are entering Canaan. Verse 50 makes that perfectly clear. The Lord says, "When you have crossed the Jordan." So there is no need to wonder if it will happen, it will.

However, no sooner does the Lord say this than He gives directions as to what should be done. That already seems a bit ominous. He has given them about seven jillion directions of things to do or not to do since they agreed to the covenant, and yet, they have consistently failed to do, or not do, those things which they were to not to, or to do. The very fact that they have failed thus far calls into question their future in Canaan. History is often the best gauge of future performance. Further, the Lord tells them exactly what the consequences for failure will be.

Joseph Benson actually provides reasons for Israel to fail to do what they were supposed to do. He says, "Those of them whom ye suffer to remain in the land through your cowardice, slothfulness, or friendship toward them, shall be a great plague to you, and bring sore calamities upon you."

Each of those can be a strong enticement for failure to comply. We are protective of self at times, even to the point of cowardice. It takes great reliance on our cause – whatever it may be – to step forward and face risk, even to the point of death.

As humans, we can be slothful in one area or another. As groups of people, we can be industrious in one way, and slothful in another. Often, it isn't intentional. Rather, it can be cultural. In this way or that, we can slothfully fail to do what we should.

And friendship can be the greatest hindrance to doing what is right. That is seen in Scripture, and it is seen in our own lives. Few people have the moral grounding to go fully against any and all established friendships when it is the right thing to do.

Text Verse: *"In that day 'HOLINESS TO THE LORD' shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. ²¹ Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." Zechariah 14:20, 21*

The Lord prophesied through Zechariah that a time was coming when Jerusalem would be the focus of the world's attention, and that there would be no Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. Why is that verse relevant to what we are looking at in our verses today?

One thing is for sure, the prophecies of Zechariah 14 have never been fulfilled in human history. Nor have many other prophecies been fulfilled which run throughout the Bible, a few of which we will see in our sermon today.

Unless you are adamant in being wrong about biblical theology, you must admit that these prophecies are to be taken literally, and that they point not to the church, but to Israel.

And, unless you want to continue being wrong by stating that the church has replaced Israel, you must admit that the reemergence of Israel in the modern world must have some prophetic significance which must be a part of what those verses are prophesying. What is to be taken as an axiom in theology is that one plus one will always equal two. Prophecies about Israel will be fulfilled by Israel. That much is certain. So let's stick to what is rational and look at things from that perspective. And... let's get into the sermon. What is presented here is another marvelous part of His superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. An Introductory Thought

This short passage is a transitional one between the record of the wilderness wanderings which preceded it, and the preparation for the division of land which will be seen in the coming chapter. There, the boundaries of the land will be stated, and the names of the leaders who are appointed to divide the land will be named.

Everything is being prepared for Israel, in advance of their entry into the land, but it is being done by the Lord through Moses. One can see a glimpse of salvation for the believer in how this is laid out, using Moses the man as typical of the law itself.

To understand this, we must first review what the purpose of the law was. Only then can we understand the symbolism of what is being relayed to us by the Lord now speaking to Moses about the inheritance.

The Lord gave the law to Israel. The law was intended to act as a means of bringing life to man. This was explicitly stated in Leviticus 18 –

“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the Lord.” Leviticus 18:5

Life could come through the law. However, the Lord said to them that this would only come about if one did the things found in His statutes and His judgments. As it says, “if a man does.”

As we saw when we were in that passage and that particular verse from Leviticus, it was given based on the holiness of God. The central theme of Leviticus, and thus the central theme of the giving of the law itself, is found in Leviticus 11:44. There it said, “...you shall be holy; for I am holy.”

It is a theme that Peter picked up on for those in Christ in 1 Peter 1:15 & 16. There he quoted Leviticus exactly. Holiness is the expectation of man in the presence of God. However, how is that obtained?

For those under law, the answer is found in doing the things of the law, as explained in Leviticus 18:5. That verse contains the main logical reason for man to be holy, and the promised outcome for him walking in holiness. In doing so, he would live.

Leviticus 18:5 is such an important verse, that it is incorporated into the thought of Genesis 2 & 3, and it is substantially repeated several times in both the Old and New Testaments. In Genesis 2, the Lord gave a command which promised death if disobeyed. The implication then is that life would result through obedience –

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:16, 17

However, in Genesis 3, because man disobeyed the law given by the Lord, access to the tree of life, by which man could live forever, was denied, and death entered the world. But in Leviticus, the Lord made a promise that through obedience to His law, the man shall live. As we saw at that time, many scholars simply pass this off as meaning living happily or possessing a higher life, or something like that.

But this was not at all what the Lord was saying. Rather, it is a promise that if a man keeps the requirements of the law, he will live and not die. Consequently, and on the flip side, if one does not keep the requirements of the law, he will die and not live.

The Lord dwelt among Israel. Access to Him at the tabernacle, and later at the temple, was restricted because of man's sin-nature. But it was also restricted because of the law itself. Without meeting the law's precepts, there could be no access.

However, in fulfillment of the law, access would naturally be granted once again. It could not be otherwise. The law was given to give life. If life is promised, then it must be granted.

If one doesn't die, then he continues to live. If he lives forever, then he has eternal life. This is the implication of the words of Leviticus 18:5, and that thought, as we saw then, was solidified by the use of a definite article in front of the word "man."

Leviticus 18:5 doesn't say "if a man does." It says, "if **the** man does." During that sermon, I asked you to correct your Bible so you would see this on your next journey through Leviticus. Thus, that verse looks forward to Christ – The Man who, in fact, did keep the ordinances and judgments of Yehovah, and thus He is the Possessor of eternal life.

This is exactly explained in the book of Romans and elsewhere in the New Testament as well. Christ fulfilled the law, and thus the law is fulfilled. In Him, life is granted.

Leviticus 18:5 is so important that Nehemiah 9:29 refers to it after the people's return from the punishment of exile. Ezekiel 20 then repeats it three times to show that failure to keep the Lord's law is what resulted in that punishment.

In the New Testament, Paul then cites this same verse twice, in Romans 10:5, and in Galatians 3:12 to show that Christ, who fulfilled the Law of Moses, is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes in Him.

It is faith in His completion of this law which grants eternal life. He did the work; we must do the believing. This, then, explains the thirty-eight years of wilderness wandering.

That was given, as was clearly seen in the earlier Numbers sermons, as a type or picture of the punishment of Israel rejecting Christ Jesus. Israel failed to do the believing, and

they were punished for it, exactly as the Lord, through the law, said time and again would occur.

And so what does that have to do with the Lord now instructing Moses on what lies ahead in this passage? It is, as I said a few minutes ago, a transitional passage between the stops of Israel since leaving Sinai, and the appointment of the boundaries of the land, and the naming of the people who would divide it.

Israel was redeemed, Israel received the law, the law pointed to Christ, and Israel rejected Christ. Because of that, they went into the punishment of exile. Now, they are on the border of the land of inheritance with Moses being instructed on the layout and division of it.

It is Moses, representative of the law, who is given the instruction. And yet, Moses will not enter into the inheritance. The law has no part in the inheritance, except for the completion of it.

The man who does the things of the law will live. Christ accomplished the things of the law, and He lives. Thus, He is the embodiment of the law. Moses, standing representative of the law will die outside of the inheritance, in the land of Moab.

Christ did not die in heaven. Rather, He died outside of that inheritance in this fallen world. When He died, the law died with Him because it is fulfilled in Him. Further, His death was not for His sin under the law, but ours. Therefore, in Him is life, not death. Our sin for transgressions of the law dies in Him, and life is granted to us in exchange.

For Israel of today, the inheritance is yet ahead, but this is what this is picturing. They can either die under the law, represented by Moses dying outside of Canaan, or they can die in Christ, represented by the entering of the promise.

This is what this short transitional set of verses is anticipating. An inheritance awaits. However, the typology ends there with that thought in some respects. Once Israel actually crosses the Jordan, they will again be used to show countless examples of the spiritual battle which is being waged, the futility of life under the law, the hope of Messiah to come, and so on.

Each passage of a section builds up to a completion, and then the stories begin again, just as was seen in the many stories of Genesis. For now, the main lesson for us to remember – and it is one which has been repeated uncounted times already – is that we cannot obtain the inheritance through the law. Only Christ could do that.

For us, the inheritance is obtained through THE MAN who did the things of the law. If we step back from that premise and to the law itself, we only bring ourselves condemnation because – as we have seen – the man who does the things of the law will live by them, and we cannot do the things of the law.

*What is it that will bring me life?
What thing must I do to be right with my God?
What will end this enmity and strife?
How shall I conduct my affairs on this path I trod?*

Shall I stand before God and boast in what I have done?
Shall I rely on my deeds accomplished under the law?
Shall I reject the perfection of His Son?
Am I able to stand on my own, without spot or flaw?

Not on a bet would I so determine to do!
*A single misdeed and I would be done in
I will trust in the work of the Lord, holy and true
Only through Him will I be freed from the penalty of sin*

*Thanks be to God for Christ Jesus my Lord
Only in Him will I to the judgment seat step forward*

II. Instructions Concerning the Conquest (verses 50-56)

⁵⁰ Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from Jericho*, saying,

The picture is the same as has been seen several times already, even just last week as we closed that passage. Moses represents the law, of whom Christ is the embodiment. Moab means “From Father.” It is Christ who is From Father and who has been given the law as His responsibility to live out.

The Jordan, or “Descender” is typical of Christ who descended to accomplish His work in order to bring the people into their inheritance. Jericho, or Place of Fragrance, is typical of that step into a return to paradise because of Christ. As Paul says –

“Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?”
2 Corinthians 2:14-16

These are the types which the narrative anticipates in Christ and in His work.

There is also the reality of the passage which originally took place. Israel is, within a very short span, going to enter into Canaan. Once over the Jordan, the land must be subdued, those things which are unholy must be destroyed, the land must be divided among the tribes, and the people must be made aware of the penalties for not living holy in the presence of the holy God, who is the Lord.

A brief review of these principles will now be laid out, and then each will be further explained, detailed, or revealed in the short span of a few weeks before Moses dies. For now, it is interesting to note that the general sentiment found in this verse is repeated again in Numbers 35:1 and it is also used to close out the book of Numbers at the very end of Chapter 36.

In other words, the substance of Numbers 33:50 through Numbers 36:13 forms its own unique addition to the body of law found in the books of Moses and which are a part of the law itself. It is that which is spoken of at their very last stopping point before entering the inheritance, and yet it is separate from the book of Deuteronomy which will also be put forth in this same spot.

This final section of Numbers is then subdivided into Numbers 33:50 through the end of Chapter 34, and then from Numbers 35:1 until the end of Chapter 36, which closes out the book.

⁵¹ **“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:**

This is what the Lord is said to have spoken to Moses in the previous verse. He is to “Speak to the children of Israel.” This is not merely something for the priests, but rather for all of the people.

As Israel is a group of people who are descended from a man, Jacob who is Israel, the words are spoken to all of his sons, meaning the twelve tribes, and all who descend from them.

The expectation is that what will be directed will be accomplished within a certain amount of time, but if it fails to be accomplished, that which is left undone will result in problems not specifically for this generation, but for all generations to follow.

Thus, the idea of speaking to the children of Israel here means the people now and at all times ahead. A matter left unattended to can be and must be corrected later, or it will continue to be a festering wound for the people. This will be seen in the words to Moses as the Lord continues.

That is a good lesson for us, even now. The Lord has spoken to the world through His word. He has also spoken to His church directly through His word. A matter which is left unattended to, or which is in violation of His word, is guaranteed to result in a wound. The only way to heal such a wound is to correct what caused it, and what has caused it to continue and grow, which was a violation of His word in the first place. Faulty doctrine is such a violation. The church will suffer from it, just as Israel suffered from violations of the law of the Lord.

The only courses that will result are continued expansions of the trouble if left uncorrected, eventually leading to rejection by the Lord, or a correction of the problem and returning to what is expected by Him. This is why Moses is told to speak to the children of Israel. Everyone is to be aware because the matter will, eventually, affect all. And, the instructions are for...

⁵¹ (con’t) **“When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan,**

At other times, the Lord spoke in general terms concerning entry into the land, such as in Leviticus 23:10 –

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.’” Leviticus 23:10

Now, the word from the Lord is that this general time spoken of before has arrived. With a simple crossing of the Jordan, the hope of the people will be realized. The imagery of Christ for the Christian is obvious. When we cross over Christ, meaning passing through what He has done for us, the journey home is complete. It may not be realized actually, but it is a done deal.

For Israel, Canaan is the anticipated inheritance. It is also the anticipated place of rest. Once they have entered the land, the people must act in accord with the word or the inheritance will be marred, and the rest will not be achieved. The question is then, how will this be achieved? The beginning to that answer is...

⁵² then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you,

The verb for “drive out” here is *yarash*. It speaks of occupying as a possession. In essence, “you shall dispossess them from the land before you.” The meaning of this is explained more fully in Deuteronomy –

“When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, ²and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them *and* utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.” Deuteronomy 7:1, 2

To “drive out all the inhabitants” then means nothing less than destroying them. If they simply drove them out physically, they could regroup and attempt to retake the land they had been disinherited from.

Or, they could make an alliance with another nation and come back to destroy Israel. The remedy was not driving out physically, but driving out through extermination. Further, they were to...

⁵² (con't) destroy all their engraved stones,

Here is a word which has only been seen once so far, *maskith*, or imagination. It is derived *sekvi* which speaks of the mind, and thus it refers to the imaginations of the mind in forming an image.

The NKJV wrongly says, “engraved stones.” Here, it is a single word signifying imagery of any type, not merely stone. Because this is dealing with the mind, it may be that it is some type of image used as a talisman or that which is intended to influence a person as in divination or the like. Using this same word in Leviticus 26:1, it said –

“You shall not make idols for yourselves; neither a carved image nor a *sacred* pillar shall you rear up for yourselves; nor shall you set up an **engraved stone** in your land, to bow down to it; for I *am* the Lord your God.” Leviticus 26:1

As can be seen, it is some type of imagery which could be bowed down to in idolatry. Therefore, any such imagery was to be destroyed. To have such images could, and would, inevitably lead the people to idolatry and/or sorcery. Further, they were told to...

⁵² (con’t) **destroy all their molded images,**

v’eth kal tsalme masekotam t’abedu – “and all images their molten you shall destroy.” Here, the word *tselem* speaks of an image of something else. The second word, *masekah*, speaks of that which is poured out, thus signifying molten. It is something cast into a shape which represents something else, like a Buddha, or a lion, or whatever. These were to be destroyed. Further...

⁵² (con’t) **and demolish all their high places;**

v’eth kal bamotam tashmidu – “and all high places desolate.” The word is *shamad*, which comes from a root signifying desolation. Thus it means to destroy until erased. The high places refer to places of worship which are on hilltops, mountains, and the like.

The idea is that the person goes up in order to bring himself closer to his god. This is contrary to the concept found in Scripture where God condescends to descend to His people. To elevate oneself through going to a high place signifies several things. First, it means that a person feels worthy enough to get closer to his god. Therefore, pride is involved.

Secondly, it means that the person has labored on his own to ascend to his god. Thus, personal works are involved in his communing with his deity. That obviously bears undertones of pride as well.

Thirdly, it denies the omnipresence of God because if God is truly God, He is everywhere. The symbolism of God descending, or “coming down to man,” is that of meeting

man on his level, but it doesn't actually mean that God is not omnipresent. But to go to a high place would give the mind that impression.

This offensive practice was never eradicated by Israel, even during the administration of Samuel, who is said to have gone to the high places to sacrifice, nor at the time of Solomon, who is said to have gone "to the high place that was in Gibeon" to meet with the Lord.

However, at times, kings of Judah such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah were noted as having obediently followed the Lord and destroyed these idolatrous places of worship. Unfortunately, as soon as a new king reigned, the people would go right back to their practices, sometimes even being spurred on by the king himself. In fact, of king Ahaz, it says –

"For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made molded images for the Baals. ³ He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. ⁴ And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree."

-2 Chronicles 28:2-4

Later, similar words were spoken concerning Manasseh. So wicked had he become that there was finally no remedy. Even after the good king, Josiah, brought great reforms to the land, the Lord's anger was too hot, and so He spoke forth His words of doom –

"Nevertheless the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath, with which His anger was aroused against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. ²⁷ And the Lord said, "I will also remove Judah from My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"

-2 Kings 23:26, 27

The law was agreed to, the people were warned, and eventually there was no remedy left. Though Israel always revered Moses as their great lawgiver, they failed to revere the Lord who is the true Source of that law, and they failed to heed the words of law which came through Moses.

Indeed, the fickle state of Israel is mirrored in our own hearts, lives, and churches as well. For many, there will not be a happy end to their walk, all because of idolatry of the

heart and of the mind, and because of a failing to simply put self aside and trust in Jesus. For now, the Lord continues His instruction to Moses...

⁵³ you shall dispossess *the inhabitants of* the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.

The same word, *yarash*, that was used in verse 52 is used twice in this verse. There is a dispossessing of the inhabitants, and then there is the possessing by Israel. And this possession is based on an inheritance...

⁵⁴ And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone's *inheritance* shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers.

These words here are similar to words found in Numbers 26 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁵³ ‘To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names. ⁵⁴ To a large *tribe* you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a small *tribe* you shall give a smaller inheritance. Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them. ⁵⁵ But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. ⁵⁶ According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller.’” Numbers 26:52-56

What is obvious is that this inheritance is not by size of tribe. In Numbers 26, the NKJV inserted the word “tribe” twice by saying, “To a larger tribe you shall give,” and “to a small tribe you shall give.” That is, as we saw then, wholly incorrect.

As it says in this verse now, “And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families.” It is not by tribe, but by family that the size of the inheritance is made. The tribe’s inheritance is not based on its given size, but rather it is based upon the lot. As it says, “...everyone’s *inheritance* shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers.” The Lord, through the lot, determined where each tribe would be situated. The division of that tribal land was to then be divided by size according to the family within the tribe.

This was the whole purpose of the second census which was conducted based on family. The importance of this was that by the Lord choosing where the tribes would be located,

the prophecies which had already been spoken concerning Judah and other tribes would be fulfilled.

What happened within the tribal land was of less consequence than the actual location of the tribal land itself. Regardless of location, though, the importance of clearing the land – and the reason for it – is again stated and expanded on...

⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain *shall be* irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.

This is a solemn and dire warning to Israel. It is not a maybe. Nor is it something tolerable but which could be ignored. Rather, it is a surety, and it is something that would constantly afflict and torment Israel, if they failed to heed.

The consequences for not dispossessing all of the people of the land are threefold. The first is that they would be *l'sikem b'enekhem*, or something which affects the eyes. The word here is *sek*, and it is only found here in the Bible. It is believed to come from the word *sakak*, meaning a covering. How that can be then translated as a thorn, as most translations say, is difficult to justify.

The NKJV steps out and says “irritants.” That probably comes closer to the meaning. It probably signifies something that causes the eyes to be covered over like getting pepper-sprayed, and so it is a constant irritant. But even more, it would keep the people from seeing what is right, and what was harmful. Thus, they would be people without discernment.

The second consequence is that they would be *v'litsninim b'sidekhem* – “and thorns in your sides.” This word, *tsanin*, is more certain. It is a thorn. It is only seen twice. The second time, interestingly, it is speaking of being a thorn in the eyes, showing that the first word is something other than a thorn –

“But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and **thorns** in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the Lord your God has given you.” Joshua 23:13

The idea here is that no matter which way one turns, there will be the discomfort of sharp pains. Thus, there would be the constant spiritual needling of these people which would rob Israel of her ability to rightly pursue the Lord.

The third consequence is that “they shall harass you in the land where you dwell.” It is the same word which was used concerning the treatment of the Midianites when they troubled Israel, pulling them into physical and spiritual harlotry.

The harassing spoken of here would be both literal and spiritual. The word gives the sense of besieging. Thus Israel would be besieged by the very people they were to dispossess. Of these three consequences, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown wrongly states –

“This earnest admonition given to the Israelites in their peculiar circumstances conveys a salutary lesson to us to allow no lurking habits of sin to remain in us. That spiritual enemy must be eradicated from our nature; otherwise it will be ruinous to our present peace and future salvation.”

This is a poor analogy. They are equating collective Israel to us individually, which is not incorrect, but then they make the error of saying that what happened to Israel can be equated to a ruining of our own salvation.

People may argue over whether a believer can lose his salvation or not (which he cannot), but the analogy is still faulty because God has never forsaken Israel. If Israel is to be equated to the individual in Christ, which is acceptable and correct, the obvious conclusion is that the individual cannot lose his salvation – quite the opposite of their analysis. What this can be equated to, is the state of individual churches which fail to deal with sin in their congregations. Eventually, judgment will come, and the church will have its lampstand removed. Regardless of that, for Israel, the words have been spoken, and they will assuredly come to pass.

Zechariah was a post-exilic prophet. What that verse implied is that the Canaanites remained in the land throughout the years of Israel prior to their exile, and they continued on in the land after the return of the exiles. This is even seen in Matthew 15:22 where he notes “a woman of Canaan” being in the region of Tyre and Sidon.

The Canaanites picture those who bring others into subjection, and thus false teachers who subject their people to false doctrines. What is seen of the inhabitants of Canaan troubling Israel in a physical way is directly equated to how false teachers brought Israel, and indeed many in the church, into spiritual bondage.

The promise of Zechariah 14 is that someday this will no longer be the case in Israel. They will be subject to the Lord, who is Jesus the Messiah.

The sad part for Israel here is that they had already seen the truth of what the Lord promises will occur when they were joined to Baal of Peor, and when they failed to eradicate the Midianites as expected. They were given advanced lessons in the consequences of their actions, and they failed to pay heed and learn. In their failing, the Lord finishes with this solemn promise...

^{56 (fin)} **Moreover it shall be *that* I will do to you as I thought to do to them.”**

The chapter ends with the introduction of a new word, *damah*, or to be like. The Lord told Israel to dispossess the inhabitants of the land. This can then only be taken in one way. In failing to do so, and in being overcome by those they should have overcome, the Lord would make a comparative exchange and, instead, dispossess Israel.

And what this means, without holding back for the sake of political correctness, is that Israel's two exiles, and the punishment they received before and during those exiles, were wholly self-inflicted wounds.

What occurred to them could have been avoided. But they were selected to be the example for the world to see. The law can save no one through his own futile attempts to live by it. Rather, the law can save anyone when his trust is in Christ who fulfilled it in his stead.

Israel was told to cross over the Jordan and to do certain things in order to be secure and free from harm, but they missed the typology of what the Jordan, or the Descender, anticipated. When they crossed over, it was in anticipation of entering their inherited rest. However, the book of Hebrews, quoting the 95th Psalm, says of the wilderness generation, “They shall not enter My rest.” The psalmist then says later in the psalm, “Today, if you will hear His voice.” Understanding that the psalmist lived long after Israel crossed the Jordan, the author of Hebrews then says –

“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.” Hebrew 4:8

The only logical conclusion, which is explained fully by the author of Hebrews, is that Joshua did not bring them into their rest, and that he was only used as a type of Christ to come. When Israel rejected Christ, they made the same pattern as when Israel rejected the Lord after leaving Sinai when they refused to enter Canaan.

The point of the author's words, and indeed the point of Israel's existence as the people called by God, is to demonstrate – without a doubt – that the law cannot save anyone apart from Christ, and that all need Christ, even Israel – collectively and individually.

And how can we know that this is correct? All we need to do is look at what the typology has brought us to. Israel was in the wilderness under punishment wandering for the past 40 years prior to crossing the Jordan. That clearly pointed to Israel's punishment and exile for the past 2000 years.

At the end of the exile, there will be a great battle which will then usher in the time of the millennium. A time when Christ will physically rule from Jerusalem for 1000 years. But what does it say about the people of the land at that time? Not that Israel is to dispossess them. Rather, Ezekiel prophesies about it –

“Thus you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. ²² It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. ²³ And it shall be *that* in whatever tribe the stranger dwells, there you shall give *him* his inheritance,” says the Lord God.” Ezekiel 47:21-23

The time of rest will be realized for this long wayward people, and that rest will include any who are there to dwell with them in the land. Both Jew and Gentile have been given, and continue to be offered, the same salvation. Someday, Israel will see this and reach out for what they have missed for so long.

God's promised rest is what Israel anticipated, it is what they failed to obtain, and it is what is now realized in Christ Jesus. Hebrews says, “For we who have believed do enter that rest.” Have you called on Jesus? Have you entered into the rest promised by God? If not, today would be a great day for you to do so.

The fulfillment of the ages is coming quickly, and the time for the world, as it is now being run, is rapidly coming to a close. Be sure that you are ready for the day when things change, and God comes for His people and then judges the world in righteousness.

Closing Verse: *“And there shall no longer be a pricking brier or a painful thorn for the house of Israel from among all who are around them, who despise them. Then they shall know that I am the Lord God.” Ezekiel 28:24*

Next Week: Numbers 34:1-29 *Is it the same as heaven? No, not a chance...* (The Earthly Inheritance) (67th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

I Have Given You the Land to Possess

Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab
By the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying
“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:
‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan
———-as I am now relaying

Then you shall drive out all the inhabitants
Of the land from before you
Destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images
And demolish all their high places too

You shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it
For I have given you the land to possess
And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance
———-among your families
As to you I now address

To the larger you shall give a larger inheritance
And to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance
———-so shall it be
There everyone’s inheritance shall be whatever falls to him by lot
You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers
———-as directed by Me

But if you do not drive out the inhabitants
Of the land from before you
Then it shall be that those whom you let remain
Shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, it is true

And they shall harass you in the land where you dwell
Moreover it shall be that I will do to you
———-as I thought to do to them, so to you I now tell

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so, be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 34:1-29 **(THE EARTHLY INHERITANCE)**

After typing all of the mechanical information of these verses, such as the meaning of all of the places and names, the technical aspects of the Hebrew, and so on, I laid out all of the names of the locations that are given, and of all of the names of the people that are named, and I looked for patterns which might alert me to a deeper reason as to why they are included. I came up with nothing.

However, there are some interesting patterns which we will see that scholars of the past have laid out. And indeed, they show the marvelous wisdom of God in relaying what will come about in the future before the things even happen.

But concerning a secondary set of reasons why specific names of locations and people are given, nothing jumped out at me with the exception of the name of one of the people listed toward the end of the verses, Parnach.

Nobody can identify the root of where his name comes from. And so, any meaning of the name would be complete speculation, and it would be without any basis for choosing it. And that is what the few references do, they guess and don't give a reason for the guess.

What that shows us is that the listing is purposefully telling us that it is not a listing with a particular typological meaning. If it was, it would have a definite meaning to fit the type.

Another thing we can grab from the listing of named locations is that they form a border which completely encompasses the land of Canaan. Places have names to identify where they are, and often why the name is given.

By giving the names of the locations which surround Canaan, we can obviously deduce that Canaan is a limited place which may not have walls, but it does have borders, nonetheless. Within those borders are then more borders.

That this is certain is seen in the verses today. There is Canaan for Israel, there are land inheritances for each tribe defined by lot, and then there are family inheritances to be appointed by the leaders. Then, individual properties will be parceled out to the people.

And there are not only these borders on the people's physical existence in geography, but there are also borders on the physical lives of the people as well. People are born, they live, and they die. They have borders which say, you may go this far, but no further. The limitations are set, and both are set by the giving of law. Through law came sin, and from sin came death. The limitation is determined. And for Israel in Canaan, through the law came the inheritance, and through the law came its boundaries and divisions.

Text Verse: *"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Galatians 3:16-18*

Because the land could be described, the land has limitations. And so, what appears to me to be the point of the contents of this chapter, beyond the obvious need to grant the inheritance of Canaan to the people in an orderly fashion, is to show that it is earthly, temporary, and not the final inheritance man can expect.

The land of Canaan is given as a pattern of the heavenly, as we will see in parts of the verses today, especially concerning the four directions which are named, but it is only that, a shadowy type of something which cannot be described.

Indeed, John describes the New Jerusalem, including its size and shape, but a city in heaven means there is a heaven for a city to be in. Thus, the exclusion of heaven's description tells us as much or more than as does the inclusion of the city's description. And this may be what Paul was trying to tell us in 2 Corinthians 12. There he speaks of himself in the third person and says that "he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (v. 4).

Paul means that it is 1) A paradox – he heard speaking which may not be spoken because it is impossible for us to express the same words. In attempting to do so, he would do injustice to what he had heard. Or, 2) They are words which are not to be uttered by man at this present time. He was allowed to hear them, but forbidden from re-stating them.

The second option seems more likely because of his final words, "...which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The Bible scholar Bengel explains this by saying –

“Others, who did not hear them, cannot; Paul, who did hear them, is not sufficiently able; and though he were able, yet it would not be lawful, it would not be proper in the state of mortality; because the inhabitants of the earth would not understand them.” Unlike Canaan, we are not given a description of heaven because we cannot, in our mortal minds, understand what it would be like. So much for people who write books about having gone to heaven; they haven’t. So, save your money.

What we can know, however, is that because it is beyond our ability to express, it will be beyond magnificent, because man can express rather marvelous things. For now, we will contrast that heavenly inheritance with an earthly one.

It’s all to be found in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Boundaries of Canaan (verses 1-15)

¹Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

These words follow directly after the last major thought which was given. At the end of Chapter 33, there were seven verses which were given concerning subduing the land of Canaan. That section began with these words –

“Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho, saying, ⁵¹‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ⁵²then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; ⁵³you shall dispossess *the inhabitants of* the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.’” Numbers 33:50-53

Obviously, if the people are given the land to subdue and possess, they must then know what the borders of that land are. Thus, this next section logically follows in order. There are several obvious reasons for needing to know the exact borders of the land. The first is because they have been instructed to exterminate all the inhabitants of the land. To not have set boundaries would mean either failing to exterminate some who should be exterminated, or it would mean that some who should not be wiped out might be wiped out.

Secondly, the land that is given to them means that land outside of those boundaries is not given to them. They are to be content within their borders, unless the authority of expanding those borders is granted.

This does not mean that they cannot wage war outside of those borders, but any such war is not to be specifically for the expansion of the people into those lands, but as a protective buffer, a land of subdued enemies who must pay tribute to their overlords, a land of exploitation of resources, and so on.

Thirdly, by defining the boundaries of the land, it is a way of showing that the land, which is the Lord's, is already marked out and prepared by Him for Israel. It is a note of surety that the Lord will be with them, and that the battle is truly already won.

A fourth reason is that with the boundaries defined, and as Canaan is to be the land of rest for Israel, the people were not to rest until the land within those boundaries was subdued. This follows logically with the words of the previous chapter –

“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain *shall be* irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. ⁵⁶ Moreover it shall be *that* I will do to you as I thought to do to them.” Numbers 33:55, 56

A fifth implied reason for marking out the land is that Israel is to be content and grateful for what they are given. As the Lord gave it, they are to be satisfied with what they have been granted, and they are to never infer that they could have done better elsewhere. The Lord determined, and Israel is to accept and acknowledge that. Because of these things...

² “Command the children of Israel, and say to them:

The words are for all of Israel to heed and understand. The corporate body is being given corporate instructions concerning their corporate dwelling which is soon to be entered...

^{2 (con't)} “When you come into the land of Canaan,

This is the point of everything concerning the land that has happened since this statement from Genesis 46 –

“So He said, ‘I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. ⁴I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.’”

-Genesis 46:3, 4

The Lord promised Jacob, who is Israel, that he would go down to Egypt, and that he would be brought back up. Immediately after that, Jacob took his journey from Beer-sheba and departed to Egypt. It was from that time until now, on the border of Canaan by the Jordan, that Israel had waited to receive their inheritance.

² (con’t) **this *is* the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance—the land of Canaan to its boundaries.**

What will now be described has already been partially detailed to both Abraham and to Moses. In Genesis 15, it says this –

“On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying:
‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates— ¹⁹the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, ²⁰the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Gir-gashites, and the Jebusites.’” Genesis 15:18-21

Again, in Exodus 23, this was spoken by the Lord to Moses –

“And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.” Exodus 23:31

What was spoken to both Abraham and later to Moses will now begin to be defined. What will be said here is less than those earlier promises. It encompasses only the land of Canaan, and not the land which extends as far as the Euphrates.

Thus, the term “the land of Canaan” speaks only of the land now to be described. It does not include anything beyond what will be marked out, and it is the standard reference throughout Scripture.

Surprisingly, Israel never actually possessed all of that land because they never fully subdued the area along the southeast where Gaza is. In 1 Kings 4:24, it does say Solomon

had peace as far as Gaza, but the inhabitants continued to live there. To this day, those areas are still inhabited by miscreants and enemies of Israel.

Where it says, “this is the land that shall fall to you,” it is speaking of inheritance by lot. As the lot falls, so shall be the inheritance.

The logic of placing the words of this chapter here is evident. First, the Midianites who had harmed Israel on its journey were subdued. Therefore, the matter – which was necessary to resolve at some point – will not interfere with the conquest of Canaan, nor would it be forgotten during the many years in which Canaan was being subdued. It is a matter completed and out of mind.

After that was accomplished, the tribes of Reuben and Gad called for their inheritance east of the Jordan. It is logical to have that matter resolved first as well.

The next thing that was detailed was the review of the entire set of journeys from the time Israel left Egypt until they had arrived at this point. From a historical perspective, that properly belonged in the narrative prior to delineating the borders of the land they were about to enter.

And finally, the instructions for subduing the land were given. That logically comes prior to the marking out of the land. 1) You are to do this, and 2) Here is where that is to be accomplished. The logic of the placement of each chapter is marvelously seen from a broader view. With those things stated, the land delineation now begins with...

³Your southern border shall be from the Wilderness of Zin along the border of Edom; then your southern border shall extend eastward to the end of the Salt Sea;

What is described concerning the southern border here is repeated again in Joshua 15:2-4 to describe the border of Judah which is the southernmost tribe in the land of Canaan. The word “south” is *negev*. That comes from a root meaning “parched.” As the south of Israel is a parched land, the term signifies both the direction, and at times, the desert area known as *ha’negev*, or “the Negev.”

The Wilderness of Zin has been referred to five times already, starting in Numbers 13. It is the area forming the border of Canaan which is the beginning of the southern border. Tsin means “thorn” or “barb.”

From this starting point, the border extends along Edom's border. Edom signifies "red" and it is closely connected to *adam*, or man. Edom's border goes all the way to the end of *yam ha'melakh* or

"Sea, the Salt," meaning the Dead Sea.

The exact lines of what is described here are debated, but the general idea would have been understood by Joshua and those of Israel as they went through the land to subdue it.

⁴ your border shall turn from the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, continue to Zin, and be on the south of Kadesh Barnea; then it shall go on to Hazar Addar, and continue to Azmon;

Next, there is a turning from the southern side of Maaleh Aqrabim. This means "*the Ascent of Akrabbim*," or "*the Ascent of Scorpions*." The *aqrav*, or scorpion, is seen six times in Scripture, and it denotes that which is used for chastisement.

The turn continues to Zin, or Thorn, and the border continues to the south of Kadesh Barnea, or "Holy Purifying Wanderings." This is the spot where Miriam died, and it is also the point where the spies were sent into Canaan.

Here, a new word is introduced *totsaah*, or "goings out." It comes from *yatsa* which means to go or come out. Thus, this is a place where there is a "goings out" of something, or a termination.

In this case, it is the goings out, or endings of the border from the south to Kadesh Barnea. From there, the border continues on to Hazar Addar. The name comes from two words signifying "village" and "majestic." Thus, it is the Majestic Village, or Village of Greatness.

From Khastar Adar, the border then proceeds to Azmon. Atsmon comes from *atsom*, meaning mighty. That comes from *etsem*, meaning a bone. The idea is that the skeletal structure is what provides strength. Thus, the place is called Mighty, or Mighty One.

⁵ the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and it shall end at the Sea.

From Azmon, the border makes another turn to *nakhal mitsrayim*, or the Wadi of Egypt. It is a brook which flows during times of rains, but otherwise is a dry riverbed. Here the

word *totsaah*, or “goings out” is used again. The southern border has its ending or “goings out” at the sea.

This location is a bit south of Israel’s border today in a city known as El Arish which is right on the Mediterranean Sea. It is the same border that Ezekiel prophesies will be the southern border of Israel during the millennium as is stated in Ezekiel 47:19.

The southern border, as described here, cuts off the V portion of Israel which extends all the way to the Red Sea today, where Eilat is. That would later be a part of Israel, as is recorded elsewhere. Instead of a long extending V, these borders reflect a shorter U.

⁶‘As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea for a border; this shall be your western border.

This verse explains some of the misunderstandings that have occurred by scholars in earlier verses of Exodus. The word translated as “western” here is *yam*. It means “sea,” and it is used two more times in this same verse, first when speaking of *yam ha’gadol*, or Sea, the Great, and then again as *gebul yam*, or “border western.”

A literal translation would be, “And border sea and shall have you the sea, the great, and border this shall be your border – sea.”

The reference for the translation of *yam* as west is because the reference is that of the land of Canaan. Even when Israel was outside of Canaan, the term is still used to speak of the west, because Canaan is the basis for the reference.

Scholars, misunderstanding this, claim that the times the word *yam* are used in this manner, such as in Exodus, must be later inserts. But Israel came from this land, and the concept of *yam* meaning west goes all the way back to the time of Abraham.

The Pulpit Commentary even includes this incorrect evaluation in their commentary of this verse. They say, “it cannot be overlooked as one small indication that the language of this passage at any rate is the language of an age subsequent to the conquest of Canaan.”

In other words, as has been seen before, they say these words are not original, but are a later insert. But the text stands for itself, especially in the construction of the tabernacle where the western end of the tabernacle also uses the term *yam* to explain its location.

It is the Lord who is speaking. The western end of the tabernacle is where He dwells, and the western side of the land, which is His – meaning Canaan – is to the *yam* or sea. The use of *yam* is consistent, logical, and precise. It is not a later insert.

The word *yam* comes from an unused root meaning “to roar” as in the roaring, breaking of waves. Thus, one could think of the western border as the Great Roaring. The sea as the western border continues until the next border on the north...

⁷ ‘And this shall be your northern border:

The word “northern” is *tsaphon*. It comes from a verb, *tsaphan*, signifying “to hide” or “to treasure up.” The reason for this is that Canaan is in the northern hemisphere (yes, the world is round), and thus, the north is the direction that is hidden from the sun more and more as the winter months come on.

The northwest is where the sun last alights in the morning, and the northeast is where it first recedes at night. Thus, the north is hidden away. This is also seen in the placement of the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle, away from the north. Again, the reference is that of Canaan, and of the dwelling place of the Lord.

^{7 (con’t)} From the Great Sea you shall mark out your *border* line to Mount Hor;

Here is a new word, *taah*. It is only found here and in the next verse. It gives the sense of pointing out, and thus one can mark out a border based on the pointing. If one stands on the shore of the Great Sea, and points to Mount Hor, that is the marking, just as a bird would fly.

Mount Hor, or Mount of the Mountain, is not the same as Mount Hor where Aaron died. It probably signifies a double mountain. Scholars are wholly divided on what this is speaking of. Some insist it is Mount Hermon. Others, Mount Amana mentioned in the Song of Solomon. Whichever it is, the people would know when they were directed to it.

⁸ from Mount Hor you shall mark out your *border* to the entrance of Hamath; then the direction of the border shall be toward Zedad;

Here is the second and last use of *taah* in the Bible. One can see that the mountain was sufficiently placed where it could be pointed at from the other location and thus keep people from claiming a border which the Lord had not otherwise designated.

From Mount Hor, one would mark out to *lebo khamath*, or the entrance of Hamath. This is the same location that the spies traveled to in Numbers 13:21. The name means “Defense” or “Citadel.” From there, the border would travel toward Zedad. The name Tse-dad is only found here and in Ezekiel 47:15. It comes from *tsad*, meaning “a side.”

⁹ the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and it shall end at Hazar Enan. This shall be your northern border.

From Zedad, the border then heads to Ziphron. The best guess of the meaning of Ziphron is Sweet Smell. From there, the northern border ends at Hazar Enan, or “Village of Eyes,” or “Village of Springs,” because springs resemble eyes.

¹⁰ ‘You shall mark out your eastern border from Hazar Enan to Shepham;

The final border is *qedem*, or east. The word signifies aforeside, ancient time, that which is everlasting or eternal, and forward. The reason why it is forward is because the temple of the Lord faces east, thus forward. Again, as has been seen each time, the direction is in reference to Canaan as if the Lord is there in His dwelling.

From the Village of Springs, the eastern border is to be *avah*, or marked out, south to Shepham. This is a word found only here in the Bible. It signifies “to draw.” Thus, the border is described with a mark, probably like we do on trails today.

Depending on the root, the name Shepham means either Swept Bare or Fenced In. From there...

¹¹ the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain;

Here the border is said to “go down.” Thus, there is a descent which goes to Rivlah. The name signifies a fertile, fruitful place.” It is said to be on the east side of Ain. The name means an eye, and thus, literally, a spring of water. It is one of the springs which would feed into the Jordan.

¹¹ (con’t) the border shall go down and reach to the eastern side of the Sea of Chinnereth;

Here, the border would again descend to the “shoulder” of *yam kineret*, meaning the Sea of Galilee. The word used speaks of the mountain slope on the northeast side of the Sea of Kinereth which is its “shoulder.”

The name Kinereth comes from *kinor*, meaning a type of harp. The reason for the name is the shape of the sea, which looks like a harp when viewed from above. As the border is on the east of these places, the water rights are included in the land rights of Israel.

¹² the border shall go down along the Jordan, and it shall end at the Salt Sea.

From the Sea of Kinereth, the border continues down the Jordan, or Descender, and ends at the Salt, or Dead, Sea.

What is rather beautiful in picture concerns this eastern border and how it looks to Christ. As we already know, the Jordan – meaning the Descender – is a type of Christ. As the Jordan comes from Mt. Hermon, the snow-capped mountain, we can see a picture of Christ who came from heaven where there is no sin; only righteousness.

That is explained by Isaiah where he says –

“Come now, and let us reason together,
Says the Lord,
‘Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow.’” Isaiah 1:18

From there, He descended even to death itself, to the Dead Sea, the lowest spot on earth, typical of the pit of death. But while there, He remained in a state of incorruption, typified by *yam ha’melakh*, or the Salt Sea. Salt, as we have seen (among other things), signifies incorruption. Understanding this, the significance of Acts 2:27 is seen –

“For You will not leave my soul in Hades,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”

¹² (con’t) This shall be your land with its surrounding boundaries.”

This is the entire scope of the original land grant to Canaan. The most difficult to determine areas are those of the northern border, but there are disagreements on the exact shape of the south in some places as well.

¹³ Then Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying: “This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which the Lord has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe.

These words explain verse 2. The inheritance that falls to Israel is because it is inherited by lot. As the Lord determines in the falling of the lot, so the inheritance falls to the people of these nine and one half tribes. Originally, it was a land of about 160 miles in length, and about 50 miles wide, often much less. It is a sliver of land among the nations.

¹⁴ For the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received *their inheritance*; and the half-tribe of Manasseh has received its inheritance.

As was seen in Chapter 32, and what is seen again in this chapter, despite this land across the Jordan being possessed by Israel, it is not considered a part of Canaan. It is merely an area of possession. The granting of the inheritance to these two- and one-half tribes was minutely detailed in Chapter 32. It is their inheritance, but it is not a part of Canaan proper.

¹⁵ The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance on this side of the Jordan, *across from Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise.*

The words here, again, show Canaan as the reference. It doesn't say "on this side of the Jordan." It says, "on side of the Jordan," a term which can mean on either side. It then explains what that means by saying "eastward, toward the sunrise."

*The borders of your land are already decided
I have set them for you as your place to dwell
In you I have trusted and confided
And so, to you I am granting the land as well*

*This is the land of Canaan which I promised before
I promised it to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob too
Now you are about to enter as you stand at the door
This is the land that I am giving to you*

*O Israel, if you will but pay heed to My word
If you will only bend your ear and listen to Me
I have brought you to this land, I the Lord
Open your eyes, Israel, I want you to see*

*If you will cherish Me and to Me have hearts that are true
You may dwell long in the land which I am giving to you*

II. One Leader of Every Tribe (verses 16-29)

¹⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

A new section is introduced with these words. After defining the borders of the land, the Lord now proceeds to define who will be responsible for the division of that land. The division is to be completely fair and impartial, and these men are selected so that such will be the case, and so the Lord proceeds...

¹⁷ “These *are* the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun.

Unless this is simply speaking of casting lots, this cannot be speaking of tribal division of the land. The lots would be thrown for the division among the tribes, but then the size of the family within the tribe was to be the standard for division within the allotted territory. Therefore, this is speaking of that.

Eleazar and Joshua represent the leaders of the congregation which is formed as a theocracy. They would thus be included in any division to ensure that everything was done according to the will of the Lord. Along with them...

¹⁸ And you shall take one leader of every tribe to divide the land for the inheritance.

One leader was to be selected with overall authority of the division of the land between families. It would be this person who worked under the approving eyes of Eleazar and Joshua to ensure the family inheritances were met according to size. Interestingly, Albert Barnes notes the following –

“The order in which the tribes are named is peculiar to this passage. If they be taken in pairs, Judah and Simeon, Benjamin and Dan, Manasseh and Ephraim, Zebulun and Issachar, Asher and Naphtali, the order of the pairs agrees with the order in which the allotments in the Holy land, taken also in couples, followed each other in the map from south to north.” Albert Barnes

It is a note, then, that the Lord is in complete control of what will occur concerning the lots. Long before they are cast, the order of tribal selection for inherited land is already

set in the written record. Despite not matching the order in which the lots were cast, they match the order in which they are laid out. It is an obscure pattern which makes it all the more astonishing when considered.

¹⁹ These *are* the names of the men: from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh;

Here, Caleb is the only leader who was selected as a tribal leader in Numbers 13. Other than him, all of the other leaders had died in the wilderness wanderings. Caleb means “Dog.” Yephunneh means “He will be beheld.”

²⁰ from the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud;

The name Shemuel is the same as our English Samuel. It means “Name of God,” or “Heard of God.” Ammihud means “My Kinsman is Glorious.”

²¹ from the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon;

Elidad means “Whom God Loves.” Khislon means “Factless Confidence.”

²² a leader from the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli;

Bukki means “Emptying (of the Lord).” Yogli means “Exiled.”

²³ from the sons of Joseph: a leader from the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod,

Hanniel means “Graciousness of God.” Ephod means something like “Girdle.”

²⁴ and a leader from the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan;

Kemuel means something like “Gathering of God.” Shiphtan means something like “Judicial.”

²⁵ a leader from the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach;

Elizaphan means “God Hides,” or “God Has Protected.” The meaning of Parnakh is unknown.

²⁶ a leader from the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan;

Paltiel means “Deliverance of God.” Azzan means “Very Strong.”

²⁷ a leader from the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi;

Akhihud means “Brother of Majesty.” Shelomi means “My Peace.”

²⁸ and a leader from the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.”

Pedahel means “God has Ransomed.” Ammihud again means “My Kinsman is Glorious.”

^{29 (fin)} These *are* the ones the Lord commanded to divide the inheritance among the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

Not only were these tribes organized from a geographical perspective, as noted in verse 18, but they were also structured in a unique family way. This is described by Joseph Benson –

“Judah and Simeon, both sons of Leah, dwelt by one another: next, Benjamin of Rachel, and Dan of Rachel’s maid: Manasseh and Ephraim, both sons of Joseph, had the next place: Zebulon and Issachar, who dwelt next together, were both sons of Leah: and the last pair were Asher of Leah’s maid, and Naphtali of Rachel’s maid. Here, therefore, we have an evident proof of the wisdom of God’s providence, and of his peculiar care of his people.” Joseph Benson

The chances of such unusual groupings between these two patterns, and the fact that nothing is openly said about them anywhere in Scripture, reveals a marvelous wisdom was at work long before the divisions were actually made.

For the student of the Bible who takes the time to understand what is otherwise hidden, there is an amazing degree of confidence in the fact that this is truly the divinely inspired word of God.

And because it is, and because it tells us of our assured inheritance in heaven (and this you will see all too well in a coming sermon) because of the Person and work of Jesus,

we can and should have the greatest encouragement and hope in this life. What is coming is so magnificent that Paul himself could not lawfully utter concerning what he had seen.

He had a moment, a mere moment, in the presence of glory, and words failed him. As heaven is without borders, it is an eternal expanse, and because our lives will continue without the border of the ending of time, we have an eternal future to search out that eternal expanse of heaven – looking into the mind of God with unceasing and endless joy as we do.

Canaan was a land of promise and abundance, but it was a land of law and death. We will have the former – forever – because Jesus prevailed over the latter for us. God be praised. Jesus has prevailed!

Closing Verse: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” 1 Peter 1:3-5*

Next Week: Numbers 35:1-8 *It is just as the Lord willed...* (The Levitical Cities – A Prophecy Fulfilled) (68th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Earthly Inheritance

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying
These are the words He was to him relaying

“Command the children of Israel, and say to them:
‘When you come into the land of Canaan, please take note
This is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance
The land of Canaan to its boundaries, as to you I quote

Your southern border shall be from the Wilderness of Zin

Along the border of Edom, as fixed by Me
Then your southern border shall extend
Eastward to the end of the Salt Sea

Your border shall turn from the southern side
Of the Ascent of Akrabbim, continue to Zin, so you are shown
And be on the south of Kadesh Barnea
Then it shall go on to Hazar Addar, and continue to Azmon

The border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt
———-as directed by Me
And it shall end at the Sea

“As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea
———-for a border
This shall be your western border, according to My order

‘And this shall be your northern border:
From the Great Sea you shall mark out your border line
———-to Mount Hor
From Mount Hor you shall mark out your border
———-to the entrance of Hamath
Then the direction of the border shall be toward Zedad
———-but that’s not all as there is more

The border shall proceed to Ziphron
———- and it shall end at Hazar Enan, according to My order
This shall be your northern border

‘You shall mark out your eastern border
From Hazar Enan to Shepham, but I am not done yet
The border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah
———-on the east side of Ain
The border shall go down and reach to the eastern side
———-of the Sea of Chinnereth

The border shall go down along the Jordan
———-and it shall end at the Salt Sea
This shall be your land with each surrounding boundary

Then Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying:
More words to them He was relaying

“This is the land which you shall inherit by lot
Which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine tribes
———-and to the half-tribe; this shall be their spot

For the tribe of the children of Reuben
———-according to the house of their fathers
And the tribe of the children of Gad
———-according to the house of their fathers too
Have received their inheritance
And the half-tribe of Manasseh has received its inheritance
———-it is true

The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance
For them, it was like an early surprise
On this side of the Jordan
Across from Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying
These words to him, He continued relaying

“These are the names of the men
Who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance:
Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun
Starting with these two fine gents

And you shall take one leader of every tribe, so I say
To divide the land for the inheritance, as I instruct you today

These are the names of the men:
From the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh
From the tribe of the children of Simeon
———-Shemuel the son of Ammihud
From the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon
———-as to you I do say

A leader from the tribe of the children of Dan

— — —- Bukki the son of Jogli
From the sons of Joseph: a leader from the tribe
— — —-of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod
And a leader from the tribe of the children of Ephraim
— — —- Kemuel the son of Shiphtan
A leader from the tribe of the children of Zebulun
— — —-Elizaphan the son of Parnach; just as I have to you showed

A leader from the tribe of the children of Issachar
— — —-Paltiel the son of Azzan
A leader from the tribe of the children of Asher
— — —-Ahihud the son of Shelomi
And a leader from the tribe of the children of Naphtali
— — —-Pedahel the son of Ammihud
All of these as directed by Me

These are the ones the LORD commanded to divide
The inheritance among the children of Israel in the land of Canaan
— — —-with their borders on each side

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 35:1-8 (THE LEVITICAL CITIES – A PROPHECY FULFILLED)

The passage today is another step toward that final step where Israel will cross over Jordan and into their long-awaited inheritance. For the tribe of Levi, the inheritance is different than for that of the other tribes, and yet, it is uniquely tied to the inheritance of the tribe of Simeon in one way.

But it was vastly different from that of Simeon in all other ways. The Levites had a special charge laid upon them which has been seen in great detail in the book of Leviticus and even more so in the book of Numbers. Leviticus dealt mostly with one portion of the tribe, that of the Aaronic priesthood.

Numbers has shown a remarkable amount of detail concerning the rest of Levi such as why they were chosen, what that choosing meant to them and to all of Israel, and the special nature of Levi in the presence of the Lord. Of this passage, the scholar Keil says – “Called out of the whole nation to be the peculiar possession of Jehovah, to watch over His covenant, and teach Israel His rights and His law ... the Levites were to form and set forth among all the tribes the ἐκλογή of the nation of Jehovah’s possession, and by their walk as well as by their calling to remind the Israelites continually of their own divine calling; to foster and preserve the law and testimony of the Lord in Israel, and to awaken and spread the fear of God and piety among all the tribes.”

Levi’s selection out of Israel for this was for one reason, but the results of that selection actually fulfill another prophecy which was pronounced upon Levi several centuries earlier. That prophecy, which was spoken out by Jacob on his deathbed, and which will be our closing verse today, was spoken out based on what had happened many years earlier in the life of Jacob and his sons...

Text Verse: *“Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.” Genesis 34:25*

Simeon and Levi killed an entire city of men because one of them had defiled their sister Dinah. That story provides a marvelous picture of things which would occur much later in history during the church age, and it corresponds well to the tasks and duties of Levi under the law.

However, the law is the law, and grace is grace, and the two do not mix. Unfortunately for so many in the church, they cannot figure this out. They bear in them the same defect that man under law always bears – pride in self.

Jesus Christ has come. He has fulfilled the law. And, that law is now set aside in Him. Those who continue to hold to the law of Moses are not pious, though they act that way. They are full of pride, and they mar the glory of what God has done in Jesus Christ.

To them, what He did was insufficient to save them, and they can do better. This is a truth which is revealed time and again in Scripture. But to understand this, one must understand the law itself, and its purpose in redemptive history. Without that base of knowledge, our walk with God is not one of felicity, but of enmity.

Let us learn this by learning the law. We will continue to do so right now. It's all to be found in His superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

Dispersed in Israel (verses 1-8)

¹And the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *across from* Jericho, saying:

This is the exact same opening formula for a passage, word for word and letter for letter, as was seen in Numbers 33:50. That was immediately after the detailed record of the travels of Israel from Egypt to this spot. With that record complete, the Lord gave the instructions for what to do when entering Canaan, including the division of the land by inheritance.

After that, in Chapter 34, the boundaries of the land were detailed, and that was then followed with the names of the leaders who were chosen to oversee that land division. Now, and in accord with that, the instructions for the Levitical cities are to be provided. It is the same order as for the counting of the divisions of Israel in the census. The main tribes were counted, and only then were those of the tribe of Levi counted.

What is already understood, is that the Levites were to receive no inheritance, meaning a division of land of their own within Israel. That goes back to Numbers 18, where this was said –

“Then the Lord said to Aaron: ‘You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I *am* your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

²¹ “Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as ⁽ⁱ⁾an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. ²² Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. ²³ But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; *it shall be* a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. ²⁴ For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up *as* a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’” Numbers 18:20-24

This note, that Levi would receive no inheritance, was repeated once again during the second census as is recorded in Numbers 26:62. There is a stress on this to show that Levi was dedicated to the Lord.

There is the priestly class which descended from Aaron, and then there are the other Levites who were given to act in a role which extended in two directions – to the priests for their assistance, and to the people for their instruction in the things of the law.

Understanding this, there is still a need for the Levites to have land set apart for them to live in. It would be unreasonable for them to live in tents around the sanctuary.

With the people spread all over Israel, this would make their job of tending to the people impossible. For a person who needed instruction in a particular matter, it would mean stopping work and traveling on a long journey to simply get a resolution to a matter.

There would be an immediate and ongoing void in the spiritual lives of the people, and that would result in an almost immediate turning of the people from the Lord. The wisdom of separating Levi from the other tribes has already been seen.

The wisdom of incorporating them among those same tribes from whom they have been separated is then seen. Levi is separate from Israel and divided as a tribe, and yet they are uniquely joined to Israel, but they remain united as Levites.

If government service were a permanent occupation (God forbid), then it would be comparable to this. Suppose that all federal employees were designated as such, forever throughout their generations.

It would be impossible to run the government solely from Washington DC. And so, this group of people would be spread out among the states. They would receive their living from the taxes of the people, they would reside among them, they would accomplish their duties both for the government, and on behalf of the people.

And so, they would be government workers, separate from other Americans and divided as a group among the states, and yet they would be carefully joined to the Americans of given states, but they would remain united as government employees.

Yes, that sounds like a complete disaster, and it shows how things could very quickly get out of hand. Despite being ingenious in its makeup for Israel, and the best possible way of administering the law, it is a part of the law, nonetheless.

It will not be long before this system's failings are revealed. The account of the Levite who became a priest to the family of Micah in Judges 17 is a perfect example of how such a system could be easily abused. As the Law is intended to point us to our need for Christ, that is inclusive of the failed actions of both priest and Levite, along with all other parts of the law.

But make no mistake, it is not that the law is defective. It is that man is defective. Paul explains that in Romans 7 –

“What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was* to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.¹² Therefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.” Romans 7:7-12

As I have said, there is immense wisdom in how this law is structured and how it is purposed. It is not the fault of the law, but the fault of man's inability to adhere to the law which brings about sin. By the law is the knowledge of sin. The account of Micah and the

Levite in Judges 17 is one example of this in relation to what we will now be instructed on here in Numbers 35.

If man were not sinful, the idea of a permanent class of government employees might be a great idea, but – as we have seen in the US – anytime someone is too long in a government position, it simply doesn't work out. For some, 10 seconds in such a position is too long. Remember what happened the moment Obama was inaugurated president concerning the White House website. Fallen man, especially fallen man without Christ, cannot be trusted with power and governmental authority.

For now, Israel is on the verge of entering into their inheritance, and the situation of the Levites must be detailed next. And so, still in the plains of Moab across from Jericho, Moses is instructed by the Lord to...

²“Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in

This is not a request, but a command. The children of Israel are given this command before entering Canaan with very specific detail because it is the twelve warring tribes that will go in to subdue the land. Levi is not a tribe of war, and so – knowing in advance the wickedness of the human heart – the Lord anticipates what may otherwise occur, and He commands what is to be done for Levi.

Otherwise, the tribes could say, “We fought for and earned the right to this land, and then it was divided by lot to us for our inheritance. Levi can go find their own land to dwell in.” Only then would the matter have to be brought to the Lord and resolved. Further, if this was the case, it would not have been a specifically directed portion of the law received by Moses and it would bear less weight in the minds of the people. The Lord knows this and is providing law, in advance, to ensure such wicked things will not arise in the hearts of the people.

It is to be noted that the priests, at this point, are considered under the umbrella of Levi. In other words, both priest and the more common Levite are included in this command. Later in 1 Samuel 22, there is a city, Nob, which is called the city of the priests, but that was a determination not specifically addressed under the law.

For now, the Levites are to be given cities, despite not being a tribe of war. And further, these cities are to be...

² (con't) from the inheritance of their possession,

This is specific, and it is explicit. The land for the Levites is to be taken out of the individual inheritance of whatever tribe is designated. The Levites have no inheritance because their inheritance is the Lord, as has already been stated.

Thus, these cities, taken out of the individual inheritances must logically be thought of as the Lord's cities, and reserved for His own tribe to live out their lives. They stand as the Lord's representatives among the people, and therefore, these cities are the Lord's cities among the tribes.

Like the tithes of Israel, so is the land. It is what comes from the inheritance of the people. As the ground of their land was won through their effort in battle, so the tithe from that ground was won by the efforts of their labor. A portion of each is granted for the Levites.

Not to take the comparison too far, it is not unlike what is mandated by the Lord, through Paul, for the workers of the gospel. As Paul said to those at Galatia, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches" (Galatians 6:6), and also to those in Corinth –

"For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.' Is it oxen God is concerned about? ¹⁰ Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things?" 1 Corinthians 9:9-11

The things of the Lord are to be tended to by the people who serve the Lord, and, in turn, those who serve the Lord are to be tended to by the labors of those who receive instruction and guidance from them. For the people of Israel, this included...

² (con't) **and you shall *also* give the Levites common-land around the cities.**

Here, for only the second time, the word *migrash*, or common land, is seen. It comes from *garash*, meaning to drive out or cast away. The meaning then is lands that are outside of their cities. It is land reserved for the use of the Levites. From here, it will become a common word in Scripture.

Older translations use the word "suburb" to describe this land. A suburb is an outlying district of a city, but one which is designated for residential use. This is not what is being

relayed here. The Levites were to dwell in Levitical cities. As the Levites had no land inheritance, they were not workers of the fields. Rather, they were workers of the law and possibly other professional jobs which may have arisen over time.

But how did the Levites survive? It was by receiving what was provided to them by the law. This included the tithes of Israel according to the laws of the tithe which have been given already, and which will be further defined in Deuteronomy.

Included in the tithes were animals. These animals would need to have a place to forage and roam, and so these common lands were necessary for the livelihood of the Levites. It would make no sense to set apart one-tenth of the livestock every third year and give it to the Levites if they had no land on which to keep that livestock.

This is then what is being referred to. It is common land for the use of the Levites who dwelt within the cities that they had been given. The Lord is preparing, in advance, for the care of the Levites. And He is doing it very meticulously and specifically so that no argument could arise against their claims later. The explanation for this common land continues with...

³They shall have the cities to dwell in;

This now specifically states what you have already heard. The cities are to be where the Levites were to live. This is how people lived in these times. There were homes built together inside of walls. This was to be protection for the people within from wild animals, invasions, and robbers.

The cities had gates which would be closed at night, and guards would normally be stationed at them. During the day, the gates are where the leaders and judges would gather. Often, there would be recesses in the walls of the gates where people would sit in the shade. This is where legal matters of all sorts were normally decided.

It should be noted that these cities were right within the confines of the land of whatever tribe they were assigned to. Further, there are times where a city is known as a Levitical city, and yet it is also a city of the tribe itself.

We will see in Joshua 14 that Hebron was given to Caleb for his faithfulness, and yet, Hebron was also designated as a city of refuge in Joshua 20, and it was designated as a Levitical city under Aaron the priest in Joshua 21. The way this is reconciled is by what it says in Joshua 21:12 concerning the Levitical cities –

“And they gave them Kirjath Arba (*Arba* was the father of Anak), which *is* Hebron, in the mountains of Judah, with the common-land surrounding it. ¹² But the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as his possession.”

Therefore, Hebron itself was designated as a Levitical city, including the land termed common land as directed by the Lord. But that which extended beyond the common land of the city itself was the property of Caleb.

As the Levites dwelt right in and among the Israelites, and as they both had families and possessions, it is easy to see that there was no such thing as a class of ascetics who lived by themselves from society, remained celibate, and shunned the normal life of comfort, wealth, and the like. Such an idea is foreign to the Law of Moses.

It shows that those who lived this type of life in Old Testament times, such as the Essenes and other sects were not in any way mainstream. Rather, they deviated from the normal sense of life outlined by the Lord through Moses.

And the same is true with those who have gone off to live such lives in New Testament times as well. There is nothing in Scripture which teaches this type of life, and it is actually foreign to the notion of people living normal lives as described by Paul and the other writers of the epistles.

Further, living such a monastic existence is actually opposed to the concept of the gospel, where we are to live in the world and allow ourselves to be used as examples and guides to others who also need to hear the good news.

The Levites lived in their own cities, but that was because of the precept that they had no inheritance, meaning no land to work. This was the appropriate way of keeping them as a part of Israel, but a unique and separate part at the same time.

Unfortunately, this mandated separation was taken to unintended extremes as is clearly evidenced by the parable of Jesus concerning the man who was waylaid on his trek from Jerusalem to Jericho –

“A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the

place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.” Luke 10:30-33

It was never the intent for the separation of the tribe of Levi to include a perceived holiness that they were above the other commands of the law concerning such things. Again, the law itself is good and holy, but it is the heart of man which is unable to properly work within the confines of the law in order to bring about the expected result which the law calls for. Only Christ was able to meet the law’s demands and then to set us free from those impossible confines. Thank God for Jesus.

^{3 (con’t)} **and their common-land shall be for their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals.**

u-migreshehem yihyu livhemtam v’lirkusham u-lekol khayatam – “And their common land shall be for their cattle and their possessions and for all their life.” Here it speaks of the common land that we previously looked into. The reason for it is now stated. It seems like an easy set of words, but the meaning is actually highly debated.

The idea of common land is set. It is said to be used here for three things. The first is their *behemah*. This is simply a beast in general, like cattle. The second word is unusual if it is to be translated as “herds.” It is *rekush*, and it means property or goods. It comes from a verb meaning to collect or gather.

It very well could be speaking of other types of animals, but what is more likely is that it refers to the things of any possession which might be left for the fields which would not be brought into a city, such as wagons and other movable possessions, stalls and pens for the livestock, and etc.

The third thing described is literally “and *for* all their life.” It could be referring to any other animals, but it also could be a phrase which speaks of whatever is needed to sustain them. As they received the tithes from Israel every third year, maybe the phrase includes silos for grain. Or it might include places for the children to go and play and so on.

⁴ **The common-land of the cities which you will give the Levites *shall extend* from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around.**

As one could expect, there are various views on this. Some consider that the city would be deemed as square, and the measure would go out from the walls from that perspective.

However, cities were more often than not irregular in shape. To not follow the shape of the city would fail to meet the expectations outlined here and lead to obvious disputes at some point.

The distance, being one-thousand cubits, is about one-third of a mile. If a cubit is 18 inches, that would make it .284/mile. This is the area, all the way around the city, which would be considered common land. However, another problem, which is even more debated, results from the next words...

⁵ And you shall measure outside the city

This is clear. The word is *madad* and it means to measure – “And you shall measure from outside the city.” The sticky problem is what does it mean “from outside?” Several suggestions have been made which will be considered. However, by doing that, the next words have to be looked at...

^{5 (con't)} on the east side two thousand cubits, on the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits.

This is understandable no matter which view is correct concerning the term “outside the city.” On each of the four directions, a measure of two thousand cubits will be measured. Based on this measurement, whatever it may be, it then says...

^{5 (con't)} The city shall be in the middle.

Again, there is nothing difficult here. The city is situated in the middle of the final measurement which is taken from outside the city. But what is that measurement? We cannot be dogmatic about this, because all dogs care about is where they can go play, not specifically how big the land that they can play in is. So, here are several suggested possibilities.

The first is that there is an error in the Hebrew. The Greek of both verses 4 and 5 say “two thousand cubits.” It seems more likely that the Greek is in error in that, and it is a cheap way of resolving the matter.

The second option is that if one measures out to the north one thousand, and then measures out to the south one thousand, there is a line that is two thousand cubits long, plus the length of the city on the east and west. Likewise, the same is true for the other two sides.

And so, a city that is one thousand cubits long would have a line that is three thousand on that side. If the other wall is five hundred feet long, then the measurement would be two thousand five hundred feet. But the words say to measure two thousand feet on the side. It doesn't say one thousand plus the city, plus one thousand.

The third option is that because the term *madad*, or measure, is first used here, it is speaking of two different measurements. The first one is that of verse 4 which speaks of the common land of the city being one thousand cubits out from the walls of the city. Now, verse 5 is saying to measure from that common land out another two thousand cubits, making a total of three thousand cubits. The logic is that the common land is the first one thousand, and that the fields of the city are beyond that. However, that view has its own problem which is seen in the next words...

^{5 (con't)} **This shall belong to them as common-land for the cities.**

The problem with the third view is that the same term, *migrash*, is used in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, & 7. Why would the same term be used to describe land with two different purposes? I would suggest that the distance from the walls is one thousand cubits. Regardless of the shape of the city, the surveyors were to go directly out from the wall situated at each of the four points on the compass, one thousand cubits from the wall.

From that point, they were to measure two thousand cubits, meaning one thousand in each direction. You now have four lines of two thousand cubits in length which are not yet touching because the city takes up some amount of space, be it narrow or wide on each side.

Once those lines are made, the gaps are simply filled in according to either the shortest route, or following a discernible trek along the ground. This makes sense because there is no fudging in the Hebrew, there is no addition or lesser ground that could reasonably be fought over, and also because the land in Israel is all over the place.

To measure exact lines, based on both the irregular nature of the city walls and the irregular nature of the landscape, in most cases, would be unreasonable. The four points of

the compass have been explicitly stated to avoid any further complications of an otherwise difficult task for surveyors to easily, and without bias, portion out the land.

Again, I'm not one to argue over this. It is complicated and each view presents its own difficulties. However, this view appears most aligned with the intent of the mandate to use the four cardinal points on the compass to measure out the land.

⁶“Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites you shall appoint six cities of refuge,

The words of this verse are very widely translated, and yet they convey the same basic meaning for the most part. It literally reads, “And the cities which you will give to *the* Levities – six cities, the refuge.”

By adding in the word “among,” like the NKJV does here, it assumes that the total number of Levitical cities is the main focus of the verse. It is not. These six cities of refuge are. This concept was first referred to in Exodus 21 –

“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. ¹³ However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered *him* into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.” Exodus 21:12, 13

This verse now is the lead-in to the next very important and very detailed section which encompasses verses 9-34. If your KJV or other Bible includes the word “among,” you might make a note that it is incorrect.

Here, the *miqlat*, or refuge is introduced. It is a word which will be seen twenty times, but only two of them are outside of Numbers 35 and Joshua 20&21. The other two are in 1 Chronicles 6 which simply repeats the granting of the cities.

The word *miqlat* comes from the word *qalat*, which is found only in Leviticus 22:23 and which, surprisingly, means “stunted.” In Leviticus, it was speaking of not offering anything that was stunted to the Lord for the fulfilling of a vow.

The connection between the words is the idea that when one is in a place of refuge, or asylum, they are taken in. Their lives are thus stunted from going out.

The number six in Scripture speaks of man. Specifically, it speaks of the imperfection of man. Often it speaks of man as destitute of God, without God, and thus meaning without Christ. The number here is purposeful, and the meaning of these cities of refuge will be carefully explained, revealing why six is the chosen number. It is one of these six cities...

^{6 (con't)} **to which a manslayer may flee.**

lanus shamah ha'roseakh – “for fleeing there the manslayer.” Here, the word *ratsakh* is used. It is the same word found in the sixth commandment and is normally translated as murder. It is not the same word, *harag*, for example, which is found in Numbers 31 when Moses said for the soldiers to kill all the women and boys of Midian.

Surprisingly, it is not even the same word used when Cain killed Abel. The first time it was used was there in the giving of the Ten Commandments. Thus, it is a word defined by the law itself. As will be seen next week, twenty of its forty-seven uses are in this chapter.

Of these twenty times, it is alternately translated in English as “manslayer” or “murderer” based on the guilt or innocence of the offender. However, because the same word is used for both, it carries an underlying thought that whether guilty or innocent, it was a form of unsanctioned taking of human life.

The one who commits such an act has a place to flee to which is designated right here, even before the allotting of the full number of Levitical cities. The placement of these six cities will be seen in Joshua 20. Three each will be in land on both sides of the Jordan, but all six were well-situated to allow a place of escape to all people.

This is the exact same pattern that will be seen when the actual cities are appointed in Joshua. First will be named the cities of refuge in Chapter 20, and only then will the cities of the Levites be named in Chapter 21. A high importance is given to this concept. The reason for this is that even though these will be Levitical cities, they actually belong to the Lord for all the people in the sense that any Israelite could go there to live if the unfortunate circumstances which necessitated it were to occur. After appointing these six cities, Israel is next instructed...

^{6 (con't)} **And to these you shall add forty-two cities.**

This thought is secondary to the highly important designation of six cities of refuge. The Levitical cities are six plus forty-two first and foremost. One could say that the United States was first 13 plus 37 added since then. Although all are equal, there is a special note of honor held among those first thirteen.

⁷ So all the cities you will give to the Levites *shall be* forty-eight; these you shall give with their common-land.

In common math, $6 + 42 = 48$. That would make four per tribe if they were evenly spaced that way, which they are not. Size of land grant varied, and the Levites would be dispersed in a way which would ensure they were properly placed throughout the land of Israel.

However, the obvious immediate division of 48 by 12 is not to be missed. Twelve signifies the perfection of government. Four represents the number of material completeness. It is the world number, and especially the “city” number.

Thus, in these cities, one can see a representation of the kingdom of God in the world, with a special focus on man which is represented by the six cities of refuge. It is a rather marvelous picture of God, working through Christ, and forming a universal government, highlighted by those who come to take refuge in Him.

As far as the census of Chapter 26, it showed a total number of Levite males from one month old and up being 23,000. Thus, the number of males per city would average at 479. Add in females, and the number would still be about 1000 per city to start with. Joshua 21 will detail the names of these forty-eight Levitical cities. The Kohathites will be given ten cities in Ephraim, Dan, and the western half of Manasseh. The Gershonites will have thirteen cities in Issachar, Asher, Naphtali and the eastern half of Manasseh. And the Merarites will have twelve cities in Reuben, Gad and Zebulun. And finally, the priests will have thirteen cities in Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. What is interesting, and which seems logical, is that the thirteen priestly cities are divided among the tribes which were nearest to where the sanctuary would eventually be in Jerusalem, rather than where the tabernacle was originally kept in Shiloh. One can see the hand of the Lord working things out ever-so meticulously, even in advance of the need for things to be the way they were.

⁸ And the cities which you will give *shall be* from the possession of the children of Israel; from the larger *tribe* you shall give many, from the smaller you shall give few.

This was a directive which actually didn't come to pass as laid out, if it speaks of actual numbers of cities. They were all very closely dispersed in this manner.

Judah and Simeon will be collocated within the same large area. They will provide nine Levitical cities. All of the rest of the tribes will each have four Levitical cities in their territory, except the last to be named, Naphtali, which will only have three. So, all of them give approximately the same number.

However, even if all gave the same basic number of cities, it could be that more Levites went to the more populated tribal inheritances. Although the Hebrew does not indicate this as an option. Otherwise, this would have to be considered a precept which was not carefully adhered to by Israel. This is then repeated with the final words of the day...

^{8 (fin)} Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives."

Again, it refers to the number of cities in relation to the inheritance received. As the inheritances were based on lots first, and then by family size within the land allotted, the final division of the Levitical cities does not follow this precept as one would read it. However, the overall dispersion of the Levites was satisfactory to ensure that the job they were called to accomplish could, in fact, be accomplished if they handled their duties in the solemn manner which reflected the office.

The eight verses today have provided great insights into the expectations for Levitical living in Israel, and what the tribes of Israel were to do to ensure the Lord's intentions worked as they should for the people.

If everything was conducted according to expectation, Israel would operate smoothly and in a state of high moral living. Unfortunately, the problem does not rest with the law and how it is laid out in order to serve the people. Rather, the problem with the precepts here lies in the heart of man who is constantly at war with what is morally proper.

This is true with the commoner in Israel, all the way up to Israel's high priest. The failings of the people, in opposition to the meticulously flawless nature of the law, is what is highlighted. Something better was needed, because the human under law simply cannot bear up.

We have seen a few interesting patterns today, and a few points of how things anticipate Christ, but there is a point which must be made before we finish, and it is a point which anticipates what we will look at next week.

The cities of refuge are given for the one who has committed *ratsakh*, or murder. No distinction between accidental or intentional murder is made in the use of this word, except as it is qualified by other words.

If one murders, he will either be put to death, or he will be granted asylum. How does that point us to Christ? It is what James says in his epistle –

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. ¹¹ For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.” James 2:10-11

The fact is that by any sin, we have broken the entire law, including murder. But more directly, our sin necessitated the death of Christ. It is we who, by our actions, caused His death. Where can we flee to in such an instance? And what can be done about the terrible price we must pay for our actions? The next two sermons will answer this for us. In short, this is the reason for Christ’s coming. He is the Israelite without sin. He is the perfect Firstborn. He is the great and sinless Priest who conducts His duties flawlessly. And He is the embodiment and completion of the law which stood so proudly in opposition to man because of the sin it highlights in him.

Christ alone was able to bear that burden, and in Him is a new and gentle yoke. In Him, the toil and labor are ended, and the rest which God promised His people is found.

Closing Verse: *“Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.*

*⁶Let not my soul enter their council;
Let not my honor be united to their assembly;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.*

*⁷Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel!*

*I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.” Genesis 49:5-7*

Next Week: Numbers 35:9-21 *The implications for this are huge...* (A Place of Refuge)
(69th Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Levitical Cities – A Prophecy Fulfilled

And the LORD spoke to Moses, words He was relaying
In the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying:

“Command the children of Israel
That they give the Levites cities to dwell in, please understand
From the inheritance of their possession
And you shall also give the Levites around the cities common-land

They shall have the cities to dwell in
And their common-land shall be
For their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals
Pay heed to these words from Me

The common-land of the cities
Which you will give the Levites; their common ground
Shall extend from the wall of the city
Outward a thousand cubits all around

And you shall measure outside the city
On the east side two thousand cubits, so you shall do
On the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side
———two thousand cubits
And on the north side two thousand cubits too

The city shall be in the middle, so it shall be planned
This shall belong to them for the cities as common-land

“Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites
You shall appoint six cities of refuge; so to you I tell
To which a manslayer may flee
And to these you shall add forty-two cities as well

So all the cities you will give to the Levites, please understand
Shall be forty-eight; these you shall give with their common-land

And the cities which you will give
Shall be from the possession of the children of Israel
From the larger tribe you shall give many
From the smaller you shall give few; follow the instructions well

Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites
— — —-as if handing out sheaves
In proportion to the inheritance that each receives

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so, be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 35:9-21 (A PLACE OF REFUGE)

When I was young, probably about ten, my parents took my brothers and me to a place in North Carolina that had a golf course where the first tee-off point was off the side of a mountain. It was a nice place and, having never golfed in my young life, I went out with a few others to hit balls off the side.

When it was my turn, I stepped forward and gave it my best try. I have no idea if I even hit the ball, but a girl had walked right up to us as I was swinging, and I beamed her in the neck. It was so hard that her neck swelled up and she was in real pain. Just an inch higher, and she would have died.

What she did wasn't intelligent, and what I did was unintentional. But it was also something that happened to a group that my grandfather was with in college. One guy went to hit a golf ball, and his club hit a guy behind him in the head. He immediately went into a seizure, and while he was being carried to get attention, his body slackened, and he was dead.

The person who hit the guy dropped out of school and apparently drank his life away. He became his own avenger of blood. Condemning himself for what was an innocent action.

Text Verse: *"Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." Hebrews 6:17, 18*

In Israel, the guy who struck the other would have actually been considered a manslayer, and the avenger of blood could have come after him. Understanding this was a part of the human condition, the Lord set aside cities where that person could have fled to in order to save his life.

We will see another part of the details of this today. For the innocent, there was a place of refuge. But, the truth that we discover in the Bible is that none of us are truly innocent. We stand guilty of committing the sins of life, and we can and should expect judgment for this.

But there is a place of refuge that we can flee to. For those who have so fled, we truly have a hope set before us. The saving message of Jesus *is* the place of refuge, and in reception of that word one can lay hold of that marvelous hope which He offers.

Though the author of Hebrews was writing to the Hebrew people, the message is applicable to all who come to Him for refuge. Whether an individual of the people Israel, or whether it is a Gentile from the furthest reaches of the planet, all can come to Him and find refuge.

For now, let us get into these verses and continue through the chapter. Great things are to be found in His superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Six Cities for Refuge (verses 9-15)

⁹ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

Verses 1-8 described the cities designated for the Levites. However, if you remember, the designation of the six cities of refuge were actually mandated before the designation of the other forty-two Levitical cities. Thus, there was a stress upon them which anticipated further clarification. The passage now before us will respond to that by providing that clarification.

Thus, we now see the usual formula for opening a new section of law, even though it is actually a further explanation of what was mandated in verse 6 with the words, "Now among the cities which you will give to the Levites *you shall appoint* six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee."

¹⁰ "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan,

The words are anticipatory, speaking of the time when Israel has entered into the promised inheritance. As a typological reminder, the Jordan, or the Descender, is a type of Christ. Just as Jordan descends from the heights to the lowest place on earth, so Christ descended from the heights of heaven, even to the pit of death. It speaks of His advent. With that in mind, the passage takes on a much fuller meaning for us to consider...

¹¹ then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you,

As noted in the previous sermon, the word *miqlat*, or refuge is seen eleven times in this chapter. This is the second use. It signifies a place of refuge and asylum. As noted before, the word comes from the word *qalat*, which means “stunted.”

Its one use in Leviticus spoke of not offering anything that was stunted to the Lord for the fulfilling of a vow. Thus, when one is in a place of refuge, or asylum, they are taken in. Their lives are stunted from going out. Such a place of confinement is so...

11 (con'ty) that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there.

This precept was originally promised in Exodus 21 –

“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. ¹³ However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered *him* into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.” Exodus 21:12, 13

That note of what would occur is now dealt with, in detail, here in Numbers 35. It is for the *ratsakh*, or manslayer. As noted last week, it is a word defined by the law. Twenty of its forty-seven uses are in this chapter.

Of these twenty times, it is alternately translated as “manslayer” or “murderer” based on the guilt or innocence of the offender. However, because the same word is used for both, it carries an underlying thought that whether guilty or innocent, it was a form of unsanctioned taking of human life.

The cities of refuge are for those who have committed this act, but who have done so innocently. The guilt is there, but it is a guilt which falls under the covering and protection of the law. As John Lange says of these cities, they are –

“...places of refuge which were located among the Levitical cities, and were thus passed under the protection of the Levites, but by the law under which they were appointed, were not only bulwarks of justice and its enforcement, but also of grace and its dispensation, and thus glorified the holy land.”

These cities were to be conveniently accessible for all people within Israel. There was to be ready access to them so that the people would be unhindered in their flight to safety. The word translated as “accidentally” means “unintentional.” It was used frequently in Leviticus and in Numbers 15 concerning unintentional sin. It is a noun which is here pre-fixed by a preposition. It is more precisely translated, “in his inadvertence.”

¹² They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger,

Here the word *gaal* is used. It has already been seen numerous times in the sense of a kinsman who has the right to redeem his relative, or a person who desires to redeem property, or some other thing of value. For example, in Ruth, Boaz is termed a “kinsman redeemer.” The word is used to describe the Lord as the Redeemer quite a few times in Scripture.

Here, it speaks of the same kinsman relationship, but instead of being a redeemer, the individual is considered as the relative’s avenger. This will be seen in coming verses where the word *dam*, or blood, is added. He is the kinsman, or avenger, of blood.

The root of *gaal* is primitive, showing that it was a precept that went back into antiquity. It is originally based on the precept which predates the flood of Noah. In Genesis 4, Cain killed Abel and the Lord sentenced him for his act. Cain’s response was –

“My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! ¹⁴ Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me.” Genesis 4:13, 14

Because of this, the Lord placed a mark on Cain, as it says, “lest anyone finding him should kill him.” Cain understood that his actions deserved death by the hand of another. As all men at that time were closely related, any of his relatives had the right to kill him. The Lord, by marking him, set a sign for refuge from such an action. This continued to be understood in Genesis 27. After Jacob stole Esau’s blessing, his mother Rebekah said to him –

“Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. ⁴⁴ And stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury turns away, ⁴⁵ until your brother’s anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?” Genesis 27:42-45

Rebekah feared for Jacob. Esau was mad enough to kill him, but she also knew that this would mean another close relative of Jacob could, in fact, kill Esau under the principle of the avenger of blood. Thus, she would be left without either.

For the manslayer noted here in Numbers, the death of the person he struck occurred in an unsanctioned way, meaning outside of the laws of war, judicial punishment, and so on. Because of this, the *gaal*, or avenger, had the right and the responsibility to avenge his relative's blood.

The cities of refuge are set aside to protect this rightful avenger of blood from taking the life of one who may be innocent, so...

¹² (con't) **that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment.**

Outside of the city of refuge, his guilt or innocence does not matter. If the avenger finds him, he may be killed without any wrongdoing being imputed to the avenger. Once inside, the manslayer is protected by the law of *miqlat*, or refuge, and he may not be harmed until his case is determined by the law of the land.

The word translated as "congregation," is *edah*. It comes from *ed* which signifies a witness, or abstractly it speaks of testimony. Thus, the word is fitting for a trial which would take into consideration the details of the matter at hand.

This is important to understand, because verse 25 will show that the manslayer actually stands before the congregation of where the act was committed. And yet, in Joshua 20:4-6, we read –

"And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. ⁵ Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand. ⁶ And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, *and* until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled."

There was to be an evaluation by the city of refuge. If accepted, he was to be protected by them. If the avenger of blood came to the city and requested his family right of revenge, stating that the slaying was not accidental but purposeful, then there would have to be a further trial.

Such a trial would take place before the congregation where the violation occurred, obviously still under protection of the Levites. If you remember, the Levites were taken in place of the firstborn of Israel, and so they actually stood in a unique way as a type of firstborn in relation to the people.

One can see Christ in this who is called by Paul “the firstborn among many brethren.” In this capacity as firstborn, the Levites could claim a sort of special family relationship to those who came to them, and also as appointed defenders of the innocent, the Levites could grant mercy on them through their defense.

If found innocent, he was returned to the city of refuge for safety until the death of the high priest. Only after the high priest’s death could he return home without fear of retribution.

¹³ And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge.

This was stated first in verse 6. It is now repeated. The idea is that of closeness to all points within the land, so that anyone could find access to such a city within a day’s journey. The law is set here for the initial granting of land to Israel. Later, in Deuteronomy, Moses will expand on this –

“Now if the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, ⁹ and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, ¹⁰ lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land which the Lord your God is giving you *as* an inheritance, and *thus* guilt of bloodshed be upon you.” Deuteronomy 19:8-10

¹⁴ You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, *which* will be cities of refuge.

The three on the east of the Jordan will be appointed by Moses in Deuteronomy 4 –

“Then Moses set apart three cities on this side of the Jordan, toward the rising of the sun, ⁴² that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without having hated him in time past, and that by fleeing to one of these cities he might live: ⁴³ Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.”

These three on the east will be reaffirmed in Joshua 20. The three on the west of the Jordan will also be named at that time –

“So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which *is* Hebron) in the mountains of Judah.” Joshua 20:7

There is about 30 miles from any point in Israel to the nearest city of refuge.

¹⁵ These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there.

Here, provision is made not only for an Israelite, but anyone who slayed another without intention. It includes the stranger, meaning someone who is simply passing through as a temporary dweller, and the sojourner, meaning someone who was not of Israel, but who dwelt among them. These held the same rights of refuge as a native of Israel. This looks to what Paul describes in Ephesians 2:11-13 –

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— ¹²that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

The Gentiles, who temporarily or permanently took up residence in Israel were, included in this particular precept, sharing in Israel’s commonwealth. Today, that extends to all who come forward to what these cities of refuge anticipate and picture.

In the Mishnah, the Jews say that such a stranger or sojourner only had this right of refuge if he slayed another stranger or proselyte, but not if he slayed an Israelite. That flies in the face of the text of the Bible, which makes no such restriction. It diminishes the value and intent of how this passage points to Christ.

Concerning such refuge, there is a note in Exodus 21:14 which shows that the altar of the Lord was considered such a place of mercy as well. There it said –

“But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.”

When one first came into the tabernacle, he would come to the altar of burnt sacrifice. The altar is where sins were expiated, where mercy was granted, and from which a propitious relationship was re-established with God. Charles Ellicott, citing several ancient sources, says that –

“In most parts of the ancient world a scruple was felt about putting criminals to death when once they had taken sanctuary, and those who did so were regarded as accursed ... The Mosaic Law regarded this scruple as a superstition, and refused to sanction it.”
Charles Ellicott

A person who had willfully and intentionally killed another was not to find mercy, even at this place of mercy. However, in the same chapter, the Lord said that He would appoint a place, meaning cities of refuge, where such a person could flee.

However, if the place where restoration with God was not available, then there would be *no other place* that he could flee to. He was to be taken from the altar and put to death. This actually occurred after the death of David.

In 1 Kings 2:5 & 6, David gave Solomon his final instructions before his death. This included a charge to bring the misdeeds of his general, Joab, back upon his own head – “Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *and* what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that *was* around his waist, and on his sandals that *were* on his feet. ⁶ Therefore do according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace.”

The killing of Abner and Amasa was exactly what that verse in Exodus was speaking of. Joab had acted on his own accord, and in a prideful manner against David’s orders. He used the death of his own brother, Asahel, as a pretext for killing Abner and Amasa. Because of his actions, which brought a stain on David’s name, David so charged Solomon. After David’s death, Solomon took the appropriate action against Joab –

“Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the Lord, and took hold of the horns of the altar. ²⁹ And King Solomon was told, ‘Joab has fled to the tabernacle of the Lord; there *he is*, by the altar.’ Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, ‘Go, strike him down.’ ³⁰ So Benaiah went to the tabernacle of the Lord, and said to him, ‘Thus says the king, ‘Come out!’

And he said, 'No, but I will die here.' And Benaiah brought back word to the king, saying, "Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me."

³¹ Then the king said to him, 'Do as he has said, and strike him down and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed. ³² So the Lord will return his blood on his head, because he struck down two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword—Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah—though my father David did not know *it*. ³³ Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the Lord.'"

-1 Kings 2:28-33

Joab died without mercy at the horns of the altar for the willful murder of the innocent. Therefore, the command of Exodus 21:14 was fulfilled in him with the exception of first removing him from the altar. Of this, the Geneva Bible states –

"The holiness of the place should not defend the murderer." Geneva

The same is true with these cities of refuge now. All cities of refuge were Levitical cities, meaning that they were the property of the Lord in a more poignant way than the rest of Israel, and thus they were holy. They were set apart for the defense of the innocent, but not for the defense of murderers.

In Joab's case, he was at the place of mercy, if it could be found. There was no point to run to a city of refuge because, first, he knew he was guilty. Secondly, he would have been returned to Jerusalem for a trial anyway.

As he was already there, and at the holy place of hoped-for mercy, a city of refuge could provide no more safety than the altar itself could. This is what the next verse now tells us...

*Where can I go to save my life?
How can I get free from what I have done?
I killed a man, but not by strife
In innocence have I slain this one*

*But the avenger of blood waits for me
To take my life for what I have done*

*Is there a place to where I can flee?
Is there a place to where I can run?*

Who will save me from what has come about?
Who can rescue me from what I have done?
Is there a chance for me? How will it come about?
Lord, my only hope is that to You I run

II. The Murderer Shall Be Put to Death (verses 16-21)

¹⁶ ‘But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he *is* a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Here, begin several specific instances of murder rather than unintentional manslaying. This first speaks of a person who strikes another with *barzel*, or iron. The word is believed to come from an unused root meaning “to pierce holes.”

It is possible to hit someone with iron unintentionally and kill him. This is recorded, for example, in Deuteronomy 19 –

“And this *is* the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past— ⁵as when a *man* goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live.”

-Deuteronomy 19:4, 5

However, it is obvious that such a person could intentionally kill another with an iron implement as well. The one who committed the act could flee to a city of refuge, proclaiming his innocence. The avenger of blood could come and claim it was premeditated. In such a case, a trial would be necessary. If the act was deemed as intentional, as it says, *rotseakh hu mot yumat ha’rotseakh* – “murderer he; dying shall be put to death, the murderer.”

¹⁷ And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he *is* a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

The idea here is a stone intentionally used to kill another. The Hebrew simply says, “with stone hand.” Thus, it could be one which is thrown, or one which is clunked on the head. Throwing a stone which kills another, however, could be without intent.

Again, the provision is for the city of refuge to give asylum to such a person until a trial could be conducted. If the act is determined to be intentional, then again, as before, “murderer he; dying shall be put to death, the murderer.”

¹⁸ Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

The word “weapon” is not in the original, even if it is implied because it became a weapon. It simply says, “instrument of wood.” One could accidentally whack someone else on the head with a club, a bat, or whatever.

However, such an item could also certainly be used intentionally to kill another person as Robert Duvall did in the movie *The Apostle*. As with the two previous instances, this is the purpose of both the city of refuge, and of any trial by the congregation. Guilt was to be determined, and if it is found to be so, the person is a murderer, and he shall be put to death.

As is obvious, the act of murder carries a penalty, and that penalty must be executed. The reason for this will be seen towards the end of the chapter. What is also obvious, is that no guilt is imputed to the one who kills the murderer. It is his right and his responsibility.

Understanding that, even though this is an Old Testament law and precept, it follows logically from both before the Mosaic covenant, and after it in New Testament times, that it is the right and responsibility of humanity to execute capital criminals.

Though there may not be an avenger of blood within the family to execute such, it is the obligation of society that capital criminals – in fact – face execution. This will be seen more clearly in verse 33. For Israel under the Mosaic law, provision is given first to the *goel ha’dam*, or “avenger the blood,” to handle the matter...

¹⁹ The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.

This verse applies in more than one way. It could be that the avenger came upon the murderer in a chance meeting, and he could kill the murderer without any fear of offense to God or of retribution from society. It can also mean that the murderer is handed to him by those who found him guilty. That is seen in Deuteronomy 19 –

“But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, ¹² then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. ¹³ Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away *the guilt of innocent blood* from Israel, that it may go well with you.”

-Deuteronomy 19:11-13

However, of this verse, John Gill says –

“Not only shall have power to do it, but, as it seems, should be obliged to do it; be the executioner of the murderer; but not before his case has been heard, examined, tried, and judged.” John Gill

This is incorrect. It was the right of the avenger of blood to kill this person whether he was guilty of premeditated murder, or simply of accidental slaying of the avenger’s relative. This is exactly why there were to be at least six cities of refuge, and why the provisions later stated in this chapter are given.

The avenger of blood had the right to avenge the death of one who killed another, even if by accident. No guilt of murder was imputed by the Lord, and the society had no right to next convict him of murder for his avenging of his relative’s blood.

An example of what this verse speaks of is found in the account of the woman of Tekoa who went before king David with a petition. David understood the law and what the consequences for intentional murder were. But the woman came forward in hopes of obtaining mercy according to her account spoken to him –

“Indeed I *am* a widow, my husband is dead. ⁶ Now your maidservant had two sons; and the two fought with each other in the field, and *there was* no one to part them, but the one struck the other and killed him. ⁷ And now the whole family has risen up against your maidservant, and they said, ‘Deliver him who struck his brother, that we may execute him for the life of his brother whom he killed; and we will destroy the heir also.’ So they would extinguish my ember that is left, and leave to my husband *neither* name nor remnant on the earth.” 2 Samuel 14:5-7

Indeed, in this example, it says that “the whole family” had risen up to take vengeance. It wasn’t the nearest relative, but all of them who jointly looked to this precept as their right to do away with the offender. This is what the law demanded, as we continue to see...

²⁰ If he pushes him out of hatred or, while lying in wait, hurls something at him so that he dies,

Here are several new words. The first is *sinah*, or “hatred.” It is a noun, coming from the word *sane*, to hate. Next, the word *hadaph*, or “to push,” is given. It can signify the act of pushing, or in a more general sense of driving out one’s enemies.

Another rare word is *tsediyah*, or the state of lying in wait. This will only be seen here and in verse 22. That comes from a more common verb which signifies the action “to lie in wait.” The words here, and in the next verse, are directed to indicate obvious intent leading to the state of death. An example of the first is found in Luke 4 –

“So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, ²⁹ and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. ³⁰ Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.” Luke 4:28-30

The One who gave the law to Israel, and who clearly spoke from the writings of that law truths which were found distasteful to them when they heard it, actually had such an attempt made against Him. In this, these people would have made themselves liable for punishment under this same law.

The irony is obvious. The intent of the people was restrained, however, so that the Lord could complete His work. Another example of such hatred leading to murder continues with...

²¹ or in enmity he strikes him with his hand so that he dies,

Again, there is fighting which is not done in enmity, but as sport. And there is fighting which is done with enmity towards one another. In that case, if one of those fighting kills the other then...

²¹ (con’t) the one who struck *him* shall surely be put to death. He *is* a murderer.

The same penalty exists whether a person uses an iron implement, a stone, a baseball bat, or even one's hand. The result is what matters, not the means of obtaining it. This is the reason for stating these precepts here.

There was to be no leniency for any supposed mitigating circumstances. When someone committed murder, he was reckoned as a murderer, and therefore...

²¹ (fin) **The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.**

The *goel ha'dam*, or the "avenger of the blood" was to be the one to put the murderer to death. In the coming verses, we will see that this precept is firm and fixed, and the murderer had no way out for his actions.

This is the severity of the law, and what the law mandated. But Jesus came to those under this law and told them that the intent behind the actions are what truly demand judgment. When speaking out the sermon on the mount, He said this to the people gathered there –

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

-Matthew 5:21, 22

The law was given because intent is not always knowable. At times, as we have seen, it is evident, and it was to be used in judgment. But, the Lord always knows the intent of the heart. To Him, the intent behind the act, even if it is not carried out, is liable to judgment, and in such judgment, punishment is to be expected.

The law was the standard for Israel, but within the law is found the greater standard by which God judges all things. When He said, "Do not covet," He spoke out a law, of which the breaking of it might not be known to anyone except the man and the Lord.

But the Lord does know, and He applies His standard of righteousness to all such things. In our society, we have tried to find every possible excuse imaginable for not upholding our own laws. And if guilt is found, we then go to great lengths to find exceptions for punishment of the violation.

But God does not work that way. He can be merciful, but His mercy must never violate another of His attributes. In order to be merciful, there must still be a meeting of the law

in some other way. He cannot arbitrarily show mercy to one without arbitrarily seeming vindictive towards another.

Because God is perfectly righteous, any violation against His righteousness must be judged – or He is not perfectly righteous. But He is and therefore His righteousness cannot be compromised.

God is perfectly just. Because He is, the penalty for violation of His righteous laws must be perfect. The law demands that every violation be punished and “the wages of sin is death.” We have earned death and we have earned condemnation. If we do not receive this, then God is not perfectly just. But He is.

God is perfectly holy. Because we are made unclean from our transgressions against His perfectly holy nature, we must be forever separated from Him – or He is not perfectly Holy. But He is. The way that God resolves these tensions which arise through His many unchanging attributes is by accepting the responsibility for them in Himself.

In His uniting with humanity, he was able to do this. He lived righteously, and He offers that righteousness to us. He remained holy and separate from sin, and He offers that holiness to us. In His coming He gave grace, and in His cross, He offers mercy.

All of the tension between us and our Creator is reconciled through the blood of Christ’s cross. Through Him, and through Him alone, fellowship is restored, and peace is realized. This will be seen as we continue through the rest of this passage next week.

For now, please pay heed and understand that what God has done in Christ is available to you by a simple act of faith. Have faith, believe that Christ died for your sins, and that He rose again for your justification. Call on Christ Jesus today, and be reconciled to God through Him.

Closing Verse: *“Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion!*

Declare His deeds among the people.

¹² When He avenges blood, He remembers them;

He does not forget the cry of the humble.” Psalm 9:12

Next Week: Numbers 35:22-34 (Until the Death of the High Priest)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is

there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Place of Refuge

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying
The words to him He was relaying

“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:
‘When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan
———yes, in Canaan is where
Then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you
That the manslayer who kills any person accidentally
———may flee there

They shall be cities of refuge for you
From the avenger who his rage would otherwise vent
That the manslayer may not die
Until he stands before the congregation in judgment

And of the cities which you give
You shall have six cities of refuge there where you live
You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan
And three cities you shall appoint
In the land of Canaan
Which will be cities of refuge: which is the city’s point

These six cities shall be for refuge
For the children of Israel
For the stranger, and for the sojourner among them
That anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there
———so to you I tell

‘But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies
He is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death
———do not heed his “I beg for mercy” cries
And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand
By which one could die, and he does die
He is a murderer

The murderer shall surely be put to death, as if an eye for eye
Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon
By which one could die, and he does die
He is a murderer
The murderer shall surely be put to death; do not even bat an eye

The avenger of blood himself shall
Put the murderer to death, as to you I say
When he meets him
He shall put him to death; it shall be this way

If he pushes him out of hatred or
While lying in wait, hurls something at him so that he dies
Or in enmity he strikes him with his hand so that he dies
The one who struck him shall surely be put to death
———do not heed his begging for mercy cries

He is a murderer, and his fate shall be swift and grim
The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death
———when he meets him

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so, be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 35:22-34 (UNTIL THE DEATH OF THE HIGH PRIEST)

Concerning the passage before us, Albert Barnes says –

“The atoning death of the Saviour cast its shadow before on the statute-book of the Law and on the annals of Jewish history. The high priest, as the head and representative of the whole chosen family of sacerdotal mediators, as exclusively entrusted with some of the chief priestly functions, as alone privileged to make yearly atonement within the holy of holies, and to gain, from the mysterious Urim and Thummim, special revelations of the will of God, was, preeminently, a type of Christ. And thus the death of each successive high priest presignified that death of Christ by which the captives were to be freed, and the remembrance of transgressions made to cease.”

What he says is not far off from most other scholars, and it is true. But... it doesn't explain the mechanics of what is being relayed in this passage. Without the mechanics, it is simply a guess that this is what is being pictured. Without knowing “how” it is, it actually doesn't help us to understand the passage.

Here we have people in a particular category – they have shed blood without sanction. That is divided into two more categories. The first is one who did it intentionally, he is a murderer, and he must die. The second did it unintentionally, and he is still guilty of blood, but he can be freed from the guilt.

What we will do today is find out the “how” of the matter as it points to Christ. But we need to do so by understanding how it first works for the person who fled to the place of refuge. If we cannot do that, then we cannot – truthfully – say that we understand “how” this points to Christ.

And before we do, we should probably define what a murderer is in its most basic form. The reason for this is that if we take the Bible's strictest definition of the words, we are all guilty of it. As this is so, we all need to understand the mechanics of what is going on in our verses today.

Text Verse: *“Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” 1 John 3:13-15*

John says that whoever hates his brother is a murderer. I could be wrong, but I'm guessing that everyone has fallen into this category at one time or another. God looks at the intent of the heart and that is the standard which is brought to bear on the human soul. John was simply citing what the law he grew up under already spoke –

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the Lord.” Leviticus 19:17, 18

As the law is written and cannot be broken, to hate one's brother in the heart means that the person has broken the law. In the breaking of the law, the law – meaning the entire law – is violated. This is why John could say this.

Jesus said as much concerning intent. In Matthew 5, he said that if you look at a woman with lust in your heart, you've already committed adultery with her. Intent... it'll get you every time. But there is good news too. We can be freed from the law and we can be given grace.

This is the marvel of what God has done in Christ. The mechanics of a part of how that can happen are found in today's verses. It's a marvelous part of His superior word. And so, let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Statute of Judgment to You (verses 22-34)

So far in this chapter, verses 1-8 were given concerning the designation of Levitical cities throughout the land given to Israel. However, there was a stress upon there being six cities of refuge which was seen in verse 6.

After that, the placement and purpose of these cities of refuge were seen in verses 9-15. The main point was that they were to be a place of refuge from the avenger of blood for one who accidentally killed another person.

Then from verses 16-21, the passage spoke of a person who intentionally killed another. For this, the city of refuge was not applicable. Rather, the murderer was to be taken and killed by the avenger of blood.

With that directive properly disposed with now, the details of who could seek refuge, how that refuge was to be determined, and the responsibilities and restrictions upon such a person are now given.

The logical and orderly way that the chapter is laid out ensures that every detail is stated and then explained so that no confusion or ambiguity would result. With that in mind, the instructions for the innocent manslayer are now precisely defined, starting with...

22 ‘However, if he pushes him suddenly

v'im b'feta – “and if suddenly.” The word *petha* comes from a root signifying “to open the eye,” and thus a wink. What occurs happens so fast that it cannot be misconstrued as with malice aforethought. There could have been a fight or flight reflex that simply took over the situation. This is probably what occurred with poor Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6:6-

“And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out *his hand* to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled.”

Unfortunately for Uzzah, his act was one which cost him his life because he touched a most holy object which was strictly forbidden by the Lord.

22 (con’t) without enmity,

Here the word *evah*, or enmity is used for only the second time in Scripture. The only other time it has been seen was in Genesis 3 –

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

It signifies hostility, or hatred. In other words, it is obvious from the surrounding interactions of the lives of the two, either because of close friendship, or from not having known one another at all, that there was no reason for there being hostility between the two.

Such a state would be evident to any who knew the relationship, or lack of it, and could see that there was nothing which would impel someone to instantly push another person, causing his death.

A possible example would be two people walking on a trail with a steep cliff next to them. One stumbles, reaches out towards the other, and accidentally pushes the other over the side. It would be obvious to any and all that the act was wholly unintentional.

²² (con't) **or throws anything at him without lying in wait,**

Towards the end of the previous sermon, in verse 20, the word *tsediyah*, or lying in wait, was introduced. Now, this is its second and last use in Scripture. In verse 20, there was an intentional lying in wait to do harm. Here that is lacking.

Instead, the person throws something toward or at another and it causes death. It could be as simple as two people throwing a baseball. The one catching misses it and it donks him in the head, killing him.

Or, it could be that the two were in a traveling show, where one throws knives at the other who is on a big spinning wheel. Unfortunately, the knife thrower missed his sleep the night before and his aim was off. The knife hits the femoral artery, the blood gushes forth, and the life is over.

The same holds true with William Tell and his one day of poor marksmanship. Instead of hitting the apple, he accidentally hits the frontal lobe of his rather dull apple holder. As loony as it is to even do this type of thing, it was not a deliberate act, and both were in agreement in the performance. Thus, the act is one which is unintentional.

²³ **or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing *it* at him without seeing *him*, so that he dies, while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm,**

The word “throwing” is not actually correct. The Hebrew word is *naphal*, meaning “to fall.” One might think of a person working on a brick building. He loses hold of the brick and it goes careening over the wall. Unfortunately, someone happens into the work area and the brick plunks down on his head, killing him.

The person who dropped the brick had no intention of killing anyone. After all, he was just laying another brick in the wall. But his action has caused death, and the avenger could, legally, take action against him.

Another example might be a person practicing his aim by throwing stones up at a target. If someone happens by and gets clunked in the head with one of the rocks as it comes down, it might kill him.

There was nothing intentional, and the person had no malice aforethought. It was simply time and chance which stepped in and brought about the death. With the lack of evil intent, the person is a manslayer, but not a murderer. Deuteronomy 9 gives a bit of a different view of such things –

“And this *is* the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past— ⁵as when a *man* goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live.”

-Deuteronomy 19:4, 5

If such unfortunate accidents occur...

²⁴ then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments.

Here, the word “manslayer” is not appropriate. It is not the standard word *ratsakh*, or “manslayer,” that is used so frequently in this chapter. Rather, it uses the word *nakah*, to strike. Thus, it should say, “the striker.” He is being set in contrast to the avenger of blood through the use of this descriptive word.

The congregation is brought together in order to hold an official trial which is conducted according to the precisely stated wording which is found here, and which is expanded upon in Deuteronomy.

The words, “according to these judgments,” mean that these are examples by which to guide any other similar situations. If the striker is deemed guilty, he is a murderer. If he is deemed innocent, he is only a manslayer without advance intent to kill.

²⁵ So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood,

Here, the judgment is made, and so the usual word, *ratsakh*, is given. He is a manslayer, but he is deemed to have done it unintentionally. Because of this, he is given legal protection from the manslayer. If this provision were not given in the law, then any act of homicide, intentional or unintentional, would be deemed as acceptable for the avenger of blood to take revenge.

^{25 (con't)} **and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled,**

It is apparent that this means that the people of the city of refuge where the manslayer went had sent him, probably under Levitical guard, back to the city where the killing had taken place. There would have been a preliminary trial at the Levitical city to see if he even qualified to be taken in.

Once summoned for a trial he would have been conducted to the city for that trial. If guilty, he would have been executed. However, being found innocent, he is then returned to the Levitical city for refuge which would last for a set but indeterminate amount of time, which was...

^{25 (con't)} **and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.**

One can see the providence of God in this. If what he did was the day when a new and young high priest was ordained, he may be there for the remainder of his life. If what he did was a week before the current high priest died, he would only have to be in refuge for that one week.

The reason for this mandate and this provision is two-fold. The first reason is that *ha'kohen ha'gadol*, or "the priest, the great," represented the nation before God. He did this with the holy offerings, and he did it in his mediatorial role on the Day of Atonement. This is seen several times, but two pertinent examples are found in Exodus and Leviticus—

"So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy *place*, as a memorial before the Lord continually. ³⁰ And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the Lord continually." Exodus 28:29,30

“Why have you not eaten the sin offering in a holy place, since it *is* most holy, and *God* has given it to you to bear the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord? ¹⁸See! Its blood was not brought inside the holy *place*; indeed you should have eaten it in a holy *place*, as I commanded.”

-Leviticus 10:17, 18

The high priest bore the judgment of the children of Israel, and the priest bore the guilt of the congregation through the eating of the sin offering. As the high priest was ultimately responsible for this, and for the rites of atonement on the Day of Atonement, he bore the guilt of the people. In the case of the manslayer, another thought, however, comes into play. Two more verses are needed to see this. Both are found in this chapter in just a few more verses –

“Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who *is* guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.” Numbers 35:31

“So you shall not pollute the land where you *are*; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.” Numbers 35:33

The guilty must be put to death. Period. Nothing else was acceptable. But the innocent is also guilty of shedding blood, for which no atonement could be made, except by the blood of the one who shed it. Therefore, the Day of Atonement, where *all other sins* were atoned for, could not atone for his act.

However, because the high priest bore the judgment and the guilt of the manslayer, his death alone could expiate those sins. When he died, because he bore the guilt of the act, the act of the law – and thus the law of the act – died with him. The manslayer was now free from his guilt.

This is why the same word is used for both murderer and manslayer. The guilt of bloodshed is the same for both, regardless if it is intentional or unintentional. As we saw already, the word which defines this act, *ratsakh*, is first found as a precept of the law itself in the Sixth Commandment, “You shall not murder.”

People question, if what Paul refers to in Colossians 2, and what the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 7, 8, and 10 about the law being annulled in Christ, actually applies to

the Ten Commandments or not. This verse right here answers it. The Ten Commandments are the basis for the law, and they are – along with the entire law – annulled, obsolete, and set aside in Christ.

The second reason is because in this there was a typological prefiguring of Christ. That will be explained later, but simply stated for now, the high priest was the mediator of the law. As this is so, the final judgment of the law, whether he officiated at the trial or not, was his.

As far as the person in the city of refuge, the time of his dwelling there would be solely up to that one determination – the death of the great priest – but it stood firm. At no time could he leave and be safe from the avenger of blood otherwise. This is seen with...

²⁶ But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled,

v'im yatso yetse – “And if going out, he goes out.” These words must be taken in connection with verse 28. “At any time” means “at any time before the death of the high priest.” The one who has shed blood is covered by this provision of the law only as long as he is in a city of refuge.

The city of refuge is a Levitical city, a city which represents for Israel the firstborn of Israel. This must be remembered from Numbers 8 –

“I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel. ¹⁹ And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary.” Numbers 8:18, 19

The cities of refuge, being Levitical cities, are thus – as it says in Numbers 8 – under the authority of Aaron and his sons. Therefore, the manslayer is represented by the firstborn, and he is under the protection of the life of the high priest. He is safe from the law because he is safe within the high priest who bore his guilt. To leave the city would then expose him to danger...

²⁷ and the avenger of blood finds him outside the limits of his city of refuge,

The person has willfully left the only place of protection for his life. The city border is a sanctuary, and he has been provided asylum. But with the high priest still alive, he is not protected outside of its border. If the avenger hears of it and finds him...

27 (con't) and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood,

The man has forfeit his life. He was found innocent of intentional murder, but he still bears the guilt of having shed blood. The act is still considered *ratsakh*. It was unsanctioned taking of human life, in contradistinction to *harag*, or killing, which can be sanctioned.

The blood is shed, there is no atonement for shedding of blood except by the blood of the one who shed it, and therefore, the avenger is not guilty of shedding further blood. Instead, he is justified in his taking of this life which bears bloodguilt. Not only is it his right to do so, it is his obligation if he finds him...

28 because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest.

Somebody must bear the responsibility and guilt for what occurred. The Lord accepted that the high priest would be the one to do this for the sins of His people. But the guilt of blood could only be borne by him, it could not be atoned for, as we have seen and will see. Therefore, as long as he lived, the guilt was either born by him, or by the one who had committed the act. The manslayer is only safe within the Levitical city of refuge. However...

28 (con't) But after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.

The guilt is freed from him, and it has been lifted from the high priest because he has died. The blood has been avenged through death. Therefore, he who was the avenger of blood is no longer so. If he were to kill this man, whose bloodguilt has been removed, he would bear bloodguilt and would, himself, be liable to the avenger.

As the high priest bore the judgment and the guilt of Israel, and as he has died, the judgment, which was passed, and the guilt which he bore on behalf of his people, died with him. However, being a high priest of the law, the law did not die with him. It continued on to the next generation. If the freed man accidentally killed again, he would, once again, be bound by the provisions of this chapter.

²⁹ ‘And these things shall be a statute of judgment to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Here is the term *l’khuqat mishpat*, or “for a statute of judgment.” It is only found here and in Numbers 27:11 which dealt with inheritances of property. The idea of both is a statute of the Lord that entails a fixed, permanent, and authoritatively established judgment. It defines and determines a legal right.

In this case, it was a legally binding precept under the Law of Moses, and which would continue under that same law for all the generations to come, until the law would find its fulfillment and ending. The judgment was made, the statute was enacted, and it is legally and permanently binding for all under the law.

³⁰ Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not *sufficient* testimony against a person for the death *penalty*.

The intent here is obvious. Anyone can make a claim on another person, especially when it may involve family of the deceased, or when it involves someone who hates the person who is accused. In Deuteronomy 17:6, the number is set at “two or three witnesses” for anyone who could be put to death for a crime.

This is extended to all iniquity or sin in Deuteronomy 19:15. Jesus repeats the precept in John 8:17, Paul uses it as a precept in 2 Corinthians 13:1, and the author of Hebrews refers to this precept for anyone who rejected the Law of Moses in Hebrews 10.

It is a safeguard which is intended for the protection of all due to the obviously wicked heart of man, or the fallibility of man to properly discern what may have occurred in a matter his eyes witnessed.

³¹ Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who *is* guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

What this means is that a person who has shed blood, and who has been judged guilty, thus identifying him as a murderer, cannot appeal for his life through some sort of payment, nor can anyone else offer a payment to buy back his life. This goes back to Exodus 21 where a person could redeem his life from a death sentence handed out for another reason –

“If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox *shall be* acquitted. ²⁹ But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death. ³⁰ If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him.” Exodus 21:28-30

The man did not commit *ratsakh*, or unsanctioned bloodshed. Therefore, he could purchase his life back at whatever payment was imposed. If he could not pay, then he died. The person who has murdered, however, could not buy his life back. This is because of what it says coming up in verse 33. Further...

³² And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest.

Of this, the Pulpit Commentary states –

“No one might buy off the enmity of the avenger before the appointed time, for that would give an unjust advantage to wealth, and would make the whole matter mercenary and vulgar.” Pulpit Commentary

This is not correct. The fact that a person could redeem his life from what his ox had done, as noted a minute ago, shows this. The reason for this will be explained in the final verses of the chapter. What is true here, is that a ransom may satisfy the avenging relative, but it cannot satisfy the justice of God.

For now, the same law applies to the person who committed unintentional *ratsakh*, or unsanctioned bloodshed, and it is for the same reason as verse 33 will explain. He could not buy his way out of what he did at any price.

Rather, he had to stay in the city of refuge as long as the high priest lived. No price, no matter how high, could be enough. The psalmist was referring to this general precept when he wrote these words about the surety of death –

“Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
⁷ None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—

⁸ For the redemption of their souls *is* costly,
And it shall cease forever—
⁹ That he should continue to live eternally,
And not see the Pit.” Psalm 49:6-8

The reason that a ransom could not be paid for either was because there was unsanctioned killing – intentional or unintentional, it makes no difference. When the death was unsanctioned, there was a price assigned to that act...

³³ So you shall not pollute the land where you *are*; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.

Here is a new word, *khaneph*. It signifies to pollute or profane. It comes from a primitive root, meaning to soil. This is especially so in a moral sense.

The intent of the words is obviously that of unsanctioned killing. Otherwise, Israel would be guilty of bloodshed anytime they went to battle. But David understood that this was not the case when he said this about Joab –

“Moreover you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *and* what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that *was* around his waist, and on his sandals that *were* on his feet.” 1 Kings 2:5

In unsanctioned killing, there was a polluting of the land which could not be atoned for except by the blood of the person who shed it. This same word is used by the psalmist with these words –

“And shed innocent blood,
The blood of their sons and daughters,
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;
And the land was polluted with blood.” Psalm 106:38

As this is a standard which precedes the Law of Moses, it is an eternal standard, and thus it – like Israel under the law who sacrificed their children – applies to those who do so to the gods of self-convenience and wickedness through abortion.

It is just one more reason, on a heaped-up pile of reasons, why those who do such things desperately need to come to Jesus. And it is why this nation, among the many other nations who approve of this practice, will be plunged into complete destruction in the years ahead. Such bloodshed defiles the land...

^{34 (fin)} Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel.”

Of verses 31 and 32 which referred to not accepting a ransom for either the murder or the freeing of the manslayer, Cambridge says, “These prohibitions emphasize the extreme value of human life.” This is an incorrect statement. Humanity makes itself worthless through their actions, even to the point where God has destroyed, and He will again destroy, the entire planet, minus very few.

The reason for these provisions is because God is holy. Until we can understand the holiness of God, we cannot see sin, meaning our own sin, in its proper light. The Lord is teaching Israel that unholiness bears a weight of guilt, and that weight must be placed somewhere.

To defile the land where the Lord dwelt was to bring contempt upon the holiness of the Lord. For the one who innocently shed such blood and defiled the land, the Lord made provisions in the cities of refuge. But for the guilty, no provision could be made.

The nature of God demands that a violation of His holiness must be corrected through a judicial process. His righteous character demands that it must be so, and yet His mercy allows for it to be borne by another. This was the burden of the high priest.

The Lord was instructing the world, through the people of Israel, that these fixed and eternal standards must be met, but that provisions for how they can be met outside of the imposition of the penalty upon the guilty were available. Proof that this is so, not only for Israel, but for any and all who will acknowledge him, comes from the words of Paul, which reflect the sentiment of this final verse of the day –

“I will dwell in them
And walk among *them*.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.” 2 Corinthians 6:16

As I said earlier, there were two reasons for the mandate that the offender had to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. The second reason I gave was that these things anticipate Christ. That is what we will see next.

*Do not defile the land in which you live
For among the midst of you, there I dwell
To you the blessings of heaven, I will give
Or, from Me will come the tortures of eternal hell*

*For I dwell among you; even I, the Lord
Therefore, be holy as I am holy – this you must be
In this, you will receive my promised reward
And there shall be peace between you and Me*

*Do not profane the land, but keep it pure and undefiled
And between us there will be a state of harmony
In this, upon you I shall have smiled
And together we shall dwell for all eternity*

II. Our Great High Priest

Chapter 35 details the cities of the Levites. They were taken in place of the firstborn of Israel to minister between the priests and the people, but they stand as representative of the firstborn. It is the first typological point concerning Christ, who is the Firstborn they anticipate.

From their cities, six cities were named as places of refuge. In Scripture, six is the number of man, especially fallen man. It is five plus one, or grace plus man's addition to it. It is seven minus one, or coming short of spiritual perfection.

The cities are given as a haven for such. They are a place of grace for those who fall short, but who seek refuge. The cities themselves do not save, they only protect. And they only do so by the voluntary act of the man staying in them.

Thus, the cities were anticipatory of Christ for Israel. One under the law still had the hope of Messiah, and in such a hope, the sin of the man was not imputed. This was spoken by David, and cited by Paul with these words –

“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

⁷ ‘Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;

⁸ Blessed *is the* man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.’” Romans 4:5-8

David was a man under the law. It was a law that said sin was to be imputed. And yet David wrote that there was a blessedness for the man to whom the Lord did not impute sin. The law is of works, and yet a person could be deemed righteous by faith.

The city of refuge was such a place. The man was guilty, but his guilt could be taken away, but not by law. It could only be taken away by a provision of grace within the law – the anticipation of Messiah.

We saw that the priests ate the sacrifice of the sin offering in order to bear the sins of the people. But we are told in Hebrews that such sacrifices actually did nothing. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. And so, these sacrifices were only anticipatory of the coming of Christ.

We saw this in each of the countless sacrifices of Leviticus and Numbers. Each detail anticipated Christ. And so, the sin animal offerings eaten by the priests did not actually take away the sin. The high priest only bore the sin of the people in an anticipatory way. That anticipation was of Christ to come.

And that takes us to the high priest. It specifically noted that it was he who was anointed with oil. The picture takes us back to Leviticus and what that anointing anticipated. The word *mashakh*, or anoint, is the root of *mashiakh*, Messiah, or Anointed One. In Isaiah 61, that Anointed One was anticipated –

“The Spirit of the Lord God *is* upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *those who are* bound.” Isaiah 61:1

Luke says that Christ went into the synagogue, read that portion of Scripture, and stated that it was fulfilled in their hearing. He was proclaiming that He was the One anointed by God as Messiah.

Those who had transgressed the law through bloodshed found safe refuge in the Levitical city of refuge. When the high priest was alive, he bore the guilt of the judgment and guilt of the offender. But he didn't actually bear the guilt because the animal which they ate to bear the guilt of the people could not be a suitable substitute to bear guilt. It was only a type of Christ.

But when Christ came, He could bear the guilt – and He did. He is the fulfillment of Levitical city of refuge, He is the fulfillment of the animal bearer-of-guilt substitute, He is also the fulfillment of the anointed high priest who then bore the guilt.

And in that capacity, and with that burden of guilt, He also died. As we said of the high priest of Israel, we can now say of the fulfillment of that high priestly position in Christ – When He died, because He bore the guilt of the act, the act of the law – and thus the law of the act – died with Him. The manslayer was now free from his guilt.

This is what Paul wrote about in Colossians 2. Though he is speaking to Gentiles, the premise remains the same concerning what occurred –

“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Colossians 2:13-15

The Anointed One, the Messiah, the true High Priest, died on the cross of Calvary, and the handwriting of that law died with Him. In that death, the law is taken away, and the captives are set free.

Some might claim that the idea of the city of refuge means that a person could lose his salvation. If they left the city, they were subject to the avenger of blood. Such is exactly the opposite. That is speaking of before, not after, the high priest dies.

That looked to Israel before the coming of Messiah. Those who trusted in Messiah, died in faith. They were kept in the City of Refuge until His coming. In the death of Messiah,

the captives are freed. Verse 26 cannot be taken to indicate a loss of salvation. In fact, it proclaims eternal salvation.

For those who come to Christ after the act, Charles Ellicott provides sufficient detail to explain their state –

“As the bodily safety of the Israelite who had slain a man depended upon his strict observance of the law which required him to remain within the city of refuge until the death of the high priest, so in the same way the spiritual safety of the believer depends upon his exclusive reliance upon the merits and efficacy of the atoning death and righteousness of Christ, seeing that “there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved; neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4:12).

If the person of Israel left the city of refuge, it meant that he was under law. He was not under grace if he went out. And that state remains today. One can choose law, or he can choose grace, but he cannot have both. The author of Hebrews makes this clear when speaking of the New and the Old covenants –

“But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. ¹³ For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” Hebrews 9:11-15

One can be under law, with a priest who dies and stays dead, and a law which continues to condemn, or he can come to Christ who lives forever, and to the grace which is offered freely unto eternal salvation.

At the beginning of our verses today, John showed us that we have all committed murder. We may have done it unintentionally, and some of us may have done it intentionally, but we have a greater hope than our pitiful actions. As the author of Hebrews says –

“Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.” Hebrews 6:17, 18

Israel had cities of refuge until the coming of Christ and His death for them. The tragically flawed thinking that we must continue to adhere to the Law of Moses now is shown false in the passage today. In fact, it is a self-condemning act because such a person rejects what the law only anticipated – freedom in Christ. We have a Place of refuge that we too can flee to, in order to keep us out of the death that we deserve. Let us flee to the grace of God in Christ and be saved from what we as humans otherwise deserve.

Closing Verse: *“And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”*

-Revelation 6:10

Next Week: Numbers 36:1-13 *It’s the last sermon in Numbers, which makes me rather sad...* (The Inheritance of Zelophehad) (71st Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Until the Death of the High Priest

‘However, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity
Or throws anything at him without lying in wait
Or uses a stone, by which a man could die
Throwing it at him without seeing him, so that he dies;
———such is his fate

While he was not his enemy or seeking his harm
Then the congregation shall judge guilt or innocence
Between the manslayer and the avenger of blood
According to these judgments

So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer
From the hand of the avenger of blood, saving his head

And the congregation shall return him
To the city of refuge where he had fled

And he shall remain there until the death of the high priest
Who was anointed with the holy oil; until he is deceased

But if the manslayer at any time goes
Outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled
And the avenger of blood finds him
Outside the limits of his city of refuge, he had better dread

And the avenger of blood kills the manslayer
He shall not be guilty of blood: from guilt he is released
Because he should have remained
In his city of refuge until the death of the high priest

But after the death of the high priest so we learn
The manslayer to the land of his possession may return

And these things shall be a statute of judgment to you
Throughout your generations in all your dwellings, so shall you do

Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death
On the testimony of witnesses, so shall it be
But one witness is not sufficient testimony
Against a person for the death penalty

Moreover you shall take no ransom
— — —-for the life of a murderer who is of death guilty
But he shall be put to death surely

And you shall take no ransom for him
Who has to his city of refuge fled
That he may return to dwell in the land
Before the death of the priest; yes, until he is dead

So you shall not pollute the land where you are
For blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made
— — —-for the land

For the blood that is shed on it
Except by the blood of him who shed it; this you must understand

Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit
In the midst of which I dwell
For I the LORD dwell
Among the children of Israel

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

NUMBERS 36:1-13 (THE INHERITANCE OF ZELOPHEHAD)

We have thirteen verses before us to close out the book of Numbers. In these thirteen verses, the idea of an inheritance is mentioned seventeen times. The inheritance, then, is an obviously important point that the Lord wants us to consider.

And, although this deals with only one family in one tribe, it actually possibly affects the inheritance of all of the people of Israel. This is because it is a conditional thing that could occur in any family, or to any person in Israel.

This is even more so, because the concept doesn't just deal with a person who dies without having any sons. It would extend to a person who lost all his sons in battle. It would extend to a person whose only son was run over by a speeding donkey, or whose son fell off a cliff on a hike from Jericho to Jerusalem.

If any inheritance could likewise be called into question, then it actually means that every inheritance could be called into question. This is because we cannot see the day ahead of us. Not one person in Israel, even if he had seventy sons, could be sure all seventy of them would be alive the next day. If that sounds unlikely, then you have forgotten the story of Ahab –

“Now the king's sons, seventy persons, *were* with the great men of the city, *who* were rearing them. ⁷ So it was, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons and slaughtered seventy persons, put their heads in baskets and sent *them* to him at Jezreel.” 2 Kings 10:6, 7

We can be so sure of our inheritance that we may forget a loophole that we might not have even considered. What if... Is the inheritance assured? Can it be lost? How can we know?

Text Verse: “...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:12-14

Paul says that in Christ, the Father has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He goes on to tell us of the riches of the glory of what God has

done in Christ. The story is magnificent, the details are choice morsels of delight, and the hope is a blessed one.

Well... that is, unless you accept the premise that you can, in fact, lose your salvation. The joy of the guarantee then fades. The hope of salvation becomes only a “hope” of salvation. What if what Christ did was lacking something. Suppose there is some legal loophole which could jeopardize the inheritance. Then what?

Imagine being one of the poor, uninformed, or willfully uneducated people who actually believes that he has to help God along in order to stay saved! But the problem with that idea is that if a person needs to do something, or not do something, in order to keep being saved, then it was never of grace and by faith. It is, by default, of works.

And if of works, it is not of Christ. Such is not the case, however. There are no loopholes in the law of God which declares a person justified, sanctified, and glorified. It is a done deal, and it is all to be found in His superior word. And so, let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. To Protect the Inheritance (verses 1-13)

¹Now the chief fathers of the families

The translation is not correct. It says, “And came near chiefs, the fathers of the families.” The article is before “fathers,” not “chiefs.” This sets the stage for what is to be conveyed. The house of the fathers is the next division below the families. They are chiefs, the fathers of the families, which are being referred to.

The specificity is necessary for the passage to be properly understood, because a conflict has arisen which seems to put a previous law concerning tribal land possession in jeopardy.

^{1 (con’t)} of the children of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh,

I won’t hide it from you, what is presented here is confusing, but it is important for those who desire to be precise. What transpires in this passage concerns land belonging to the tribe of Manasseh. However, Manasseh has been divided into two halves. One half would reside on the eastern side of Jordan in Gilead, and one half would reside on the western side, in Canaan.

As this is dealing with land belonging to Machir, it would seem to involve land on the eastern side, outside of Canaan proper. This would seem to be so from what is seen in Numbers 32 –

“And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and dispossessed the Amorites who *were* in it. ⁴⁰ So Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he dwelt in it.” Numbers 32:39, 40

However, this is not the case. Rather, the sons of Gilead who are listed in Numbers 32 are named again in Joshua 17 in the division of the land for the half-tribe of Manasseh who settled in Canaan. There it says –

“There was also a lot for the tribe of Manasseh, for he *was* the firstborn of Joseph: *namely* for Machir the firstborn of Manasseh, the father of Gilead, because he was a man of war; therefore he was given Gilead and Bashan. ² And there was *a lot* for the rest of the children of Manasseh according to their families: for the children of Abiezer, the children of Helek, the children of Asriel, the children of Shechem, the children of Hepher, and the children of Shemida; these *were* the male children of Manasseh the son of Joseph according to their families.

³ But Zelophehad the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, had no sons, but only daughters. And these *are* the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. ⁴ And they came near before Eleazar the priest, before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the rulers, saying, “The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers.” Therefore, according to the commandment of the Lord, he gave them an inheritance among their father’s brothers. ⁵ Ten shares fell to Manasseh, besides the land of Gilead and Bashan, which *were* on the other side of the Jordan, ⁶ because the daughters of Manasseh received an inheritance among his sons; and the rest of Manasseh’s sons had the land of Gilead.” Joshua 17:1-6

The way that ten shares are counted is first by counting the six named sons – Abiezer, Helek, Asriel, Shechem, Hepher, and Shemida. But as Hepher’s son Zelophehad is dead, he is removed from the counting and in his place are listed his five daughters – Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

Thus, there are five plus five, or ten total shares which will be given to the family of Gilead west of Jordan in Canaan. The inheritance of these five daughters is raised to the level of the family of their grandfather due to the death of their father.

Each of these five noble and wise daughters received a one-tenth inheritance, or a total of fifty percent of that which is named, of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Canaan.

The division of land for their great-great-grandfather Machir is on both sides of the Jordan – one half in Gilead and one half in Canaan, but it is his descendants from Hephher and through Zelophehad who now are referred to. It is they who are...

^{1 (con't)} **of the families of the sons of Joseph,**

This note almost seems superfluous. The tribe in question is that of Manasseh, and so it doesn't seem necessary to mention the genealogy all the way up to Joseph, but it is. First, if this addition wasn't made, then there could be a later problem between Joseph's two sons – Ephraim and Manasseh. The word "sons" here is, in fact, plural. There are two sons of Joseph.

However, they were adopted by Jacob and thus reckoned as his. But someone might say that they are both sons of Joseph, and so this didn't actually apply between the two of them. This will be seen as incorrect in verse 5.

Secondly, the name Joseph was given is based on the very words these men who have come forward will use. That was seen in Genesis 30 –

"Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. ²³ And she conceived and bore a son, and said, 'God has taken away my reproach.' ²⁴ So she called his name Joseph, and said, "The Lord shall add to me another son." Genesis 30:22-24

The word for "shall add" which she exclaimed is *yasaph*. It is the root of the name Joseph, or "He shall add." In verse 3, they will use the same word, *yasaph*, to show that what they possess will be added to another tribe's possession while it is taken away from them. Naming their father here is undoubtedly to make an intentional connection concerning what is going on.

^{1 (con't)} **came near and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the chief fathers of the children of Israel.**

In this, there is no article before “fathers.” It says, “chiefs, fathers of the children of Israel.” This then would probably be referring to the seventy designated as a ruling council, or the chiefs of the named tribes of Israel. Following where and when the definite article is supplied is important to understand the details of what is being presented.

It is a matter which must go to the very top of the governmental structure in Israel because it is a matter which – by its very nature – cannot be handled without bias at a lower level. It involves inheritance between tribes which are already considered as permanent and fixed grants in perpetuity.

² And they said: “The Lord commanded my lord Moses to give the land as an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel,

This was recorded in Numbers 26:52-56 –

“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁵³ ‘To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names. ⁵⁴ To a large *tribe* you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a small *tribe* you shall give a smaller inheritance. Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them. ⁵⁵ But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. ⁵⁶ According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller.’”

But there is more to consider...

^{2 (con’t)} and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters.

This is exactly as it occurred, and as is recorded in Numbers 27 –

“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁷ ‘The daughters of Zelophehad speak *what is right*; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.’”

-Numbers 27:6, 7

The words spoken in this verse are in the singular to Moses. He says *adoni*, or “my lord.” Thus, there is one person speaking for, and on behalf of, the whole. This person brings up a logical difficulty which must be presented before land inheritances are granted, or there could immediately be problems.

What precipitated this isn't known. It could be that one person simply thought it through after hearing the news about Zelophehad's daughters. Or, it could be that one of the daughters is already being considered for marriage to someone and the realization of the difficulty suddenly came to light because of that.

Whatever brought this to light, it cannot be left unaddressed due to the permanent rights of land grants to each tribe. That difficulty is now seen with the words which follow...

³ Now if they are married to any of the sons of the *other* tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and it will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance.

This is an interesting set of words. The irregular construction of the verse is noted by scholars, but it is acknowledged that the sense is clear, nonetheless.

First, two words for "tribe" are used. The first is *shevet*, which signifies a scepter. It indicates rule, coming from a word which signifies "to branch off." One can think of those below the main tribe as branching off.

The second word is *matteh*. It comes from the word *natah*, also meaning to branch off. It is used to indicate support, as a walking staff, and thus figuratively to indicate support of life, meaning bread which sustains.

The use of the two words is probably intentional in order to say something like, "If they are married to any of the sons of another authority of the children of Israel, their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the support into which they marry." Thus, the support for their tribe would be diminished.

The reason for this is that the sons born to the women would be reckoned not as sons of Manasseh, but as sons the tribe of the fathers. Therefore, the inheritance to the sons, meaning the land, which is within the boundaries of Manasseh, would no longer belong to Manasseh.

If no sons were born to the father, then the rules of inheritance found in Numbers 27 would prevail, but that would be the exception, not the rule.

However, as there is already the precedent of a father having daughters and no sons, it would be sure to arise from time to time. Eventually, the inheritance rights throughout Israel would become extremely complicated as land moved from one tribal inheritance to another.

The term “the land of Judah,” or “the land of Zebulun,” and so on, would no longer have the intended meaning it once did. Further, this would then violate another precept which has already been laid down in the law...

⁴ And when the Jubilee of the children of Israel comes,

The law of the Jubilee is recorded in Leviticus 25, with some specific details being conveyed in Leviticus 27. The term Jubilee comes from the Hebrew word which signifies a ram’s horn. The reason for this name is because of what the blowing of this ram’s horn signified –

“And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. ⁹Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth *day* of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.” Leviticus 25:8, 9

The *yobel*, or ram’s horn, is only mentioned four times outside of Leviticus, here and three times in Joshua. However, the three uses in Joshua refer not to this special event, but simply to the literal blowing of a ram’s horn.

In other words, apart from the instructions given in Leviticus, this is the only time that the Jubilee is mentioned in Scripture. And more, this is not even referring to it in its actual occurrence, but only in a hypothetical possibility which could occur on the Jubilee.

^{4 (con’t)} then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.”

Technically, the inheritance belonging to the daughter would transfer immediately to the tribe of the husband once the marriage took place. However, through other technical aspects of the law, it could potentially revert back to Manasseh.

If there was a divorce before children were born, if there were no children in the marriage, or if the inheritance was purchased in some manner, it may return to Manasseh, but the normal cycle of life would say otherwise.

But, the law of the Jubilee says that all landed property was to revert to its original owner, or to his legal heir. Any title to land which was not legally and successfully challenged would be confirmed.

And because the title of the children of one of the daughters of Zelophehad could not be challenged, then regardless as to what happened to the land after they inherited it, at the Jubilee, it would become permanently theirs as the landed title holders, even though they were not of Manasseh.

Regardless as to whether Israel ever observed the Jubilee or not, the precepts which surrounded the Jubilee are what matter. And the precept is that the land of a tribe was to never transfer out of that tribe – forever.

To understand this from an imperfect example, if the great state of Florida were to use its public funds to buy land in the less great state of, say, Hawaii, that land would still belong to Hawaii. The taxes owed to it would go to Hawaii. It would not become a part of Florida, except in the sense of any other ownership by an individual, a company, or whatever – we could say a company that prints Bibles.

The laws of Hawaii would still apply in the sale of that property to Florida, and they would have to be considered by the purchaser. With this understanding, that a law is necessary in order to protect the permanent ownership of a land granted by lot to a tribe, a law is needed for the security of that tribe to resolve this issue...

⁵ Then Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying:

In Numbers 27, when this issue was first raised by the daughters of Zelophehad, it said – “So Moses brought their case before the Lord.

⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ⁷ ‘The daughters of Zelophehad speak *what is right*; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.’”

-Numbers 27:5-7

It is possible that this account in Numbers 36 actually happened at the same time as that account in Numbers 27, but it is recorded separately according to content, not as a chronology of events.

Or, it could be that Moses went in again to the Lord at this time, without it being stated. Either way, Moses now gives a command based on the word of the Lord, to the children of Israel.

⁵ (con't) **“What the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks is right.**

ken, matteh bene yoseph doberim – “Rightly so, tribe sons Joseph speakings.” Again, as before, the matter is elevated to the “tribe of the sons of Joseph,” or “He shall add,” rather than simply saying “Manasseh.” The word “tribe” here is singular.

This could ostensibly be taken in one of two ways. Joseph is a single tribe, and what the sons of that tribe have brought forward is correct. Or, it could be that this single tribe of Joseph, which is comprised of two separate tribes, has brought forward a premise which is correct.

The latter is certainly the case based upon the adoption of the two sons by Jacob, based upon the selection of Levi out of the tribes, and based upon the conducting of two census which included the counting of both Ephraim and Manasseh as separate tribes. In other words, Manasseh is a separate tribe from Ephraim, despite both being sons of Joseph.

But again, there is the subtle play on words which is being conveyed as well. Joseph means, “He shall add.” The men here do not want their land being added, at their expense, to that of the other tribes, despite the meaning of the name of their forefather.

⁶ **This is what the Lord commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, ‘Let them marry whom they think best, but they may marry only within the family of their father’s tribe.’**

akh, l’mishpakhat matteh avihem tihyenah l’nashim – “surely to family of tribe of their father they may become married” Verses 6 and verse 8 are complicated. Most translations add in definite articles not found in the Hebrew, and scholarly comments say that this means they can only marry in the tribe, and also only in the family of their father.

This is not correct. They may marry anyone within the tribe. This will be seen as we go. In other words, instead of “within the family of their father’s tribe,” it means “within a family of the tribe of their father.”

They were not forced to marry anyone, but they could not marry outside of the tribe. Their inheritance was from their father Zelophehad, and his was from Manasseh. And therefore, they had to remain within that tribe. This restriction is only imposed upon heiresses and not upon daughters in other circumstances.

As stated earlier, this precedent was a part of the law and would have been adhered to as such. Even if Israel never celebrated a Jubilee, the codes which were set for such an event would not have been violated. Such an occurrence is actually recorded in 1 Chronicles –

“The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli *were* Eleazar and Kish. ²² And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but only daughters; and their brethren, the sons of Kish, took them *as wives*.” 1 Chronicles 23:22

As seen earlier, there is nothing that says a state must buy land in another state, but the principle behind such a purchase would be binding if it did. The logical reason for this law continues to be explained with...

⁷ So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

That which was assigned by lot to the tribe was to forever remain joined to that tribe. The word translated here as “keep” is *dabaq*. It means to cleave or be fastly joined together. It is the word used in Genesis 2 when it says that a man would be joined to his wife and they would become one flesh. There was to be no separation between a tribe and its land forever.

This precept here is why even today the land of Asher in Israel is noted as such, and the land of Judah is noted as such, and so on. There were specific prophecies made over the sons of Israel which speak of the land of the sons of Israel.

In order for them to be fulfilled, the land would have to remain within the tribe. Otherwise, those prophecies would have no value. As an example, we read this in Deuteronomy 33 –

“Asher is most blessed of sons;
Let him be favored by his brothers,
And let him dip his foot in oil.
²⁵ Your sandals *shall be* iron and bronze;
As your days, *so shall your strength be.*” Deuteronomy 33:24, 25

By strictly maintaining these inheritances in accord with the word of the Lord through Moses, right now in Israel a Christian oil company is in the traditional land of Asher, drilling oil wells. This could not have been possible if the laws we are looking at right now were not put in place.

⁸ And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be the wife of one of the family of her father’s tribe,

The translation is misleading. It says, *l’ekhad mi-mishphakhat matteh abiha* – “to one from family of tribe of her father.” This rule only applies, as it says, to every daughter who possesses an inheritance. If this is the case, she was to marry within a family of her father’s tribe. As he was of the tribe of Manasseh, they must marry someone descended from him. Thus, the family would be maintained in accord with the word of the Lord. This was...

^{8 (con’t)} so that the children of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers.

The land itself is governed by the tribe to which it belongs. Therefore, a female who was to inherit property had to maintain that tribe’s property through marriage.

This did not apply to women who were not set to inherit land. They were free to marry outside of tribe, without restriction. Thus, it is seen that Elizabeth, who was of the daughters of Aaron, meaning of the tribe of Levi and of the priestly class of Israel, was related to Mary, the mother of Christ Jesus.

How their relationship was connected is unknown. It could be that the mother of Mary, and the mother of Elizabeth, were sisters descended from Aaron, but Mary’s mother could have married a man of Judah. If so, then Mary would be reckoned as being of the tribe of Judah through her father.

That is just one possible scenario for how the two could be related despite being reckoned to different tribes. It is through the father that the tribe and family are reckoned.

And therefore, unless the inheritor is a male, these special restrictions came into play in order to protect the possession of the tribe.

⁹ Thus no inheritance shall change hands from *one* tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance.”

This verse rewords what was just stated in verse 7, confirming what was said there. The inheritance of the tribe would cleave to the tribe without fail, as long as these provisions were maintained. This was the intent of the year of Jubilee, but it would not have been possible without the addition of this provision now given.

The thing about this precept is that it plays upon the greed of the human heart. Where countless precepts of the law were constantly violated by Israel, and where there is not a single recording of a Jubilee having been conducted in Israel showing it probably wasn't carefully adhered to – admittedly an argument from silence – the fact that land, and thus wealth, was at stake, it is certain that the precepts of this law now being given were never violated.

Despite flagrant violations of almost every precept handed down to the people by the Lord through Moses, this is one of the laws that would have been meticulously watched over by the leaders of the land. And to get things started in that vein of obedience we read...

¹⁰ Just as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad;

There is nothing stated in this law, now or afterward, about the possible effects and consequences of love. In other words, if one of these five daughters fell in love with a guy from Zebulun, could she have given up her inheritance and married him? The answer is probably, “Yes,” but it is not even addressed. What this passage is concerned with is the integrity of the tribal and family inheritances.

The matter here is simply stated as an act of obedience to the precept by the daughters of Zelophehad. In this, it sets the stage for the rest of the record of the Bible. Nothing is later recorded where there was some type of deviation from the precept.

¹¹ for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to the sons of their father's brothers.

The names of these five are recorded in the same order in Numbers 26:33 and 27:1 and in Joshua 17:3. However, in this listing, here in Chapter 36, the names of Tirzah and Noah are exchanged in the order. There is no reason given, but one commentator speculates that this is the order in which they were married.

As this particular verse is speaking of marriage, that sounds like a satisfactory reason for the matter, and we will go with it. The word translated as “father’s brothers” is *dod*. It means “uncle.” Thus, it means they married their cousins, first or otherwise.

There is no prohibition for this in the law, and thus it was acceptable and proper to maintain the inheritance within the family. It would also mean that the inheritance of those particular men would be rather large. They would have been willing accomplices in such an endeavor.

¹² They were married into the families of the children of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father’s family.

For the third time in the chapter, Joseph, or “He Shall Add,” is again named. This time it is in relation to the families of Manasseh, confirming again that the marriage was to take place within the single tribe, not within one of the two tribes descended from him. Nothing was to be taken away from “He Shall Add.” But that which was to be added to him would be through the development of the tribe from within, or from without through marriages which would not bring a liability to the inheritance rights of themselves or another tribe.

From there, the words further define their marriages as *al matteh mishpakhat avihem* – “over tribe of family their father.” Without support, the NIV translates this as, “their inheritance remained in their father’s tribe and clan.” There is no “and” in the words. It is may be a true statement, because they married their uncles’ sons, but the verse itself is concerned with the tribal inheritance, that of Manasseh, only. The meaning of “uncle” is not defined, first or otherwise, and based on Joshua 17, it is certainly otherwise.

The precepts for protection of the inheritances have been laid down, and obedience to those precepts has been noted. From there we come to the closing verse of the passage, of the chapter, and of the book of Numbers.

^{13 (fin)} These *are* the commandments and the judgments which the Lord commanded the children of Israel by the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho.

The words here are a mixture of that which was seen in Leviticus 26:46 and of those which closed out Leviticus one chapter later –

“These *are* the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.”

-Leviticus 26:46

“These *are* the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.” Leviticus 27:34

The Lord spoke out commands, and He made judgments which were commanded to the children of Israel, meaning all people of the nation, by the hand of Moses. This means that what is recorded was written as it was spoken. It is thus an expression of the Lord in written form for all to read, understand, and apply to their lives.

What this verse conveys speaks, of course, of the contents of this chapter, but they are an overall summary of everything that has been conveyed to the people since their arrival at this spot.

And the spot itself speaks of the coming Messiah. The Lord is the Source of what is presented. The words come by the hand of Moses, or “He who draws out.” Thus, it anticipates Christ.

The hand is what accomplishes things. It is given to man to complete the tasks set before him, just as Christ was sent to accomplish the tasks set before Him by the Father. It is He who draws out the will of the Lord and who embodies that will, pictured by Moses. The words then say, “in the plains of Moab.” The word “plains” is *arbot*, which speaks of the deserts. That comes from *arav* meaning “to grow dark,” but it is identical with the word *arav*, meaning “surety” because a surety or a pledge covers over something. *Arav* is the basis for the magnificent word *eravon* used in Genesis 38 and which speaks in type of the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

Moab means “From Father.” And thus, it is in the place of sureties, From Father, which is said to be “by the Jordan.” As we have seen, Jordan, meaning Descender, pictures Christ who descended from heaven to earth to redeem man. He is the surety from the Father that this law drawn out from the Lord will be fulfilled.

And finally, it says, across from Jericho, or Place of Fragrance. To pass over Christ is to pass into the promise of heaven, the place of the fragrance of the knowledge of God in

Christ. Like when Leviticus closed out at Sinai, each word of the verse here anticipates Christ and His mission to bring restoration between God and man.

But before His coming, these statutes and judgments would be given in order to anticipate Him and to be fulfilled by Him.

*Giving thanks to God who has qualified us
To be partakers of the inheritance
It is a done deal through our Lord Jesus
And of losing this, there is just no chance*

*He has delivered us from the power of darkness
And He has conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love
Without Christ, there would be no hope; we would be in a mess
But because of Christ, assurances of glory rain down from above*

*In Him we have redemption through His blood
And in Him there is the forgiveness of all of our sins
So come to Christ, and be immersed in the cleansing flood
Come to Christ who for you, the victory He wins*

II. Restoration, Not Loss, at the Jubilee

What must be considered when reading this final chapter of Numbers is “What is the main purpose of what we are reading?” The answer is, as has been seen throughout this marvelous book, to discover Christ and what He would do.

The final verse of the chapter has shown that to us. Everything in that verse spoke in veiled terms of what God would do in and through Christ. In this chapter, the preservation of the land within the tribes was designed to protect the state of those families and tribes.

If mixture was allowed in, the defined lines leading to Messiah would be mixed and suspect. But, to ensure to each tribe that the land of the tribe remained consistent, these laws were given.

That way, when Messiah came, it would be clear and without question that He was of such a given place and that He belonged to such a given tribe. By closing out this marvelous book, filled with typological and pictorial hints of Christ, with the precepts of this chapter, that would remain possible.

Outside of ensuring the inheritances, the two other main points of what was seen in this chapter are the noting three times of Joseph, or “He Shall Add,” and of the mentioning of the year of Jubilee as the point in which no hope of retaining the inheritance would remain.

The idea of an inheritance is mentioned seventeen times in this one chapter. It is the main subject of everything conveyed. Adding in the name of Joseph was because of what his name, “He Shall Add,” signifies.

At his birth, it was seen that the account pictured the taking away of man’s reproach, meaning his sinful state, but that Christ would do it for both Jew and Gentile. Thus, “He Shall Add.”

Christ is the One who doubles through His work, because it is effective for all, not just those under the law. The stress on Joseph here is to remind us of that.

Mentioning the Jubilee means that we need to remember the significance of the Jubilee as it points to Christ. The Jubilee is based on God’s provision of Sabbaths. The Sabbath was a time where the people would rest and not work. That was the first marker in an amazing and intricate cycle of life.

The Sabbath day was given to be the great reminder of God’s creative and redemptive hand among the people. Every aspect of the Sabbath, as was detailed in Exodus and Leviticus, gave insights into what Christ would do.

From the Sabbath day, the next marker in the cycle was to be the Sabbath-month, the seventh month, which detailed the three fall Feasts of the Lord. In order, they pictured Christ’s birth into humanity, His atoning death, and His dwelling among and in His people.

After that, the next great marker was the Sabbath year. It anticipates a time when the Lord would tend to the people’s needs apart from any work. They could rest in Him and find that He would provide for them apart from their effort.

From there, those Sabbath years were to accumulate into the great year of Jubilee where debts would be released, properties would be restored, the land would produce on its own, and captives would be set free.

A total restoration of all things was prefigured in the great year of Jubilee. That year of Jubilee is reflective of the words of Paul concerning the position of believers in Christ –

“Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

And yet, that position in Christ for us now is only an anticipatory taste of what will be realized in its fullness at the restoration of all things. That is described in Revelation 21:5 –

Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

So, understand – the seventh day Sabbath acknowledges the Lord’s Creation and Redemption. The seventh month anticipates His incarnation, atoning death, and dwelling in His people. The seventh-year Sabbath looks ahead to His millennial reign. And the year of Jubilee anticipates total restoration of what was lost at the beginning.

Everything, leading up to the Jubilee looks to the Lord and His work in the grand plan of redemption. Each step is fulfilled in Jesus, until we are again in the presence of God.

However, if the inheritance can be confounded, then the success of that great plan is put into question. That is what is being seen here. There is, until a law is given to correct it, a chance that this inheritance can be lost for God’s people. If it can be lost, and if that is solidified through the year of Jubilee, then it is lost forever.

And so, in order to ensure that this could not come about, the chapter today is given. A seeming difficulty is presented, and the Lord explains how to remedy it, which is that the female inheritor may only marry within the tribe of the father. The inheritance is granted through faith in Christ. That is spoken of by both Paul and Peter –

“In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:13, 14

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

-1 Peter 1:3-5

There, and elsewhere, the inheritance is spoken of, and the surety of it is conveyed. The word used by Paul in Ephesians 1, and translated as “guarantee” is *arrabón*. It is the same word found in Genesis 38, *eravon*, and which comes from *arav*, meaning surety, which we just looked at a moment ago. However, the chapter now speaks of a loophole which could jeopardize the inheritance of God’s people. Is it a guarantee or not?

In order to correct this seeming deficiency, the rite of marriage is brought in, stating the limitations on it to ensure that the inheritance cannot be lost.

In the Bible, a betrothal confirms a marriage. As we saw in Numbers 30, the betrothed husband has the rights over his spouse to confirm or annul vows and the like. She is bound to him in a permanent bond once the betrothal is made. This is what Paul then speaks of for those who now possess the inheritance –

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:2

For the believer, the inheritance is given, it has been promised with a seal which is our guarantee, and it has also been assured, once and forever, through our betrothal to Christ. The consummation of that is simply a formality of which we now await. The guarantee has been made, and the inheritance is forever secured for the people of God. The chapter today anticipates the doctrine known as “eternal salvation.” Where there are seeming loopholes in any person’s salvation and the granting of the inheritance, the Bible completely closes them up through Christ.

What He has done is sufficient to save, but even more, what He has done, and who He is in relation to us, is our guarantee that we are saved and will remain that way. If there was another note and point of rejoicing that could surpass this idea and which could have ended the book of Numbers, I don’t know what it could have been.

The patterns and pictures of what Christ would do have been many, but to know that what He has done for us in them is assured for all eternity is like sprinkles on top of the ice cream in the cone.

The chapter and the book close out with the words that this account came from the Lord by the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho.

As we saw, every word of that speaks of what God would do in Christ. The Lord is the Source. By the hand Moses, or “He who draws out,” anticipates Christ, because Christ is the right hand of God who accomplishes the tasks set before Him by the Father. He draws out the will of the Lord and embodies that will.

“In the plains of Moab” speak of the pledge, or surety – meaning the giving of the Holy Spirit – Who is From Father, which is the meaning of “Moab.”

This was said to be “by the Jordan,” meaning the Descender – the Lord Jesus (See Ephesians 4:9, 10). And in passing through Him, one is in Jericho, the Place of Fragrance. To pass through Christ is to pass into the promise of heaven, the place of the fragrance of the knowledge of God in Christ.

God, in His infinite wisdom, took us through pictures of rejection of Him by His people, to their sentencing of them by Him to die in the wilderness, to pictures of simply looking to Him in faith in that wilderness and being saved from the viper, and through so many other varied hints of temporary difficulty and yet anticipated glory.

And through it all, He brought them right to the border of the Land of Promise, right to the Descender Himself. And along with them, He also brought along the Gentile people of the world. All are standing at the border, and all are welcome to come in.

And to finish off His anticipatory look into the inheritance, He ends with a note of surety that the inheritance is, it will be, and it will never pass away. One must pity those who believe they can lose their salvation. They are stuck in a hopeless condition of constant failure intermixed with a trembling but uncertain hope.

The name Tselophekhad means “Shadow of Fear.” Because of his family situation, there was a shadow of fear hanging over the inheritance of God’s people. But in Christ, that shadow of fear is forever removed.

Christ did not come to provide us with eternal insecurity. And He did not come to offer us an inheritance that can be lost. Rather, we are betrothed to Him to ensure that the inheritance will never pass away. This is the message of God in Christ, and it is a marvelous, glorious part of His superior word.

Closing Verse: *“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3:23, 24*

Next Week: *Don’t be a clod, so to you I saith...* The Word of God – The Basis of our Faith (First Doctrine Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Inheritance of Zelophehad

Now the chief fathers of the families
Of the children of Gilead, yes, these ones
The son of Machir
The son of Manasseh, of the families of Joseph’s sons

Came near and spoke before Moses
And before the leaders, with words to tell
To the chief fathers of
The children of Israel

And they said: “The Lord commanded my lord Moses
To give the land as an inheritance by lot
——-dividing among one another
To the children of Israel, and my lord was commanded
——-by the Lord
To give the inheritance to the daughters of Zelophehad our brother

Now if they are married to any of the sons
Of the other tribes of the children of Israel
Then their inheritance will be taken

From the inheritance of our fathers; this just doesn't sit well

And it will be added to the inheritance
Of the tribe into which they marry
So, it will be taken from the lot
Of our inheritance, thus the borders will vary

And when the Jubilee of the children of Israel comes
Then their inheritance will be added, as we now describe
To the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry
So, their inheritance will be taken away
———-from the inheritance of our father's tribe

Then Moses commanded the children of Israel
According to the word of the Lord, saying:
"What the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks is right
Here now the words to you I am conveying

This is what the Lord commands
Concerning the daughters of Zelophehad
———-saying as to you I now describe
'Let them marry whom they think best
But they may marry only within the family of their father's tribe

So, the inheritance of the children of Israel
Shall not change hands from tribe to tribe
For every one of the children of Israel
Shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers
———-to where the Lord did first ascribe

And every daughter who possesses an inheritance
In any tribe of the children of Israel, such shall be the stance
Shall be the wife of one of the family of her father's tribe
So that the children of Israel each may possess
———-his father's inheritance

Thus, no inheritance shall change hands
From one tribe to another
But every tribe of the children of Israel

Shall keep its own inheritance
— — — it is by father and not by mother

Just as the Lord commanded Moses
So did the daughters of Zelophehad, obeying the Lord's druthers
For Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah
The daughters of Zelophehad
— — — were married to the sons of their father's brothers

They were married into the families
Of the children of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, as it was said to be
And their inheritance remained
In the tribe of their father's family

These are the commandments and the judgments
Which the Lord commanded the children of Israel
— — — as we now know
By the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab
By the Jordan, across from Jericho

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so, be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true

We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

And Lord God, thank you for this wonderful book
Numbers! What a marvel to have studied it
Into every detail possible we took a look
And to You our thanks and praise we now submit!

Hallelujah to Christ our Lord!

Hallelujah for Numbers, a marvelous part of Your superior word!

Hallelujah and Amen...