

Numbers 17

¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ² “Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father’s house, all their leaders according to their fathers’ houses—twelve rods. Write each man’s name on his rod. ³ 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. ⁴ Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you. ⁵ 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.”

⁶ So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers’ houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. ⁷ And Moses placed the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness.

⁸ Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds. ⁹ Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod.

¹⁰ And the Lord said to Moses, “Bring Aaron’s rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.” ¹¹ Thus did Moses; just as the Lord had commanded him, so he did.

¹² 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?”

Sign of the Mediator

Main Idea: God puts a sign of the High Priest’s mediation between Himself and His people, because for His sake, He spares them from death.

Introduction: escalating displays of wickedness to which God now responds by initiating.

1. **The Houses of the Fathers.** (a reminder of original sin)
 1. There were specific leadership staffs (staves) for each house (cf. Gen 49:10, Num 21:18). The source of Israel’s actual sin was their original sin.
 2. The Lord’s “house” is a thirteenth house, for which He chooses His representative.
2. **The Danger to the Children.** (a reminder of the holiness of God)
 1. The complaints of the children (v5) are a danger not to Moses or Aaron (and certainly not to God!!) but to themselves (v10).
 2. Our flesh responds to the order and reliability that God has put into creation by lulling us to sleep in ignorance of the almighty power of God that is being continuously exerted. But what God does to Aaron’s rod reminds them.
3. **The Sign God Provided of the Salvation God Provided.** (a reminder of Christ’s salvation)

1. Each man receives his rod back where it belongs, in his house.
2. Aaron's rod is received back where it belongs, in God's "house." And yet he is a representative for all of them.
3. The tabernacle pointed to Christ. The sacrifices pointed to Christ. The mercy seat upon the ark pointed to Christ. Just as, now, baptism and the supper point heavenward to the Christ Who is enthroned.

Conclusion: How dreadful if we see only the danger but not the salvation. Do not limit your response to that of the children of Israel, becoming unwilling to draw near; but, be amazed at the salvation, and draw near in Christ!

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

Number 17. These are God's words. And Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, speak to the children of Israel and get from them a rod from each father's house. All their leaders.

According to their father's houses 12 rods. Write each man's name on his Rod. 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. Then you shall place them in the Tabernacle of meeting before the testimony.

Where I meet with you. And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose. Will Blossom. Thus, I will rid myself of the complaints. Of the children of Israel, which they make against you. So Moses spoke to the children of Israel and each of their leaders gave him a rod of Peace for each leader, according to their father's houses, 12 rods.

And the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses placed the rods before y'all. They In the Tabernacle of witness. Now, it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the Tabernacle of witness And behold the rod of Aaron. Of the House of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds.

Then Moses brought out all the rods from before Yahweh to all the children of Israel. And they looked, and Each man took his rod. And Yahweh said to Moses bring Aaron's Rod back. Before the testimony to be kept. As a sign against the rebels. That you may put their complaints away from me.

They die. Thus did Moses just as Yahweh had commanded him, so he did. So the children of Israel spoke to Moses saying, surely we die. We perish. We all perish. Whoever even comes near the Tabernacle of Yahweh must die. Shall we all utterly die?

Now, sends this reading of God's inspired. And an Antwort. We Rejoice to know that he Glorifies himself in and That's his blessing to the preaching of it.

We've had. Escalating series of rebellions. All the way back to. The beginning of chapter 15. Sorry, chapter 16. Cora. When Nathan and Iberum. Rising up against. Uh, Moses and Aaron. And you remember, Uh, those three in their households were swallowed by. Uh, the And you had the 250 leaders from the various houses.

Their fire pans and Fire came out from the Lord and consumed them all. And their fire pan or incense. Um, their sensors shovels. Uh, were beaten and made a second bronze overlaying. Over the altar. And then, The people. Who on the very next day. All the congregation. A complaining against Moses and Aaron.

And you remember last week, Uh, Moses and Aaron begin to intercede, but while they're interceding for the people, Moses either in his Spirit from the Lord, as a way of Prophecy or perhaps even just hearing the death cries. Of those who are being killed by the Lord as the plague goes out.

From the Tabernacle. Tells Aaron to hurry up and get the sense or the remaining. Uh, fire pan or shovel and run. And he ran. And he did it. He made haste, he ran And stood. Um, And made atonement for the people standing between the dead and the living. But even as quickly as he had done that, Another 14, 700 had fallen.

And so there are is this. Sequence of Rebellion. And each time the Lord has answered, but now. Uh, verse chapter 17 the budding of the rod isn't occasioned. By a moment of rebellion a moment. Of complaint. Rather the people having displayed what they are like this time, the Lord initiates Previously, the people complain and the Lord responds.

But now, The Lord initiates. The Lord establishes. A challenge. And the Lord comes here. In Mercy. Just as he had provided, the sacrifices, just as he had provided, the Tabernacle. Just as he had provided the priesthood, So that this sinful people could actually have the holy and living God, make his presence known among them and to be in their midst and they would be able to have God in their midst.

Looking forward to Christ, who is our Tabernacle looking forward to Christ. Who is our sacrifice looking forward to Christ? Who is our great high priest? And it has been, of course. On account of the Lord Jesus and the priesthood and the atonement that that he would make offering himself once for all and entering heaven with his own blood.

And we with him ascending with him. Perhaps. You remember from that which our English Bibles, usually call the the burnt offering but is really just the Ascension Jesus being All of those things. It was for the sake of Jesus. That they were able to have God in their midst.

And yet, they wanted to alter The way of worship or altar. The. Through whom they would come. And hear the Lord. Uh, makes again a display of his power. And to display specifically that he had chosen Aaron. Not that he hadn't done this before. But he gives them a sign.

And it's related to each of their houses. And so, as we consider the passage, Uh, before us this afternoon. We'll consider first. The houses of the fathers. Reminding us of our original sin of the source. From which our sin comes. And then we'll consider the second place. The danger.

To the children. Which is a reminder of the Holiness of God. God's holiness is dangerous to Sinners. He will not abide. Sinners. And then in the last place, we'll consider the sign. That God provided of the Salvation. That he had provided a reminder. Of Christ's salvation. So God initiates in chapter 17 says Yahweh spoke to Moses saying speak to the children of Israel.

Get from them. A rod from each father's house. Take a rod. A rod. It's Repeat it. Of the house of the father. Uh, The idea being here, not just that there would be like, a walking staff, and it would be, you know, in every tribe. They would just pick a random walking staff that came from among that tribe, But the idea here is that each tribe has a ruler's scepter.

Uh, like In Genesis 49 and verse 10, where Uh, where is prophesied of Judah that the scepter would not depart from Judah's house until Shiloh comes Um, This was not uncommon. The ancient near East the, the nation of Israel being among other nations in which Uh, you would have the The tribe or the nation, or the clan.

Ruled by a particular House of a particular father. And there would be a staff. Uh, that was used as a What would belong to the one who was in Authority among them? This is the Forerunner of what we now. Think of, when we talk about the scepters of Kings, I suppose we don't have those.

Uh, that much in the world anymore, but surely it was used. Um, long enough that you understand, most of you. What the scepter of a king is Now, what would be very sobering? As. Uh, as they did this with 12 rods. And this would not include Levi. Aaron is added.

Uh, and that is consistent with the censuses that we have had in the book of numbers, whenever the tribes are, are numbered in the book of numbers. Uh, Joseph is split into two Manasseh and Ephraim and so there's actually the 12 plus, the one Levi having been taken as it were In the place of the firstborn, a reminder that all of God's people actually belonged to him and yet Levi used to redeem the firstborn.

Uh, from the rest of Israel and Levi's house. But as each man, Who was the new leader of his father's house? Wrote his name on the rod, It would be very sobering for him to. Look at the previous name. That might be inscribed on that rod. Um, at the beginning of the book of numbers, not that long ago, chronologically from the date.

Of Numbers chapter 17. But at the beginning of the book of numbers, you remember, when they took a census of each house? God himself had named, who would be the leader? Of each household. And yet these men have now fallen. Much of the leadership of Israel has been wiped out.

Uh, just the day before last week's portion. The end of chapter 16. Um, the English Bible. The Hebrew Bible. Actually changes from chapter 16 to chapter 17 and what is verse 36 of chapter 16 in our Bible? But in the, in that in the day after Cora's Rebellion, the Or the the day before the plague, the day of course, Rebellion.

Remember 250 liters. From among the tribes. An average of just over 20 leading men per tribe. And so, There was a leadership vacuum. Those who had raised themselves up and led the people of Israel and raising themselves up against the Lord. Against his way of worship, against his anointed servants through whom that they were to come They had perished.

Now, thankfully They are not told each of them to bring their rod and stand before the Tabernacle, Uh, that would have been very frightening after they were told to for the 250 to bring their pan. And burn their incense. But it's a reminder. That the source of their sin.

As original sin, they're Sinners because they're fathers were Sinners. These new leaders are not better. Than the previous leaders. This is true of you. You're a sinner. Because you come from Sinners. We are sinners because we come from and send in Our first father, Adam. It's not just the rest of The world that had original sin.

Of whom towards the beginning of Genesis 6. God says every intention of the thoughts of their hearts were only evil and that continually Noah found Grace in the eyes of Yahweh. In Genesis chapter 6, but after the Lord has wiped out the rest of the world. Except for Noah and those who are with him.

And Noah and his household are in the ark. In in Genesis chapter 8, waiting to come out God says to himself. That he will never again. Wipe out. The people of the earth, all flesh and which is the breath of life like this again. Because The hearts of men are evil from their youth.

And that's not said about the rest, that's said about the only men that there are left at the time when he says that. Or Noah and his household. And so, the problem with Israel is not that we hadn't found the right leaders yet. Or that we hadn't found The Godly generation yet.

The reason they're sinning. Is because they're Sinners. The reason they commit actual sins, Is because they have original sins. We have original sin singular. But the Lord has. Provided for himself now. This 13th. And it doesn't have anything to do so much with Levi. Or Aaron. Except for that God chose Levi and God chose Aaron.

Because he would send his son. As a great high priest taken from among men,

There is one God and there is only The one mediator. So, This emphasis on the houses of the fathers here. Ought to be ought to have been for them a sobering reminder. Of their original sin. And if we have original sin and act out then in actual sin, then we are in great danger.

And there was a reminder here, then of the Holiness of God. We are grateful that. The Lord speaks as he does in verse 10. So that we might understand verse 5. Well, listen to verse 5 and it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will Blossom.

Thus, I will rid myself Of the complaints of the children of Israel. Which they make against you. So that's verse five. I will rid myself of the complaints of the children of Israel which they make against you. If we had that all by itself, we would think That perhaps these complaints are a danger to Moses and Aaron perhaps.

The problem is that this is really Hindering Moses. And Aaron from being able to lead and God has finally figured out how to stop the people from complaining. But verse 10 sheds, light on what he actually means in verse 5. Because after the whole thing is over, And they've seen the one blossomed Rod and and fruited and ripened Rod.

And then the 12 dead rods. The Lord says this, he always said to Moses, bring Aaron's Rod back before the testimony. To be kept as a sign. Against the rebels. That's a very strange place to put a sign. Well, we're probably not ones to talk the turn here for Hopewell sign is almost impossible to see if you know it's there and you're looking for it.

Um, but ordinarily you put a sign where everyone can see it. Where you can't miss it. God commands, that this sign be put where only he can see it. In fact, Hebrews chapter 9 tells us. That eventually the, the rod of Aaron was was not Uh, the rod that had blossomed was not laid in front of the testimony was, but was actually put inside the ark.

Hebrews 9 verse 4 tells us Says, they know that the sign is there. What they can see is they're dead rot. That has their names on it, not the the rod with a Perpetual. Leafing a Perpetual blossoming of Perpetual fruitening fruiting Perpetual ripened Olive. This miraculous Rod. You see the distinction in the rods?

Was not that all these other 12 rods had failed. To produce. A ripened almond. The distinction of the rods was From 13 dead rods. God did not give or choose the twelve, but the one that he chose he is the god Who brings life from dead and calls to that, which is not as if it was.

He is the God who says, let there be light and there is light Remember that faith that Abraham had that he that he encouraged himself with as he was on his face before God to which

Romans chapter 4 refers. So they wouldn't have the fruited one. They would know that it was in.

The Tabernacle they would know that it was in front of the Arc of the testimony. But what Rod could you have looked at children if you were in one of the 12 Israelite tribes, one of the not Levi. But one of One of the other 12. You could. Maybe especially if you were the kid of the tribal leader, you were friends with, with one of his kids and you came by their tent.

And, and You're like let's see your dad's Rod again and there. He pulls it out and there's the list of of names of the men who have been head over the tribe and And you say yep, still dead. That's what we are. Apart from Apart from God's Sovereign Grace.

Apart from his exerting on human Souls. The power that he had exerted on Aaron's rod. And so the sign is For them to God. That they would know that God keeps in mind. That he has chosen to save. That he has provided atonement. God keeps in mind that he brings There's people near.

As a sign against the rebels. In contradict a sign that is contrary to And the word Rebels here doesn't help much. Uh, or doesn't help as much as it would if they just translated it literally literally in the original. It says again against the sons of rebellion That's what we are.

That's what he's saying. Isn't he with the rods from the father's houses and the sin that comes out from us and As a sign, against the sons of rebellion. That you may put their complaints away from me. Lest.

It's a sign not of God's Wrath against them. It's a sign of God, saving them from Death.

You see? Uh, our complaints against God. Are dangerous to us. Are resisting. God is dangerous to ourselves. We are ignorant of the almighty power. That God has continually exerting. You know, even for those rods with the other names from the other tribes to continue existing The almighty power of God.

Must uphold the whole of creation. Must hold those rods together. There's two different kinds of Miracles taking place one. The Earth continues to exist. The rods. Continue to exist. And the other not only does God continue to sustain the existence of the rod, but he super adds doing things in a different way in a different order.

So that not only did it have ripe almonds on it, but it had every stage in the production of the almonds on it. Where it would be leafed out. And in another place you would see the blossoms in another place. Common the blossom, having fallen off, and there being fruit and another part It wasn't just like uh, you know, someone had teleported through.

Space-time a ripe Branch. The branch had all of them on it. It's what it's implied by the text.

And it was a reminder of just who we're dealing with. You know, when you and I We're rebelling against the God. Created the whole world and everything in it, the God who gives us Every breath that we draw. You're very unworthy thought. About God or feeling towards him. That you have.

He is the one who's keeping your synapses, uh, working in your, your neurons firing and

We are always. In his presence and the more he makes his Holiness known the more he makes his presence known to us. The greater the danger to And our sin. This is why you must have the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be your righteousness to stand before.

God, this is why you must have The sacrifice of his cross which is yours by faith, his righteousness, his sacrifice. Yours by resting upon him. Yours in himself. It's the only way you can have it and you must have it.

Because when we depart from this world in the next, You will experience. The greatness of the glory of God and you will either experience it as a blessing unto you in Heavenly blessedness, or as second Thessalonians 1 describes it, you will experience everlasting destruction.

From the presence of God and from his glory,

And so, you have the The houses of the fathers, the reminder that their sons of rebellion. The reminder that our actual sin. Uh, speaks of something even worse. And that is that we are sinners. You have the danger to the children, reminder of the Holiness of God. And then you have the sign that God provided Of the Salvation.

That God provided each man receives, his Rod back where it belongs. It is in his house. They'll be reminded now. Not that it will completely restrain their sin. We're not done seeing The Disobedience and the sin and the Rebellion of the nation of Israel, even in the wilderness. And yet, the Lord would have provided for each of them.

A reminder that he has selected for himself. He chooses. How to come near and through whom to come near but Aaron's Rod has received back where it belongs. In God's house. Where he would go and Uh, Aaron wouldn't take the rod back and forth, but he would wear In and out, wouldn't he?

The Garment that God has designed for him. That has the names of the tribes. All of them. On his shoulders, and on the breast pouch. You see God had provided each of them a representative. It wasn't that he was taking one of the tribes but not the rest of them.

God has provided a Salvation for all who come In and through the Lord, Jesus Christ. If you trust in the Lord Jesus, You know, that as he has risen again from the dead and passed through the heavens and taken his seat on On the throne at the right hand of the Majesty that is on high.

He is interceding for you. He is there representing. You, Ephesians tells you that you are seated with him in the Heavenly places. It's not that Jesus has gone and we cannot. So we're glad at least that he went. No, he is there for us and we are united to him.

God gives us signs of that. It's very difficult for us to comprehend that and what little we can comprehend, is still difficult for us to accept and believe. You mean that I a sinner with all the things that I have thought and said and done last week and even today at the beginning of this week on the Lord's day.

And will undoubtedly do tomorrow and the rest that I am somehow United to Christ and seated with him in in heaven. But he's given us signs on Earth. Now, we can't see the spirit being poured out. We can't see Jesus. Pouring the spirit out on all those whom he's bringing to life against either, the Father by the son, sending the spirit of his son into the hearts of those, who believe for they are the the because they are children adopted.

But you can see baptism. And the Lord has commanded a sign. For us. A sign between us and him. You can see. And you. Can feel. And every time you see another baptism and you see man doing with the water, what Jesus does with the spirit. And you remember, Jesus is in heaven, I I can't see in heaven any more than these men could see in the Tabernacle.

But he's given us a sign on our end. Assign also that he responds to the same with the table.

When we eat the bread and we drink the cup we do. So in remembrance of him, Acting upon him, who is in heaven? You can't act physically upon Jesus. You must act by faith Upon Jesus. You must receive your life from Jesus, not just once in the sense of coming to him and being converted but continually you must live the Christian Life by the life of Jesus in you.

And because of the weakness of our faith. The difficulty that we have in perceiving such things, one of the things he gives us, of course, is the preaching of the word that he blesses to us. But another thing that he gives us is the supper The Lord's supper that you had this morning,

He gives us. Science. Just as the Tabernacle pointed to Christ and the sacrifices that they had pointed to Christ and The Mercy Seat upon the ark pointed to Christ and even Aaron's Rod, which had blossomed pointed to the fact that God had chosen for himself who would be the priest through whom his people could come and it's only Jesus.

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, if you have given up, If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, one of the things that you have done is you have given up, trying to come to God on your own terms. You have given up trying to be good enough.

Trying to make up for what you have done. Only Jesus is good enough. Only Jesus by his cross. Can atone for what you have done. There's no other way to come to God. There's no other one who can draw near to him. The only way that you can draw near to him and blessedness in favor and safety.

Is in his appointed high priest. He anointed his son, he selected his son. From among men. And so now also baptism and the supper point us Heavenward to the Christ who is enthroned there. And yet who ministers to us here?

Dreadfully the children of Israel. Got the message. About their sinfulness. And God's holiness. And their danger. But they didn't understand that what was given them was a sign. That was actually to prevent. Their death, a sign of Salvation. That had been offered them. By the worship that the Lord had provided.

Or that was signified in the worship that the Lord had provided. Verse 12 and 13 are dreadfully, sad. If they weren't so Grievous, they would almost be funny in the repetition and the manic hysteria So the children of Israel spoke to Moses saying, surely we die. We perish. We all perish.

Whoever even comes near the Tabernacle of Yahweh must die. Shall we all utterly die? And you just want to answer. It's not God. The one who gave you? The sin offering and the trespass offering. For the cleansing of your conscience. Has he not given you the Ascension? By which you identified with a substitute can Ascend unto the Lord.

Has he not given you the tribute Called the green offering. Something that is the prescribed thing from him to bring in your hand as you draw near to God. And Ascend to him, you bring also the tribute signifying that you are authorized that he is yours and you are his and you have you have the right, you've been welcomed.

And here's the here's the tribute that he says to bring the grain offering has he not given you the peace offering? The the piece where, which was the sacrifice that you would bring. And there, there was the part that was reserved for God, but there's actually a part from the same table from the same animal, the same meal.

Now you share with God. From living, God requires that part of it, be burnt and offered to him. And the other part you get to eat

You see when the Lord. Did this and he and he pointed to how he chose Aaron. And how he would genuinely had put away their sin and saved them from death. All they saw was God, warning them about their sin and rejecting their own way of coming to him.

They saw the danger but they didn't see the Salvation that had been provided. Now, if you have never seen your danger, oh you should Because you are a sinner and you have to deal with the Living God. But if you have seen only your danger, Will you not also see the salvation that the Lord has provided?

Because he has not now provided Bulls and goats and the shedding of blood for the temporary cleansing of a conscience. No, he has provided his own son himself in the person of his son and the shedding of his blood once for all The genuine bodily physical Ascension into Heaven by the Lord.

Jesus, who, if you believe in him, you are joined to him. His righteousness is yours. His sacrifice is yours. You are no longer counted guilty before. God, you may be cleansed of your sin.

They should not have said. Surely we die. We perish. We all perish. Whoever even comes near the Tabernacle of Yahweh must die. It should have been. Surely we are saved. The Lord's way only is right. We may draw near only in the way that he says, how glorious that we may draw near.

How sure we are that he whom the Lord has chosen. Brings us near to God. Returns for our sin. So, do not limit your response to that of the children of Israel. Do not hear about your sin and the Holiness of God and become Halting, and reluctant and Afraid and unwilling to draw near to him.

Be amazed at the Salvation that he has provided Embrace Christ Alone for your sin come to the Living. God, Who even for Sinners like you. Has made such atonement and has given such a priest. That in your great high priest, the Lord Jesus. May draw near to him draw near to God.

In the Lord, Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Oh Lord, help us to see that. You are the one? Who gives life to the. Grant that your spirit would remind us of The truth that we have heard. In this portion of your word, Thank you for setting Christ, always before you So, that you deal with us according to him, Gr, That by your spirit, you would set Christ always before us.

That we would come to you only through him. And we pray that you would not make us reluctant or halting or afraid. But rather that you would Amaze us that in him, you have brought us near Forgive us, our sins for his sake. And make known your glory to.

With all of your favor and Grace in him. We ask in his own name. Even Jesus. Amen.