

**Friday, August 30, 2024 ▫ Read Numbers 20:14–21:3**

Questions from the Scripture text: Who sent whom to whom (v14)? How does he identify Israel? What does he bring to Edom's attention? What does he recount in v15? What does he say Israel did (v16)? What does he say YHWH did? Whom does he say YHWH sent? Where does he say they are? What does he ask in v17? What does he promise Israel will not do? How does Edom reply—what does he say not to do (v18)? What does he threaten if they do? What do the children of Israel say that they will do (v19)? What do they promise to repay? How does Edom reply again in v20? What response do they add to this reply? How does v21 summarize Edom's response? What does Israel do? What does all of Israel then do (v22)? Who speaks to whom in v23? Where? What is about to happen there (v24)? Why? Whom must Moses bring up the mountain (v25)? What is he to do there (v26)? Then what will happen to Aaron there? How does Moses act (v27)? Who sees it? What does Moses do to Aaron (v28)? To Eleazar? What happens to Aaron there? Who come down the mountain? What does the congregation see from this (v29)? How many of them? What do they all do? For how long? Who dwell where (21:1)? What did he hear? What did he do? To Whom does Israel go with this problem (v2)? What do they ask YHWH to do? What do they promise Him that they will do? To what does YHWH listen (v3)? What does He do with the Canaanites? What does Israel do to them? To what does this "utter destruction" give its name?

**If God has already determined what will happen, what should we do?** Numbers 20:14–21:3 looks forward to the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these nineteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we must trust God to do His own almighty work, while sustaining us by His grace in the duties that He has assigned to us.**

It is foolish to try to circumvent God's providence. No one can overrule what He has ordained. It's not our job to make events happen, but to love the Lord, walk with Him, and obey Him. The results are in His hands—the safest and best place they could possibly be. Duty is ours; events belong to God.

It is even more foolish, when the Lord has told you what will happen. Moses and Aaron have just been told that they cannot enter the land (v12), but they now proceed just as the people had done in 14:39–45. They immediately try to enter the land. It's no wonder, attempting to overrule their punishment, that they do not seek the Lord for help with Edom. They don't ask the Lord for help either at the outset, or after Edom's first refusal (v18). Instead, they try to reason with Edom (v19), to which the response is a threatening show of force (v20–21).

So, Israel has to go around Edom, and as they do, they arrive at mount Hor (v22). There, the Lord tells them that it's time for Aaron's death, because of the waters of Meribah (v24). Note that though Aaron is being chastened, he is not being punished. YHWH calls this a "gathering to his people" both in v24 and v26. This is not a burial site of the family of Levi; the language reminds us that the departure of the souls of believers is a separation from those left behind in this world, but a much greater reunion with those believers who have gone on to the next. In the wake of Christ's ascension, it is a glorious reunion not just with the souls of the just made perfect, but with the Lord Jesus Himself (cf. Php 1:23; 2Cor 5:8).

Still, the grief for those left behind can be profound, and all Israel mourn Israel for thirty days at the sight of just the two men returning from where the three had gone up. It is not a denial of the goodness to which dying believers go to grieve for them, and grief over death is still appropriate for Christians. Though the Lord conquered it into a servant to finish our sanctification and transport us to be with Him (cf. 1Co 15:55), death is still an enemy, to whose defeat we look forward (cf. 1Co 15:26).

YHWH's mercy here extends beyond the redemptive way in which He speaks of Aaron's death. The location and the formalities are not depriving them of their high priest but providing them a new one. Neither Aaron, nor Eleazar, are the ultimate provision but the priesthood itself. Christ Himself is the ultimate provision!

With the lesson of Aaron's death learned, the encounter with Arad in 21:1–3 goes differently. Not on Arad's part; they are hostile and attack (v1). But Israel immediately turn to the Lord this time (v2a). And they do so, following His revealed agenda for the Canaanites (v2b, cf. Lev 18:24, 20:23). "utterly destroy" in v2 and v3 is translating a word for devoting things unto God (in this case, for destruction). The word for this has the same root as the name which they call the place ("Hormah").

Christians who have been told that all sinfulness must be expunged for us to enter glory (cf. Heb 12:14; 1Jn 3:2–3) must not attempt to hold onto it. It is devoted to destruction. And, when the Lord has told us about the godliness that must be worked into us to enter glory, we must pursue His agenda for our lives (cf. Php 2:12–13). But we must remember that we are not merely to pursue God's agenda for us, but to do so in dependence upon God's power and interaction with Him in that dependence. Churches and individuals alike must seek for Him to act almightily in our behalf, while we respond by doing our part as His grace sustains us in doing so.

**If you're a Christian, what are God's ultimate plans for your life? What do you need Him to do for you? What has He commanded you to do? How can you even be able to do it?**

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for telling us Your plans to sanctify and glorify us in Christ. Forgive us our sins and cleanse us from them. Lead us not into temptation, but give us everything that we need, deliver us from evil, and bring us all the way home, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP23B "The Lord's My Shepherd" or TPH433 "Amazing Grace"**

**"(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](http://hopewellarp.org))"**

Numbers 20 verse 14 through 21 verse 3. These are God's words. Now, Moses sent Messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. Thus says your brother Israel. You know, all the hardship that has befallen us. How our fathers went down to Egypt and we dwelt in Egypt a long time.

And the Egyptians Afflicted us and our fathers. When we cried out to Yahweh, he heard our voice and sent the angel 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.

Nor will we drink water from Wells. We'll 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. Then Edom said to him, you shall not pass through my land. Lest I come out against you with the sword.

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? 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. Now, the children of Ezra, the whole congregation journeyed from Kardashian came to Mount, Hore And Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hore by the border of the land of Edom saying Aaron shall be gathered to his people for he shall not.

Enter the land, which I have given to the children of Israel. Because you rebelled against my word at the water of maryva. Take Aaron and deliatzar, his son. And bring them up to Mount Hore and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on. Eliads are his son. For Aaron shall be gathered to his people.

And die there. So Moses did just as Yahweh commanded and they went up to Mount Hore in the sight of all the congregation Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Elliott's or his Then Aaron died there, on top of the mountain. Then Moses and eliads are came down from the mountain.

Not in all the congregations saw that Aaron was dead. All the house of Israel mourned for air in 30 days. The king of Arad the Canaanite, who dwelt in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming on the road to atharim. And he fought against Israel and took some of them prisoners.

So, Israel made a vow to Yahweh and said, If you will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities. Then Yahoo listens to the voice of Israel. And delivered up the Canaanites. And they utterly destroyed them and their cities. So, the name of the place was called hormah,

This is this reading of Inspired. And And Aaron toward, For the Lord has just spoken to Moses and Aaron in verse 12. Last week's passage. And told them you shall not bring this assembly into the land, which I have given them. But the right on the border, the only thing between them and the promised land at this point is Edom, the land of Esau And, The response is to, by them, is not to ask the Lord for help or ask the Lord for guidance.

Where, then shall we go or To follow. The cloud as they are supposed to be following the glory Cloud. When it arises, Apparently, the angel who has gone before them. doesn't move. Although he is referenced. In verse 16 and the message to Edom. they attempt. To just go on as if the Lord has not given them instruction about how their the, their life in this world is to end.

And they don't seek him. About it. There's a strong connection here. with the Christian who is told, That without holding us. will not see the Lord and if the Christian lives in Hope of seeing the Lord and therefore, the Christian lives in Hope of being holy, Those who hope thus purify themselves even as he As pure we have as it were our marching orders, whatever else.

Whatever else we do in our life. But many questions proceed. As if they have not been told. Something about their future, something about As if you had not been told something about your life, And are free to just pursue your own agenda. And even without Consulting. the word of God, which he has given us.

not by visions and prophesiers, but The scriptures. So there is a parallel here. For the Christian Life. Moses sends Messengers from Kadesh to Esau to Edom. certainly, he must know the Historical account of when Jacob had left. Laban and encountered Esau and Found sympathy with his brother towards him, and giving him telling him how things have gone with him, then, and there's a little bit of a rehearsal of that here.

The Messengers that Moses sends, tell the king of Edom, about the hardships in Egypt and how the Lord was. With them through it all and probably hoping to evoke or engender the same sympathy. Or similar, sympathy. Edom. Forefather Esau. head had towards Jacob on that previous occasion.

but the Lord is not with them in this. He does not. Permit, Edom's heart to be moved. He does not permit cause the king of Edom to make way for them. And the king of Edom refuses. And even when the king of Edom refuses, In verse 18, the children of Israel.

Again, they do not ask the Lord for Help, they do not ask the Lord for instruction. They negotiate they they send A second message about taking the King's Highway, but now They add to it, the promise that they will go on foot. which means no wagons and no chariots, they would go without As it were military capabilities.

As they as they go along the King's Highway, and They would. They add a profit motive, they're going to pay for any water that they take. Well Edom has You know, the wells and water sources. in the land of of Edom and now they can make a significant amount of money off of that if a few million people come and buy water.

and so Rather than ask the Lord for Mercy, ask the Lord for forgiveness, who knows that he might relent his relented many times in the past, when he said, you know, get out of the way. So that I will destroy these people and start over with you, rather than ask him for counsels, you know, shall we go around the land of Enwhatever.

Continue in their failure to seek the Lord because they're really trying to get around. and maybe it's not hyper willfully. So, like conscientiously fighting against the penalty that God had given them. but there is a, a hindrance here. the Lord has told them that they will not Moses and Aaron will not Take the people in.

And so, that is probably one of a number of things. We have plenty in our remaining sin. trust in ourselves. trying to make our own plans and get our own way. But our by our own wits. Rather than looking to the Lord, we are sluggish towards him.

I hope. That whatever extent this is true in each of Our Lives. We are convicted by it and admit it and seek for him to give us repentance that we would be mindful of him and calling upon his name and searching his word. And making decisions according to the scriptures and not according to our wits.

Are putting our hope in. what we think we can get from others. But the outcome here after this. Upgraded request or offer from the nation of Israel, is that Edom actually does come out. with many men and a strong hand. Strong hand. there's the same language used of how God delivered.

Israel from Egypt. And so, there may even be in the Biblical context here. An implication that God strengthens Edom. Against. Israel, in this case. And we find that. This is connected to. The death of Aaron. They are at Mount. Hore on the border of Edom. And the Lord stops them.

Israel. journeying on. And the Lord stops them and says, Aaron's gonna die now. and yet, even in the way that the Lord does this, although he Enacting the penalty. That he spoke of in verse 12. it's done with language and action of Mercy. That Aaron is not lost.

He is not perishing in his sin. twice. He uses the language of Aaron being gathered. Gathered to his people, verse 24. And then just the word gathered in verse 26. For Aaron, who is a believer, who converted and Forgiven, for the sake of Christ. his death is is not.

A punishment for his sin. It is a consequence of sin. All death is a consequence of sin, But it is a means, by which his soul is gathered, he's going to his people, he yes leaving some behind but he's joining many more. This is true of the passing of all believers.

death is still an enemy First Corinthians 15. Got 26. says, is The Last Enemy to be defeated? It is also something that takes us into the presence of the Lord. So First Corinthians, 15 verse 55 and Philippians, 1 verse 23. And second Corinthians 5 verse 8. Now, the Lord Jesus had not been Incarnated.

He did not become a man yet. God the son had not become a man and died and risen and descended. And yet there were still The Souls of those Believers. with him. Aaron would be gathered. So that's How a big merciful part of this? that doesn't mean that.

We shouldn't grieve. It's appropriate that when the congregation sees that, whereas, Moses, Aaron, and eliazar had left to go up the mountain, but only Moses and Eliotes are returned from the mountain. They grieve for Aaron for. 30 days. which is a reminder that sometimes those who have treated you badly in life, will remember you well in death.

or those who have treated you poorly for a time when you were with them. Will remember you more fondly when you are taken from them. I've actually had that experience. A couple of occasions in the ministry. people who begrudge the ministry, or resisted it or Thought unkindly.

of Me and my shepherding once the Lord took me from them. Or grateful. And their hearts inclined towards me. All that to say that if you look at the way that the honors honor Aaron in verse 29 here, it's a good reminder to you not to put so much stock.

And how people are responding to you and treating you now. You can leave with the Lord, what comes of that? He He will set things right in the end. But they did grieve and they were right to grieve. Grieving is appropriate, particularly for those on our end who are doing the losing, Even though.

the believer who is departing is doing the gaining And being restored or United. to reunite it, with many more people to whom they go. And now this side of the Ascension of Christ going to Christ himself, it's wonderful. And I'm sure Aaron. being perfected in the Holiness.

And going to be gathered to. other believers who had been perfected in Holiness. It was certainly an upgrade over. The grumbling millions that he left behind and the But God was also being merciful to them, and you see that the emphasis on Dressing Elliotts are in the high priest's clothes.

God's great gifts to Israel, a great gift to Israel. As far as I is concerned, has not so much Aaron in his person or Eliates are in his person. But the office of the high priest itself, And even then, The office of the high priest. Itself is not so much the great gift.

As the gift is the Lord Jesus. Who is prefigured to them and presented represented to them in? The office of high priest, because Jesus himself will be Our gray type priest forever and ever. And so, the Lord Is merciful to them. In this, even though they have been Forgetful of him.

And there is a significant Improvement, then. On the other side of this, When the king of Arad. Hears. That Israel is coming. And comes and fights and takes some of them prisoner. Israel does not try to negotiate with him. Israel does not. take up their arms against him.

And so forth. here, they direct their attention directly to the Lord immediately to the Lord. And they make a vow to him. They ask him. To deliver. A rad into his hand and they promised to do un. These Canaanites according to what the Lord has said. you remember.

All the way back in Genesis 15. God said that he wouldn't give Abraham the land yet or Abram at that time, the land yet. Because, And the sins of the amorites were not yet complete. And then we've heard in Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20. That. the Lord is vomiting, the people out of the land or causing the land to vomit them out, casting the people out of the land.

on account of their sins. And so, Israel understands its place in God's purposes here. And asks, not only for God to do his part. Deliver a rad into their hands. but they also pledge independence, upon God. To do to the Canaanites, what the Lord has intended for them to do.

This is something that you see. Or I guess you don't see. In the English. this word utterly destroy in verse 2 and then utterly destroyed them. And verse 3. It is the the word for putting something under the ban or devoting it to destruction. Or devoting it unto the Lord.

Being something consecrated unto the Lord for Destruction. Haram. And That's where you get the name horma there. In verse 3. so that they They understand that these people. that have attacked them. under a curse of being devoted to destruction for the Lord's. Glory And Israel here is.

Not being vengeful or bloodthirsty. They are submitting themselves to what the Lord has said that he will do. So it's very, very much the opposite of what was happening in the incident with Edom. And wrapped around to the death of Aaron is reminding us That. When the Lord has told us what he will do.

it is irrational and foolish. to try and overcome it. not to participate in in it in the way that he has said for us to do. Christians who have been told that all sinfulness must be expunged for us to enter. Glory must not attempt to hold on to sinfulness.

It's devoted to destruction. And when the Lord has told us about the Holiness that we must have in order to see the Lord, Then we must pursue his agenda for our lives work out your own salvation with fear and trembling But we must remember that we are not merely to pursue God's agenda for us.

But to do so Independence, upon God's power and in interaction with him. So yes, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling Verse in Philippians 2, comes in the chapter immediately following. He who started the good work in, you will bring it to completion in the day of Christ Jesus.

So we are commanded to do our part in it. But we are commanded to do it independence upon him. Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling for it is God who works in you? Birth dwell into work according to his good pleasure. Churches and individuals alike must seek for God.

To act or mightily on our behalf. While we respond by doing our part. Has his grace sustains. in doing so. Boil it all down to one instruction. Pursue God's agenda. For your life. Don't pursue your own agenda and be forgot. Full of God. And then be discouraged. When your agenda does not succeed.

His agenda will succeed.

All right, let's pray.

Father, we pray that you would help us.

Do you trust? And obey. To follow what you have. Said, is your plan for our life? That we would come to Glory through sanctification.

I pray that you would not. Permit us to be forgot full of you or to pursue. A competing agenda with our own life.

So, please help us by your spirit. And make us to learn and remember, The truth from this portion of your word. Before we ask it through Christ. Amen.