

Sunday – February 12, 2017

Preparation

As we come to the end of the Book of Leviticus this week, let's not take for granted the lessons learned, or perhaps the lessons remembered, through the chapters we read. Oftentimes, people tend to get bogged down in the Book of Leviticus, perhaps getting overwhelmed by the meticulous display of all the various offerings and sacrifices. As we've mentioned before, find hope and joy in Proverbs 30:5 which states that "Every word of God is pure". God intended to place each particular word in this Book exactly as each and every word is placed, otherwise there would be room for doubt within the very passages we read each day. Praise God for the Lamb that was slain, and for the blood that was applied as a sacrifice for our sins.

As we dive into the Book of Numbers, the fourth Book of our Bible, be prepared for some challenging passages. This is not meant as a discouragement to read the Book, however, may we be challenged to be more like Christ as we read of the challenges Israel will face in preparation of entering the "promised land". We'll possibly even find ourselves as we compare scripture with scripture and discover Israel's response to the life God demands from the nation of Israel, as He prepares them for the destination, He originally had in mind when rescuing them from the bondage of Egypt.

Today, let's find some time to set aside to spend in prayer, asking for God's guidance through the upcoming pages. Perhaps, with this mindset, we'll be more apt to understand, believe, and act upon the truths God has preserved for us through His word. If nothing else, the upcoming weeks will reveal a Laodicean mindset (Revelation 3:14-22) in an Old Testament passage. As we continue to move ahead through this incredible Book God has given us, be encouraged of the journey we are all on, and again, find hope in the truths God will continue to reveal.

Monday – February 13, 2017

TODAY S READING: LEVITICUS 25-27

OVERVIEW:

Laws concerning personal property; the sevens of rest and liberty; the blessing of obedience and the cursing of disobedience; vows and tithes explained.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

I believe I can fly, sings the hip-hop star R. Kelly, but what would happen if someone were to challenge the truth of Mr. Kelly s proposition? Suppose R. Kelly climbed to the top of the Empire State building and tested the validity of his belief by jumping. What would happen? Of course that s a rhetorical question because before we could answer we would hear terrified screams and ambulance sirens. You see, it doesn t matter what you believe because truth still prevails. In fact, as illustrated by this scenario, believing the wrong thing will kill you no matter how sincere or genuine you are.

God established *physical* laws or truths in our universe, gravity being one of them, that always prevail no matter how man attempts to overcome them or ignore them. God has also established *spiritual* laws or truths that prevail no matter how man tries to overcome or ignore them. Leviticus 26 reveals a very simple truth that many don t want to believe or don t like to believe: obeying God results in blessing, disobeying God results in cursing. Believers and unbelievers alike prefer to believe that there are no consequences to disobedience. God says it like this: *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting* (Gal. 6:7,8). Oftentimes, the problem is that we never connect the circumstances of our lives with the consequences of our disobedience –it s too painful to accept; ignorance is bliss as they say. But Leviticus 26:18,21,24 and 28 shows us that the consequences of disobedience are real concrete facts of history. Israel was punished 7 times for their sins during their 70 year captivity in Babylon (c. 536-606 BC) and they will be chastised again for seven years in the Great Tribulation because they rejected their Messiah, Jesus Christ. So hows your life? Are the circumstances you are experiencing a result of disobeying God s word? Are there broken relationships in your life because you wont confess your wrong, or forgive the wrong of others? Are there secret sins you are habitually practicing, thinking that no one will ever find out, forgetting that everything you do is live before a studio audience in heaven? Repent today. Don t forget that the fires of the altar

are always burning because *God is good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon[Him]* (Ps.86:5).

Looking back through the book of Leviticus we can see two clear divisions: chapters 1-10 describe our POSITIONAL STANDING before God (salvation), while chapters 11-27 describe our PRACTICAL STANDING before God (sanctification). As we close today, let's remind ourselves of the high points of Leviticus. First, REMEMBER that the path to peace and fruitfulness starts with worship. Next, REJOICE that through Jesus Christ's finished work, God has made you (if you're a Christian) a sacrifice (Rom. 12:1, 2), a priest (1 Pet. 2:5) and a place (Eph. 2:22). Finally, REALIZE that you are to be holy as He is holy (Lev. 11:45).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the REDEEMER of the kingdom of heaven –Lev 25 (Acts 3:20, 21; Rev 11:15).

Tuesday – February 14, 2017

TODAY S READING: NUMBERS 1-4

OVERVIEW:

The first numbering (census) of the Israelites; the encampment location of each tribe in relation to the Tabernacle; the census and duties of the Levites: the Kohathites, the Gersonites, and the Merarites.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As mentioned in the INTRODUCTION TO NUMBERS, the Book of Numbers picks up the narrative where the Book of Exodus left off. The last chapter of 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 reared up.* Numbers 1:1 says, *And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the SECOND MONTH, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt.* So there was a break of just one month between the time the Tabernacle was erected at the end of Exodus, and the command to number the people at the beginning of Numbers (1:1-3) —with the Leviticus instructions coming between the two.

Note that the census that God commanded Israel to make was not of the entire nation, but only the men age 20 and above who were able to go to war. The total was 603, 550.

One of the saddest realities in the entire Bible is that of these 603,550 men, 603,548 of them would die in the wilderness, having never experienced God s purpose for the exodus. As God made abundantly clear from the beginning, the purpose for the exodus wasn t just to bring them OUT of EGYPT, but to bring them IN to CANAAN (Exodus 3:8; Deut. 6:23)! As God warns us to learn from Israel s failure in the wilderness in I Cor. 10:5-6, it makes one wonder whether out of 603,550 believers today, would there be more than two who actually fulfill God s purposes for their exodus, by allowing God to bring them into their Canaan (the fullness of life in Christ)? What an incredibly sobering reality! If those statistics are right, will you be one of the two? Will you trust God, not only to save you from the PENALTY of sin, but from the POWER of sin? Will you rise above the spiritual discouragement, disillusionment, defeat, and death of the wilderness, and live in the spiritual peace, prosperity, productivity, and power of Canaan?

Note also, that if there were 603,550 men at the time of the census, it would

strongly suggest that Israel's total population would have been between 2 and 2.5 million people! It has been estimated that it would have required nearly 50 railroad box cars of manna per day just to feed the people. The land mass needed to accommodate this multitude when they camped at night would exceed 100 square miles!

As we come through the first four chapters of Numbers, one of the things that is very apparent is that God always does things decently and in order (I Cor. 14:40). God gave specific instruction for Israel to arrange itself into an orderly camp with its mobile worship center (the Tabernacle) at the very center. God did not want Israel to be a chaotic mob in the midst of their journeys, but rather, intended Israel's orderliness, organization, and structure to be one of the key ways His people stood out from the rest of the world, so they would have the opportunity to tell them of their God (See Num. 24:2,5).

As we journey through the midst of the chaotic world of the 21st century, with the lives of its people in such disarray, God wants the orderliness of the lives of His people, as we arrange them according to the instruction of His Word with worship at the very center, to be one of the key ways our lives stand out from the rest of the world, so we have the opportunity to tell them of our God (I Peter 3:15).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

Through MOSES as he led the people –Num. 1:54 (John 10:14,27) Through AARON, the high priest, who was served by the Levites –Num. 3:6 (As a holy and royal priesthood, we serve Christ, our great high Priest –John 12:26; I Pet. 2:5-9; Heb. 4:14)

TODAY S READING: NUMBERS 5-7

OVERVIEW:

Laws concerning cleansing; laws concerning confession and restitution; laws concerning suspected immorality (jealousy); the princes offerings for the dedication of the Tabernacle.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The Bible tells us very distinctly that we are to *rightly divide the word of truth (II Tim.2:15)*. This verse also tells us that in order to make those right divisions, we must see ourselves as workmen, employing one of the most difficult tasks known to man: STUDY! Through diligent study and hard work, God reveals to us the divisions He has made in His Word. In each Book of the Bible, there are certain keys that help us to unlock the divisions that God has specifically set –what God likes to call the RIGHT divisions!

As we study the Book of Numbers, what becomes key to unlocking the divisions God has set is understanding that there are two very distinct generations of people that are being dealt with in this Book. The first group of people is the generation of people that came up out of Egypt, but because of their unbelief, were forbidden to enter the Promised Land and died in the wilderness. The other generation is the group of people who grew up in the wilderness, but were permitted to enter into Canaan because they were under their parent s authority at the time of Israel s failure to trust God (Deut. 1:35-39). Identifying these two generations neatly divides the Book of Numbers into 3 sections:

The „old „generation is covered in chapters 1-14. The new generation is covered in chapters 21-36.

The chapters in between (15-20), record the period of transition during which the old generationdiedoff,andthe new generationgrewup.

Whereas the first four chapters of the Book of Numbers dealt with the OUTWARD FORMATION of the camp, the next five chapters deal with the INWARD CONDITION of it. God capsulizes the central theme of this section in chapter 5 and verse 3, . . . *that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell.* „Because God was in their camp, it was to be holy –completely free from defilement. The New Testament equivalent is II Corinthians 6:14-7:1 . . . because God dwells in us, we are to be separated from all uncleanness, perfecting

holiness in the fear of God.

In chapter 5, God gives instruction that lepers are to be quarantined outside of the camp (5:1-4); that anything acquired through dishonesty be confessed and recompensed (5:5-10); and that any suspected immorality be tested before God (5:11-31). In short, God is showing us the absolute necessity for purity, honesty, and truth.

Chapter 6 deals with God's instruction concerning the Nazarite vow. The implications are this: when a man or a woman in the Old Testament wanted to be used in God's service, but did not qualify because they were not a Levite or priest, they could voluntarily take the Nazarite vow (Nazarite is a Hebrew transliteration that means dedication by separation). The Nazarite separated himself from certain hindrances to holiness in order to be wholly devoted to the service of the Lord. Although the outward characteristics of the Nazarite vow no longer apply, they point to the priority God places on our personal surrender and consecration in order to be used to carry out His will and mission.

Chapter 7 records the free-will offering of the princes of Israel, (the representative heads of each of the tribes of Israel). Several things to note are that the gifts were totally voluntary, and although the gifts were identical, God took an enormous amount of space to specifically and separately record each one. The New Testament equivalent is the fact that, *God loveth a cheerful giver* (II Cor. 9.7), and that though He doesn't need our treasure, He treasures the fact that our heart of love for Him prompts us to give to Him (Matt. 6:21).

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In the NAZARITE who dedicated himself by separation – Numbers 6:1-8 (Jesus willingly dedicated Himself to serve the will of the Father, separating Himself from sin, even to death – John 6:38; Matthew 26:39, 42)

TODAY S READING: NUMBERS 8-10

OVERVIEW:

Consecration of the Levites; observance of the second Passover; the Lord s guiding presence in the cloud and fire; the two silver trumpets; the children of Israel leave Sinai.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we move into Numbers 8, God unfolds to us the consecration of the Levites. God reveals that before these priests were to render their service to God, they were first to be cleansed (8:7). There were three different aspects of their cleansing:

1. The sprinkling of water upon them.
2. The shaving of all hair from their flesh.
3. The washing of their clothes.

God also wants His New Testament priests (all believers –I Peter 2:9) to be cleansed before offering to God their deeds of service. As with the Levites of Numbers 8, we too, are cleansed:

1. By the sprinkling of water upon us . . . Heb. 10:22 – *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*
2. By the cleansing (shaving) of all filthiness of the flesh . . . II Cor. 7:1 –(those deeds of the flesh that are as much a part of us as our very hair).
3. By the washing of our clothes. . . Eph. 5:26 – *the washing of water by the word.*

Just as the Levites acceptance with God was on the basis of the SIN offering and the BURNT offering (8:8-12), so our acceptance with God is based solely on the atoning offering for sin provided by the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:6).

Just as the Levites were to be presented before the Lord and completely surrendered to Him (8:13-16), we too, are commanded to *present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God* (Rom. 12:1).

In chapter 9, God deals with the issue of FELLOWSHIP and GUIDANCE. In 9:1-14, God covers the celebration of the first anniversary of the Passover, which speaks of fellowship. In 9:15-23, God explains the pillar of cloud and fire, which speak of guidance. The Passover, of course, relates to the New Testament believer in the Lord's Supper, where we, like Israel, are put in remembrance of God's work of redemption, and thus, fellowship, through the blood of the Passover Lamb (I Cor. 5:7). The pillar of cloud and fire which provided guidance to the Old Testament saints, is representative of the indwelling Spirit in the New Testament believer in Christ. Just as the children of Israel were to make no plans on their own, but were to be totally dependent upon God's guidance for their every move, so we are to be completely surrendered to the Spirit of God to provide our guidance through His filling.

In chapter 10, Moses is told to make two trumpets. These trumpets, like the pillar of cloud and fire, were for guidance. Whereas the cloud and fire gave guidance for the eye, the trumpets provided guidance through the ear. The trumpets were used for four specific purposes:

1. To be a summoning call to ASSEMBLE the people.
2. To be a signal to ADVANCE the people.
3. To be a sounding blast at a time of war to ALARM the people.
4. To be a melodious song to provide a continued AWARENESS (memorial) to the people of the sacrifices of God.

The sounding of these trumpets point prophetically to:

1. The summoning call to ASSEMBLE the church of Jesus Christ at the rapture (I Thess. 4:16).
2. The signal of ADVANCE as our corruptible, mortal bodies put on incorruption and immortality (I Cor. 15:52).
3. The sounding ALARM in Zion (Joel 2:1) as God declares war in the Tribulation Period (Rev. 8-9).
4. The melodious song ever-sounding in our ears through out eternity as a memorial of God's glorious sacrifice on our behalf through His Son.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In the PASSOVER -Num. 9:2 (I Cor. 5:7; John 1:29)

Friday – February 17, 2017

TODAY S READING: NUMBERS 11-12

OVERVIEW:

The complaint of the people; the lust of the people; the complaint of Moses; the 70 elders chosen; the plague of the quail; Aaron and Miriam speak against Moses; Miriam is stricken with leprosy; Moses prays on her behalf.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As the blessed observance of the Passover ended in chapter 9, the guiding cloud lifted from off the Tabernacle in chapter 10, sending the entire camp of Israel in motion. What an exciting time it must have been as *the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days journey, to search out a resting place from them* (Num. 10:33), moving them ever-closer to Canaan. Surely Israel was filled with singing, and rejoicing! NOT! The opening words of chapter 11 begin, *And when the people complained.* In fact, complaining and murmuring becomes one of Israel s favorite pastimes!

And when the people complained _____ ... -Num. 11:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses Num. 12:1

And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron ... - Num. 14:2

Now Koran ...took men: And they rose up before Moses and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron ... -Num. 16:1-3

But on the morrow all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron ... -Numbers 16:41

And the men, which Moses sent to search the land ...made all the congregation to murmur against him ... -Num. 14:36

Some have even suggested that rather than being called the Book of Numbers, perhaps the Fourth Book of Moses might more aptly be called The Book of Murmurings !

But not only did the people fall into the trap of murmuring and complaining, they also fell into the trap of lusting. It seems unthinkable, especially coming off of the heels of the glorious reminder of their deliverance from the AFFLICTION of their flesh in Egypt that they had just celebrated in the Passover, that only a few days

later they would be lusting for the ways their flesh was GRATIFIED in Egypt. (Num. 11:4-9)! Can anyone say I Corinthians 6:10 ? *Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.* Sometimes it is easy for believers to forget that this world's system (Egypt), was the snare Satan used to hold us captive at his will (II Tim 2:26). Forgetting that it was the very system of evil that almost sent us to Hell, we begin to lust for the ways our flesh was gratified when we were in it. God help us!

Note the sad results of the complaining and carnality of the people upon their leader. Moses is thrust into great discouragement, and himself, begins to voice his complaint to the Lord (11:10-15). He cries out, I can't do this, God! The burden is too heavy. Just kill me!

In the remainder of chapter 11, God deals the complaints of both Moses and the people. He gives Moses 70 elders to assist him in his work, and he gives the Jews the meat they lusted for. Note, however, that in both cases, **THEY GOT WHAT THEY WANTED, BUT LOST WHAT THEY HAD.** The Spirit of God anointing Moses to lead the people was divided among the 70 elders, and the meat the Children of Israel lusted after was a curse that led to their death. (*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* –James 1:14-15) The lesson is, be careful what you ask God for.

In chapter 12, the murmuring has ascended to yet another level. Now it flows from Moses own brother and sister: Aaron, the High Priest, and Miriam, Israel's prophetess (Ex. 15:20). They state that their complaint against Moses was the Ethiopian wife he had selected, but it is only the smokescreen to mask their own jealousy and pride. Their complaint wasn't really against Moses selection of a wife; it was against Moses authority. What they really wanted was the authority of Moses position. Verse 2 makes their motive abundantly clear. Once again, don't miss the fact that the more things change, the more they stay the same! Human nature still employs the same tactics in the 21st century.

Note that Moses in his meekness (12:3), does not seek to vindicate himself, but rather trusts God to handle the situation. God was well able to make the point!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In MOSES who *was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth* –Num. 12:3 (Matt. 11:29 –Jesus said, *I am meek and lowly in heart.*)

Saturday – February 18th, 2017

Reflection

The Book of Numbers was written by Moses, approximately 1445 to 1405 B.C. (Numbers 33:2; 36:13). In our King James Bible it is called The Fourth Book of Moses Called NUMBERS. This Book contains 36 chapters, 1,288 verses, and 32,896 words. Interestingly, the word NUMBERS (or some form of it) is found 127 times in this Book, but it actually gets its name from the two numberings (censuses) of the men of war in chapters 1-4 and chapters 26-27. The first numbering or census took place the second year after the Jews' exodus from Egypt, and the second numbering was made 38 years later, just as the nation of Israel was about to enter Canaan.

As we have noted, the Book of Numbers actually picks up the history of the Israelites where the Book of Exodus left off. Just one month had passed between the completion of the Tabernacle in Exodus 40:17 and God's command to number the people in Numbers 1:1-2. During that one month period, the instruction in the Book of Leviticus was given. Whereas the Book of Leviticus deals with the believer's WORSHIP the Book of Numbers deals with the believer's WALK. While PURITY is the central theme of Leviticus PILGRIMAGE is the central theme of Numbers.

The Book of Numbers has incredible implications and applications for believers today. God specifically tells us this in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 and Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. In this Book we will see the nation of Israel, after being gloriously delivered from the bondage of Egypt by the blood of the lamb, failing to take God at His word, and thus, wandering in the wilderness of unbelief rather than entering into their inheritance in Canaan.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

Leviticus 26:12 “And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”

Numbers 1:2 “Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls;”

Numbers 7:89 “And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto

him from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him.”

Numbers 8:16 “For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me.”

Numbers 11:5 “We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:”