

4. Jesus in Numbers

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If a Christian who wants to read the entire Bible hasn't given up somewhere in the middle of the Book of Leviticus, he will have a hard time mulling through the Book of Numbers, especially chapter 7 which is one of the longest chapters in the Bible.

This Book is called "Numbers" because it contains two major census events – the Israel fighting men were numbered at Mount Sinai in chapter 1. Then, 38 years later as the Israelis were about to enter the Promised Land for the second time, another census was done. During the 40 years of the wilderness wandering, all the first generation who were 20 years and older were dead, with the exception of two – Joshua and Caleb, in the wilderness due to their unbelief. This Book records the tragedy of unbelief.

The Israelis, if they were obedient to the Lord, could arrive at the Promised Land in 40 days at the most after they left Egypt. Instead, it took almost 40 years of wandering for all the unbelievers to die off.

What an example for us to take heed! As we face one opportunity after another to trust the Lord and His faithfulness every day, we must remember these unbelievers' tragedy. It is our choice to trust Him and enter in to the victorious Christian life of faith, or we can reject His promise, live in unbelief, and wander around in the spiritual wilderness, griping and complaining, and walking in circles, never entering into His promised rest.

A. JESUS IN THE CAMP

Numbers 2:1-3a And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting. 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

Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, all descendants of Leah, camped to the east, with a total of 186,400 men. Since the entrance to the tabernacle was there, it was important to have the largest number of soldiers protecting it. According to the rabbinical tradition, these tribes would order themselves after the standard (the banner or flag) of Judah, which was said to be a "Lion."

Reuben, Simeon, and Gad camped south of the tabernacle with 151,450 men. The tribes ordered themselves after the banner of Reuben, which was said to be a "Man."

Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph, encamped west of the tabernacle, along with Benjamin, a total of 108,100 men. Thus, all the descendants of Rachel camped together. The tribes ordered themselves after the banner of Ephraim, which was said to be an "Ox."

On the north side of the tabernacle were Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, with 157,600 men. The tribes ordered themselves after the banner of Dan, which was said to be an "Eagle."

I am sure that by now you've noticed that God's tribal arrangement is in the shape of a cross with the ark of God which was a symbol of God's presence in the middle. Do you think that it just happened to be that way? I think not.

While we are at this, please notice the arrangement of the four main tribes' emblems – Lion for Judah, Man for Reuben, Ox for Ephraim, and Eagle for Dan just happened to be in that formation? Again, I disagree. In our God, there are no such things as coincidence or “Oops”.

Ezekiel 1:10 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.

The angelic beings described here have four faces: the face of a man, a lion on the right, an ox on the left, an eagle's face on the other side. Many notable biblical scholars tell us that these are the four characteristics of Jesus that were represented by the four Gospels of Jesus.

The Book of Matthew describes Jesus as the Messiah – the Lion of the tribe of Judah; Mark as the Suffering Servant is depicted as the Ox; Luke as the Kinsman Redeemer in the form of a Human; and the Book of John points to Jesus as God depicted by the Eagle.

This should remind us of what we learned in the Book of Revelation chapter 4:

Revelation 4:7-8 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. 8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

Some might wonder, “How are you going to connect all these images to God?” Our infinitely wise God arranged all of these to show us what we see in the camp of Israel is a copy of the heavenly things. All the instructions in the OT point to one person: Jesus.

Hebrews 8:1-5 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

B. JESUS THE ROCK STRICKEN AGAIN BY MOSES

Numbers 20:2-12 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. 3 And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! 4 Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? 5 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.” 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. And the glory of the Lord appeared

to them. 7 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 8 "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." 9 So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him. 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank. 12 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."

How long has Moses been waiting for leading the Israelis to the Promised Land? There could not be anyone who was more excited to go into the land than Moses. But because of his one-time disobedience, the Lord put him on the sideline. In other words, Moses disqualified himself to lead them to the Promised Land.

Then, a question would arise: "Didn't our merciful God forgive the Israelis from their sins time after time?" Yes, He did. But they were not Moses, and this was not just another sin. Moses and Aaron misrepresented the Lord by striking the rock that was previously struck in Exodus 17:5-6. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses, in his temper tantrum, struck it with his rod. And additionally, he claimed to be the one who brought water out of the rock in v10. Taking glory away from God? A terrible idea, Moses. The Lord put all the leaders in much higher standard than the rest.

As we studied in Exodus, when the rock was struck once, it represented His crucifixion once and for all, no need for another crucifixion of Him. Besides, the Israelis developed their concepts of God from what they saw in Moses as God's representative. They figured God was mad, if Moses was mad. Though they were wrong for complaining instead of trusting, the Lord knew their legitimate need – wanting water to drink.

Misrepresenting the Lord can be a costly mistake. It was for Moses. We must be careful how we represent Him in our lives.

C. JESUS WAS LIFTED UP

Numbers 21:5-9 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 worthless bread." 6 So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. 7 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. 8 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." 9 So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

It didn't take long before the difficulty of the march made the people impatient and they started complaining against the Lord and His spokesperson Moses again. The word "worthless" they used for manna was total contempt against the Lord. These people had gotten so accustomed to their blessings from the Lord that they detested it and called it "worthless".

They rejected God's gift of life and health from heaven, so He sent them suffering and death from the earth, and many of them died. The word "fiery" in Hebrew is "saraph" which means "burning". I wouldn't be surprised if the serpents were poisonous with their venom and gave torturous death to the Israelites. In the OT typology, bronze represents 'God's judgment'; and the serpent represents 'devil' or 'sin'.

Jesus used the bronze serpent to illustrate His own death on the cross in John 3 as we already studied it before:

John 3:14-15 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.

All people have been infected by sin and will one day die and face judgment, but if they look by faith to Christ before their death, He will save them and give them eternal life. Looking to the bronze serpent saved the Israel people from physical death, but looking to Christ saves anyone from eternal death.

D. JESUS THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR

Numbers 24:17a "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

As the Lord put His words in this disobedient soothsayer Balaam's mouth, this heathen spoke a prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus. Balaam spoke about Jesus way down in the future:

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

Isn't it amazing how the Lord used a total disobedient soothsayer to speak about His own Son? Just because the Lord is using any one of us, it doesn't mean that we are right with Him. The Lord even uses satan for His glory, too. The point we need to understand is that we must glorify Him in everything we do, think, and speak.

E. JESUS IN THE FEASTS

In chapters 28 and 29, we see more details of the preparation for the feasts that were designated by the Lord in the Book of Leviticus. We ran out of time to go over every single element that connected to Jesus in Leviticus last time. Since Moses covered the material preparations for the feasts in this Book, let's quickly see how each feast points to Jesus.

1) Passover

Pointed to Jesus as our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7) whose blood would be shed for our sins. Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover at the same hour that the lambs were being slaughtered for the Passover meal that evening (John 19:14).

2) Unleavened Bread

Pointed to Jesus' sinless life, as leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible, making Him the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' body was in the grave during the first days of this feast, like a kernel of wheat planted and waiting to burst forth as the bread of life.

3) First Fruits

Pointed to Jesus' resurrection as the first fruits of the righteous. Jesus was resurrected on this very day, which is one of the reasons that Paul refers to him in 1 Corinthians 15:20 as the "first fruits from the dead."

4) Weeks or Pentecost

Occurred 50 days after the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and pointed to the great harvest of souls and the gift of the Holy Spirit for both Jew and Gentile, who would be brought into the kingdom of God during the Church Age as it is mentioned in Acts 2. The Church was actually established on this day when God poured out His Holy Spirit and 3,000 Jews responded to Peter's great sermon and his first proclamation of the Gospel.

5) Trumpets

The first of the fall feasts. Many believe this day points to the Rapture of the Church when the Messiah Jesus will appear in the heavens as He comes for His bride, the Church. The Rapture is always associated in Scripture with the blowing of a loud trumpet call of God as we can see in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:52.

6) Day of Atonement

Many believe this prophetically points to the day of the Second Coming of Jesus when He will return to earth. That will be the Day of Atonement for the Jewish remnant when they "look upon Him whom they have pierced," repent of their sins, and receive Him as their Messiah as it was prophesied in Zechariah 12:10 and Romans 11:1-6, 25-36.

7) Tabernacles or Booths

Many scholars believe that this feast day points to the Lord Jesus' promise that He will once again "tabernacle" with His people when He returns to reign over all the world as it was prophesied in Micah 4:1-7.