

Numbers 20 Bible Study Notes

1 Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. 2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! 4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? 5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see again that the people have forgotten they are under a death sentence from 20 years old and upward. Their own disobedience has led them where they are and they still want to blame Moses and Aaron for their predicament.

6 And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them. 7 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 8 Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. 9 And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. 10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We notice that Moses forgot to put God in the matter and to glorify the name of the Lord. This is sin, even if it is a sin of frustration, it is still sin. God will not be robbed of His glory.

11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. 12 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see that God did provide the water, however, He exacts a penalty for the sin of Moses and Aaron for not honoring his name before the people. Notice that in this instance; God's rebuke begins immediately but will not be finally carried out for a long time.

This sin reaches further than you think at first. By Moses saying to the congregation in: ***Nu 20:10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice:***

He left in the minds of the people the idea that Moses and Aaron could produce something of themselves.

"Because ye believed me not" The reason Moses and Aaron failed to honor the name of the Lord was; they did not believe God themselves, or maybe their faith was in the power of the rod. However, we understand that the rod, in and of itself, had no power. The miracles produced by the use of the rod are done by the power of God.

13 This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Meribah means to strive. Therefore God called the place Meribah because the people Israel strove against him.

14 And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us:

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We point out here; if you look at a map, that plots the path that Israel took from Egypt to the Promised Land, you will see several things clearly:

- Notice that God didn't tell them to petition Edom. This was an action of Moses on his own or at the urging of the Israelites.
- The shortest route for Israel from Kadesh to the Promised Land is straight through the Land of Eden. This I think is why Israel petitioned the King of Edom.
- Israel has only made about 1/2 of the journey that they are to take before they enter the Promised Land. The easiest, and shortest, way is not the way the Lord would have them to go.
- We see that in their petition to Edom (Edom is the country inhabited by Esau, Jacob's brother) they claim their kinship in hope of obtaining favor.
- They tell of their woes in Egypt hoping to exact pity from the Edomites

15 How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers: 16 And when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border:

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Israel tells Edom; In our vexation we cried unto God and he delivered us in a mighty way. It would seem; they thought this might also give them favor in the eyes of Edom.

My thought is; surely Edom has already heard how they refused to enter Canaan and how they were defeated by the Amalekites and the Canaanites.

We notice: Israel didn't tell; they were where they were because of their disobedience.

17 Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's high way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Think about the arrogance Israel displayed by telling the King of Edom: this is the path we will take through your land; instead of asking what route they should use if he permitted them to pass through.

18 And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword. 19 And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without doing anything else, go through on my feet. 20 And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand. 21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see two things in the refusal of Edom to allow Israel to pass through:

- It was not the Lord's will; so he didn't give them favor in the eyes of the King of Edom, and the Edomites
- The Edomites remember; Jacob had robbed Esau of his birthright and stole the blessing of the Lord from them.

22 And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor. 23 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, 24 Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: In these verses we see; God is leading them and talking to them again. God speaks to Moses and Aaron.

God tells them both; Aaron is to die and not enter the Land of Promise because you both rebelled against me at the water of Meribah. Notice; God defines their taking glory to themselves at Meribah as rebellion.

How often have we rebelled against God in our own Christian walks in life?

25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: 26 And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there. 27 And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 28 And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see here; at the command of God, the office of High Priest is transferred from Aaron to his son Eleazar.

Notice that God, not Moses or Aaron or Israel, chose the next one to hold this office.

Notice that as soon as this transfer is accomplished that Aaron dies. This was a great show of mercy and grace from God, to allow Aaron to see his follower, and to not let him live in disgrace of losing the office because of his sin.

Finally, remember that the judicial wrath of God for sinning against Him may not come swiftly, though we have seen it does sometimes, but it does come surely. This is certainly a lesson that we can apply in our own lives, and have in remembrance as a warning; to live in complete subjection and obedience to God.

29 And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: In the beginning of this chapter we saw the death and burial of Miriam and in the close the death and burial of Aaron. They are Moses' sister and brother. Before Israel enters Canaan; Moses himself will die.

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