

Numbers Chapter 20

- Between chapters 19 & 20 approximately 38 to 40 years have passed, the generation spoken of previously has died off and the children of Israel are once again preparing to enter into the promise land.

V: 1 The congregation is in the desert of Zin headed towards Kadesh.

- Desert: green some of the year, can sustain herds and flocks.
- Wilderness: never green, cannot sustain cattle or flocks.
- Miriam, Moses' older sister dies and is buried in Kadesh. This is the first mention of Miriam since she and Aaron murmured against Moses back in Numbers 12 in Hazereth.

V: 2-3 There was no water for the congregation. This is a legitimate need.

Proverbs 3:27 "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it."

Isaiah 42:6 "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;"

James 4:2-3 "²... ye have not, because ye ask not. ³Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

- They've been through all of this before – at the same place which should have been a reminder.
- Reading these complaints it would be easy to assume that it is just the same group of people doing what they seem to always be doing – complaining!
- This is almost 40 years later; the old group had died off, these are their descendants who have taken up the same attitudes and characteristics as their parents. That group that was 17, 18, 19 years old – now they're all coming up on 60 years – and what do they sound like? Is it good or bad?

Deuteronomy 30:19 "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

- As we see from Deuteronomy that the choice between obedience and disobedience, life and death isn't one that just affects us, but also affects our children as well.
- Moses surely seems to be the consistent fall guy and scapegoat for everything trial.

V: 4-5 Same old complaint – after so many years of God’s faithful provision; they should have learned by now not to doubt God’s goodness, nor His ability to provide for them.

- They’re still talking about Egypt, their hearts are still in Egypt.
- This is a sad picture of the Christian that still loves the world, and the old life.

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

V: 6 Moses and Aaron do now what the people should have done, they turn to God.

V: 7-8 This seems like the same situation as some 40 years prior, a similar solution: but there is a need for discernment.

Deuteronomy 4:2 “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”

2 Timothy 2:15 “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

- It is basically the same difficulty – the same faith test: a test of the Emergency Christian System.
- The solution is what is different than before.

Exodus 17:4-6 ⁴“And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, what shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me. ⁵And the Lord said unto Moses, go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. ⁶Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.”

- There are two important differences in the two solutions:

1st: “thy rod” vs: “the rod” – “thy rod” is the one belonging to Moses that God turned into a snake, and that was used to turn the water to blood.

- “The rod” – is Aaron’s rod which God miraculously caused to bud, and to blossom, and to produce almonds as proof to the people of God’s authority in

(V: 7-8 cont.)

choosing Aaron to be the high priest. It was thereafter placed in the Tabernacle before the Lord.

2nd: Moses is told to “speak” to the rock as opposed to “striking” the rock.

- God told Moses to “speak” to the Rock because it was a depiction of Jesus –

1 Corinthians 10:4 “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.”

- Jesus often spoke of the thirsty soul that could only be satisfied through Himself:

John 7:37-38 ³⁷... if any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.
³⁸He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

Jesus told the Samaritan woman:

John 4:14 “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Jesus tells all of us:

Revelation 22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

- Jesus was that Rock and he would only to be smitten once for the sin of mankind.

John 19:30 “... it is finished!” – God died once and for all for our sins, not over and over again.

Hebrews 9:24-28 ²⁴For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: ²⁵Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; ²⁶for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ²⁸So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

- God’s intent was that when Moses would stand before the people and speak to the Rock, with the symbol of God’s authority in his hand, a witness to the people of God’s power displaying the rod that blossomed and produced fruit – that when Moses spoke not just with God’s authority, but representing God – life giving water would pour forth – and God would be glorified.

V: 9 Moses takes the rod from before the Lord – again identifying which rod is being referred to.

V: 10-11 Moses starts off in obedience, getting the rod, gathering the people at the Rock – then he opened his mouth...

- Moses was an awesome man, greatly used of God – yet just a man; in a moment of weakness, frustration – he walks in the flesh, not in the spirit.
- Moses was told to speak to the Rock, but he's addressing the people – and he's calling them names! It's not hard to assume that he's probably using harsh tones, and that there is an expression on his face that matches this scene.

Matthew 12:34 "... for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

1 Corinthians 13:5 Love "Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not provoked, thinketh no evil;"

Speaking of Moses:

Psalms 106:32-33 ³²They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: ³³Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."

- Put all of this together and this is not an accurate representation of God – God is love! God is kind and patient.

Exodus 34:6-7 ⁶And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..."

Psalms 36:5 "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds."

Psalms 103:13-14 ¹³Like as a father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. ¹⁴For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

V: 10 Moses also used the phrase "we" – "must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Moses really has a limited role – which he has already overstepped.

Isaiah 42:8 "I am the Lord: that is My name: and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images."

1. Not only did Moses misrepresent God to the people in speaking to the people instead of to the rock; Moses also struck the rock two times with "the rod".
2. Again, Aaron's rod that blossomed and produced almonds in being used like this probably removed the witness.

3. An almond tree blossoms in January with many thousands of blossoms. As the wind and elements beat against it's branches, they loose many of the blossoms – the relatively few blossoms that remain produce fruit / almonds.
4. This rod being set aside as a witness and testimony when used as a club probably knocked most of the blossoms and fruit from off the rod – thereby eliminating the witness and symbol of God's authority.

Psalm 103:10 “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”

- We see that herein God demonstrates His grace, in that even though Moses didn't do it the way that God had directed, He still brought water out of the rock for the people and their animals to drink.

V: 12 God takes Moses aside and tells him that he will not lead the children of Israel into the promise land – because he didn't “believe” to “sanctify” God before the people.

- **Herein is an important typological point:** Moses; the Law could not, cannot lead God's people into the promise land. Only Joshua, a type of Jesus could do that – only Jesus can lead us into the promise land.
- Moses didn't pay attention to and or follow God's word, he didn't set God apart or above, didn't distinguish between God's word and the word of man, otherwise Moses would have been obedient to God's word.

James 3:1 “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.”

- Leaders are held to a higher standard.
- It's not the Pastor's job to beat people up or to straighten them out. My job is to share God's word with people lovingly whether corporately or individually, generally, or specifically – just to share God's word.
- Anger and bitterness will disqualify us from true leadership, and from ministry.

James 1:20 “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”

- Leaders like Moses, and anyone who serves the Lord in ministry are held to a higher standard – thus we need to be careful how we represent God.

V: 13 “*This is the water of Meribah...*” (strife or contention)

- This is the clue that we need to positively describe where this is happening. Up to this point in this chapter, 40 years after the previous incident at the Split Rock of Horeb, this location hasn't yet been identified in this chapter.

Identifying the split rock of Horeb:

Exodus 17:6-7 “⁶Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, is the Lord among us, or not?”

V: 14-21 The king of Edom is not identified.

- Israel wants to pass through, won't touch anything – and they are refused.
- Israel is being led by the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night: Edom still didn't have a capacity or value spiritual things. When they refused Israel, they at the same time refused God.
- Israel turns away as opposed to fighting their brother Edom.
- The prophet Obadiah describes the Edomites as being evil, filling in the details of a hateful and cruel people.

Romans 9:13 “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.”

V: 22-24 The changing of the guard:

- They move from Kadesh back to Mt. Hor / Mt. Sinai.
- Aaron is included in the judgment about not leading the people into the promise land because he had also rebelled against God's word at Meribah, and will be gathered to his fathers, meaning he will die.
- God views not wholly keeping His word as rebellion.

V: 25-29 The transferring of the High Priesthood from Aaron to his son Eleazar.

- The hands that had first placed the sacred robes upon Aaron now remove them, to place them upon Eleazar – and Aaron dies presumably in front of them.
- Aaron was not judged by fire like his sons, not just dying along the way like his sister, not cut off, but gathered to his fathers in the presence of God.

- Eleazar is not allowed to mourn for his father:

Leviticus 21:10-12 “¹⁰And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; ¹¹neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; ¹²Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the Lord.”

- There are at times some hard realities in serving the Lord, here Eleazar can't mourn for his father.
- Think about Moses, he's had a tough week: in one chapter:
 1. Miriam died.
 2. The people continue with their usual sniveling.
 3. He had his greatest personal set back in ministry resulting in his not getting to lead the people into the promise land.
 4. His brother Aaron dies.
- How does Moses respond? He picks up his staff and walks down the mountain and ministers to the people and he faithfully represents God to the people, he keeps doing what he knows God has called him to do.
- Because Eleazar cannot mourn – the people do for 30 days.

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- Not unlike Aaron, unless the rapture comes first some day we too will be gathered to our own people.
 - Who are your people? Who's your daddy?

John 13:35 “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

1 John 3:14 “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”

- What do you hunger for?

Matthew 5:6 “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

1 John 2:4 “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”