

Numbers Chapter 21

V: 1 “... *king Arad the Canaanite...*” - “Arad” = “wild ass”

“... *he fought against Israel, and took some of them prisoners.*”

- He fought against those who were governed by God – and took some captive.

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

- The enemy is always looking for whom he can either destroy or take captive; his captives always end of dead.

V: 2-3 This is a picture of ultimate victory – Jesus wins and is glorified.

- “**And Israel vowed...**” – not Moses vowed, or the Levites vowed – “Israel vowed” – they took an oath, that if God would deliver the enemy into their hands, they would do their part and “utterly destroy them”.
- There is a picture of unity in this description – and the victory from being united in Christ.

Psalms 133:1 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

- God delivered up the Canaanites, and they were “utterly destroyed.” This is no different than what God would have done earlier had they entered into the promise land.
- To “utterly destroy” something meant to dedicate it to the Lord. Wiping out the people and their city, and giving all the spoils to God. **Leviticus 27:28-29**
- This was the situation when they would later go into Jericho, it was to be utterly destroyed – everything dedicated to God. Achan’s sin was that of stealing from God, and so God dealt with him.

[Map / picture: Tel Arad](#)

V: 4 They moved back toward the red sea to go around the land of Edom.

- They were going out of their way to keep peace with the Edomites.

Romans 12:18 “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

Hebrews 12:14 “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

V: 5 The people speak against God and against His servant: those two things usually run together.

- The same old complaint; you brought us out here to die of starvation and thirst.
- If it is true that there was no water at their present location; as was the case before – what might the solution to that problem be?

James 4:2b “... ye have not, because ye ask not.”

- Regarding bread: it wasn't that there wasn't any bread as they stated, they didn't like the bread they were given, they loathed it.
- They were referring to the Manna that they had been given, the bread from Heaven.
- Loatheth: ^(H6973) “quwts” (koots) - the idea of severing oneself from (throwing away) to be disgusted with or to abhor, to be weary.
- To loath something is to be hostile towards or to be hateful towards something.
- Not unlike showing despise, or despising something; accounting it of no value.

“Light bread” / “worthless bread” NKJV: insubstantial, miserable, un-attractive, contemptible

- What they didn't realize was that the manna was a picture of Jesus.
- The manna is literally bread from Heaven; it represents the True Bread of Life; Jesus Himself.
- This is the reason we see God respond so firmly with the people; they aren't just rejecting God's cooking... they are rejecting a representation or a type of their Savior.

John 6:48-51 ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which commeth down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

- Rejecting the Bread of Life is the same as embracing death. Rejecting the truth, embracing the lie.
- According to the Apostle Paul; they were tempting the Lord:

1 Corinthians 10:9-10 “⁹Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. ¹⁰Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.”

V: 6 The Lord sends fiery serpents:

Hebrews 10:26-27 “²⁶For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

- We're not told how many, but “many” meaning more than a few of the people were bitten and died.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death...”

V: 7 The people came to Moses and confessed their sins and asked Moses to intercede on their behalf.

James 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

V: 8-9 God tells Moses to make a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole. Everyone that looks at it will be healed.

- This is the symbol of the medical profession today: a snake coiled around a pole.
- Moses makes a serpent of brass: brass is the metal of judgment.
- The serpent being a representation of our sin.
- The brass altar upon which the people's sin offerings were consumed represented the cross upon which our sins were judged.
- After Sampson rejected God's word and had his eyes put out – made blind – he was bound with brass fetters until his death.
- Jesus later refers to this situation in His discussion with Nicodemus in John Ch. 3

John 3:3 “Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

- Nicodemus asks how can a man be born again when he is old.

John 3:5-6 “⁵Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

John 3:14-15 “¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

John 8:28 “Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am, and that I do nothing of Myself...”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

- When Jesus became sin for us, He too was lifted up on a pole, the cross; just like the serpent.
- In a similar fashion, when we too humble ourselves in obedience to God’s word and look to the cross of Jesus – we too are saved from our sins, and the fiery indignation that would otherwise await us is abated.

Isaiah 45:22 “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

- There may have been some who were snake bitten and dying; having been told – just look at the brass snake – and said “that’s foolish, I’m not doing that...” and died.
- We hear the same thing today: that’s too easy; I don’t need that; that’s foolish.

Paul recognized this when he wrote:

1 Corinthians 1:18 “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”

V: 10-20 Travel log: starting out from Kadesh.

V: 10 **Oboth.**

V: 11 **Ijeabbarim**, near Moab to the east, towards Arabia.

V: 12 **Valley of Zared.**

V: 13 Other side of the **River Arnon**, which is the border between Edom and Moab.

V: 14 “The book of the wars of the Lord.”

1. Genesis 5:1 Book of generations.
3. Numbers 21:14 **Book of wars**
5. Joshua 10:13 Book of Jasher
7. Ezra 6:18 Book of Moses
9. Isaiah 34:16 Book of the Lord

2. Exodus 24:7 Book of the covenant.
4. Deuteronomy 28:61, 29:21 Book of the Law
6. 1 Kings 11:41 Book of the acts of Solomon
8. Psalm 69:28 **Book of the Living**
10. Jeremiah 32:12 Book of the purchase

11. Nahum 1:1 **Book of the vision** 12. Malachi 3:16 **Book of remembrance**
13. Philippians 4:3 / Revelation 3:5 **Book of life** (7X's)

V: 15 **Ar**, at the border of Moab.

V: 16 **Beer**: (well, water well).

- Here the Lord has Moses gather the people so that He can give them water.

V: 17-18 Then Israel – again not just Moses, or the Levites – but Israel collectively and in unity sang this song of praise – this song of faith.

- Why is it a song of faith? Because they started singing before they had the water, they started singing then they started digging.

2 Corinthians 5:7 “For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please Him / God.”

This scenario falls right in line with what Paul taught us:

Philippians 4:6-7 “⁶Be careful / anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

- The princes and the nobles were doing the digging – fulfilling their role in ministering to the people.
- Watered up and back on the move:
- Back on the move, from Beer to **Mattanah**.

V: 19 **Nahaliel**. (Valley of God / palm grove of God.)

- **Bamoth**, in Moab. (High places / Heights of Baal)

V: 20 To the top of Mt. Pisgah, looking towards Jeshimon.

V: 21-30 “Israel” sent messengers, emissaries to Sihon king of the Amorites seeking peaceful passage through their territory.

- Sihon = “tempestuous” – and he won’t allow Israel to pass through, then he attacks Israel – and gets smoted.

V: 24 “Israel” those governed by God obtain victory through the sword – the word of God.

V: 29 “Chemosh” – pagan god of the Moabites, “subdue”.

V: 31-32 Jaazer = “May He help”

V: 33-35 “Og” king of Bashan. “Og” identified as one of the “giants”. They were of the “Rephaim” the Moabite equivalent of the Philistine “Anakim” – or giants.

- Edrei was the royal or capital city Bashan.

We’ve seen 3 different pictures of Jesus in this chapter:

1. V: 5 Jesus is the bread of life, the Word that became flesh, as manifested in the Manna.
2. V: 8-9 Jesus is the fiery serpent, becoming sin for us, lifted up on the pole as our redeemer.
3. V: 17-18 Jesus is that well of living water, springing up to life everlasting.

Examine the bigger picture in this chapter:

1. This chapter starts off with king Arad of the Canaanites attacking Israel and taking prisoners.
2. Then “Israel” vows a vow to God – “Israel” as opposed to Moses, the Levites – “Israel” corporately and unified makes a vow.
3. This is a transitional point: prior to this they had been referred to as “the children of Israel.”

Numbers 20:1 “Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation.”

Numbers 20:12 “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel,...”

Numbers 20:22 “And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor.”

- They’ve gone from being “the children of Israel” – to “Israel” – “Governed by God.”
 - They’ve gone from being “the children of Israel” to being actually “Governed by God.”
 - The Lord listens, He hears their vow and gives them victory.
 - God doesn’t have “grand children” – only children with a direct personal relationship with Him.
1. Then (V: 4-7) they get discouraged, they complain against God and His servants – they stumble – rejecting the bread from Heaven.
- [The trials we experience in life will either draw us closer to the Lord, or we can allow them to drive us away from the Lord – it’s always our choice.](#)
 - They loathed it – despised it – they were mad at God.
 - Sometimes we’re in the same boat, mad at God – so mad that we could scream or scratch His eyes out, or at the very least pout.

- We can't scratch His eyes out, so how do we express our disappointment, anger, and frustration?
- We loathe his word: "no I won't read my Bible!" - "I'm not going to church" – "yeah, right; worship...when hell freezes over!"

V: 4 Notice that during this process they are referred to as "the people" was much discouraged..." not Israel.

V: 5 "And the people spake against God and against Moses..."

V: 6-7 Again it is "the people" who are chastened by the Lord with the fiery serpents.

Psalm 94:12 "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy Law."

Hebrews 12:5-7 ⁵...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: ⁶For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. ⁷If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?"

- Notice that we can see both cause and effect: in this case the cause is the chastening.

V: 10 The effect: "The children of Israel" – are back to following God as they go from place to place.

- Notice however that there is still a difference between "following" God and being "governed" by God.

V: 17 "Then Israel" – singing a song – worshipping God – "walking by faith, not by sight".

- When they are walking by faith and worshipping God – they are "governed by God" – they are Israel.
- Please note that the stumbling (V: 4-5) and chastening (V:6) was preceded by (V:1) "Israel" those governed by God – in other words we all mess up, we all fall short.

Psalm 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."

- Notice that the chastening led to RESTORATION.
- Notice that they go from Israel / governed by God – to stumbling, chastening, restoration – to once again being governed by God, worshipping Him, walking by faith – and now from victory to victory.

1. Sihon king of the Amorites – smitten.
 2. Og – of the giants that they had previously feared – smitten.
- There are times when we too slip back and forth: not in losing our salvation; but between Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Lord and Savior.