

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

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LESSON EIGHT

NUMBERS, CHAPTERS 20-36

In beginning this lesson we reach the third and last of the geographical divisions of Numbers. But a question may be raised here about the locality.

In 14:45, the people were driven by the Canaanites from Kadesh unto Hormah, after they had presumptuously tried to enter their land without the approval of GOD. How then do we find them at the former place again? The theory of some is that about 38 years have elapsed since that occurrence, during which time they have been dwelling at different places, of which no record has been kept, and that now for some peculiar reason they have returned to Kadesh. Others would solve the difficulty by saying there were two places of that name. But perhaps the most likely solution is that chapter 20 really follows chapter 14 chronologically, and that up to this time they had not left the immediate neighborhood of Kadesh. To go into particulars would not be a wise disposition of our time just now, and we will proceed to divide up and consider the following events without further reference to this question. From any point of view it seems proper to say they were now starting from Kadesh, and with that understanding we may map out the events of the itinerary thus:

Kadesh.

Mount Hor.

Moab.

- what notable event is mentioned in verse 1?

- what further ground for "murmuring" is referred to?
- what was Moses directed to do in this case as distinguished from a somewhat similar action at Rephidim, recorded in Exodus?
- how did he and Aaron fail to sanctify GOD in this case?
- what punishment was inflicted on them therefore?
- how is their offense spoken of (Psalm 106:32, 33)?
- how does the New Testament refer to this rock or that at Rephidim (I Corinthians 10:4)?

It is worth while to observe that since this rock symbolized CHRIST, the offense of Moses was of a deeper and more serious nature than ever appears. This can be said even though Moses may have been ignorant of that fact.

The two rocks indeed, like the two goats in Leviticus, are taken together to symbolize two aspects of His work. The smitten rock at Rephidim is representative of His sacrifice for us; the rock to be spoken to at Kadesh, of His intercession on our behalf.

"**Speak ye unto the rock,**" brings to mind such a passage as I John 1:9, which appeals to Christians rather than the unconverted, and on the basis of their previous acceptance of the atoning work of CHRIST. To smite the rock the second time, instead of simply speaking to it, would seem (in type), to deny to CHRIST the full efficacy of His work, and rob the believer of the joy and comfort of it.

At Mount Hor

- what event seems to have made it necessary for the people to journey in this direction (see intervening verses)?
- what notable event occurred here (v. 28)?
- what occasioned the "murmuring" here (21:4)?
- what punishment followed?
- what was the means of their deliverance therefrom?
- how does our Lord speak of its typical significance (John 3:14, 15)?

If anyone desires material for a discourse on the very heart of the Gospel, they will surely find it here. The whole human family have felt the serpent's sting (Romans 3:23). The very image of that which did the mischief was the channel through which deliverance came (Romans 8:3,4). Faith is the instrument, look and live (Isaiah 45:22). Look not to ordinances, or churches, or men, or angels, or even your own character, or penitence, or prayers, but to JESUS CHRIST (John 3:16). Each one had to look for himself. Salvation is a personal matter.

But let us not leave Mount Hor without speaking further of the cause of the people's discouragement.

Observe that the Edomites descended from Esau (Genesis 36), illustrating that he that is born after the flesh still persecutes him that is born after the Spirit. It affords a good figure of the hostility of the world to the church.

Observe, too, that the main judgments of the prophet Obadiah are denounced against Edam, and

because of this very treatment of his brother Israel in his emergency.

And further, that although GOD could easily have made a way for them through Edom, He tried the patience of the one people, and delayed His vengeance on the other, by leading Israel a circuitous way. What an illustration it affords, furnished by the divine hand itself, as to what the right path may be even though it has many windings, and is encumbered by numerous conflicts!

At Moab

If the book of Numbers has been read carefully, you will recall that this section of our lesson practically includes all the rest of its contents. Please locate the country on the map, and see how close it is to Canaan on the east, since from that point the entrance upon the land was ultimately undertaken.

It might be interesting to notice the number of stopping-places spoken of in chapter 21, and the particular record of the conquest of the Amorites, and the possession of their land. Now begin those exterminating wars which Israel undertook at GOD's command, and as the expression of His wrath against the guilty nations of Canaan, till all should be cut off. Observe that the victory is ascribed to GOD. Compare Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 2:32-33; Judges 11:21; Psalm 135:10, 11; Amos 2:9.

What prophet comes prominently before us at chapter 22?

So conspicuous is he, and so much space is given him, that we may attach his name to the next great fact in the book.

- by what nation were his services engaged?
- what other people seem to have been affiliated in the scheme?
- does it appear that Balaam had any knowledge of the true GOD?
- how would you harmonize the fact that GOD permitted him to go, and was nevertheless angered at his going?
- what super-natural event occurred on the journey?
- what peculiar prophecy of Balaam about Israel has been strikingly fulfilled before our eyes (23:9)?
- how many distinct efforts were vainly made to curse the people?
- how does the first part of verse 21 illustrate the believer's position through the righteousness of CHRIST?
- how does verse 23 illustrate the Christian doctrine of assurance?
- name the verses in chapter 24 that refer to CHRIST, and, apparently, His millennial reign?
- how does the conduct of Moab in this case fulfill Deuteronomy 2:25?

The Story of Balaam

Curiosity may be roused concerning Balaam. He was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, which suggests questions as to the source of his knowledge of GOD, and the meaning of GOD's dealings with him. But remember that while GOD had special dealings with Israel He never limited the revelation of Himself to that people. Such characters as Melchizedek and Job in the

Old, and Cornelius in the New Testament, afford parallels. Recall also that GOD made Himself known to heathen kings through the prophets Jonah, Jeremiah and Daniel.

If anyone is troubled at the apparent contradiction between GOD's permission to Balaam, and his subsequent punishment for what he was permitted to do, remember that GOD looketh at the heart. A careful study of these chapters is hardly necessary to show that he was a double-minded man, hoping against hope always that GOD would give him his own way. Use your concordance here to see what the HOLY SPIRIT says about Balaam and "Balaamism" in other places of the Bible.

Minor Events

If what follows in the book is classed as "minor events," it does not mean that they are less important in themselves necessarily, but only that they take up less room comparatively.

It will be seen from chapter 25, that what the Moabites could not accomplish against Israel by war or magical incantation, they came very near doing by more insidious means. What is the name of the idol mentioned in verse 3?

Baal was a general name for "*Lord*," and Peor for a "*mount*" in Moab. Another name for this "*Lord of the mount*" was Chemosh, whose rites were accompanied by the grossest obscenity. These lessons cannot do much in the way of explaining such matters, but the Bible dictionary heretofore recommended will come in place here. Which seems to have been chief in the trespass in this case, the people of GOD or the heathen (vv. 16-18)? And yet observe from the preceding verses that the one was punished as well as the other. Compare carefully 31:1-20. What warnings these lessons give about sin!

- what, in a word, is the subject of chapter 26?
- what qualification of an earlier supposition is found in verse 11?
- on what basis was the land to be divided (vv. 53,54)?
- what word of GOD had been fulfilled prior to this numbering (vv. 64, 65)?

If one has a taste for figures, it will be seen that the people had multiplied greatly, notwithstanding the devastating judgments on them. It will be seen, too, that the more sinful tribes diminished, while the others increased, so that the division of the land on the basis of populousness was a direct reward to some and punishment to others. To him that hath shall be given, but in the grace and providence of GOD the one that hath is the one who obeys and pleases Him.

- while the land was divided by lot, what shows that the matter was still under the control of GOD (Proverbs 16:33)?
- how were the rights and privileges of the female sex to be regarded in the distribution (chap. 27)?
- who is chosen to succeed Moses?
- what expression (v. 16) indicates GOD's ability to discriminate among men in assigning them their tasks?
- how is Joshua differentiated from others (v. 18)?

- what shows his need nevertheless, of special direction from the word of the Lord (v. 21)?

It will not be especially needful to dwell on the repetition of the several laws about offerings and vows, chapters 28-30. This was made necessary, no doubt, by the fact of their approaching entrance into the land where those laws could be observed more strictly than in the wilderness, and because a new generation had sprung up since their first enactment. But let us pass on to the closing events which culminate in the appointment of the cities for the Levites, and especially, from among them, the

Six Cities of Refuge

- for whom were these cities appointed (v. 6)?
- what qualification of this appointment is contained in verse 11? And in verse 12?
- how were these cities located with reference to the Jordan?
- how comprehensive was this appointment (v. 15)?
- for how long a period was the confinement necessary in order to safety (v. 25)?
- what were the names of these cities when subsequently selected (Josh. 20)?

The subject of the cities of refuge affords suggestive material for a Bible reading. They may be considered a type of CHRIST in the following particulars:

Origin (divine);
Necessity;
Accessibility;
Sufficiency;
Security;
Applicability.

In working out the details it might be well to show that like our salvation in CHRIST, their value was limited to those that remained in them. "**Abide in me.**" Also, point the contrast, that whereas they were restricted to the innocent man-slayer, CHRIST receives the guilty. The man-slayer had to be judged first; we believers are already judged, condemned, and yet free in CHRIST.

The Types in Numbers.

1. Types of the church.

- (1) The priests typify the church in worship.
- (2) The Levites typify the church in service.

2. Human type of CHRIST - Joshua.

3. Ideal type of CHRIST - the Nazarite.

4. General types of CHRIST.

- (1) Rock.
- (2) Brazen serpent.
- (3) Cities of Refuge.

The great prophecy of CHRIST in this book is that of the star spoken of by Balaam.

~ end of Lesson 8 ~
