

## MARCH 12

### Numbers 16:41-18:32

#### Numbers 16:41-50

Vs. 41-43 Until now, Korah's rebellion seems to have been a small problem involving the tribes of Levi and Reuben. Now we see that all the other tribes became infected by the criticisms against Moses and Aaron. The charge they brought against Moses defies all reason. Moses didn't open up the earth and swallow those families, and it wasn't Moses that brought fire out of the tabernacle to consume the 250 would-be priests.

But I've seen this in churches, too. People will not recognize God's working or submit themselves to leadership but will instead destroy churches and neglect the harvest. I don't think we are any different than these people. Look at how often Paul had to tell believers to submit to God's choice in giving gifts. Without submission to Jesus and taking up our cross, as people called to die, following Him in the harvest, we could all end up like this. This is why we constantly, every day, need to be in the Word, allowing the Spirit to "adjust" us.

When they faced off against Moses and Aaron, the cloud moved. Didn't they see the cloud?

Vs. 44-46 Moses and Aaron now both *fell on their faces*. They knew this was going to cost people their lives. Moses somehow understood that Aaron needed to get into the masses and make atonement for them.

Vs. 47-49 It is interesting what the "right" man with a censer could do. I'm sure God made a point in this that Aaron was the man whom He had chosen. Apparently Aaron ran through the streets of this tent city spreading the incense (symbolically, prayers) throughout the camp. At one point Aaron was standing between dead people and living people. It is hard to imagine that 14,700 people died on one day. And it was all the result of being infected by the discontentment of a few.

#### Numbers 17

This chapter sets the cause of the previous rebellions to rest as God Himself takes care of the problem, stating this in v. 5.

As mentioned yesterday, it seems that whenever there is an organization, we crave the lead roles. This is true in the church in spite of Christ being the Head and in spite of the church's mission being that of reaching a dying world. We are still caught up with what we think of each other and who is the leader. *God's choices* in gifting and giving one person more visibility than another don't seem important to us. We look at the organization and forget the God who owns it. They forgot the cloud, although it was in plain view.

With Israel, and even with us, God gives gifts/offices. He makes the choice. Each of us is to live and serve according to the measure of faith which God has assigned to us (Romans 12:3). God gives and assigns and orders. We either go with it or mess it up.

God would now confirm the choice He had made again. Twelve staffs representing each tribe would be put between the altar and the Holy Place. You see what happened to Aaron's staff. It was a class "A" miracle, and the people couldn't blame it on Moses.

Vs. 12 and 13 are the reaction of the people to their own rebellion and as a result you'll notice that 18:1 begins with *so*.

#### Numbers 18

Vs. 1-7 So, in the context of protecting the people, God clarified the special relationship of the priests and the Levites. Aaron and his family were to protect the people. The Levites were given to Aaron and his family to help them do this. Notice the mentions of *keep guard* and *gift*.

Vs. 8-20 In this section notice the words, *gift*, *given*, and *shall be yours*. These laws also show the privilege of Aaron and his sons having their needs met through the offerings and sacrifices brought to the tabernacle.

Vs. 21-32 This now was the privilege of the Levites. Notice that with the Levites and Aaron, God was their inheritance on earth. They were to serve and God would supply. This was all commanded by God but it ran on faith. If the people of the nation loved God and saw the sacrifices as important in their relationship to God, and if they obeyed the Lord, and if they understood that God wanted them to come to Him through the ministry of Aaron, then all was well. If not, they would look at Aaron and the Levites as "living off" them, as if by charity.

Notice that the Levites were to tithe, too. They were to give the best when they tithed. Just like the people were not supposed to hold back, the Levites were also to give the best that they were given, to the Lord for the priests.

Some people think that Cain's sin was not that he offered a sacrifice of his fields instead of an animal offering, but that the fruit and grains he offered were not the best. Instead of giving the best of his fruit, he gave the wormy stuff that he wouldn't have eaten anyway.

One more thing regarding these offerings and tithes - in Malachi these offerings become a major issue. The people brought what was sick and blighted; because, hey, times are hard and a blind animal is better than no animal, right? And the priests accepted it because, hey, they had to eat, too. Obviously God didn't agree with them.

This principle of tithing extends over to the NT. You see Paul mentioning the command the Lord gave, *that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel*. (Read 1 Cor. 9.) Again, this is God's choice for things. If we see the Lord and the harvest as the center of our lives, then it all works. Also, the ministry of Ephesians 4:11-16 is very important and dependent on God giving certain men to the church, those men being supported and the people submitting to God in following them. There is a lot of faith involved in this too. If we are not here to be slaves of our Lord Christ, we are in trouble. If we think "church" means something other than binding together to serve Christ in the harvest, we get in trouble. I was in a church where people said that both of my predecessors were lazy and never put in an honest day's work. In the file drawers, I found time sheets from them, logging in 55-hour work weeks. The real issue was that the people "owned" the church, the building, to meet their needs. They weren't getting what they paid for. What they really wanted was for themselves, so they could stay isolated on a hill. Both "lazy" pastors burned out.

As disciples we must understand that God left us here on earth on purpose. We could all have been taken into heaven, "safe at home" the minute we trusted Christ. The reason we are left here is to serve our Lord by following Him in the harvest. We have no right not submitting to Him or to the structures He has set up to get this done. Obviously not all churches are doing the job, but we don't reject church or judge those who try to lead them. We still need to obey Him and find a church where we can work in the harvest. When Paul wrote to the Philippians notice how often *witness* and *being of one mind* are mentioned. The Church is to strengthen the harvesters, working together to glorify the Father, by bearing much fruit and so proving that we are Christ's disciples.

## **Mark 16**

Vs. 1-8 In Mark's customary style, chapter 16 is short and crisp. Jesus is raised; the angels say to go to Galilee; there are appearances and then the Great Commission and Jesus' ascension. All the highlights and no detail.

V. 7 Do you remember why the meeting in Galilee was significant? It was because of the Great Commission.

Vs. 9-20 Now, welcome to one of the biggest problems in the New Testament. This section of Mark doesn't seem to be in the original first edition of the Gospel of Mark. In a nutshell, the best, earliest manuscripts don't have these verses. Also, the Greek doesn't seem to match up in style, word usage and grammar. If you want a fuller explanation of this, read The Bible Knowledge Commentary - NT, pp. 193-194.

Yet, since it has been in most of the later manuscripts and was accepted by the group of church fathers that established the canon, we are probably safe to quote it. Just for your information, the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8 is a similar problem.

Also, what is said in this ending is verified by the other Gospels. It is a little different, but that might actually show it is authentic. I would assume that either Mark or Peter added the ending years later. Mark's Gospel is said to be the earliest Gospel, written sometime before 54 A.D. Maybe later in his life, Mark got tired of people asking him why he ended the story so abruptly, and so he quickly wrote an ending on separate paper that went with some of the manuscripts but not with others. We can ask the Lord when we get to heaven.

On the other hand, if this is one of the most severe NT textual problems, it's really nothing at all. Everything written here is validated by the other Gospels.

Vs. 9-11 This is exactly what we find in the other Gospels, especially the doubt of the eleven.

V. 12 Mark alludes to the guys on the road to Emmaus. Luke will give the rest of the story.

Vs. 15-16 Jesus says, *Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.* The message went out first to Jerusalem. Baptism wasn't necessary for salvation, but it did supply a visual proof of true faith. Peter will say something similar to this in 50 days when 3000 people will claim allegiance through baptism. In doing this these Jews would be proclaiming the name of Jesus, whom some of them had denounced, and whose name was a cause for them to be thrown out of the synagogues in Jerusalem. Baptism has always been symbolic of death with Christ and our public identification with Him, the coming King. It has never been necessary for salvation. Notice also on the negative side of that verse, not believing is the only cause of condemnation. Baptism doesn't save, but in that culture, it sure did show who was really a disciple.

Vs. 17-18 Notice the accompanying signs. Then notice the key to this in v. 20. The signs confirmed the message. These men had no Bible to point to like we do. How the signs substantiated their word is easy to see in Acts.

I'm not wanting to be divisive here, but just making an observation. Today, it is politically incorrect to disagree with the statement, "all the gifts seen in the book of Acts are normative for today and are still in use." I don't buy that. To say that God can still do these things is fine. But the special nature of the formation of the church, like the formation of the nation of Israel in the OT, has to be given some honest evaluation.

Do we have people getting snakebites and still living all the time? Is there anyone today, whose shadow falling across a sick man heals him? Can God still do this? Yes. Does God give any of us that ability? No. The time of the formation of Israel and the formation of the church were very special times. God used wonders and special exceptions to how things normally go. For example, in Acts you see people who have accepted Christ but hadn't yet received the Spirit, until Jews from Jerusalem showed up to lay hands on them. God did this so that the Jews could see that Samaritans were being given the Spirit. It was a special visual aid to help the Jewish Christians, at that time, get over their racial prejudice. I think that was only for that time, not now.

**Psalm 55**

The intro to this psalm says, "with stringed instruments." It should read, "with stressed instruments." ☺

David is expressing a deep sense of betrayal here. Some think that this might have to do with Absalom's rebellion and Ahithophel's betrayal. Maybe. But David was a son-in-law of King Saul and had many friends in the palace. Everyone David knew who was close to Saul, except Jonathan, betrayed David. Either situation would fit. My personal feeling is that I don't think David wrote too much after he hurt himself with Bathsheba.

Vs. 1-8 When we read this we need to remember that God is OK with our needs, our weaknesses and our sufferings. It doesn't mean we have sinned or are far from Him. This is what God uses to draw us to Him. He wants us to cry out. He let David go through this, so it could be expressed to us.

Vs. 9-15 In this betrayal, there is a connection to Jesus being betrayed by someone close to Him. When you see Jesus at the Passover supper, He is saddened because of Judas. Jesus doesn't express Himself quite like this, but He does warn Judas that he would wish he were never born if he betrayed Him.

Vs. 16-19 This is what God was teaching David. This is what He teaches us also. We need Him more than we know. My heart is encouraged with these verses saying that we can cry to the Lord and He will hear us.

Vs. 20-21 When we are suffering because of others and they seem to be prospering, that makes it doubly hard to go on. But as disciples we have the harvest and a Savior to follow. We need to focus on Him and His work and leave the rest to Him.

V. 22 says it all. This is the verse that Peter used for 1 Peter 5:7, and that's probably where Psalty, the singing songbook, got the song, "I Cast All My Cares Upon You." If you know that song, I'll bet you wondered where it originated.

### **Proverbs 11:7**

Just a couple things to say here.

First, the hope of the person without God doesn't take into consideration that our 70 years on earth are like walking into the entry of a building. This is not all of reality. He can't see beyond this little place called earth, and he has no hope, beyond what he can buy and enjoy. Our hope is in the Lord and our treasure is in heaven. The question for us as disciples is, "Are we willing to forgo heaven on earth for the sake of the Lord and the harvest and heaven?" That is where we can chill.

Second, the word "wealth" can also be translated "strength." I think the NIV has the best translation, *When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.*

This verse has good parallelism and it is true. Men hope their power and accomplishments will somehow translate into getting position or blessing in heaven. Alexander Dumas ([The Count of Monte Cristo](#)) said that if he got to heaven and found that he was out of step, he would just tell them a little story and perhaps it would open doors for him in heaven as it did for him on earth. Harry Houdini said he would find a way out of the afterlife, just like he found ways out of things here on earth. We haven't seen Harry since he died, and I doubt Alexander is telling anyone stories where he is.