

MARCH 21

Numbers 32:1-33:39

Numbers 32

Vs. 1-5 The people of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh ask for the land they have just captured on the east side of the Jordan. This is their formal request. Note that this is a request and not a rebellious declaration. Something was learned in those 38 years since Kadesh-barnea.

Vs. 6-15 Moses' words to them have one big point: the rebellion of the few brings God's anger on the many. Notice that Moses doesn't use an argument against them, but rather the story of their own history. Moses mentions the cause/effect danger of what they "might" be doing in vs. 14-15. The effect on the people would be as it was 38 years earlier - discouragement and a bitter heart. Moses recounts the history of Kadesh-barnea, mentioning how that resulted in what they have just lived through for 40 years, and that Caleb and Joshua were the only survivors.

Vs. 16-26 The story had a happy ending because these tribes were not rebelling; they were asking. They were seeking the Lord and seeking permission to do this. In the 40 years, seeing the older generation die because of their rebellion, and understanding every day that their situation came to them because of the report of 10 men, had ingrained in them that if they sin, others will suffer. These tribes represent what every person in the camp knew and felt. It also shows that they were developing a heart to ask God instead of trying to "complain" Him into submission. God shows Himself to be very flexible and accommodating here.

Vs. 28-32 With a decision of this magnitude, communication was vital and it was important that Moses was still the man in charge. Even though God allowed it, it could have caused bitterness; but with Moses heading up the communication and making this known, it didn't look like new leadership making a bad decision.

Vs. 33-42 Moses was even able to lead Joshua and Eleazar through the exercise of dividing the land for these tribes. In a way, that was also God's mercy on Moses. He wouldn't enter the land, but God allowed him to enjoy some of the process and to train the men who would go beyond him.

God gave Israel the victories they needed to encourage them before they entered the land, and the fighting men of Reuben, Gad and 1/2 Manasseh would cross over the Jordan ready to rumble. And, they would be a source of encouragement for Joshua.

I think it is kind of neat that Joshua and Caleb were two of the oldest men in the camp. Both would have been 80+ and both were godly leaders; in fact, we'll see that Caleb still has "attitude."

As disciples, this history of Israel provides important lessons to learn about spiritual group dynamics. Criticism, bitterness and pride never, never take us in the right direction. Personally it hurts us in our growth in Christ and our service and focus in His harvest. This sin kills the harvest of a group. If a group of people is reaching no one, something happened. Look for it. If we personally are not reaching out and reaching out with a group, we're on the wrong track. It took God 40 years to develop a heart of obedience in these people so that they were willing to focus on following Him, and to bring them to the understanding of each person's responsibility to the entire people.

For us as disciples in the harvest, life on earth should be very simple. We follow Christ into the harvest with a group of people, telling lost people what the Lord has done for us and how they can come to know Christ. As people come to Christ, we help them become disciples, who make disciples in the harvest. So why is this really very complicated for many churches and believers? That's good food for thought.

Numbers 33

Just for fun, without looking online or in another book, try to figure out how many times they moved.

Many of these places where they camped were just "areas" in the wilderness and can be referred to by several names. I'll do some leg work for you. They rebelled, we are told later, at Kadesh-barnea. After 38 years of wandering they return to Kadesh-barnea where Miriam dies. So where was Kadesh-barnea in this list, the first time? If you go back to the rebellion, in Numbers 13:16, they have just left Hazereth (where Miriam had leprosy) and arrived at the desert of Paran. In our list today, Paran is called Rithmah. Rithmah must be some landmark at Kadesh-barnea. Now that you have that piece of the puzzle, figure out how many times they moved before and after Rithmah.

It's interesting in Psalm 90, a psalm Moses wrote about all the wilderness years, he says *Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.* (Psalm 90:1) Where do you dwell? Now think of David in The Psalms. Where would David want to dwell? I think Moses and David dwelt in the same place.

Vs. 38-39 are actually Numbers 20. Both Miriam and Aaron died that year, four months apart. This is how you can figure out the time lapse between chapters 19 and 20.

Luke 4:31-5:11

The events here launched Jesus into being followed by the masses. Before these events, there were no great crowds following Him. After these events, Jesus and the disciples will seldom have time to themselves. It is no accident then that Jesus began asking men to become permanent followers who began to assist Him in His work.

Also, Mark and Luke have these events reversed chronologically. Notice that 5:1 says, *On one occasion...* This means that this story is probably not in order but is put here to mark the occasion where Jesus personally called Peter, Andrew, James and John. Jesus already knew these men, and they had already had some adventures together in John 1-4. I think Mark has the right chronology, and Luke is showing logically why Jesus needed to call the disciples. Both events happened, it seems, in the same week.

Luke 4:31-44

Vs. 31-37 In Capernaum in this synagogue Jesus' mass ministry was launched by driving out this demon. Reports were already going out about Him, but there was something about this event that caused the news to begin circulating rapidly.

Vs. 38-39 Jesus had already stayed at Peter's house, but from here on out, Peter's house would be His base of operations in Capernaum.

Vs. 40-41 This great crowd was just the city. When Jesus returned to Capernaum, this kind of gathering at Peter's house would become a regular event, as it was the day the paralytic was healed.

Vs. 42-44 Jesus rose early and evaded the crowd, knowing they would have kept Him from leaving. This would be the first preaching tour He took the disciples on.

Luke 5:1-11

This, I think, is a flashback. If this was a TV show, it would say, "Three days earlier."

Vs. 1-3 Notice that Luke identifies the Sea of Galilee by its Gentile name. That Jesus was teaching here was incidental to what follows with Peter and the boys.

Vs. 4-5 Here is the point. Jesus was "presumably" a novice in fishing. Experienced fishermen labored all night and sat by for hours as Jesus taught. Now He was finished. They had done their good deed and finished their work (multi-tasking); the nets were ready for tomorrow. Now they could go home, eat and get ready for the night of fishing ahead. Then, of all things, Jesus tells the pros to go out into the deep in the heat of the day and throw their newly cleaned nets in the water. To Peter's credit, he did it. Now, it should be mentioned that Peter had seen the water turned into wine and had probably seen other miracles in Jerusalem and in Capernaum when Jesus stayed there with His family after the marriage in Cana.

Vs. 6-7 The key word of faith here is, *when they had done this*. The partners in the boat on land were the Zebedees. James, John and their father were partners with Peter. Later that day when Jesus called James and John, Mark tells us they were in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. Here the nets are tearing.

Vs. 8-11 Peter fell at Jesus' knees because Jesus was probably knee deep in fish. Notice what the call to Peter was. It was to catch men. That's what disciples are supposed to do in following Jesus (switching metaphors) into the harvest. It was no small thing for Peter (and Andrew, James and John) to get the boat to land, hand it off to the workers and probably Peter's and James' fathers, and then to leave everything and follow Jesus.

I know this is theoretical, but would we have that same faith to follow Jesus in the harvest, or do our stuff, our sources of income and security own us?

Psalm 64

What a contrast to the last psalm.

Vs. 1-6 David is in distress. Maybe it was the next day or next week. There was danger and the lies and threats of the enemy had shaken him. His cry to God for help includes the catalog of the arrogance of these people who are pursuing David.

Vs. 7-8 David wouldn't work to fight or judge these people, but David was confident that God would. He did.

Vs. 9-10 It takes getting to these verses before David had something to praise God for. David didn't know when God would vindicate him, but he knew that when He did, it would be visible and all men would fear and learn to put their trust in the Lord. Those who were righteous would learn to take refuge in the Lord.

The psalm itself is a picture of what really brings praise, trust and understanding. It is not until we are so weighed down and desperate, and we have endured, holding on and waiting on the Lord, that we can know this kind of rejoicing. Only when we have taken refuge in Him and seen His vindication, will we be able to praise Him like this. Then the words of v. 10 will flow from our hearts.

Proverbs 11:22

God said it. This is a weird kind of image if you think about it. It doesn't compare the woman to the pig, but to a gold ring in a pig's nose. The beauty of the ring can't hide the pig. So, in this proverb, what is this big, crass, dirty, and for the Jew, unclean animal that can't be hidden or dressed up? It is the woman's lack of discretion and godly wisdom.