

## **MARCH 8**

### **Numbers 10:1-11:23**

Get ready to roll!

Numbers 10

Vs. 1-10 The trumpets were the final addition to moving. They were used for all sorts of things from battle to feast days. Notice that only the priests could blow them. The other interesting thing was that in battle, they were used to call God for help. Even in the trumpets, there was symbolism mixed in.

In terms of moving the camp of Israel, what we have here is all summary. We don't know how much in advance the "alarms" were made to give each camp time to prepare to move. It may be that when they saw the glory move away from the tabernacle they began making preparation. That definitely would have been visible.

Vs. 11-28 Here we go! I can just hear Willie Nelson standing there, as the tribes are passing by, singing, "On the Road Again."

V. 11 Notice when this happened. Remember the guys who were unclean and couldn't celebrate the Passover in the first month. This means that those men celebrated both the Passover and the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. The day after they finished, God moved them.

If you made a diagram of the tabernacle with the Levites around it and then surrounded by the other tribes, you get an idea of how they took off, led by Judah. Writing out their order helps give a good visual image of how they moved out.

I wonder how long this all took. People had to pack up their tents and find little Joe and Sarah playing with their friends. They had to load it on Nellie (the family cow), then you moved out three tribes as the Levites were working like crazy to tear down the tabernacle, besides getting their own stuff in order. How long does it take to move 6-10 million people? Do they walk in single file or a quarter mile wide? It must have taken forever. I think Willie would have gotten tired playing that song.

V. 17 Notice that the sons of Gershon and Merari traveled together after the camp of Judah. This would allow them time to set up the court and the tabernacle, before the Kohathites arrived with the furniture. Also, the camp of Judah would have been able to "set up a perimeter."

Vs. 29-32 Moses appeals for his (?)-in-law to go with, thinking they would soon be in the land. This guy had more names than Jason Bourne. Take a look at p. 226 of the [Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT](#) for an explanation that the word for "father-in-law" actually means "in-law" and that this guy was most likely Moses' brother-in-law. Apparently he went with them, but little did they know that Israel was not on its way to blessing.

Vs. 33-36 I don't know what to think of what Moses said when the cloud lifted and rested. He took great care for the people and took his position very seriously. God doesn't command him to do this, but I suppose with the signal of the trumpets, Moses, as a leader, wanted to motivate the people and focus their attention on the Lord. Anyway it's more gripping than, "Hi-ho, Silver, away!"

Numbers 11

Vs. 1-15 So, they finally move. The Promised Land is on the radar, and they know it is their destination. They have just seen wonder upon wonder, and the cloud is leading them. And they complain about the manna and want meat.

One of the main themes of both Numbers and Deuteronomy is that the sin of a few will affect the entire nation. We have seen the symbolism being laid in the things that make a person unclean and in the way lepers were to be treated. Now we will begin to see God showing them that the sin and rebellion of a few people can destroy the nation.

Vs. 1-3 Notice that the first step in this entire event was a few people complaining and then the attitude of complaint catching on around them. Symbolically, God dealt with it with a spreading fire. The judgment matched what they were doing to one another.

Vs. 4-6 I think their desire was valid. The expression of their desire was not. They could have asked God personally. They could have gone to Moses patiently. They could have prayed and spread prayer throughout the camp. I'm sure the meat would have come. In any case, once inside the land, they would have had anything they wanted.

Paul mentions this event in 1 Corinthians 10:10 *"And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer."* We should ask ourselves what was wrong with their complaining. Then we need to ask ourselves about our complaining. Is there a difference? Actually, I like complaining, but I'm getting better (at not complaining). If we see our lives, as disciples, as living out God's will every day, we realize that God is in charge of our circumstances, more than we are. The challenge is for us to live our lives accepting what God brings into our lives and responding in a way that shows we are His followers and children. Paul addresses grumbling one more time in Philippians 2:13-15, *for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...*

The "rabble" refers to a mixed group of people, Jews and non-Jews, probably Egyptians who were sympathetic to the cause while they were still in Egypt. Now a year into the Exodus, living on manna, they were helping the Jews to grumble and be discontent. These people had been good to the Jews when it had to do with human injustice, but had no clue regarding the spiritual ramifications of the promise of Abraham, the promise to Adam and Eve and the destiny of the nation of Israel. Now, they were poison to the Jews. A few people complaining spread like gangrene through the camp. Many would now die because of the few.

As disciples, you would expect to find dissenting voices outside the church; but more often than not, it comes from the brethren (and sistren). I have seen churches ruined, pastors give up on ministry and groups of believers held hostage for decades, because of a few immature rabble rousers. Paul's words to the Corinthians, about their inability to see immaturity and "nice people" who were not believers, still hold true for us. *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.* (1 Corinthians 15:33-34)

Vs. 7-9 They were now treating their daily bread, and its giver, with contempt. Not smart, or spiritual.

Vs. 10-15 It is hard to imagine the intense pressure on Moses. God was mad; Moses wasn't real happy; the people were standing at the doors of their tents weeping out loud. In a few days, Moses, in his thinking, went from success to utter failure. And in this pressure and sense of failure, he wanted help or death.

I've got to admit that I like Moses' poetic flair in his nervous breakdown.

Vs. 16-17 This is important enough to take note of. God was willing to go with the people and their needs. He waited for natural problems to arise before He moved and answered requests. Of course Moses needed help; but now, in a whiney sort of way, he was asking, and God was willing to provide. The provision of 70 elders on whom the Spirit would rest is a great thing. Moses doesn't need to feel jealous, because they are provided out of Moses' own cry to God.

Joshua will get a little bent, but God prepared Moses for this by letting Moses melt down. This isn't quite, but it resembles, the beginning of the office of prophet.

Again, for us as disciples, it isn't the emergency or the need that is bad, but it is what we personally do about it. Are we driven to our knees before a sovereign, loving God, or do we act in our strength or give up and complain?

Vs. 18-20 God is really not happy here. There was no better way to spit in God's face than to say they were better off in Egypt and to say they wanted flavorful food. They didn't fully grasp that God was in their presence, listening to them. If anyone had had any sense, they would have fallen on their faces and asked God for forgiveness. They definitely shouldn't have eaten without seeking forgiveness for their sins and giving thanks.

I had to laugh the first time I read v. 20. If saying, *until it comes out at your nostrils*, is a guy thing, then God is a guy.

Vs. 21-23 What is amazing here is that in the emotional stress of leading, Moses totally loses perspective. Why did he think this was his responsibility to feed them? Why would he think God would have a hard time providing meat? "Well, you know, the manna is sort of like....whatever. Meat comes from animals and you can't just conjure those up, can you?" Of course, God could. Moses himself is losing sight of who God is. If God created chicken on the day of creation, He could do it now. His hand had not lost its touch or "become shortened."

As disciples following our Lord in the harvest, we don't always see fruit. We often see some disappointment in those who profess Christ, but fall away. And we see people begin well as disciples, but settle into a harmless, ineffective lifestyle. It seems that God should at least be nice to us, because we're trying, and keep our cars running and our microwaves from dying. Well, Jesus said the good seed bore fruit "with patience," and part of the Father's pruning process is to direct the life flowing in us to be concentrated in places where the fruit will be produced. That means that the process of crying out to God and trimming our focus and honing our energy will always be part of following Him. He wants fruit more than we do. *Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!* (Psalm 27:14)

### **Mark 14:1-21**

Vs. 1-2 Everyone knew the leaders were wanting to kill Jesus. It is interesting that they decided not to attempt doing anything during the Passover and feast week. But something will change that.

Vs. 3-9 This was the event that made Judas mad. In a way it is funny. I, myself, have met Christians who were more (self) righteous than Jesus. When Mary anointed Him and the disciples got all righteously religious and told Him what she did was a waste, Jesus told them to back off, that it was ok, that the poor would be there every day. They were trying to press Jesus into some kind of religious thinking that already existed. John 12 mentions that Judas was a thief and that what he said was motivated by wanting to get his hands on the money. Oddly enough, he was the "rabble" who got the other disciples complaining.

Just for trivia. This was the end of a very long Wednesday in the week before Jesus died. John seems to say that this event happened five days earlier; but if you notice the words in John 12:2, he is only referring to where the event took place, not when it took place. Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover, and that was the place (not the time) Mary anointed Jesus.

Vs. 10-11 Now the chief priests were praising God, because one of Jesus' disciples was a traitor; and they could, unexpectedly, kill Him.

Vs. 12-16 Jesus waited until the last possible second to send the disciples to find a place to celebrate the Passover. And it worked. It made a lasting impression that God could be trusted even if He makes us wait until, not only the last hour, but until our strength is failing and our

hope is beginning to get strained. And Boom! There was a room and it was a good one. Tradition says this was the home of John Mark, the writer of this Gospel.

Vs. 17-21 I'll bet Peter and John were the only disciples who weren't asking Him, "*Is it I?*" The disciples never knew that Judas was the rat. Jesus' security in His Father allowed Him to show Judas an amazing kind of love. It was such a constant and sincere love, that the disciples never picked up on the fact that Jesus knew from the beginning who it was who would betray Him.

V. 21 Jesus knew who it was, but it was Judas who made the decision. You see both sovereignty and human responsibility here. Rather than question how they work together, it is easier to understand that God is amazingly loving, righteous and wise, and they do work together.

### **Psalm 51**

This is a great psalm of David, written after God spoke judgment on David, for what he did with Bathsheba and Uriah. There are lots of great verses here like v. 17. I have a couple general observations.

First, according to what we're reading in the OT, David should have been put to death for this, a couple of times over. God Himself spared David out of sheer grace. God forgives. There is no human sin He will not forgive, and that should be a comfort to us, not only in working with others, but also when we hear that tiny voice telling us we're as useful to God as a screen door on a submarine. We may sin, but we get up and keep on going, following Christ, receiving grace upon grace and forgiveness that goes beyond our guilt. And God will use us.

Second, I always have a hard time with the way David expresses himself in v. 4, as if his sin only affected God and not other people. This verse is true in terms of ultimate guilt; but if we have sinned against others, we can't use this verse as proof that we don't have to apologize or make restitution. In my experience I would say the rule of thumb is this, that if we have really harmed someone, we let *them* tell *us* what restitution looks like. We keep saying we're sorry, until they release us from that obligation. Too often, the guilty party forces the party they wronged to grant forgiveness, to get "themselves" off the hook, instead of lifting the pain and the injustice from the other person.

In this case, from what we will read later and the fact that David's family was ruined and his most trusted counselor rebelled against him and committed suicide in bitterness, I sense that David did not work with Bathsheba's family until they were satisfied. I don't really sense that his repentance went past God, into the families that he ruined. We'll talk more about this when we get to 2 Samuel 11. David was a great man, but he really destroyed himself in what he did and how he handled it.

Still, it's a great psalm. David was like us, blessed but weak. What the Spirit of God says here is true.

Vs. 1-2 David knew there was no appeal for what he had done. Only God could pardon Him, and then, only on the basis of totally unmerited kindness and mercy. Eventually the blood of Christ would be shed that could cover this. In faith, David is asking for pardon.

Vs. 3-4 Ultimately David could only be pardoned by God. His friends and his nation could look the other way but David's true guilt would remain. He needed to be pronounced free by God. Still, David did a lot of damage in many families. We have no evidence that he took care of those sins.

Vs. 5-12 Verse 5 is a strike against the idea that kids are born clean, without sin, like blank slates, and that it is our environment that teaches us to sin. The Lord shows in His Word that we are born with an incurable sin nature. Only God can cure us. Notice what David lost in vs. 8-12. This was serious and David never expected that his fling with Bathsheba could damage him spiritually. In a way, David never fully recovered.

Vs. 13-17 David often promised God that he would tell of God's deliverance and help. Psalm 40:1-10 states something like this too.

Vs. 18-19 At this point, David didn't know how the city and the nation would suffer for what he had done. Here at least it seems he realized that his sin might impact the nation and the city, so he is asking for God's protection and that Zion would prosper as a place that men would seek God and as a place where God would show mankind His favor.

**Proverbs 10:31-32**

If you put these verses together it might look like this.

31The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, because 32the lips of the righteous know what is acceptable; but the perverse tongue will be cut off, because the mouth of the wicked only knows what is perverse.