

FRINGES IN THE BORDERS

NUMBERS 15:1 – 16:3

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~ Our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God marches on across the wilderness with the children of Israel in this report as they continue their forty years of wandering in unbelief. This is the only record of what really happened in this account; and there is scant further reference to it in the Word of God. Only a few incidents from these forty years are recorded. We could call these the silent years. Chapter thirty-three will be as uninteresting as any other chapter in Numbers, but we will find Israel's travel log for this part of their journey there. In our last report, we saw what happened as they disobeyed God by not entering the land as He had commanded; and then they rushed up the hill to worship presumptuously after that disobedience. Moses and Aaron told them not to go up on the mountain to the place the Lord had promised them because they had not listened the first time. Well, they went up on the mountain against Moses' advice, presumptuously, and the enemy wiped them out. If you haven't read our previous safari report, I highly suggest you go back and do so now.

That's where we left the children of Israel in our last report - defeated and wandering at the place of indecision at Kadesh-barnea. Walking has turned to wandering for these people now; their definition has turned to defeat; marching has degenerated into murmuring, complaining and conspiring to murder Moses and Aaron. Their witness has turned to a wail. Warring has turned into wobbling. Singing has turned to sighing. Working has turned to wishing. The decisions we must make, for or against, and about the Lord in this life, are difficult. Many times, we come to a crossroads in life, and we aren't sure which way to go. It's very easy for us to say to one another to trust the Lord and follow Him when it isn't us who needs His help. So many Christians stagger through the wilderness of this life in exactly this condition.

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Well, the children of Israel understood exactly what they were commanded to do - and how they had been instructed to do it - but they refused to trust the promises that God had revealed to them by Moses and Aaron. They went the wrong way and were faced with the problem of either entering the land without faith - or turning back in unbelief into the dreadful wilderness. They looked out in that wilderness and decided they had made a big mistake by not believing God the first time. Then, THAT became the wrong decision because it was not a decision of faith; it was only made because they didn't want to go back into the wilderness again. They had just had two years out there. The thought of forty more was unbearable. The wilderness was not a comfortable place to be - but back into the wilderness they must go, because they presumed; and presumption, friends – with God – is more dangerous than unbelief!

The child of God needs to be very careful that they don't presume anything at any time in their life with the Lord. Doing so is when many people experience calamity, and they ask why God would let it happen since they had been led to do this thing or that thing; whatever it was. So many people move in a totally opposite direction from God's direct will; and then they wonder why their lives are just not working out. If they would be honest for a moment, they would admit that they simply do whatever they want to do and expect God to bless their foolish desires and clean up their messes. We need to definitively ascertain whether we are moving in faith or by presumption. Somewhere between the two is the will of God; and we will do well to seek the will of God from the Word of God.

What we have before us are the wasted years of the children of Israel for which, while we are not given a detailed account, we can know many things about them, because we have the luxury of seeing their future, also. The things the children of Israel were doing in their lives had no meaning, purpose or direction for them at all. None of the things they sacrificed at this point pointed to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We find out later in Joshua that they did not circumcise their children during this time period, either. Without the ritual of circumcision, it would be impossible for them to fulfill the will of God relevant to the covenant that God had made with

Abraham. Amos tells us that they did not offer sacrifices at the tabernacle during this time of wandering.

Amos 5:25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? 26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves ~

Acts 7:42 Then God turned , and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? ~

~ So, they're turned back into the wilderness by the Lord to wander forty more years; and these incidents have many wonderful lessons for us today. All these things happened unto them as examples for us. You and I are strangers and pilgrims in this world. The world is a wilderness in God's sight. Now, I fully recognize that some people do not feel that way. There is a crowd who act and display a countenance of being very civilized and highly refined. They are, generally, very rich people who have luxurious possessions. Well, okay - but - God says you and I, as believers, are just passing through an awful wilderness in this world. If you say differently, God contradicts you....

XV

1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you,

~ The children of Israel will delay the blessing of the Lord, but they cannot change or deter His plan and purpose for them in this world. Even if God had destroyed Israel, as He spoke to Moses about doing, His plan and purpose for His chosen people would have remained the same. The entire theme of this chapter is God going forward while the people are going

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backwards; as in, going nowhere! When God told them how they were to enter and possess the land, it was as good as done. It didn't need a plan. This is written in prophetic tense. We have the advantage on this safari of knowing that forty years later, Israel entered the Promised Land and did the very things their fathers had disbelieved....

3 And will make an offering by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice in performing a vow, or in a freewill offering, or in your solemn feasts, to make a sweet savour unto the LORD, of the herd, or of the flock:

4 Then shall he that offereth his offering unto the LORD bring a meat offering of a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of oil.

5 And the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering shalt thou prepare with the burnt offering or sacrifice, for one lamb.

~ The hin of oil speaks of the Holy Spirit and a hin of wine speaks of joy. The lamb and ram for a meal offering are prepared, and a bull for a burnt offering. Now, God speaks to them about exactly what it is He is going to do, and what they are to do when they enter the land. Even in their disobedience, the Lord gives further commands. It will be forty years before these new commandments become applicable to them again, though. This generation will wander in idolatry and unbelief, but the next generation will enter; and all of these sacrifices speak to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, let's bring this all up to date. How many of us, as believers, serve the Lord Jesus around the clock, in our job, in our home and in our community? Are we stable and dependable – or are we really serving the gods of this world? Does Christ go to work with you? Does He go to the grocery store with you? Does God drive along with you as you go down the road? These offerings all speak of Christ, and these are the things the children of Israel are to do when they get into the land; even though they won't be going into the land at this time. Of course, they turned away from these things. You better ask yourself: are you living a secular life during the week? Is your

“relationship” with God something you only remember from time to time? That’s no good, my friend. Jesus wants to be as real in your bed at night as He is in your church on Sunday and, for some people, that’s not very real at all. I think it’s important that we recognize all of this correctly today....

6 Or for a ram, thou shalt prepare for a meat offering two tenth deals of flour mingled with the third part of an hin of oil.

7 And for a drink offering thou shalt offer the third part of an hin of wine, for a sweet savour unto the LORD.

8 And when thou preparest a bullock for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice in performing a vow, or peace offerings unto the LORD:

9 Then shall he bring with a bullock a meat offering of three tenth deals of flour mingled with half an hin of oil.

10 And thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

11 Thus shall it be done for one bullock, or for one ram, or for a lamb, or a kid.

12 According to the number that ye shall prepare, so shall ye do to every one according to their number.

13 All that are born of the country shall do these things after this manner, in offering an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

14 And if a stranger sojourn with you, or whosoever be among you in your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD; as ye do, so he shall do.

15 One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD.

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16 One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourneth with you.

17 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

18 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land whither I bring you,

19 Then it shall be, that, when ye eat of the bread of the land, ye shall offer up an heave offering unto the LORD.

20 Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for an heave offering: as ye do the heave offering of the threshingfloor, so shall ye heave it.

21 Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the LORD an heave offering in your generations.

22 And if ye have erred, and not observed all these commandments, which the LORD hath spoken unto Moses,

23 Even all that the LORD hath commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the LORD commanded Moses, and henceforward among your generations;

24 Then it shall be, if ought be committed by ignorance without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bullock for a burnt offering, for a sweet savour unto the LORD, with his meat offering, and his drink offering, according to the manner, and one kid of the goats for a sin offering.

~ We have seen this before in Leviticus. There is a great deal of debate about the heathen and whether they are lost or not. Well, no one is lost because they are ignorant of the Gospel; they're lost because they're sinners. The Word of God had gone to the ends of the earth when the Queen of the South visited Solomon. The darkest tribe in South America

that has never had human contact is in the plan of God. Whether or not they are following it, I do not know. I am sure God has a way to reach them out there in the jungle. Christ came to this earth to save the lost, and He has reached all men – or He has them accounted for some other way – you may rest assured. Men on this earth are naturally in a lost condition, though; that is the premise we have to start with. The lost are not sitting down and grieving because they have not heard the Gospel. If you have ever had an opportunity to witness to the world, you'll know they're just not anxious to hear it....

25 And the priest shall make an atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them; for it is ignorance: and they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their ignorance:

26 And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them; seeing all the people were in ignorance.

27 And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering.

28 And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.

29 Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them.

30 But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

31 Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off ; his iniquity shall be upon him.

32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day.

33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.

34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him.

~ Here we have a man who was gathering up sticks on the Sabbath and got caught. They're going to stone this man because the death penalty was enforced evenly and effectively for breaking any of the Ten Commandments. Gathering sticks meant that this man was going to break another Sabbath commandment against kindling a fire, too. I think that's obvious here. So, my Adventist friends, let's stop playing church. You don't, can't and never have kept the Sabbath - and you don't rest in Christ's Sabbath rest during the week, either. That means you're not keeping His commandment at all. Frankly, in my estimation, your liturgical lie amounts to blasphemy and apostasy. I don't think I can make it any stronger than that. I highly suggest you take it up with the Lord in prayer and relinquish your dead and meaningless ritual....

35 And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.

36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

37 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying ,

38 Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:

~ This "fringe on the borders" is to remind them of the fact that blue is a Heavenly color. This means that they are God's chosen people, and they are to walk a Heavenly walk down here on this earth. I think many Christians today need to make a border of blue to look upon and be reminded of all the things they are to do....

39 And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:

40 That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.

41 I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.

XVI

1 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men:

2 And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown:

~ Alright, chapters sixteen through nineteen record four incidents that happened during the wandering years we are studying; and they all happened in the priesthood. I think each of the accounts has a significant message for us. This chapter opens with the murmuring of the children of Israel. This is the fifth murmuring we have had – if you are keeping track –

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and before we get out of this chapter, we will have a sixth murmuring. In fact, we can divide these chapters according to the murmurings in the wilderness. This murmuring among the priests is led by Korah, who was a prominent Levite. Obviously, the murmuring wasn't confined to the mixed multitude....

3 And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?

~ This is willful rebellion against the divinely constituted authority instituted Personally by God Almighty. Korah was a Levite with tremendous power, influence and ability amongst the men associated with him. Rebellions require intellect, strategic planning and money. This is no small deal as Korah makes an appeal to the mind of the mob. This is the way it's still done today, too. The protests and movements we see are nothing new. Here is a protest movement against the establishment and against Moses and Aaron. Any appeals that your rights are being infringed upon or that your liberties are being curtailed are always winners in the mob-rule mentality. Just tell people they are not having it as good as they ought to be having it, and that they are getting less than they deserve, and that crowd will follow you all the way to wherever you want to take them.

The charge against Moses is absolutely unfounded. Moses was not taking any more upon himself than God had instructed him to do. When God called Moses, he refused initially. Moses didn't even want to do this in the first place! Even after God had trained him the hard way in the desert, Moses still didn't want to do it. Then, Moses asked for a helper in Aaron because he was still making excuses. This all adds up to Moses being the meekest man on the face of the earth. When Joshua wants Moses to silence the prophets, Moses refuses and expresses the wish that all people might prophesy. Moses was a sinful man like any other, but he was not guilty of the charge of 'taking too much upon himself.'

The root trouble here is the jealousy of Korah. Jealousy is, all at once, awful and tragic when it manifests the wrong way in our lives. All authority is God appointed and God given; no man is to take that honor upon himself. God had given each family specific places in the camp when they were led out of Egypt. Korah was assigned a place at that time and was seemingly grateful for it. Unfortunately, this rebellion will have to be dealt with by God on our Spiritual Safari - and it will be. I promise you it won't be nice. Extreme measures will be used. As a result, some people will call God unfair and unreasonable. We'll see those in our next report ~

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