

People on the Move The Book of Numbers Lesson 11 4Q 2009

Immorality on the Border

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs – “Here again...” thoughts?

Did God want to do more than bring them into the land of promise? What more did God want to do?

What does it mean that God’s overriding providence succeeded then and will succeed? Did God’s overriding providence succeed in accomplishing what God truly wanted to accomplish? Did God want them to wander 40 years in the desert? Did God want them to kill when they entered the land of Canaan? Did God want them to get involved with fertility cults? Are their limits to God’s providence?

Providence – “the foreseeing care and guidance of God or nature over the creatures of the earth.”

Can we limit God’s ability to care for us? Does that alter God’s providence – not His desire but what actually transpires, what He actually does?

Why did He bring the ancient people into the promised land? Was it because they were righteous, mature, spiritually healthy people?

- “Listen, people of Israel! Today you are about to cross the Jordan River and occupy the land belonging to nations greater and more powerful than you. Their cities are large, with walls that reach the sky. The people themselves are tall and strong; they are giants, and you have heard it said that no one can stand against them. But now you will see for yourselves that the LORD your God will go ahead of you like a raging fire. He will defeat

them as you advance, so that you will drive them out and destroy them quickly, as he promised. After the LORD your God has driven them out for you, **do not say to yourselves that he brought you in to possess this land because you deserved it. No, the LORD is going to drive these people out for you because they are wicked. It is not because you are good and do what is right that the LORD is letting you take their land. He will drive them out because they are wicked and because he intends to keep the promise that he made to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. You can be sure that the LORD is not giving you this fertile land because you deserve it. No, you are a stubborn people.** Never forget how you made the LORD your God angry in the desert. From the day that you left Egypt until the day you arrived here, you have rebelled against him” (Deuteronomy 9:1-7 - GN)

Why did God bring the people into the land of Canaan? Because God was working on a larger mission, on the salvation of the entire planet and the eradication of sin from the universe- which means Jesus had to come. Therefore, God was working through Abraham’s descendents to keep the promise given – to bring the Seed – the Messiah, through whom salvation would come.

Did the children of Israel have to be spiritually mature for God to accomplish this purpose? Are there any differences between God’s providence working to bring the children of Israel into Canaan and His providence in working to bring us into our eternal promised land?

Can we be in the same spiritual condition as the Jews were when we enter our promised land? Do we have a role to play in, as Peter says, to not only look forward to the day of the Lord but to “speed its coming”? (2Pet 3:12)?

- With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in

keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2Pet 3:8,9

What is God waiting for, the world to get more wicked or His people to get more righteous – or both?

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. 5:22, 23. This fruit can never perish, but will produce after its kind a harvest unto eternal life. {COL 68.1}

"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." [Mark 4:29]. Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. **When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.** {COL 69.1}

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain. {COL 69.2}

Thoughts? Do you agree with this perspective, that God is waiting for a people to be ready to meet Him and then He will come? Is that something God accomplishes on His own, or does that require our participation?

Any suggestions on how we can cooperate with God to experience His healing of our minds and hearts more quickly?

1. Know God – the truth about Him as revealed in Jesus
 - a. Study the truth for yourself
 - b. God's word is a revelation of Himself
2. Meditate upon His character/works daily

- a. Brain science reveals meditation on God's true character of love changes the brain and strengthens the area we experience empathy, other centered love, compassion and altruism
 - b. "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit." DA 84
3. Apply His principles to your life as you understand them
- a. Engage in ministry, give of yourself to others
 - b. As we apply these principles the brain rewires
 - c. "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2Cor 9:7
4. Reject legal payment models which promote false security in something Christ legally did and fails to include the application of Christ's character to your life.
- a. "The Lord Jesus loves His people, and when they put their trust in Him, depending wholly upon Him, He strengthens them. He will live through them, giving them the inspiration of His sanctifying Spirit, **imparting to the soul a vital transfusion of Himself. He acts through their faculties and causes them to choose His will and to act out His character.** With the apostle Paul they then may say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). . . . {TMK 78.4}
 - b. "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by

taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” John 16:13,14

- i. “The Spirit of Christ working upon the heart conforms it to His image, for Christ is the model upon which the Spirit works. By the ministry of His Word, by His providences, by His inward working, God stamps the likeness of Christ upon the soul.” {TMK 94.4}

5. Confess sin one to another – why?

- a. “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” James 5:16
- b. When we sin we are filled with fear, shame, guilt, self-loathing and anxiety that we will be rejected, abandoned, that no one will love us, that we are not good enough etc. This leads to isolation, internal turmoil, unresolved guilt and living behind masks.

This causes increased worry and fear and the activation of the stress response. This is the primary emotion associated with sin and leads to more self-protection. This chronic stress response causes the release of inflammatory factors which damage brain and body and increases, medical and mental illness. What is the only remedy for fear? Love, perfect love casts out all fear.

When we confess our sins, shortcomings, failings and experience acceptance, love and grace it is healing and powerful.

- i. Consider the woman caught in adultery – what empowered her to go forward and live a better life?
- ii. Is our church a place where people can take off their masks, confess their hearts to one another and experience love, acceptance and help to overcome? Or is it like Philip Yancy

describes in the opening page of his book *What's So Amazing About Grace*:

1. "I told a story in my book *The Jesus I Never Knew*, a true story that long afterward continued to haunt me. I heard it from a friend who works with the down-and-out in Chicago:

A prostitute came to me in wretched straights, homeless, sick, unable to buy food for her two-year-old daughter. Through sobs and tears, she told me she had been renting out her daughter—two years old!—to men interested in kinky sex. She made more renting her daughter for an hour than she could earn on her own in a night. She had to do it, she said, to support her own drug habit. I could hardly bear hearing her sordid story. For one thing, it made me legally liable—I'm required to report cases of child abuse. I had no idea what to say to this woman.

At last I asked if she had ever thought of going to church for help. I will never forget the look of pure, naïve shock that crossed her face. "Church!" she cried. "Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse."

What struck me about my friend's story is that women much like this prostitute fled toward Jesus, not away from him. The worse a person felt about herself, the more likely she saw Jesus as a refuge. Has the church lost that gift? Evidently the down-and-out, who flocked to Jesus when he lived on earth, no longer feel

welcome among his followers. What has happened?

Thoughts?

What would happen in our church if someone came in with a remorseful heart confessing a problem with pornography, alcohol, marijuana, premarital sex, adultery? Would they experience grace?

6. Avoid theatrical entertainment

- a. Theatrical entertainment activates limbic system and turns off the higher cortical centers and makes it harder to appreciate truth, hear the Holy Spirit and overcome fear and selfishness.
- b. Teaches values, beliefs, concepts which impact decision making
- c. Read FRIDAY first paragraph, "It was when..."

Thoughts?

7. Avoid toxic substances – damage the higher brain regions (Pre Frontal Cortex) and impair judgment and self-control
8. Exercise - not only healthier body but brain produces factors which keep the brain healthy, calms the emotional centers, has anti-inflammatory effects, which reduces the risk of depression and improves the organization of the thought processes.
9. Trust God with the future, with the outcome of events!

SUNDAY

Read Numbers 25:1-3 "While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, ² who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. ³ So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them."

Thoughts?

Read fourth paragraph, “Sex, food...” thoughts?

Any other examples in scripture of sexual relations being the avenue of downfall, in which men or women who were called by God were brought down through sex? Sampson, Solomon, any others?

Why is this such a powerful medium? When we have sexual relations with a person there is a neurobiological change in our brain that emotionally ties us to the person. We become more susceptible to their influence and less capable of making an objective choice. During sex dopamine surges occur in the reward pathways combined with special neuropeptides called oxytocin and vasopressin. This combination of brain chemicals causes a biological bonding to the person with whom you have had sexual relations making it harder to resist their influence over you.

This of course is predicated on having initial desire or attraction on your part for your sexual partner. The bonding impact does not occur when someone is sexually traumatized because such an experience is not pleasurable, dopamine doesn't surge, but instead the fear cascade is initiated resulting in revulsion for the person not bonding.

Does this give any insight into why God warns against adultery and premarital sex? Does it give any insight as to why Satan attacks us sexually?

What do you think it means the Lord's anger burned against them? Why was the Lord angry?

Parents, if you had a child in high-school and you found out your child was sexually active with prostitutes – would you be angry? Why? Would you hate your child? Would you want to literally kill your child? Would you be angry about the damage happening to your child as a result of their own foolish choices?

How do we understand God's anger resulting in many of them dying?

Imagine you are a soldier in Viet Nam, you are on guard duty up in a tower/tree and a 5 year old Vietnamese child is walking toward your camp carrying a sack and you know it is explosives. If you do nothing what will happen? In order to stop many of your friends from being killed what do you have to do? What would you do? Would such a situation make you angry? Why would you be angry? Would you be angry at the child? Would you be angry because, in order to save in this horrible situation you would have to kill the child?

You are not angry at the child because the child is a pawn of some evil person.

The Israelites and the women who seduced them were also being used as pawns by Satan, to do what? To try and destroy the entire camp of Israel so that the avenue for the Messiah will be closed.

What did God find it necessary to do? Kill over 20,000 of them. Do you think God enjoyed this?

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "At Balaam's suggestion..."

What is Satan's goal? What is Satan trying to accomplish with respect to human beings? Do you agree with this possibility, described by E.G. White?

"Satan's aim had been to reproduce his own character in human beings. No sooner was man created than Satan resolved to efface in him the image of God, and to place his stamp where God's should be." 6BC 1119

What is God trying to accomplish?

“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³ I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes. ²⁴ ‘For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. EZ 36:22-27

Thoughts? Does this text have any bearing on Revelation 14:7, “‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come”?

How do we give glory to God? How is God glorified? When He restores His image in us, when we have characters like His who gets the credit?

TUESDAY

Great statement in the middle of the lesson “God calls us to obey Him, not because He’s a demanding tyrant but because He loves His children and knows what’s best for us.”

Read top paragraph, “The fact...” thoughts?

Balaam was a prophet of God, weren’t they right to listen to the prophet? Should we be cautious about following prophetic instructions? What about today? Should we use our own

judgment in deciding what instructions to follow from God's prophets or should we say, well God's prophet said it then we should follow it? Any other examples from other prophets?

Deuteronomy 14:22-26

Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. ²³ Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. ²⁴ But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), ²⁵ then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. ²⁶ Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, **wine or other fermented drink**, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice.

Should we take the Bible as it reads, "God said it, I believe it, that's all there is." Okay, I have a new church mission project, let's take the tithe and open a wine store off the church lobby – good idea????

Proverbs 31: 6,7

"Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more.

Should we use the tithe to open a bar in the inner city for the homeless and poor? What does this mean? Should we think? And if we think what is likely to be message of Proverbs? Should we use pain medicines to give those who are dying of metastatic cancer so that their suffering will be eased? Is this the principle of Proverbs?

Let's consider another, from Thursday's lesson, Dt 21:10-14:

When you go to war against your enemies and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take captives, ¹¹ if you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife. ¹² Bring her into your home and have her shave her head, trim her nails ¹³ and put aside the clothes she was wearing when captured. After she has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month, then you may go to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. ¹⁴ If you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

Thoughts? Do you like this idea of trial marriages? What's going on?

Jesus gives insight in Matthew 19:3-8

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

⁷ "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.

Why did God, through Moses, give them rights of divorce? Their hearts were hard and they were immature. Look back to

the Deuteronomy text, what was the basis to marry? In the context of marauding and killing her family you see a girl and are physically attracted. Do you take time to get to know her, build a relationship, find out her personality? No, you say, “she’s hot! I want her for my wife.” So what does God do? He gives an instruction to take her home, shave her head, cut her nails and then listen to her whine for an entire month, and if you still find her attractive then marry her. But, children, this is not a good foundation for a marriage. It is likely there are going to be problems. She may very well not want to stay with the man who killed her parents, therefore, if she wants to leave let her go!

Is this an example of God working with people where they were, trying to bring them to where He wanted them to be? It was not his ideal, but he knew what they were likely to do. So, He had them shave the heads of the women, in part, I think not just for mourning but to make them less attractive. He had them wait a month under the pretext of mourning, but I think to give time for the infatuation to wear off a little, to be worn down by their crying and whining. Also, the relationship was based only on physical attraction “if you find a beautiful woman and are attracted to her” and the month would give time to have other personality traits etc be considered.

But, I think God did not want them keeping these pagan women as wives and therefore he made it very easy to get rid of them. Consider what happened after the 70 year captivity with Ezra and how they were all told to get rid of their heathen wives. Why? Because of the influence they would have in turning the people away from God.

Do you think we should practice this Bible directive today?

What do we learn about God that He permitted such things? What was He dealing with? Do we see an incredibly gracious, patient, loving God working with terrible immature people?

Do we have similar problems today?

WEDNESDAY

Great statement in last paragraph, “It’s not that God can’t forgive our sin; it’s that the sin can so warp us that we can get to the point that we don’t even see it as sin any longer.” – thoughts?

The problem with sin is that it changes the sinner, warps the mind and impairs the judgment.

Check out this EGW quote, written in the 1890’s sent to Uriah Smith, editor of the Review, who didn’t like it, so he filed it away in the Review files and never published it. It was discovered in the 1950’s and published in the selected messages:

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

This is exactly what sin does. Sadly, Satan has tricked so many into being afraid of God, who is trying to heal and save, rather than the sin which is destroying us!

THURSDAY

Read first two paragraphs, “After the terrible...”

Do you like these kinds of explanations that say nothing and tell you, basically, not to think and just trust? Isn’t that the attitude that got the Israelites into this mess as they trusted Balaam and didn’t think for themselves?

Was the destruction of the Midianites “justice”? How so? In the sense of God giving up the Midianites to reap what they had sown? Was it for some other purpose? If God’s justice works by people using military might to kill violators of God’s law and seducers of His people, then wouldn’t that mean that the Muslim Jihadists methods are the right methods? If God’s justice works this way then shouldn’t we Christians be organizing into military units and hunting down sexual perverts, pornographers, molesters and killing them and their entire families?

Is it an example of God’s emergency measures, fighting, to, with as little killing as possible, keep open the channel through which the Messiah would come? Do you notice that since Jesus came and completed His mission on earth that God has not done such things in human history as He did prior to Christ’s arrival on earth.

FRIDAY Questions 1-3 read and discuss