

NUMBERS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Numbers chapter 19 as we continue our study through the Word of God. In this chapter the focus is on the laws of purification and the primary focus is the cleansing after someone comes in contact with a dead body. Was that a big problem? I believe it was. You see, over 600,000 people will die in the wilderness because of their unbelief. That means about 40 people would die every day for forty years! They needed these ashes of the red heifer for cleansing. With that said, let's begin reading in Numbers chapter 19, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

NUMBERS 19

VERSES 1-2

1. This red heifer was a cow that was all red, not one hair that was not red! It was never pregnant, it never was yoked and it was without spot or blemish. Obviously this was a rare animal. I believe the picture here is of Christ. He shed His blood for our sins, purifying us. In Isaiah 1:18 we are told, **“Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the Lord, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.’”**

He freely gave His life for us; no one took it from Him. That is what we are told in John 10:18, **“No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”** He was without spot or blemish; He had no inherited sin or acquired sin in His life. That is what Peter tells us in I Peter 1:18-19, **“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”**

VERSES 3-10

1. This red heifer was slaughtered outside the camp just as Jesus was crucified outside the city. When they enter the land of Israel, they will do this on the Mount of Olives, outside the city once again. Not only was the flesh burned, but also the blood, which was unusual. Only a portion of the blood of this animal was sprinkled on the tabernacle of meeting. Also placed in this fire was cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet, which is interesting because these were used for the cleansing of a leper back in Leviticus 14:4-6. But what do they mean here? I believe once again they point to Jesus!

A. CEDAR WOOD: This wood is very resistant to disease and rot and I believe the picture here is of the wooden cross that Jesus hung on, that it was made of cedar wood.

B. HYSSOP: This plant was used to sprinkle the blood on the door for the first Passover, in purification ceremonies and it was used at the crucifixion of Jesus to relieve the thirst of Jesus, which He refused. (John 19:29, Matthew 27:48).

C. SCARLET: Not only was scarlet used in the veil and the curtains of the tabernacle, it was also used in the garments of the high priest. And it is a picture of Jesus and how His blood cleanses us!

Keep in mind that the Bible is a picture of Jesus and even though we might not see or understand all the types that are in it, all the pictures of Jesus, they are there if we would only take the time to look!

2. After the sacrifice was completed the ashes were gathered up and kept outside the camp with only a small portion placed in clean water and used to purify an unclean person.

VERSES 11-13

1. As I have said, death was a common occurrence during their wilderness wanderings and thus, if you came in contact with a dead person, you needed to be cleansed. Now coming in contact with a dead person is not a sin but it caused the person to be barred from the worship of God, from fellowship with God. If the person refuses to go through this ceremony, then they were to be “**cut off**” from the people, not put to death but left out of the fellowship of the camp.

2. As Christians, we have been cleansed, bathed you might say by Jesus, washed in His blood and we don't need to bathe again. What we do need is that daily cleansing from the dirt we pick up in this world. And if we refuse, then our worship, our fellowship with God can be broken. And, if we continue in rebellion, then that person is to be cut off or excommunicated from the fellowship of believers until they repent and get right with God. That may seem harsh, but their relationship with God is more important than their comfort!

3. For the priests, their actions or non-actions could cause a defilement of the tabernacle, so it was important for them to receive the purification if they came in contact with a dead body. Paul, in I Corinthians 6:9-10 reminds us, **“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”** Thus, we too can defile the dwelling place of God by walking in the flesh and not the Spirit!

VERSES 14-16

1. This seems a little extreme, doesn't it? Being quarantined for seven days, come on! Think about it, God was protecting His people from the spread of disease, which could possibly wipe out the entire nation. Even the open vessels could be contaminated and thus, they were destroyed. So this was a good practice that God was instituting!

VERSES 17-19

1. Here we see these ashes of a red heifer sprinkled in clean water and this was then used for the purification of the people. And once again, this was all pointing to Jesus as Paul tells us in Hebrews 9:13-14, **“For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”**

VERSES 20-22

1. Notice that apart from this purification, there is nothing a person can do to correct this problem. The same is true today, that apart from Christ there is no cleansing! It is as John tells us in I John 1:7-10, **“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”**

2. According to the Bible, the temple will be rebuilt and the sacrifices will start up again during the Tribulation Period. That is interesting to me because the Temple Institute in Israel has put together the temple implements, except the Ark of the Covenant, which they believe is in one of the rabbi's tunnels under the temple mount. They have priests going to school to learn the sacrifices once again. They are ready to rebuild, even having plans on what the temple will look like. Now, listen to this report because it explains what we have been looking at this evening, the ashes of the red heifer. We are told:

Before Temple services can be legally reinstated according to Biblical Law, a ritual cleansing must be performed which involves the sacrifice of the Red Heifer (Numbers 19:1-22). The ceremony has only been performed seven times. The priest would sacrifice an unblemished, unbroken Red Heifer, after which the remaining ashes were collected and added to the ashes of the next sacrifice. It took place on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, within sight of the Holy of Holies. The ashes were then sprinkled upon the waters of a large cistern under the Temple to prepare them to be used as the water of purification to cleanse sin and defilement. The last sacrifice occurred in 70 AD, prior to the destruction of the Temple, after which the ashes were secretly buried. This ritual cleansing would have to be performed on the Temple Mount in order to reinstate Temple worship as commanded by the Laws of God.

Originally kept in a containment building near the Eastern Gate, archaeological excavations have been initiated to find the ashes, which according to the ‘Copper Scroll’ found at Qumran, were buried in a container made of clay, and dung from the Red Heifer. If they can not be located, the Temple Institute, on the belief that the tradition of the “ashes of continuity” is a mistranslation, maintains that the original ashes are not necessary.

- Final warning: a history of the new world order, chapter eleven the shining star

Thus, if they find the old ashes of the red heifer to mix with the new ashes, that would be great. But, if they can’t be located, no problem, they will just use the new ashes to purify the priests so they can perform the duties in the temple. And folks, they are looking for this red heifer and once they find it, they will go through this sacrifice!

NUMBERS 20

VERSE 1

1. I believe that at this point we are very close to the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. That generation who refused to walk by faith was dying out, over 600,000 people and now their children would enter in! And here we see the death of Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. And keep in mind that they are once again at Kadesh Barnea, on the boarder of the Promise Land, the place they were at in the beginning when they refused to enter in!

VERSES 2-5

1. Keep in mind that this is the new generation, the old generation was almost completely gone at this point, and now they were acting the same way, lacking faith and that lead them to blame Moses and Aaron for this predicament they were in. What was the predicament? That they were going to die in the wilderness because they had no water! Yes, from a human perspective, it was a serious problem but through the eyes of faith, trusting that God would provide, there is rest and contentment. And keep in mind they are once again on the boarder of the Promise Land and they are complaining, they are filled with unbelief! Poor Moses and Aaron, they can't go another forty years waiting for another generation to grow up and this one to die off! What are they going to do? Look at verse 6 and you will see!

VERSE 6

1. They pray to God to intercede for them. Again, we have seen these men pray over and over again because of the lack of faith in the children of Israel, their rebellious hearts, but they don't give up praying! Folks, we should do no less!

VERSES 7-8

1. Remember back in Exodus 17:6-7, back at Mount Sinai as the children of Israel were complaining that they had no water, and we are told, **“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.’ And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’”** Now God tells Moses and Aaron to take the rod, a symbol of authority, but not to strike the rock this time, but just speak to it and it will give forth water, enough to quench the thirst of the people and the animals!

VERSES 9-11

1. Moses started out obeying the Lord but then he let his emotions take control and the works of the flesh overflowed in his words and his deeds. The word **“rebels”** is translated in the Septuagint or the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures with the Greek word MOROS and from that word we get our English word “moron” from. In other words, Moses is yelling at the children of Israel, “Hear now, you morons! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?” Not exactly what God had in mind!

Interestingly enough, in Psalm 106:32-33 we are told of this event, “**They angered Him also at the waters of strife, So that it went ill with Moses on account of them; Because they rebelled against His Spirit, So that he spoke rashly with his lips.**” The people provoked Moses, thus, isn’t he justified in his actions? Not at all! We can’t let the actions of others dictate our words or deeds. We need to allow God’s Spirit to guide us so we represent Him correctly. For Moses, he even elevates himself with God as he tells them, “. . . **Must we bring water for you out of this rock?**” This humble man is now showing that there is some pride in his life and thus, instead of the fruit of the Spirit flowing from his life, we see the works of the flesh, and that is *NEVER* good!

2. Not only did he yell at the people, but also he took the rod and struck the rock not once, but twice, disobeying what God told him to do. God said that he should just speak to the rock and water would come forth, but he allowed his anger, his frustration with the people to cause him to disobey God! What a great lesson for us to learn!

VERSES 12-13

1. Isn't that interesting. Moses and Aaron did not believe what God had said and thus, their actions made God look unholy! God wasn't mad at the people, in fact He did give them water even with the disobedience of Moses. It was Moses who was mad at the people and because of that he misrepresented God to them. Now, because of that, Moses was not going to lead the people into the Promise Land. That may seem harsh but it truly is as Jesus said in Luke 12:48, **“But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”** With authority comes accountability! James put it like this in James 3:1, **“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.”** God holds leaders, teachers, and pastors, those in a leadership positions, to a higher standard because they are representing Him before the people!

2. There is another important point here and it is the picture that God was painting for us and Moses messed up. You see, Jesus was smitten once for our sins. Paul put it like this in Hebrews 10:10-12, **“By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”** And in I Peter 3:18 we are told, **“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.”** Now we only need to speak to Him to receive those life-giving waters. In John 7:37-38 we see this as we are told, **“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”** Thus, Paul tells us in Romans 10:8-10, **“But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”** Moses ruined the picture God was painting for us of Jesus, smitten once for our sins so that now all we must do is come to Him and speak to Him!

3. One last point regarding what Moses did and this is from G. Campbell Morgan and he wrote:

By this manifestation of anger, which as we have said was so very natural, the servant of God misrepresented God to the people. His failure was due to the fact that for the moment his faith failed to reach the highest level of activity. He still believed in God, and in His power: but he did not believe in Him *to sanctify Him in the eyes of his people*. The lesson is indeed a very searching one. Right things may be done in so wrong a way as to produce evil results. There is a hymn in which we may miss the deep meaning, if we are not thoughtful –

Lord, speak to me that I may speak
In living echoes of thy tone.

That is far more than a prayer that we may be able to deliver the Lord's message. It is rather that we may do so in His tone, with His temper. That is where Moses failed, and for this failure he was excluded from the Land.

- G. Campbell Morgan

May we represent God faithfully, giving Him the glory that is due, for if we don't, as here with Moses, He will correct us and He will get His glory, God will be hallowed! Here's the thing, do you want God to be hallowed through your obedience or his correction of you?

VERSES 14-17

1. Kadesh Barnea was on the southern boarder of the land of Canaan and now Moses wants to travel east and north, through Edom. It would not seem like such a big deal to ask the king of Edom for permission to pass through the boarders of the land on the King's highway. In fact, they were relatives since Esau was the brother of Jacob. And again, not a big deal, they would not even take anything from the land because God was going to provide for their needs.

2. Keep in mind that the Edomites are a type of the flesh and I like what we are told in verse 17, “. . . **we will go along the King's Highway; we will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.**” You see, for us as Christians we are passing through this world and we are to stay on the Kings highway. We are not to turn to the left or the right but stay focused upon the Lord, where He is going, where He is leading, the path that He has set for us. If we don't we will fulfill the lusts of the flesh and that is not a good thing!

VERSES 18-21

1. The king of Edom refuses to let the children of Israel pass through their land and thus, the journey is going to be more difficult. Why did God allow this? Maybe God was using this to test their faith, to get the children of Israel to trust in Him and walk by faith and not by sight. To not let the outward circumstances discourage them because God is working and He is for them, not against them!

VERSES 22-29

1. This chapter opened up with the death of Miriam and now it closes with the death of Aaron. According to Numbers 33:38, we know the timeframe of Aaron's death. We are told, "**Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the Lord, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.**" So forty years after the Exodus, prior to them entering the land of Canaan, Aaron died at the age of 123! We don't know exactly where Mount Hor is except that it is on the boarder of Edom, by the Promise Land. And the reason for his death is his actions or inactions at the waters of Meribah, where he allowed Moses to misrepresent God in his speech and deeds!

2. This was also a transition period for the priesthood and thus, God wanted the children of Israel to see that Aaron is gone and now his son, Eleazar would be the high priest. And the people mourned for Aaron, the one they wanted to kill, to stone to death, to replace. People can be very fickle! But I am sure that there were some who truly mourned the death of Aaron and as his son, Eleazar comes down in the priestly garments, they know that God is still with them; He will work through Eleazar now.

NUMBERS 21**VERSES 1-3**

1. In the southern part of the land the king of Arad hears of where the children of Israel are going and he comes out to fight against them, taking some prisoners with him. Now, instead of complaining they bring it to the Lord and the Lord gives them the victory over this enemy. They utterly destroyed the city, so much so that they called it Hormah or destruction. We now see them walk by faith and not by sight. They are trusting in the Lord. They are learning faith lessons!

VERSES 4-5

1. A little burp you might say in their walk of faith. Yes, to go into the land they would have to go back into the wilderness and it all goes back to the Edomites refusing to let them go through their land. But that is not the issue, God was still in control and they needed to walk by faith no matter how difficult things might be and will be! What is God going to do with these people who now have the unbelief of their fathers? Let's read on and see.

VERSE 6

1. God sent these fiery serpents upon them and I believe the fiery speaks of the intense burning pain that was felt when they were bit! And because of unbelief, many of the children of Israel died, probably the last of that older generation that was to die in the wilderness and possibly even some of the next generation. They did not walk by faith and God judged them for their unbelief!

VERSES 7-9

1. The people recognized their sin, repented and asked Moses to intercede for them, and he does. And the Lord tells Moses to take a bronze serpent and place it on a pole, and all who look at it, after they are bitten, will be healed. Now, as ridiculous as this sounds, all who believed were healed and all that did not believe and refused to look, died. Yes, it seems foolish, but by faith they were to obey! Remember, they are learning how to walk by faith!

2. Jesus picks up on this in John 3:14-15 and tells us, “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**” You see, the serpent is not only a symbol of Satan, but it is also symbolic of sin. Brass is the metal of judgment. Thus, when Jesus was lifted up on the cross, He became sin for us, taking all of our sins upon Himself, and it was upon the cross that God’s judgment for our sins was judged in Jesus!

Folks, we have all been bitten by sin, we have inherited and acquired sin in our lives and we are dying in our sins. In Isaiah 45:22 we are told, **“Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”** In other words, God is telling us to look to Him to be saved. It is not of works of righteousness that we are saved, but only by looking to Jesus! But it is not easy as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 1:22-24, **“For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”**

You see, many feel it is foolish to look to the cross, to Jesus and His finished work for our salvation! For others, it is a stumbling block; things are getting in the way of believing, traditions and-so-on. And for both, they will die in their sins because they refuse to look to Jesus and receive His healing in their lives. For those that do, they will be healed and enter into eternity with Him!

3. Tragically, this bronze serpent on a pole became an idol to the children of Israel. In King Hezekiah’s day we are told in II Kings 18:4, **“He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.”** Isn’t it amazing what we make into idols and worship instead of the true and living God! It was a thing of brass and yet they were worshiping it!

Folks, I know it says that this idol was broken into pieces, but that never stops the Catholic Church from gathering idols. We are told:

An old story tells that the famous Bronze Serpent was brought from Constantinople to Milan by Archbishop Arnulf II around 1000 A.D. as a wedding present for the solemn marriage between princess Stephania and Emperor Otto III, together with other precious things.

However, when the ship with the Archbishop and the bride docked in Italy, the Emperor was dead, and the wedding present remained in Arnulf's possession. He decided to put the precious relic on the top of a Roman marble column inside the famous Basilica of St. Ambrose, in Milan, where it can still be seen.

A legend tells that, on the day of the Judgment, the snake will take life, and will announce the end of the time. Then it will slither back to Josafat valley where Moses once forged it, leading the whole Humankind to its final judgment.

- Source Unknown

How sad that millions of people make a pilgrimage to the Basilica of St. Ambrose, in Milan, to worship a bronze serpent. All I can say is, **NEHUSHTAN!** It is a thing of brass. Don't worship it! They should be worshipping the true and living God, coming to Him for life, but instead they will receive death in His judgment!

VERSES 10-20

1. They are now moving northward and have come to Mount Pisgah, which is located northeast of the northern part of the Dead Sea with the Promise Land to the west.

2. We don't have the Book of the Wars of the LORD but as you can see in what is written here, there seems to be much excitement, as they are getting closer to the Promise Land, getting ready to enter in!

VERSES 21-23

1. Like with the Edomites, the children of Israel ask Sihon king of the Amorites if they could pass through, not taking anything that is theirs, but just to go on the King's highway. And Sihon refuses and even takes it a step further; he comes out against them to do battle. Of this we are told in Deuteronomy 2:30-31, "**But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass through, for the Lord your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as it is this day. And the Lord said to me, 'See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to possess it, that you may inherit his land.'**" Sihon refused, God made his heart firmer and he wants to fight against the children of Israel, but in the end he will lose and Israel will get their land!

VERSES 24-32

1. Why did God allow this? I believe He was giving the children of Israel small victories on the east side of the Jordan River so as they enter the land of Canaan and they face the giants, their faith would be strong and they would walk by faith into the land and receive the victories that God had for them!

VERSES 33-35

1. Notice that they came against the children of Israel and God gave them the victory.

Bashan is to the north by the Sea of Galilee and thus, the land that the children of Israel now possess on the east side of the Jordan River goes from Mount Hermon in the north to the Arnon river in the south, the Trans-Jordan area! This is the area that Rueben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh occupied. Edom was south of that and God did not give them this land.

2. The children of Israel experienced the victories of God but make no mistake about it, the challenges are not over for them. Folks, the same is true for us as we close this evening. Just because we have victories doesn't mean the battle is over or we won't have more challenges in our lives. The thing we need to remember as we face these battles, these giants you might say, is to know that God is with us and He wants us to walk by faith! May we do that!