

Numbers 18-20

Good evening, church.

I am happy to be with you tonight.

We usually have our prayer night on the second Wednesday of the month, but we moved it to the third Wednesday of this month.

So next week we will have that amazing night of coming before the Lord in prayer.

Tonight we will continue in our study of the Book of Numbers.

Tonight, chapters 18-20 will detail the last leg of the nation's wondering, and next time we are together we will start the march toward the Promise Land with this mighty nation.

Now, remember last time, the priesthood was challenged by a group of influential rebels last week, they were led by Korah, a man of position, power, and prestige.

And with a mighty spectacle Korah and his followers were put down and punished for their opposition and challenge to God's appointed leadership.

The people once again mourned and blamed their leader Moses and God for this tragedy.

They failed to see their fault in these matters.

So to make things clear once again who God has established as high priest, remember in chapter 17 God allowed a miraculous sign to appear.

God instructed every tribe to send a representative to the tabernacle with a rod.

And through these rods God would set apart His man to lead and instruct these people.

Aaron's dead rod, not only bloomed, it produced fruit and buds.

There was no debating who was God's chosen man after this sign.

Now that it is clear who would serve in this high calling God will now delegate duties and responsibilities of the priests and the Levites.

He will make clear once again the position of each and what their responsibilities are.

Understand Korah, being a Levite was already in a privileged position, but it was not enough for him, he wanted the highest office.

We will see tonight the Levites were really set apart for a great work.

And understand position will not only come with honor, but great and severe responsibilities.

I know some of you serve in a leadership capacity at work, and you understand the higher you move up, the more responsibility and burden you have thrust upon you.

The same is for the ministry.

Sometimes the pastorate or elder's position is coveted in the ministry.

People oftentimes want the recognition from people, and they are blinded by that ambition, and they fail to understand the weight and obligation that comes with the calling of spiritual leadership.

We just had our yearly Board Meeting with our Elders and outside pastors that serve as Board Members.

One of our Elders expressed to me the weight of such responsibility, and he explained if God ever called him to another ministry in his retirement, he would like to just serve maybe as an usher or something with less of weight to carry.

Understand leadership in church is not just subject to the normal pressures of leadership, we also have an unseen enemy who torments and accuses us day and night.

Another brother who is qualified to serve as an Elder, and has served as one in the past at another ministry, explained to me, he was not sure he wanted to carry that weight again.

So if you are ambitious to be in leadership, really count up the cost, talk to those who are their now, and understand clearly if it is something you desire still.

We will see tonight, the spiritual leaders are called to a very special place, but it also means their lives have to be held to a higher standard than the rest.

And the New Testament very clearly lays out the requirements for leadership within the church, and to many they might be all too much to live according to.

So let's get into it, much of this will be repetition from Leviticus, but remember what has happened prior to this, and it will make sense why God is repeating and clarifying for this rebellious people.

Remember their reply to Aaron's Rod Budding...

Num. 17:12-13 So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, "Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! 13 Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the Lord must die. Shall we all utterly die?"

God replies to them next...

Duties of Priests and Levites

18:1 Then the Lord said to Aaron: "You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood. 2 Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness. 3 They shall attend to your needs and all the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die — they and you also. 4 They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you. 5 And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel. 6 Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the Lord, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 7 Therefore you and your sons with you shall

attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

Notice here God speaks only to Aaron once again setting him apart for this position.

God elevates Aaron, and makes clear his ministry is unique.

God in this instruction to Aaron makes it very clear it is him and his family only that can bear the responsibility and iniquity of the work of the sanctuary.

Aaron and his sons too were to bear the iniquity of the priesthood.

This ministry was a serious undertaking. If the priests did not follow God's precepts exactly their very lives would be put into jeopardy.

Aaron had already lost his two oldest sons, because they took their calling carelessly.

Understand God is a gracious and merciful God, but when you are called to represent Him in ministry, that position must be taken seriously and cautiously.

Understand if God has set you apart and called you to ministry, that means you must live knowing you are held to a stricter, and what can be perceived by some as unfair judgment.

Any person who comes to me and explains they are called to ministry, I give them first the sobering realities of what that means.

Yes, it is an amazing honor, but too often the severity of what is required leaves many young men walking away as the Rich Young Ruler did, in disappointment of what is required of their lives.

You must first count the cost, and when you are able to see Jesus clearly and what He has done for you, and the love He has bestowed upon your life, there comes a point, the things you must give up in this world become less and less important and valuable.

The cost is worth it, if you just simply answer the call.

We also see here the Levites are given to the priesthood as assistants.

They are joined into the ministry, they will not be as prominent as the family of Aaron, yet they will have an enormous part in the worship and work of the Lord.

We see the whole tribe is set apart for the ministry.

In the New testament, as the church grew, and the ministry demands became more intense, we see in

Acts 6:2-4 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3

Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Deacons were called to assist the Apostles.

There is nothing demeaning about serving tables in the church, in fact, Jesus said if you want to be great in His Kingdom, you must take the servants position.

These deacons had a mighty testimony within the church.

Although they were not the elders or Apostles, their role was just as vital.

They are the churches equivalent to the Levites.

The Levites were God's gift to the priests; they took care of the arduous tasks in the sanctuary, so the priests could focus on the high calling of mediating between God and the people through sacrifice.

The Levites also we see in verse four assisted in policing of the tabernacle, and keeping the secular tribes from approaching the Holy Place.

But verse seven makes it clear that only Aaron and his sons can work within the tabernacle and before the altar.

If any person tried to usurp this order God has established, we see that they shall be put to death, any outsider trying to arise to a place they do not belong received capital punishment.

Since the priests and Levites were solely set apart for the ministry, and could not work to provide for themselves as the secular tribes did, we see God provides for them through the offerings brought to the tabernacle, and through the tithes.

Offerings for Support of the Priests

8 And the Lord spoke to Aaron: "Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever. 9 This shall be yours of the most holy things reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they render to Me, shall be most holy for you and your sons. 10 In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you.

11 "This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

12 "All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord, I have given them to you. 13 Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

14 "Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.

15 "Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. 16 And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17 But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. 18 And

their flesh shall be yours, just as the wave breast and the right thigh are yours.

19 "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the Lord, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord with you and your descendants with you."

20 Then the Lord said to Aaron: "You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

So the priests, Aaron's family received their livelihood off the obedience of the people to bring their offerings before the Lord.

Now some of this food from the offerings could be only eaten by the priests, but a majority of their portion was shared with their families.

But notice the family had to be ceremonially clean to eat of it.

These offerings were holy and set apart for the Lord.

The priests had to treat this provision with reverence and respect.

The people were presenting these offerings to God.

Once again we see the severity of their calling, there was no area of their lives where they could be careless or selfish.

Every part of their lives was set apart to the Lord for His purposes and calling.

The priests had no inheritance in the Land, they could not get a side job, or build enormous crops for profit, and their lives were solely committed to the ministry.

It was only when the Nation of Israel was disobedient to bring in their offerings, or they left their God to worship other gods do we see the priests and Levites out of necessity having to go to work.

It happened in the days of Nehemiah and other times, the priests were forced to leave their duties to support their families.

You see when the priests walked uprightly many times the people followed, and provision came in through their loyalty to God, however when the priests were negligent in their calling, the ministry suffered.

Health came to the Nation when the priests ministered as they should and the people obeyed and cared for the priests.

It was a vital cycle for Israel to maintain.

Next we will see even the Levites would be provided for from the obedience of the people to worship God.

Tithes for Support of the Levites

21 "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 22 Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. 23 But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they

shall have no inheritance. 24 For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up as a heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.'"

And we see as with the priests the whole tribe of Levi would receive no inheritance, they were solely dependent on the health of the worship system set up here.

As long as the nation honored God with their livelihood the Levites would be cared for.

Understand the priests and Levites were also the teachers in Israel.

If they were faithful to lead the nation in all that God had established they would be more than cared for.

The Levites, as the priests, were to have no distractions from the ministry and the ministry would be the source of their provision.

This payment in return for their services in the worship of God is recognition of the hazards of their occupation.

They dealt with the holy things, and this put them right at the cusp of divine judgment.

The emphasis is clear here as it is in other places in scripture, those who serve the Lord and His people in ministry should be supported from the material blessings God gives His people. Wiersbe

This tithing principle predates the Levitical Legislation here.

Abram was the first to show us this ancient institution. He brought his tithe to the priest Melchizedek, after a great victory in Genesis 14.

And the principle is carried into the Law, and will also be transferred to the church to support the ministry and those who have given their lives to the calling of fulltime ministry.

The New Testament clearly brings continuity to this principle.

Jesus was the first to mention that **Luke 10:7**
the laborer is worthy of his wages.

The Apostle Paul also explained **1 Cor. 9:14** **Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.**

Also to young Timothy, Paul wrote **1 Tim 5:17-18** **Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages."**

There is a sweet relationship between the minister and the lay people when this principle is carried out.

When the people worship God in their giving and a portion of that is used for the minister's livelihood.

A ministry built on love, obedience and gratitude is established.

When the minister and his family are cared for by the people he is then able to minister freely to the people without the distraction of a secular job.

A lay pastor or a pastor that ministers while working a secular job is a unique calling as well, and in no way is it any less of a calling.

But when a church gets to a place where they can pay the pastor, it creates a special bond between minister and the congregation.

And just like in Israel, the blessings are reciprocal.

When God's people are faithful to bring in the tithe, then God's minister is able to minister to the people and God faithfully and solely.

The ministry I was ordained through in Lake Havasu was not able to bring me on fulltime, so I needed to maintain a secular job, and it always created conflict in Jess and I's desire to do more for the church and the people.

I am grateful for the hard lessons of those days of struggle, because when I was able to be in fulltime ministry, it created in Jess and I a love and gratefulness to God and the people, it made the service sweeter.

Pastor Josh is about to experience this transition next year, the Board has decided through much prayer and consideration to bring him on fulltime starting in January.

He has served in two ministries as a lay minister.

And now, he will know the joy of being able to serve you all without the obligation of his secular job.

I am excited to see Pastor Josh and his wife Cynthia grow in the ministry before the Lord and in their relationship with you all in this new season.

You can pray for them, as their lives are about to be radically changed.

But when the people are obedient in this area of their lives to the Lord, to acknowledge God as their provider, and give back to Him His portion. The house and ministry of God is blessed.

Remember what happened in Israel, when they neglected this important part of their lives.

They were rebuked by God as robbers...

Mal 3:8-9 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation.

Then God reminded them of the blessings of worshipping Him with their increase...

Mal 3:10-11 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the Lord of hosts;

There is blessing for the people, and the ministry when this principle is adhered to.

Now notice next, even the ministers were required to acknowledge God's provision by tithing off of their tithe.

The Tithe of the Levites

25 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 26 "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the Lord, a tenth of the tithe. 27 And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress. 28 Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the Lord from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the Lord's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest. 29 Of all your gifts you shall offer up every heave offering due to the Lord, from all the best of them, the consecrated part of them.' 30 Therefore you shall say to them: 'When you have lifted up the best of it, then the rest shall be accounted to the Levites as the produce of the threshing floor and as the

produce of the winepress. 31 You may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward for your work in the tabernacle of meeting. 32 And you shall bear no sin because of it, when you have lifted up the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the children of Israel, lest you die.'"

The Levites were to offer up a tithe to the priests.

Even though they were recipients of the offerings themselves, they were obliged to give to the Lord as well.

After they gave first to the Lord, they could eat the rest of the provision without restriction.

This was their reward for their service at the tabernacle.

However if they profaned this obligation, they were in danger of being judged with their very lives.

This principle shows the people and even the Levites that their provision comes from the Lord, and in obedience to this principle they are regarding God as Jehovah Jireh, My God who provides.

Understand today, the minister who receives his income from the giving of the people should also practice this principle.

Should not the teacher of God's Word even set an example of obedience?

How can someone teach and not do, that person would be defined as a hypocrite.

"Would it not be easier to just deduct the tithe from the paycheck of such a minister?" you might be thinking.

It is actually better for the minister to sacrifice from his own bank account the firstfruits of his own provision.

As he drops the tithe into the offering plate each week, he too is thanking the Lord for His provision.

It is very important, I have seen ministers overlook this obligation, and they have allowed the blessing of the Lord to depart from their ministries.

The minister is held to the stricter standard, and he cannot take anything for granted in the ministry.

Now I will end this chapter by saying thank you, I do not know who gives to the ministry here, but I do administrate and present the budget each year to the Board.

And you all are faithful givers, and I believe this next year will be all the more blessed because of your faithfulness.

I don't know many ministries who are thanking their congregation these days, usually they are asking for more, but we are blessed.

I have been the only pastor on staff for the first two years here, and next year we will have one more and another part-time pastor.

That can only be possible by your obedience to the Lord in this area of your lives.

It will give us the ability to serve you all more faithfully and fully in the years to come.

If you are here tonight and you do not know yet the joys and blessings promised from giving to the Lord.

I would encourage you to prayerfully change this attitude toward your finances.

Acknowledge the Lord's provision with a giving heart, and understand He will bless you.

If you are in financial turmoil tonight, this is the first step to getting back on track financially, honoring God with your increase.

January 10th

So let's move on now to chapter 19... As God gives this unique instruction found only here in Numbers...

Laws of Purification

19:1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,
2 "This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord has commanded, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come. 3 You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him; 4 and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle

some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. 5 Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned. 6 And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer. 7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening. 8 And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening. 9 Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin. 10 And the one who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. It shall be a statute forever to the children of Israel and to the stranger who dwells among them.

Now there are many unique things about this ordeal here.

This animal was not male, it was slain outside the camp, and it is not a sacrifice to the Lord.

There is no altar, and a layman was the one who killed the beast.

The blood was not poured out before the Lord, but it was burned with the body of the beast.

Eleazar only took some of the blood with his finger and sprinkled the blood seven times before the tabernacle.

The ashes were gathered to be mixed with water for a ceremony of purification.

This animal had to be red in color, and without blemish.

It could have never been used for work.

Many think the red points to the blood being shed for cleansing.

Eleazar, Aaron's son, supervised the slaying of the beast.

The word for slaughtering is not the same word used for sacrificing. Wiersbe

Three important things were dropped into the fire with the beast, cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet wool.

All of these items were used in the cleansing ceremony of the Leper in Leviticus 14.

The man who killed the beast and Eleazar were considered unclean because of the dealings with the dead animal.

They had to wash before returning to the camp in the evening.

The man who gathered the ashes into a container was also unclean until he washed.

We see in verse 9 this was to be used for water purification.

We will see next, it was to purify those who have touched a dead body.

11 'He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. 12 He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean.

13 Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the Lord. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him.

Now above all else, the Israelite camp must remain clean, for it was the place where God Himself dwelt.

They must take serious their cleanliness as God made very clear in Leviticus.

This purification process would be helpful during their wanderings, if they were on the move they could not wait until the tabernacle was set up, they had to deal with their uncleanness immediately, and this gave them a way to do so.

If anyone failed to purify himself, he was to be cut-off.

Understand God was to be the center, most important part of this community, He is what sets them apart from all the other nations.

What other people group has known God through His glory? Only the Jews, and this came with severe responsibilities.

They had to maintain holiness.

We read next...

14 'This is the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be unclean seven days; 15 and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean. 16 Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

17 'And for an unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. 18 A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. 19 The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and

on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.

20 'But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he is unclean. 21 It shall be a perpetual statute for them. He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. 22 Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening.'"

God's presence was in the tabernacle.

The tabernacle was in the camp of Israel.

The camp must remain Holy, and any unclean person who refused to be cleansed was cut off.

A person could be made clean again by using the ashes, three days after their defilement they went out of the camp with a ceremonially clean man.

The man would mix the ashes with running water in a vessel.

Dip the hyssop plant into it and sprinkle the unclean person.

Then on the seventh day they would repeat this, and then the person would wash themselves and their clothes and at evening return to camp.

There was no shortcuts to cleanliness.

Thankfully the church today is not bound to these rituals.

I never understand why those who advocate for the Law today, fail to completely live out the whole law.

How do they pick and choose what parts to adhere too?

Well, God does want His church to be Holy, but this can only be accomplished through the sacrifice that all others pointed to.

This Red Heifer is only another picture of what Christ is the substance of.

You see even under the Law, God's Grace was the saving factor.

They did not have Jesus yet, however all of their ceremony pointed forward to Him.

Have you ever shined a light directly down on an object?

It usually causes a shadow to go two ways.

And the Cross casts a shadow in two directions, and it covers history proceeding it, and also overwhelms the time period after Jesus' Sacrifice upon it.

All of History is affected by the sacrifice that cleanses humanity from sin and uncleanness.

Today, we see fully what the ceremonies of old spoke toward, and today looking back toward the cross we receive by faith our cleansing.

And I cannot say faith is any easier than the ceremonies of the past, sometimes believing that we are cleansed is harder for some than performing a ritual.

People almost crave the ritual over faith, because its tangible.

Listen tonight, you live on this side of the crosses shadow, on this side of God's redemption story we believe for our cleansing.

Jesus does the cleansing, we know His Name today, we know His sacrifice, this is the New Covenant which is a full picture of what those sacrifices of old pointed too.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Believe tonight if you have not already, and be free from the bondage of sin.

Now after, this cleansing ritual was given to the people in their wondering, we pick up again in the narrative, and chapter 20 is the last part of their wonderings in the wilderness...

Moses their leader will find that there is no human position high enough to neglect the responsibility to honor a Holy God.

No man is too important that God cannot deal with him.

And this is a tragic lesson in spiritual leadership we will read next...

Moses' Error at Kadesh(Ex 17:1-7)

20:1 Then the children of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the Wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh; and Miriam died there and was buried there.

We see here the people have made it back to Kadesh Barnea; they have come full circle after 38 years of wondering in the wilderness.

And here Miriam dies.

Now this is not a little thing here to overlook.

This is the setting to Moses' breakdown.

Moses surely loved his sister, he owed his life to this woman who saved him in the little ark, and even boldly approached Pharaoh's daughter to allow for Moses' mother to nurse her own child.

Miriam was a leader among the people, and she really has one spot on her record, where she challenged Moses' authority, there is not a godly worker who is without spot or wrinkle in their walk.

Miriam, as family is in ministry was a strength for Moses.

I find in ministry, family is the only place where you can vent; you can let down your guard, and just be completely unguarded.

Family knows you best, and tends to love you even after your worst.

And here Moses loses his beloved sister.

And this heartbreak sets the stage for the next part in the act...

2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron. 3 And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: "If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! 4 Why have you brought up the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here? 5 And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink." 6 So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them.

The ministry does not stop for the minister to assess his own wounds.

Understand this very clearly, if you are called into the ministry, you will face tragedy in your own life, you will

experience depression, chaos, and darkness, and through it all, the ministry will not stop.

The people will always have needs, and the people rarely will take notice of your own heartache.

If you do not have this understanding, you will become bitter and resentful of the ministry and the people you minister to.

Moses and Aaron do not even have time to mourn their loss here, and the people come against them.

I will tell you from experience; it is when Jess and I are going through the darkest times ourselves, that the messenger of Satan seems to arrive with their torment.

We are at our lowest emotionally and that is when we will get buffeted by a thorn in our flesh.

This is part of the counting up the cost when you are called into ministry.

You will even find your own tragedies become ministry to others.

I remember the very first death I had to minister to the family over, it was woman who was very close to Jess and I.

I had to tell Pam's two Jr. High aged children their mommy had passed away, and the tragedy was unbearable.

But what I found, through that tragedy, it opened wounds in other people.

And those people who perhaps had lost a parent in the past, now needed ministry as they were reliving their heartaches.

They too demanded ministry, even being detached from the main incident.

And ministry has not slowed down since that day.

That is part of the cost of saying yes to the calling of fulltime ministry; you must be willing to put your own heartache aside to minister to the people.

And here Moses and Aaron contend with a thirsty people.

They demand water, again they accuse Moses of bringing them into an evil place.

And Moses and Aaron once again fall on their faces, before the Lord appears in His glory.

We read next...

7 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 8 "Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals." 9 So Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him.

Another test for Moses here, when he is emotionally drained, God tells him to bring his rod that struck the rock last time after they crossed the Red Sea.

But this time Moses is only to hold the rod and speak to the rock.

Moses, now unbeknownst to him is to paint a clear picture of Jesus Christ in his obedience.

Jesus Christ, our Rock, was struck once and for all upon the cross, never again is a He to be struck again.

The grace poured out freely the first time, now, the water of life flows freely to those who confess with their mouth and believe with their heart.

There is no need to put Christ back on the cross.

This is the picture Moses is to uphold.

Let's see how he does, in his emotional and fed up state of mind...

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

Moses, the man, reaches his limit in ministry, and the meekest man to ever live, loses his temper.

I cannot say I would have done any better.

These people have pushed and pushed, Moses has given of himself repeatedly, and it was never enough, and we see he just cannot take it anymore.

And this outburst will cost him greatly as we read next...

12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

13 This was the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel contended with the Lord, and He was hallowed among them.

The people received their help, they were saved by the water by God's grace.

But Moses, because he misrepresented the Lord here, will receive discipline.

Moses exalted himself here, and did not glorify God in his presentation.

Moses will later on plead with the Lord **Deut. 3:25**

25 I pray, let me cross over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, those pleasant mountains, and Lebanon.'

But God did not allow him to speak again on the matter.

And even in severe discipline the Meek Moses submits to God's will.

And Joshua, will take the people into the Promise Land. For which, another picture is painted for us.

Moses representing the Law would ruin this picture had he been the one to bring the people into the Promise Land.

The Law is powerless to bring one into their inheritance, Yet, Joshua, a type of Jesus Christ was their means to the promises of God.

And understand the Promise Land is not a picture of heaven, it is a picture of living in a place of God's promises and His will for your lives.

Only Jesus can bring this kind of completion and satisfaction in this sojourn here in this life.

In Jesus we find **2 Cor. 1:18**

20 For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

We dwell in the Promises through Jesus.

Moses submits to God's decision, and it serves well as a greater picture.

If you are trapped in legalism and living according to the Law, you will live in misery, and your life will always be incomplete.

Only through faith in Jesus Christ, can you find the victorious living here on earth.

So we continue on now....

Next, they encounter their distant relatives.

Passage Through Edom Refused

14 Now Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. "Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the hardship that has befallen us, 15 how our

fathers went down to Egypt, and we dwelt in Egypt a long time, and the Egyptians afflicted us and our fathers. 16 When we cried out to the Lord, He heard our voice and sent the Angel and brought us up out of Egypt; now here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your border. 17 Please let us pass through your country. We will not pass through fields or vineyards, nor will we drink water from wells; 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."

18 Then Edom said to him, "You shall not pass through my land, lest I come out against you with the sword."

19 So the children of Israel said to him, "We will go by the Highway, and if I or my livestock drink any of your water, then I will pay for it; let me only pass through on foot, nothing more."

20 Then he said, "You shall not pass through." So Edom came out against them with many men and with a strong hand. 21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel

passage through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

Now, the former Egyptian prince Moses, knows diplomacy and approaches Jacob's brother Esau's decedents tactfully.

He reminds them of their relation, and tells the story of their deliverance out of Egypt, which he assumes they know.

But you can imagine the Edomites here are really using wisdom.

Remember they are looking at an army of up to 2 million strong.

They are counting up the cost of their land, that it can easily be eaten up by a multitude that large.

And even at the reassurance of Moses, that they will not take anything, but they will respect their land, and pay for anything they take, the Edomites still refuse, and even mount up a defense in preparation for battle.

And Moses uses wisdom here and turns the nation away, he is not looking for confrontation with Edom, they are not in the land promised to them.

And God will deal with Edom later on for this, as He has throughout history dealt with every nation that has ever come against His special people.

In fact, we just read about Edom's judgment in Obadiah this morning in our daily manna reading.

They will pay for this fatal error.

The Hebrews will now move to Mount Hor, the location of this mount is unknown today, but it will be a place of more mourning for Moses.

Death of Aaron

22 Now the children of Israel, the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh and came to Mount Hor. 23 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor by the border of the land of Edom, saying: 24 "Aaron shall be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against My word at the water of

Meribah. 25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor; 26 and strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; for Aaron shall be gathered to his people and die there." 27 So Moses did just as the Lord commanded, and they went up to Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. 28 Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Then Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain. 29 Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.

This chapter starts out with death and ends with death.

This is a tragic time for Moses, but once again, ministry and duty must continue.

God here establishes the perpetual priesthood, that would stay in Aaron's lineage for the ages to come.

Eleazar would pick up right where Aaron was leaving off.

It is as John Wesley says, “God buries His workman and His work goes on.”

And for those of you who have been on this journey through the Old Testament with us, we have fallen in love with characters and heroes of the Bible, and as we are getting to know them, and appreciate them they disappear off the pages of the Holy Transcript.

This is not a story of man, but a story of God’s Glory and God’s solution to the fallen state of man.

Understand this, Christian worker, the ministry is never about you, once it becomes about you, you jump off the pages of God’s story, and start writing your own.

And any other story than God has laid out for you will end in failure and defeat.

Live your life for God’s glory, and constantly put down that monster of self, and may your life find purpose and satisfaction.

You see it is all about Him, as the Poem by C.T. Studd so clearly points out in its stanza

Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.
And when I am dying, how happy I'll be,
If the lamp of my life has been burned out for Thee

The High Priest Aaron's story is complete, but the story of God continues on, and after this mourning at Mount Hor, the Israelites will experience their first victory after all these years of wondering, and things will start looking up once again.

As it goes walking with the Lord, many valley lows, then come the mountain highs.

I do not know where you are at tonight, perhaps you are in the valley low, maybe you are wondering aimlessly, maybe you are just unsure of things, come up for prayer tonight, the guys will be up here to pray with you if you have any prayer needs.

Stay faithful, no matter what comes your way, your story is not complete, and victories lay ahead.

Amen? Let's pray....