

Numbers 18-20 • Misrepresenting the Lord

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When we last had our study in numbers last week, you'll remember that Moses went through a very serious challenge to his leadership by some individuals who were able to gather a great number of people actually, to be a part of the rebellion that they were posing against Moses and Aaron. And the Lord had to deal with it and he dealt with it very decidedly you'll remember by causing, next to Korah and his family, the ground literally to open up and swallow all of those people and then and completely engulf them.

Whenever there's that kind of a situation where the leadership of something is challenged, many times it is necessary to go back after such a thing and reestablish leadership. And that's what begins to happen here in Numbers chapter 18.

If you'll look there in the first verse of the chapter, it begins by saying, *“So the LORD said to Aaron, “You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood.” (ESV)*

Now, the reason this is a very significant verse is because up to this point God has given a lot of insight as it relates to the responsibility and the job that Aaron and his sons have. But I want you to notice how this verse, this first verse of the chapter talks about their leadership role. He says you and your sons are going to actually bear iniquity for this position. In other words, you're going to bear responsibility. You're going to be accountable for these things being done and being done correctly.

And this is the other side of leadership that sometimes people don't readily understand or lay hold of. And that is that yes, Moses and Aaron were given a very certain calling. It was very specific. And with that calling came authority. And it seems like everybody wants to focus on the authority.

And what happened in the previous chapters was Korah and his followers we're jealous of that authority and they were saying to Moses and Aaron, you've taken too much upon yourselves. We're just as good as you guys are.

One of the things that Korah and his followers did not stop and consider was the accountability that goes along with leadership. They had to learn the hard way. All of those individuals who came against Moses and Aaron died that day because they didn't have the calling, and they took fire and incense into their censers, and it says the fire of the Lord came out and literally destroyed all of those men. As I said before, Korah and his family, swallowed by the earth.

They were made to bear their own iniquity in that sort of a situation, but they weren't thinking about the fact that Aaron and Moses, yeah, they have authority, but they have responsibility.

I want you to read this verse again. This is important. *“You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear iniquity connected with the sanctuary, (he says) and you and your sons with you shall bear iniquity connected with your priesthood.”*

So, listen, if you hear that God has given someone headship or authority. Some place of leadership, where others are told in God's Word according to His order to submit to that individual in their ministry, in their calling. I want you to remember something. That those individuals who have that calling also have a special accountability before God related to those callings, and it is not all fun and games. Every man, every, and I don't care if they're a Christian or not, every man, when that individual gets married, is called into a position of headship in the home.

The Bible says that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. That man enters into a position of headship. And does that position have authority? Oh yeah, sure. Yeah, some. And that's what we focus on, and that's what culturally we tend to bristle under. We don't like authority. And so, that's one of the reasons why our culture today has rejected the whole idea of the husband's authority in the family because we don't want to talk about that. We bristle under the idea of somebody having authority.

What we forget about is the responsibility that goes with that authority. Now men, there are several of you men here today and for those of you that are married, how often do you think about the responsibility, the accountability that goes along with the position of headship that you've been given? You have a responsibility before God. God is looking to you to carry out certain things related to your family. Particularly provision and protection. And those things carry accountability before God.

Men, we are going to stand before God as it relates to our families and how we functioned in that position of authority. Once again, stop thinking of authority just as what I get to do. It's authority related to what God is holding me accountable to do. You guys remember what James talked about when he spoke of calling and authority and position? Let me show you this verse on the screen. It's from James chapter 3, verse 1. You guys remember this. He says,

James 3:1 (ESV)

Not many of you should become teachers. My brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Not many of you should become teachers. My brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

In other words, what James is saying is that there is a stricter form of accountability for those who take upon themselves the role of teacher in the body of Christ. There is an accountability that goes along with that position just like there's listen, responsibility and accountability go together all the time. They're never separated. You don't get responsibility without accountability.

So, you want a position? You want a position of leadership? You want a position of responsibility and authority? Are you ready to take the accountability that goes along with it? That's the question. So, this is an important reminder here as we get into this chapter.

Verse 2 goes on and says, *“And with you bring your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, (That means the rest of the Levites) the tribe of your father, that they may join you and minister to you (Notice their function is to minister to the sons of Aaron) while you and your sons with you are before the tent of the testimony.”*

Look at this, verse 3. Another function of the Levites. He says, *“They shall keep guard over you. (That's one of their responsibilities. But there's an accountability that goes with it. Levites, are you watching over the priests, the high priest and his sons?) and over the whole tent, (They're supposed to guard the whole, this is the tabernacle. This is what would later become the temple) but shall not come near to the vessels of the sanctuary or to the altar lest they, and you, die.”*

The Levites were to guard the priests. They were to guard the tabernacle. But they were not to come near the worship implements that only the high priest could touch. Right? The altar, the Ark of the Covenant, so on and so forth. Otherwise, they would die.

Verse 4, *“They shall join you and keep guard over the tent of meeting for all the service of the tent, and no outsider shall come near you. ⁵ And you shall keep guard over the sanctuary (Now he's talking to Aaron and his sons) and over the altar, that there may never again be wrath on the people of Israel.”*

Wow! Talk about accountability. What did God just say to Aaron and his sons? You guys are to watch over the tabernacle, the altar, those most holy things so that wrath doesn't come out against the whole nation of Israel. That is your accountability. You guys do your job, and wrath doesn't fall upon the nation. You guys mess up in your job and wrath falls upon the nation. Again, I don't know if Korah and his followers thought that one through and they thought, gee, we want to be just like Aaron and have his sort of responsibility. You see what God is doing here? God is revealing that with these positions come this accountability and it's a difficult thing.

Verse 6, *“And behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites (Now he's talking to Aaron again about the tribe of Levi) from among the people of Israel. (Look at what he says here. We saw this in Leviticus) They are a gift to you, given to the LORD, to do the service of the tent of meeting. ⁷ And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give you the priesthood as a gift, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.”*”

So, he talks to the priests here, the Aaronic priests, meaning Aaron and his sons and says, I've given you the priesthood as a gift. And in the New Testament, we all have gifts. The Bible says we've all been given gifts. There's something else interesting told about the gifts in the Book of Romans. It says the gifts, and the calling of God are without repentance or irrevocable, depending on which Bible you may have. What that means is God isn't going to take them away. God isn't going to remove them. So you're given a calling.

You're given a position of responsibility. There's accountability that goes with it, and that doesn't go away just because you decide, oh, I don't want to do that anymore. I mean, if the tribe of Levi would have said, yeah, we don't really want to take care of the tabernacle anymore. Sorry, that doesn't mean that that gift has gone away right and there will be accountability. So, what is your gift? What has God called you to do? What are you to be in the body of Christ? What's your position? You say, well, pastor Paul, I don't know. That's okay. It's alright not to know. Here's what I think is really important. That we just begin to serve the Lord. Do something! Do something!

Now, it doesn't, I'm not, when I say serve the Lord, boy, that's a very broad sort of an idea. It doesn't have to be things within the church there. Yes, there's ways we serve within the church. There's wonderful ways we get to serve within the church, but there's also a lot of ministry giftings that apply outside the church. Evangelism is one of them. Evangelism is supposed to be going on outside the church. It can certainly happen within but it's one of those things, it's a go out job to do. Taking it out. I'm going to take my job and go.

There's a lot of things that could draw you outside, but then some of you are gifted and called to minister inside the church in the body of Christ, doing things, whatever they may be. The point is, get busy and do something and see where the Lord would have you to be, because I really truly believe that the refining process of clarification regarding people's gifts come. I think God hits a moving target. That's what I'm trying to say and not doing it very well. But I really believe that if you're going to sit on your hands, you're not going to discover your calling.

I think that if you just get busy and start doing, you're going to start to see that calling shape itself as the Holy Spirit brings direction and insight, and I talked to a lot of Christians who begin to serve, and they'll serve in areas that they don't necessarily feel called to, and they get frustrated and they kind of back away and they go, yeah, I tried that, and now that wasn't for me. Okay. So, what did that cause you to do? Well, I'm just kind of hanging out. I'm just going to wait. Well, like I said, I really believe God hits a moving target.

So, step out and find another place to serve. Be praying, ask God to open up doors, open up opportunities. Lord, what would you have me do? Listen, here's the point. You have a calling on your life. God has you here for a purpose more than to live for yourself. Living for yourself is a life of misery. Living for God is a life of ministry. And there's a great difference between misery and ministry. And one brings joy and the other one is terrible. It's an awful way to live. So how are you serving? What are you doing for others?

When you wake up in the morning, are you thinking about what you're going to do for yourself, or you're thinking about what you're going to do for others? What doing for others is the ministry, and so, I believe God hasn't left anybody out, and I mean that with all of my heart I truly believe it that God has not left anyone out as it relates to gifts. So, our job is to get busy, get moving, get active, let the Lord bring direction as you go. So, He speaks of the priesthood as a gift.

Verse 8, *“Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, “Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated (or set apart) things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due. ⁹ This shall be yours of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering of theirs and every sin offering of theirs and every guilt offering of theirs, which they render to me, shall be most holy to you and to your sons. ¹⁰ In a most holy place shall you eat it. Every male may eat it; it is holy to you.”*

Now, he's talking about the part of the offering that is not burned up on the fire. The part that is offered to the Lord, given to the Lord. What happened to all those parts of the animal that didn't get burned up? Or those grain offerings, whatever the thing? They went to the priests and often to the Levites as well. So, but notice these are the holy offerings. These are, when he says holy offerings, this is things that are offered on the altar, given to the Lord on the altar of fire, if you will.

And then he goes on to say, in verse 11, *“This also is yours: the contribution of their gift, all the wave offerings of the people of Israel. I have given them to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. ¹² All the best of the oil and all the best of the wine and of the grain, the first fruits of what they give to the LORD, I give to you.”*

Now he's talking about the provision that goes not just to Aaron, and his sons, but to the whole family of the priests to take care of them, because remember, they weren't given any land so they're going to literally exist on the gifts of the people.

Verse 13 says, *“The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, (They're going to be offering them up as a sacrifice to the Lord, or as an offering to the Lord. He says, they're going to) 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. (meaning devoted to the Lord) ¹⁵ Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours. Nevertheless, the firstborn of man (of course) you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.*

¹⁶ And their redemption price (at a month old you shall redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. ¹⁷ But the firstborn of a cow, or 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 shall burn their fat as a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. (These animals, the firstborn, given to the Lord in sacrifice. But the others are redeemed. But, verse 18. Even of these things that are burned up, he goes on to explain) ¹⁸ But their flesh shall be yours, as the breast that is waved and as the right thigh are yours.

¹⁹ All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the LORD I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. It is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD for you and for your offspring with you.” ²⁰ And the LORD said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.”

Alright, so no land given. They are given the Lord. I like the Lord's portion, don't you? I mean, land can have all kinds of problems. Have you looked at your lawn lately? Have you started to see spots where the snow is melting? Doesn't it look great under there? It looks awful, doesn't it? I looked at it with Sue the other day, and I thought, is grass going to grow in this area? I'm not sure. Land can go through all kinds of problems. There can be issues.

There can be drought. There can be, land can be taken away, your enemies can come, and the portion of the Lord can never be taken away. And I always have loved the idea that God said to the priests and to the Levites, I am your portion. I am your inheritance. We think about an inheritance today. You maybe sit around and hope some rich uncle you never heard of is going to pass away and you're going to get a note in the mail saying you're called to a reading of a will because you're a beneficiary.

Probably not going to happen. Here's the thing. We have an inheritance in Christ, right? And that's such a beautiful thing. God said to the Levites, to the priests, I am your inheritance. Do you understand that you and I, Paul prayed for the Ephesians. When you go through and read the book of Ephesians, what a beautiful prayer he mounts for the church in Ephesus, which is, I believe, a prayer for the body of Christ. But he prays and says, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be open, that you might know the inheritance that you have in Christ Jesus, that you might understand what you are inheriting.

Because doesn't the Bible say we are joint heirs with Christ? We're heirs of God, for heaven's sakes, and joint heirs with Christ. So, what is your inheritance? We don't even know. We don't even know what our inheritance is. That's why we're sitting on our chairs right now and not moving or whooping and hollering. Right? We're all going, yeah, that's right. I don't know what it is.

If we did, you would, I dare say you would not be able to remain seated right now. If God gave you a glimpse of that inheritance, you'd be just like, dude, we're going out tonight to get some frozen yogurt. This is celebrate time, right? Or something like that. Yeah.

Verse 21 says, *“To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting, ²² so that the people of Israel do not come near the tent of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. ²³ But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the people of Israel they shall have no inheritance. (Other than, of course, what the Lord gives them.) ²⁴ For the tithe of the people of Israel, which they present as a contribution to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance. Therefore, I have said of them that they shall have no inheritance among the people of Israel.”*

²⁵ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁶ “Moreover, you shall speak and say to the Levites, ‘When you take from the people of Israel the tithe that I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present a contribution from it to the LORD, (literally) a tithe of the tithe. (Did you catch that?) ²⁷ And your contribution shall be counted to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress. ²⁸ So you shall also present a contribution to the LORD from all your tithes, which you receive from the people of Israel. And from it you shall give the Lord's contribution to Aaron the priest.”

And so, even the Levites had to tithe on the tithe. That's an interesting concept, isn't it? Do you know that here at Calvary Chapel, we've been tithing on the tithe for over 26 years? In fact, we've been trying very much to go beyond tithing on the tithe, because as you know, the word tithe means 10 percent. You guys give your gifts and offerings to the church, and we take from those gifts and offerings, and we give to missions.

That's where that money comes from. So, we're giving money to Italy, and we're giving money elsewhere, and then there's local missions, to the Hope Pregnancy Center, and Love, Inc., and there's a lot of things that frankly kind of come into that idea of missions, if you will. The point is we're tithing on the tithe, if you will, just as the Levites were commanded to do in the Word of God.

Verse 29 says, *“Out of all the gifts to you, you shall present every contribution due to the Lord; from each its best part is to be dedicated.” (Did I say that right? Yeah) ³⁰ Therefore you shall say to them, when you have offered from it the best*

of it, then the rest shall be counted to the Levites as produce of the threshing floor, and as produce (or just like produce) of the winepress. ³¹ And you may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward in return for your service in the tent of meeting.

² And you shall bear no sin by reason of it, ... ” Why? Because these are not holy offerings. These are tithes. Okay? So he's saying, doesn't matter where you eat them. Doesn't matter really who eats it. There's going to be no sin related to any sort of misuse. There's no specific rules or guidelines related to it. This is just your due. This is your reward, if you will. Or, if you're going to put it in a new, kind of a modern way, this is your salary.

He says “...when you have contributed the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy things of the people of Israel, lest you die.’” Okay, chapter 19.

“Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, ² “This is the statute of the law that the Lord has commanded: Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish, and on which a yoke has never come. ³ And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered before him. ⁴ And Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times.

⁵ And the heifer shall be burned in his sight. Its skin, its flesh, (look at this) and its blood, ... ” This is the only instance of a sacrifice where the blood is not drained and used elsewhere to sprinkle. It is burned up in the fire.

So, this is an animal that is being burned completely “with its dung, shall be burned. ⁶ And the priest shall take cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn and throw them into the fire burning the heifer.” All this burns together. And it's to create ash.

“⁷ Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. But the priest shall be unclean until evening.

⁸ The one who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water and shall be unclean until evening. ⁹ And a man who is clean (then) shall gather up (look at this) the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place. (In other words, a place that is not unclean) And they shall be kept for the water for impurity for the congregation of the people of Israel; it is a sin offering. ¹⁰ And the one who gathers the ashes of the

heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. And this shall be a perpetual statute for the people of Israel, and for the stranger who sojourns among them.”

Now this is interesting. The ashes of the red heifer. This is a wild sort of a thing. And these ashes were kept in perpetuity and used very sparingly. We're told that during the course of, while this sort of an offering was going on, that only like six red heifers were ever used in the history of Israel during the sacrificial period. Because they would use these ashes very sparingly, and only just a small portion was used with fresh spring water used as a cleansing agent for people in certain various sorts of cleansings that were required, such as somebody who had been healed of leprosy and other things.

This water, mixed with the ashes of the red heifer, would be used in this cleansing ceremony. Now remember, this is all external. You guys with me? This is all external. That's why in the New Testament these things are mentioned as being less effective than what you and I have in terms of cleansing. You might say, well, why a red heifer? Why did they burn the whole animal, take the ashes, mix it with water, and use it for these various ceremonial cleansings? Because it's a picture. Everything in the Old Testament is a picture.

Let me show you a passage here on the screen from Hebrews that speaks of this. Look at chapter 9, verses 13 to 14.

Hebrews 9:13-14 (ESV)

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, (meaning the outside) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience (meaning our inside) from dead works to serve the living God.

You see that here in the Old Testament, all these things that we're talking about in these books have a New Testament picture that we're pointing toward, and the writer of Hebrews is using these references and particularly you can see the ashes of a heifer, where he's talking exactly about what we just read, to pinpoint the supremacy of the New Covenant. He said that the sprinkling of these

cleansing waters mixed with the ashes of a heifer were meant to cleanse the outside, the flesh. But it couldn't get into here.

So, what happens when I really mess up? What happens when I really go the way of the flesh, and I do something that just grieves the Lord and grieves me and grieves others. And now what? How am I going to ever start again? How am I ever going to move forward in my walk with God? Well, my conscience needs to be cleansed, doesn't it? When we come to Him for forgiveness, when we know that Jesus died on the cross for all of our sins. When we know that we've been cleansed and washed and purified, there is such a deep work of the Spirit that can take place whereby our conscience becomes cleansed.

Literally, we can start anew. We can move forward. One of the things I love about reading the Bible, particularly even the New Testament is it shows us some of the very serious mistakes and failures that people in the body of Christ made. Think about Peter. I don't know if you've ever denied the Lord three times with cursing to a, mostly to a servant girl, and then to some other people. But that had to weigh very heavily upon his heart. How in the world is Peter ever going to move forward after something like that?

How about the apostle Paul? Here's a man who spent the early part of his life doing everything in his power to get rid of Christians. He believed that Christianity and the followers of Christ were a blight on Jewish society and religious observance, and he had devoted himself to the extermination of these people. And then God calls him to be an apostle. You have to wonder, how does a man like that take up a mantle of apostleship and begin to go out and help people get saved and establish churches and so on and so forth without bearing some kind of wound upon his conscience that keeps him from being able to move forward?

It's because he knew he was cleansed by faith. The blood of Jesus Christ, which does a better, more efficient, more powerful work of cleansing than can the water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer, which is only external. So, we see in the Old Testament, so many of these things related to the externality of life. Even the Law, even the Law was external, right? Where was the Law? It sat on these two rigid stones. What does God say that He's going to do with that Law in the New Testament? I'm going to write it on their hearts. I'm going to, I'm going to write it in here.

It's no longer going to be out. It's going to be in. You see how everything has moved inside. The Holy Spirit never came in in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit never came to indwell somebody in the Old Testament. Because, why?

The vessel hasn't been, hadn't been cleansed. The Holy Spirit could come upon, and He did. The Spirit came upon people in the Old Testament, and He still comes upon people today, even believers. But we have something that's even greater.

The Holy Spirit who comes to dwell within. Living inside of us, so that the Bible says, we are now temples of the Holy Spirit. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. Isn't that amazing? You are the building of God, literally. This is not the building of God. You are. That's the exciting thing about it. It's inside. The kingdom of God is within you, right? It's wonderful. So much superior to what they had in the Old Testament. That's what the writer of Hebrews is arguing. Let's keep reading.

Verse 11. *“Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days. ¹² He shall cleanse himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day and so be clean. But if he does not cleanse himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not become clean. ¹³ Whoever touches a dead person, the body of anyone who has died, and does not cleanse himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not thrown on him, (This is the water we've been talking about with the red heifer) he shall be unclean. His uncleanness is still on him.”*

“¹⁴ This is the law (verse 14) when someone dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent and everyone who is in the tent shall be unclean seven days.” And every, by the way, have you ever noticed God's not into death? He's really not. God is not into death. Death was never part of God's original design. He never intended for you to die. He never intended for mankind to die.

Death, the Bible says, what does it call it? An enemy, right? The last enemy to be destroyed is death. God considers it an enemy. It's a bad thing in the kingdom. Our culture sometimes wants us to kind of make friends with it. But no, it's an enemy. Jesus came to conquer death. That's what He did by rising again. He conquered death and everyone who is putting their faith in Jesus, that same victory is imputed to that individual.

You now have the victory over death in you, living in you, residing in you. Right? That's why we don't fear death. Because the victory is ours in Christ Jesus. It's already, it's done. For you and I, when the body expires, it's just like walking through a door. We walk through the door into the next room, which is real life. So, isn't that glorious? So, God's not into death and He had all these things related in the Law to death that would cause people to become unclean

because death is unclean. Death is not a clean thing It's a dark thing. It's an unclean thing. It's an unwanted thing.

Verse 15 says, *“And every open vessel that has no cover fastened on it is unclean. ¹⁶ Whoever in the open field touches someone who was killed with a sword or who died naturally, or touches a human bone or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.”* You couldn't walk upon a grave. If you walked on top of a grave, you'd be unclean. Of course, most of the graves weren't in the ground, they were in hillsides.

“¹⁷ For the unclean they shall take some ashes of the burnt sin offering, and fresh water shall be added in a vessel.” This is the thing we were talking about earlier.

“¹⁸ Then a clean person shall take hyssop (which is a branch that they use to brush things with) and dip it in the water and sprinkle it on the tent and on all the furnishings and on the persons who were there and on whoever touched the bone, or the slain or the dead or the grave. ¹⁹ And the clean person shall sprinkle it on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day. Thus on the seventh day he shall cleanse him, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe himself in water, and at evening he shall be clean.

²⁰ “If the man who is unclean does not cleanse himself, that person shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, since he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. Because the water for impurity has not been thrown on him, he is unclean. ²¹ And it shall be a statute forever for them. The one who sprinkles the water for impurity shall wash his clothes, and the one who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening. ²² And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean, and anyone who touches it shall be unclean until evening.”

All right. Chapter 20. Do you like stories about time travel? I do. I love time travel. Well, between Chapter 19 and Chapter 20, we're going to go, whoosh! We are now 40 years from the time Israel left Egypt. Thirty eight years from the time they first came to the land of promise, and they're now nearing that area right now.

And as we begin Chapter 20, they are there. They are basically there, and we're going to talk about some of the things that go on during that period of time. So, you have to understand that a lot of people have died. A whole generation died because of their unbelief. We think somewhere around 600,000 people would

have perished during that, following that 38 years of wandering after the first two. So, a lot of people. A lot of graves in the desert.

“And the people 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.” So, Miriam is not going to be the last person, but she is one of the individuals to die there. You remember Miriam? The sister of Moses.

“² Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. ³ And the people quarreled with Moses (and this is a new generation quarreling now) and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD!”

What a wonderful thing to say to God. He brought them really practically to the doorstep of the promised land. Oh, if we'd only died with our families. That's what they're saying.

“⁴ Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? ⁵ And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”

I can imagine when you've gone without water for a period of time, it probably becomes stressful. I get that. But these people, once again, do not have the foresight, maybe I should even say the faith sight, to see beyond their current circumstances and know that very soon they will be in the land that God is bringing them into. And yeah, this wilderness is no place to raise a family, or anything else for that matter. But we're just about to move out of this place.

“⁶ Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them, ⁷ and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁸ “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock (notice that, “tell the rock.” Your Bible may say, speak to the rock) before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” ⁹ And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him.”

Now stop there for a moment. Let me just briefly, because this is a very, very powerful story here in the course of the Book of Numbers. So, the nation of Israel has come to a place where there's no water and they begin grumbling and they're sick and tired of being in the desert and all that goes along with it. And

so, Moses and Aaron, as usual, take their complaint to the Lord. I like that. You got people complaining to you? Take it to the Lord. And so, they go to the Lord and the Lord says, okay, here's what I want you to do.

I want you to go out in the sight of all the people and I want you to stand before the rock and I want you to, with your staff in your hand, I want you to then speak to that rock. Speak to the rock. And water will come forth from the rock, and we'll take care of this entire, that's got to be a lot, we're not talking about trickle here guys. We're not talking about your bathroom faucet. We're talking about a gusher, because this is a lot of people. This is millions of people and their animals that need to drink. And by the way, water doesn't usually come out of a rock. So this is going to be a supernatural work of God.

But notice what God is telling Moses to do. Now, you've got to understand something else before we read. Moses has been in the wilderness with these people for 40 years and he's like had it up to here with these folks, right? These complainers, these whiners, these grumblers. Let's see how this thing plays out.

Verse 10, *"Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, 'Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?'"* Can you kind of hear it? I'm putting a little emphasis in there because I think this is, I'm doing my Moses interpretation post 40 years in the wilderness.

"¹¹ And Moses lifted up his hand (look at this) and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank and their livestock."

So, well, it worked. It worked. Do you know this isn't the first time water came out of a rock? It's actually given to us in Exodus chapter 17. Let me show you this passage on the screen because this one will help us to kind of remember this. It says,

Exodus 17:2, 5-6 (ESV)

Therefore, the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Therefore, the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test

the LORD?” And the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, (Notice what he was supposed to do the first time. Strike the rock) and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.” And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

This happened about 38 years ago. And Moses was told, go out to the rock, strike it with your staff, water will come gushing out. It's 38 years later. Moses is 38 years older. Thirty eight years more tired of these people and all their grumbling and complaining.

And so, what does God say to Moses? Does He go, separate yourself from these people so I can wipe them out? He's actually said that before. Not this time. God simply says, fine, go out to the rock, speak to it, and I'll give them water. That's all. And Moses comes out, and you can see that he's angry. And he starts calling them rebels. And, so what's going on here? God's heart in this situation is to simply take care of the people. Moses' heart is to chastise them and to spank them.

Well, that wasn't God's heart. And remember, Moses is God's representative. Remember we talked at the very beginning about responsibility, calling, and accountability? Remember we mentioned that? So, Moses has a responsibility to exemplify for the people, the heart of God related to whatever they happen to be going through. And God's heart in this case was, okay, I'll take care of you guys. I'll give you water to drink.

So, Moses, go out, take your staff with you, that's fine, but speak to the rock, and may water, and water will come forth. So, Moses does kind of the opposite. Misrepresents God to the people. That's very important, people. Please understand that. Moses misrepresents God to the people. And what happens?

Verse 12. *“And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, (Come here boys) “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”* ¹³ *These are the waters of Meribah, (Meribah means quarreling) where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy.”*

This is the area, this is the time in Moses' life when God said to him, because you misrepresented me, you will not enter the land. You will not take these people into the land. Because you did not regard me as holy in the eyes of the people. Because you misrepresented me before the people. Now I wonder how many people want to be Moses? Now I wonder how many people want to have

his same responsibility and calling? Have you ever thought about your calling, my calling to represent God to a lost and dying generation?

We represent the Lord. You've heard that saying you're the only Bible some people are ever going to read. It's true. It's true. We are to be holy as He is holy. We are to represent the Lord. So, and you know what's really interesting? If people are, I'll be honest with you. If people look at us Christians, and they try to figure out what God's like, they're going to be confused. Because some of us are representing God as really ticked off. Really angry, right? Some people, that's the way they represent God. They're just always kind of going around God's going to get you for that one! And they're always talking judgment, and they're talking about how God's going to judge the sinners.

And stuff, and then Hollywood's going to burn like Sodom and I and it's like wow, wonder how many people that attitude brings to Christ? My Bible says that it is His kindness that leads us to repentance. My Bible says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16)

Now, that doesn't mean we love the things of the world, or the sin of the world. We're talking about the people. We're not to hate the people of the world. God loved them so much, Jesus died for them. That's what the Bible says. Jesus died for our sins, and not ours only, but the sins of all the world, John wrote.

So, are we representing that love, or are we angry? You rebels! Going around with our big stick. I'll help you, but I'm not going to like it. That's where Moses is at here, isn't he? We'll bring you water, but I'm hoping some of you drowned in it, sort of a thing. That wasn't God's heart. So, it's a serious matter, frankly, that you and I represent God's heart to people. And I know, sometimes it's hard to represent His heart, especially when people bait you.

So, what do you Christians think about...or all those other kinds of questions that are meant to kind of lure you in to an inappropriate sort of a conversation that's going to embarrass and make you look really, really bad. I know it's hard. I know it is, but we still have a responsibility. The Bible says that we are ambassadors for Christ. It actually uses that word. You guys know what an ambassador does. They represent like a nation.

The ambassador from China comes to the United States, or the ambassador from Germany visits another place in Europe or something like that because they represent the government, the people of that nation to another nation. Well, you and I are ambassadors for Christ. Right? That means we represent Jesus to

the lost people of the world. How are we doing? That's the important thing for us to remember or to think about. So, difficult time for Moses.

“¹⁴ “Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: “Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met:” Now you guys know that the Edomites are the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, right? Sons of Isaac and Rebekah. So, Edom and Esau both mean red. And so these, when Moses says to these people, “thus says your brother Israel,” this is literally a connection, a family connection. And he says, all the hardships that we have met.

Verse 15, *“how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers.*

¹⁶ And when we cried to the LORD, he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. And here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. ¹⁷ Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. 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 But Edom said to him, “You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you.” ¹⁹ And the people of Israel said to him, “We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then I will pay for it. Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more.”

²⁰ But he said, “You shall not pass through.” And Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force. ²¹ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory, so Israel turned away from him.” And actually, during the lifetime of Saul, king of Israel, God will actually punish the Edomites because of this attitude of not allowing the nation of Israel to go through.

“²² And they journeyed from Kadesh, and the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. ²³ And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, ²⁴ “Let Aaron be gathered to his people, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah.”

Apparently, Aaron was involved in that process of misrepresentation) *“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...”*

Now you know what that's all about, don't you? Remember we talked about death? Remember, the high priest Aaron represents who? Represents Jesus Christ, our High Priest. Okay? Aaron is about to be gathered to his father's, which is a euphemism for dying.

What's the first thing that's going to happen when they get up on the mountain? Moses is to take those high priestly garments off of Aaron. Why? He can't die in them. Death can't be upon the high priest in that way. So, representing Christ in that way, death, there can't be a connection. So the clothes have to come off Aaron, go on to his next oldest son Eleazer, and then Aaron will pass from the scene.

We're in the middle of verse 26, “...*And Aaron shall be gathered to his people and shall die there.*” ²⁷ *Moses did as the LORD commanded. And they went up Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.* ²⁸ *And 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 *And when all the congregation saw that Aaron had perished, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days.*”

And that's where we're going to have to stop tonight. I really kind of meant to go through another chapter, but I wasn't able to. But that's where we'll have to end, with the death of Aaron. And for all the things that Aaron did, and he made some mistakes, God still gave him a gracious death. I mean, he didn't die in a plague, or bitten by snakes, or the ground didn't swallow him up, or anything like that.

He actually had a very peaceful home going, if you call it that, where they just went up to the mountain. They were able to say their goodbyes, and presumably Aaron, who was in good health, just laid down and breathed his last because it was his time. And you got to admit that's, it's a pretty good way to go.