

Numbers 15-16

Good evening and thank you again for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to Numbers 15 please?

Last week we saw the continuous rebellion of the nation through their unbelief. And we discovered Gods judgment-anyone over the age of 20 would not see the promise land, except for the 2 faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb.

Tonight, we're going to study chapters 15-16 and we'll sadly see that the rebellion of the people continues, but we'll see how Moses and Aaron intercede on the nation's behalf.

The title of tonight's message is INTERCEDING FOR OTHERS

Before we begin let's ask for the Lord's blessing.

PRAY

1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you, God didn't give up on Israel, the nation will one day enter Canaan. Israel had sinned greatly, but God didn't take back His promise.

You and I both know that life is full of setbacks. Some are caused by situations beyond our control, others by our own willfulness and unbelief. But God remains faithful to His promises.

Here, God shows His mercy to Israel, as He shows in this section the sacrifice to cover sin and sacrifice as an expression of thanksgiving.

Remember Israel is at their point of failure, and God reminded them of sacrificial atonement, and the need to give thanks - even in the wilderness. That's what we see in verses 3-16.

3 and you make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the LORD, from the herd or the flock, 4 then he who presents his offering to the LORD shall bring a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil; 5 and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. 6 Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; 7 and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the LORD. 8 And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, or as a peace offering to the LORD, 9 then shall be offered with the young bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil; 10 and you shall bring as the drink offering half a hin of wine as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

11 'Thus it shall be done for each young bull, for each ram, or for each lamb or young goat. 12 According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do with everyone according to their number. 13 All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. 14 And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD, just as you do, so shall he do. 15 One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD. 16 One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.' "So the Lord is again instructing them on making their sacrifices.

17 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 18 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land to which I bring you, notice again the promise from God

19 then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the LORD. 20 You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up. 21 Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the LORD a heave offering throughout your generations.

Verses 22-29 deal with the laws Concerning Unintentional Sin, both as a nation and as individuals

22 ‘If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the LORD has spoken to Moses—

23 all that the LORD has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the LORD gave commandment and onward throughout your generations— 24 then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering. 25 So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD, for their unintended sin. 26 It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people did it unintentionally.

27 ‘And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. 28 So the priest shall

make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the LORD, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. 29 You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them. Notice whether the guilty knows it's a sin or not – it's still a sin in God's eyes, and it requires the blood of a sacrifice.

This reminds of what Jesus said from the cross, **Luke 23:34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."**^[fn] **And they divided His garments and cast lots.** Jesus became the sacrifice for both intentional and unintentional sins.

30 'But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people.' The word means "highhanded". It's the idea of deliberately betraying the Lord.

31 Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.' There are times when discipline has to be administered. Every parent understands the need for discipline.

When a child makes an honest mistake parents need to be quick to forgive. But when a child commits treason and deliberately defies their parents' word, discipline has to take place to correct the behavior.

And this is true even in the church.

STORY?

1 Corinthians 5:5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

And in verse 32 we see an example of this flagrant disobedience to God's command.

32 Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. 33 And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. 34 They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. ”

Here's a guy collecting firewood on the Sabbath – a clear violation of God's command to do no work on the 7th day. The man is placed in solitary confinement until they could discern God's will.

35 Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” 36 So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died. This penalty may seem harsh, until we remember that Sabbath observance was the outward sign of the Mosaic Covenant. To violate the Sabbath law deliberately was the same as rejecting God's sovereignty.

37 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 38 “Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. If you remember from our studies in Numbers 4, the Ark was transported under a blue cloth. The robes of the High Priest had a blue hue. Blue was the color of the curtains in the Tabernacle.

This is why we'll never forbid anyone from wearing blue jeans!!

39 And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, 40 and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God. The tassels reminded the people of God's commandments.

You can picture an Israelite being tempted into some kind of sin, and then catching sight of the blue tassels, reminding him that He's a child of God.

The blue tassels were to be a reminder of God, yet later we see how the religious leaders made it about themselves. This is what Jesus rebuked the religious leaders for. **Matthew 23:5 "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments."**

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

CHAPTER 16 we see continued rebellion of the people...

1 Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; 2 and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. On the heels of their failure to enter the land of Canaan, these guys gather together and they look for a scapegoat. They blame their failure on Moses and Aaron.

And notice these are leaders who turn their back on Moses.

3 They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the

congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?" You'll recall that God Himself called Moses and Aaron to lead. Originally, Moses didn't want the job-he was full of excuses when God called him!

Yet clearly, Moses and Aaron were commissioned by God, and used mightily by God.

Men like Korah are always playing to an audience, always trying to draw a following after themselves. But they never come right out and say this, rather men like Korah act as if they represent the people and are fighting for their interests. The truth was that men like Korah desire a following and a position for themselves.

Now look carefully-Korah is from the Kohathites. Numbers 4 told us their duty. Numbers 4:15 "And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry. They had the most exalted duty among the Levites; their charge was to carry the most holy things of the temple.

4-10

4 So when Moses heard it, he fell on his face; 5 and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. 6 Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; 7 put fire in them and put incense in them before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the LORD

chooses is the holy one. You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!”

8 Then Moses said to Korah, “Hear now, you sons of Levi: 9 Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; 10 and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? **And are you seeking the priesthood also?** ” God allowed the Levites to help the priests in the ministry of the Tabernacle, but now they’re no longer content to simply help. They want to take over.

And what happened to Korah and the Levites often occurs in the Church today. It’s easy to start out wanting to help – thankful for an opportunity to serve. But over time volunteers can forget their place, and assume more authority than they’ve been given.

Korah took on a few duties - now he wants to take over the ministry.

11 Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. And what is Aaron that you complain against him?”

12 And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, “We will not come up! These guys were co-conspirators with Korah according to verse 1. And they disregard Moses so much they won’t even meet with him, nor answer his challenge. They choose to accuse Moses instead...

13 Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us? Look carefully-brought

us out of a land flowing with milk and honey-this is how they are describing their years in slavery Egypt!!!

14 Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!" This was a defiant, disrespectful bunch of rebels. It makes you wonder where these rebels were when God struck Miriam with leprosy from our study last week!

15 Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them." Moses knew he had done nothing to deserve these accusations, and he became very angry, but notice he did the right thing - he left the situation to God.

Remember, Moses was a man of political power; it was certainly within his capability to have Korah and his followers arrested and/or executed.

Instead, he left the situation to God.

16 And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD—you and they, as well as Aaron. 17 Let each take his censer and put incense in it, and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, two hundred and fifty censers; both you and Aaron, each with his censer." 18 So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. A censer is a metal pot used to burn incense, and they were used in the priestly worship of God. Since Korah and his companions questioned Moses and Aaron's right to lead the nation and conduct the priesthood, each group would come to the LORD as worshipping priests - and God would show which group He accepted.

19 And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.

20 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 21 “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” It’s as if God said, “step back boys, I don’t want you to get hurt!”

22 Then they (Aaron and Moses) fell on their faces, and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?” What incredible hearts on display. Moses and Aaron fall on their faces and pray to God—they again intercede for the nation.

Though many men were involved in the rebellion, one man was at the center of it all - Korah. It was Korah’s sin, his drawing of a group after himself, was the cause of all this mess. Which is why we see....

23 So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24 “Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’”

25 Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. Don’t let this verse pass you by. God had appointed elders back in Numbers 10 in response to another attack on Moses’ leadership. There, the elders were to be men with the same spirit and vision as Moses, men to help him bear the burden, men to stand with Moses.

Here the elders did exactly what God appointed them to do.

26 And he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you

be consumed in all their sins.” The New Testament also speaks along this same principle of separation:

Titus 3:10-11 10 Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, 11 knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

And

Romans 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus[fn] Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

It's important to remember a divisive or contentious person will never claim to be divisive and contentious - they always consider their work a noble cause. We need to pray for discernment and observe what people do, not just what they may say.

Lets read the thrilling climax..

27-35

27 So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children.

28 And Moses said: “By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. 29 If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. 30 But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD.”

31 Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, 32 and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods. 33 So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly. 34 Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up also!”

35 And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense. What a tragic end to this story. And Korah offers a great reminder to all of us, that ministry is not a ladder to climb. Position and authority are not gained by power-plays and takeovers – but handed out by God.

Success in ministry is being content wherever God puts you.

36-40

36 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 37 “Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. 38 The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls, let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the LORD, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel.” 39 So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, 40 to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the LORD had said to him through Moses. Try to picture the scene! The true priests are picking up the fallen censers among the bodies, charred flesh, stench, and smoke as they grab all 250 censers.

Notice that in the end, each one of the 250 rebels were identified completely with Korah. Now that's probably not how they meant it. You can be sure some of the folks who followed Korah said "Well, I don't agree with everything Korah says, but he's got some good points" type of deal.

But to God all those distinctions didn't matter. All the censers are hammered together, and collectively titled: Korah and his companions.

This is a warning about who we align ourselves with.

You'd think the nation would no longer complain after the ground opens up and the fire falls on the 250 right?

41 On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have killed the people of the LORD." God opens a chasm in the earth and swallows up Korah, and fire burns the rebels, but the people blame Moses! They accuse Moses for being too harsh.

42 Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared. 43 Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.

44 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 45 "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces. Guys this is why we need to read the OT. People get intimidated by the book of numbers, but what a treasure it is to see the heart of Moses! God again says 'step back boys', but Moses and Aaron fall on their faces to intercede for the people.

46 So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun.” 47 Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people. So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people. This is an intense situation... Aaron is sprinting while people are dying

48 And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped.

49 Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident. 50 So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.

We don't usually think of it this way, but you and I are in the same situation as Aaron. We've been commissioned by Jesus to go into all the world and share the Gospel.

But while we're strolling along, sometimes barely moving – people are dying.

Do we have an urgency to get to God in prayer and get to the people in need with the Gospel?