

BOOK OF NUMBERS

Lesson 9: Chapter 16:41- 19:22

The Rebellion Continues

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The Rebellion Continues

- **In Chapter 16**, we will see a dramatic turn of events as Aaron assumes the intercessor's role in making atonement for the people.
- **In Chapter 17** we will see God's validation of His high priest with the budding of Aaron's rod.
- **In Chapters 18 and 19** are another series of Laws tucked into our narrative, relevant to what has taken place but also to what will come. They set us up for some future lessons.
- As we wrap up our study of this particular incident, we will contrast Korah and Aaron which will take us into Romans 5.

Recap:

Aftermath of God's judgment on Korah and company.

Eleazar was tasked with hammering the purified bronze censers into a covering for the bronze altar

Rebellion continues. God comes out in strength to put down the rebellion.

Aaron the high priest intervenes. Focus today on the picture of the High Priest.

Read Numbers 16:41- 50.

The Rebellion Continues

Numbers 16:41a – “On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron ...”

Complain meaning to murmur with the added sense of digging in ones’ heels and refusing to budge. It implies a hardening has taken place. **Hebrews 3:8-11**

Their hearts have been hardened and God knows it. God knew even during the Korah rebellion that the corruption went through and through the lot of them.

Moses and Aaron asked for grace for those who did not sin after the likeness of Korah’s sin, and the Lord relented for the moment. But it didn’t change anything,

Numbers 16:41b – “You have killed the people of the LORD.”

What “people of the Lord” are they talking about?

Again, the twisted argument and focus on victimization.

God’s wrath goes out in a plague on the people.

Numbers 16:45 *“Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”*

Does Moses ask God for grace on the people this time?

- He realizes he has made as much intercession as he could but it was not sufficient.
- It has not had any effect on turning the people’s hearts away from sin.
- Even though these people did not sin in the likeness of Korah and company, nevertheless, death reigns in the camp.
- In order to stop the reign of death, a different kind of intervention is needed apart from what Moses and the Law can provide.

Atonement for the People

Numbers 16:46-48 (NKJV)

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."

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

How does Aaron make atonement for the people?

From what we know of the Law, what was needed to make atonement for sin?

Can burning incense alone make atonement for sin?

Two uses of incense:

- Incense is burned on the golden altar before the veil as a sweet aroma to the Lord (Exodus 30:7-8). We know that it represents prayers being lifted up to God.
- Incense is taken in hand by the high priest when he goes behind the veil on the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16:12-13).

Atonement for the People

Aaron's actions are like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, in accordance with the Law:

- He is making atonement for the nation.
- He is presenting incense in the same way that he would on the Day of Atonement

There is a departure from the Law:

- He is not performing the atonement within the Tabernacle. He is not where he is supposed to be.
- The blood of the sacrifice is missing.

When we look at this picture of Aaron with his censer of incense standing between the living and the dead, we are seeing a prophetic picture of a **new order of High Priest**.

The future High Priest

- This future High Priest is not necessarily one who ministers behind the veil in the Tabernacle like the Levitical High Priest does, even though He makes atonement as a High Priest.
- Instead of offering animal sacrifices, He offers himself as a covering for the people to hide their sin and turn away God's wrath.
- The atonement He offers is sufficient to stop the reign of death, whereas the atonement according to the Law represented by Moses proved insufficient.
- This future High Priest creates not a physical boundary but a spiritual boundary between the living and dead. He creates a wall and then takes his stand in the gap.

Standing in the Gap

- Physical boundaries in the camp often had a human counterpart associated with them
- The Tabernacle veil was one of those boundaries that separated God from the people and it was specifically associated with the High Priest.
- The veil performed the function of standing in the gap between the side curtains in order to complete that wall and yet provide a way into the Holy of Holies.
- Physical veil standing in the gap would transfigure into a man who stands in the gap. The Lord looks for that man to stand in the gap (**Ezekiel 22:30-31**)
- In this moment, Aaron is not officiating through the veil.
- He as becomes the veil – the veil with incense burning before it.
- He is the picture of a future High Priest who will become that veil in order to turn away the Lord's wrath. **Hebrews 10:19-20**
- The incense He offers are His prayers and supplications to God. **Hebrews 5:7**

Summary of the picture:

- A High Priest making atonement for the nation (Day of Atonement)
- A High Priest offering himself as covering for the people instead of an animal sacrifice.
- A High Priest who has become the embodiment of that picture of the veil with incense burning before it, as one who stands in the gap to stop the Lord's wrath.
- His atonement stops the progress of death. It brings an end to the reign of death in the camp at this moment. Even though this act of atonement is a departure from the Law, it is acceptable to the Lord
- Having brought death to an end, he returns to the Tabernacle (v50)

Aaron is painting a picture of Christ at His death, offering prayers to the Lord in Gethsemane as He prepares to make atonement on the cross with His own body.

Having made that atonement, He then returned to Presence of His Father in that heavenly Tabernacle.

In chapter 17 we are going to see the next phase of this picture as God glorifies His risen son.

The Budding of Aaron's Rod

Hebrews 5:4 "... no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

Read Numbers 17:1-13.

God lifts Aaron up and glorifies him before his brethren with this picture of a rod that was once just a dead branch but returns not just to life but to fruitfulness, and a fruitfulness that is out of season.

The preeminence of Aaron's rod comes from God's will, not Aaron's will.

The fruitfulness of Aaron's rod comes from God's works, not Aaron's works.

- God could have chosen a number of things to do with that rod to make it stand out from the others.
- He chooses to make it fruitful with a particular fruit – the almond. It came back to life in the form of an almond branch with buds, blossoms and fruit – all three at one time.
- The shape Aaron's rod takes is similar to the almond branch that the golden Lampstand is modeled after
- We have a developing association between the light in the Tabernacle, the High Priest, and the rod that has come back to life and produced fruit – symbolic of a future Christ.

Fruitfulness is the reward for faithfulness. Aaron's obedience has born fruit in a way that none of the others have.

Aaron's rod is placed in the Ark of the Covenant, along with the pot of manna and the tablets of the commandments.

Chapters 18-19: More Camp Rules

Numbers 18:1-3: Reestablish the place and duties of the priesthood and Levites.

- Establish accountability: High Priest and priesthood bear the iniquity for the sanctuary and priesthood.
- Priesthood held accountable for the Levites handling of the Tabernacle holy things.
- *“they will die, and you also.”* The priest and Levite will die if the holy things are mishandled.

Numbers 18:8-20: Define how food is provided for the Levites – what offerings they / families can eat,

Numbers 18:21-32 Define how the people are to support the Levites. Tithing arrangements.

The people tithe to the Levites. The Levites tithe to the priesthood. The priesthood doesn't tithe... or does it? **Heb 7:1-10**

Numbers 19: Defines the laymen's role with the priests in the Laws of Purification

- One of the driving factors of the Korah Rebellion was the desire to have an active role in priestly functions.
- This law will clarify the role we as the congregants play in interceding and purifying our kinsmen.

The Red Heifer Sacrifice

The Ritual

- Red Heifer, solid red without blemish or defect, never been yoked (v2) must be offered
- Eleazar, son of the High Priest, officiates (v4), but one who is not a priest can perform the actual slaughter and burning.
- Heifer must be sacrificed and burned **outside the camp** (v4). It is classified as a sin offering (v9)
- Its **blood is sprinkled toward the Tabernacle**, later the Temple (v4)
- It had to be **wholly burnt**, with hyssop, cedar wood, and scarlet (v6)
- Someone had to **gather the ashes** to be stored outside the camp in a clean place for future use (v9)
- When needed, the ashes had to be **mixed with living (running) water** in order to be applied (v9, 17)—called the water of purification or the water of separation.
- Someone **sprinkles the water with a hyssop branch** on the unclean person, and on the tent and vessels if needed. (v18)
- Water **must be applied on the 3rd and 7th day** or the cleansing is not accepted. (v12)

The Facilitators

In order to perform this cleansing, all facilitators have to be clean.

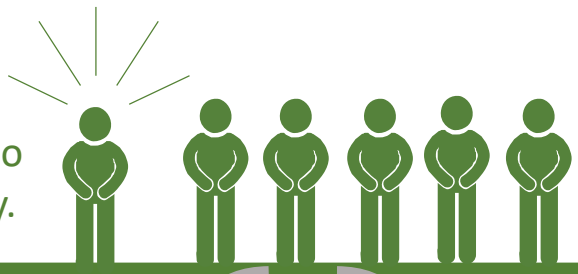
- Eleazar, son of the High Priest, becomes unclean until evening and must wash his clothes and body (v7)
Note: this cannot be performed by the High Priest himself because he is holy and not allowed to make himself unclean under any circumstance. It has to be performed by his son.
- The one who burns the sacrifice becomes unclean until evening, must wash his clothes/body (v8)
Note: this can be a layman, doesn't have to be a priest.
- The one who gathers the ashes becomes unclean until evening, must wash his clothes/body (v10)
this can be a layman, doesn't have to be a priest.
- The one who mixes the ashes with the water or touches the water of purification becomes unclean until evening (v21)
this can be a layman, doesn't have to be a priest.
- The one who sprinkles the unclean with the water must wash his clothes only but he himself is not considered unclean (v21)
this can be a layman, doesn't have to be a priest.

The Old Testament Picture Numbers 19

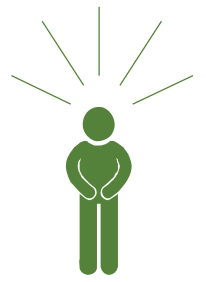
“Inside the camp”

Ritually clean, allowed to worship God as an assembly

They return to the assembly.

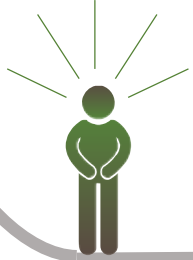


The sprinkler returns after washing his clothes.
The water preparer returns at evening.



Son of the high priest and the red heifer sacrifice

The son goes outside the camp and officiates the sacrifice. He becomes unclean until evening. A third party performs the burning and ash collecting. They become unclean until evening.



Later, a person becomes unclean because of a dead body. He goes outside the camp and waits. Two from the assembly are called to perform his cleansing.



On the 3rd day, the newly clean man returns to camp but not the assembly – he is still unclean until the ritual is completed on the 7th day.



On the Third Day

On the 3rd day, One man prepares water of purification, and one man does the sprinkling.

“Outside the camp”

Dwelling place of the defiled (Num 5:2).
Where sin offerings are burned.
Where death sentences are carried out.
Represents a place of death and separation from God.

People going “outside the camp” are in the role of kinsmen redeemers, not because they have sinned.

The Red Heifer Sacrifice

Offered with element of:

- **Cedar wood** (OT symbol of being exalted)
- **Hyssop** (symbol of lowliness)
- **Scarlet** (dye from a worm that produces a scarlet stain on wood when it dies)
- **Ashes**
 - Unlike blood or water, ashes can be stored forever without degrading.
 - So long as they exist, they can be used to purify generation after generation.

Unique form of mediation

- Classified as a sin sacrifice. Sin sacrifices are mediation by fire alone (wholly burnt). The Red Heifer sacrifice is a sin sacrifice, but combines aspects of purification by both fire and water.
- Ashes represent a sacrifice purified by fire – a refining process
- Ashes are applied by the water.
- Anything defiled by the dead must be put through fire (Numbers 31:23)
- If it cannot bear the fire, then it must be put through water containing a representative of the refining process, that is the ashes.

The sacrifice is officiated by the son of the High Priest.

The rest of the congregation to perform the application of the waters on an as-needed basis. The only qualification for facilitators is that they be ritually clean.

Why would you volunteer to do something you knew would make you unclean?

It depends on how well you understand glory from God's perspective.

Glory in status as being one of the priesthood

- Priesthood has authority, status, and power
- Priesthood has a sense of being close to God
- Achieving a status of cleanness and holiness before God

Glory in humility

- Go outside the camp – to the world of defiled and dying people
- Doing this for a brother means sacrificing your own status and purity
- This level of care of others and a desire to see a brother lifted up, even at the cost of your own status, is what glorifies God.
- It aligns with His heart and His character

Sacrificing Personal Status

- How are we called to go “outside the camp”?
- Is our mission to keep ourselves “inside the camp” – in our holy huddle?
- Is our mission to serve God but only inside the Church?
- Can the position we hold in the church – being one of the “clean” people – become a status symbol?

Camp Rule #8: Be willing to go outside the camp to restore a brother, even if it means a loss of your own personal status and “cleanness.” This act is an expression of loving your brother.

Pictures of Christ in the Red Heifer Sacrifice

Jesus, the Son of God, offered Himself as this sacrifice

- He was perfect, without blemish or defect.
- As the Son of God, He offered Himself as the sacrifice, although His actual death was carried out by the Romans (a third party, not the priests).
- He was sacrificed “outside the gate.”
- His death included the hyssop, wood, and a scarlet stain.
- The purpose of His death was to purify us from sin and cleanse us from the condemnation of death.
- Just as ashes transformed by fire no longer decay, so Jesus now lives eternally in a glorified body that no longer decays. As long as He lives, His sacrifice facilitates the cleansing for all who are defiled by death. He is both the sacrifice and the living water that washes us (Ephesian 5:25-17, Titus 3:4-7).
- He arose on the third day, the day when the application of the sacrifice was deemed acceptable by the Father.

Key Message:

Jesus, the Son of God, volunteered to leave the realm of the clean and make Himself unclean, so that we who were unclean might become clean. It required a loss of status and purity on His part, but in the Father’s eyes, this was a glorious thing to do.

This required an extreme act of love, affection, mercy, consolation, and desire for fellowship. This is an extreme act of humility and putting others before yourself.

The Old Testament Hebrews were required to perform this Red Heifer ritual for one another because it was the picture of what Messiah would do for them one day.

We are called to follow His example of humility and service because of what He has done for us.

Hebrews Commentary on Numbers

Hebrews 3-4/ Numbers 14 : Failing to enter the Land, hardening of hearts, not entering into the Lord's rest.

Hebrews 6/ Numbers 14 : The perils of not progressing in our relationship with God.

Hebrews 7/ Numbers 16 : a new priestly order was needed to supply what the Law and Levitical priesthood could not.

- The future Mediator would have no right to make atonement in the earthly Tabernacle, not being of the priesthood. (This explains the omission of the Tabernacle service in the prophetic picture.) Even so He makes atonement for the people and it is accepted by God.
- Christ our High Priest does not need to make animal sacrifices even for himself because He offered Himself as the sacrifice. (This explains the omission of the animal sacrifice and substitution of Aaron himself in the picture.)

Hebrews 8 and 9/ Numbers 16 : compare the physical priesthood in a physical Tabernacle under the old covenant (Moses) to the new priestly service in a heavenly sanctuary under a new covenant (Aaron).

Hebrews 5/ Numbers 17 : Christ, like Aaron, did not take the glory for Himself, but was given it by God. How He offered up prayers and supplications to be saved from death.

Hebrews 7/ Numbers 18 : Tithes of the Levites to a more glorious priest (Melchizedek).

Hebrews 10/ Numbers 19 : Going outside the camp to officiate the sacrifice. Christ making a way for us through the veil, that is His flesh.

Korah and Aaron, Adam and Christ

Numbers 16:22 *"... shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?"*

1. The Lord is treating all of Israel as one man
2. The sin of one man (Korah) is being attributed to the whole, making all of them guilty of the one man's sin.

Moses does not understand why God is seeing the nation of Israel as being guilty of one man's sin when they haven't sinned after the likeness of Korah's sin.

He is grappling with a picture of something that is half-hidden from him.

Paul's commentary in Romans 5 that provides an answer to Moses' question.

"Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life." Romans 5:18

Yes, God can look at a group of people as one man.

Yes, God can attribute the sin of one man to the whole.

The sin of one man becomes representative of the sin of the whole.

This is a hard truth to swallow without seeing the other half of the equation - the hope that comes when one man's righteous act brings salvation for all.

How does God teach this truth about Himself and give hope to a group of wilderness wanderers, when the person of Christ remains veiled and unknown?

Korah and Aaron, Adam and Christ

Until such time as Christ was revealed and His death accomplished, the Lord orchestrated events to paint these shadow pictures. And the Law becomes our tutor in this way...

Two physical things (or people in this case) are brought together with a specific relationship between them. That physical relationship teaches us the greater spiritual relationship between two others yet to come.

Korah and Aaron create the substitute picture to teach the relationship that Paul is talking about in Romans 5.

Korah is to Aaron what Adam is to Christ.

Korah and Aaron are types of Adam and Christ.

Korah is a type of the first man whose offense brought judgment on all, and death to the camp.

Aaron is a type of the future (unknown) Christ, whose righteous act intercession and atonement for the people gave life.

Korah and Aaron, Adam and Christ: Walking through Romans 5

Romans 5:12. *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...”*

Korah was the instigator of the initial rebellion. Following his action the whole nation of Israel sinned and was condemned for rebellion. Korah himself died for his sin, but now death has spread throughout the camp.

Romans 5:13-14. *“(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.”*

Moses and Aaron saw Korah and company as being the culprits and worthy of wrath, but they didn't see the entire camp as being guilty of sin – at least not after the likeness of Korah's sin.

The rebellion didn't end with Korah. Death spread to all the nation, even those who had not sinned after the likeness of Korah.

Romans 5:15. *“But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”*

Even though Aaron does not die at this point as Christ did, he nevertheless offers himself as a covering for the people. He does this of his own free will, as a gift of sorts.

Korah and Aaron, Adam and Christ: Walking through Romans 5

Romans 5:17. *“For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)”*

All the sins of the nation (still living) are gathered behind Aaron so that Aaron stands as representative of all of them and as covering for all of them.

The sins of the many, condensed into a single man, are now atoned for and forgiven.

Romans 5:18-19 *“Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.”*

God uses Korah's catastrophic failure and Aaron's righteousness to teach His people something about their spiritual relationship to Himself through a future Christ.