

Monday - Week Thirteen

Lesson thirty-six: Glimpses of the Forty Years of Training in the Wilderness

Read: Numbers 16; 17; 20; 21

Summary: During the 40 years in the desert God trained all the Israelites ... the younger ones (20 and younger) for the land of Canaan and the older ones (20 and older) for heaven.

Background and Comments

- It's noteworthy that Korah's sons did not follow their father's rebellion. Numbers 26:11 states, *The line of Korah, however, did not die out.* It takes great wisdom not to fall into the same sins as one's relatives and friends.
- Moses and Aaron sinned by striking the rock instead of speaking to it. This incident happened near the end of the 40 years in the wilderness; this new generation needed to see God's gracious hand of blessings. Instead Moses showed them God's wrath. Moses looked at the people only as rebellious sinners and not as God's chosen people.

Lessons for Today

- Korah tried to conceal the real reason for his rebellion by claiming that Moses and Aaron had too much authority. In reality he was jealous of Aaron and wanted to have as much power as him. People still try to conceal wicked intentions with nice sounding arguments.
- The bronze serpent was a type of Christ for a number of reasons:
 1. The Israelites faced death unless they looked at the serpent. We sinners face death unless we look at the Messiah.
 2. The Israelites were saved by faith (they looked at the serpent believing that God would heal them). We are saved through faith in Jesus.
 3. There was no other remedy for the Israelites. There is no other remedy that can forgive our sin.
 4. Both remedies were complete!

Read: Psalm 61; 1 Corinthians 1.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for training me for this life and the next. Make me open and able to learn the lessons You want me to learn. Make me instrumental in teaching other people as well. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Thirteen

Lesson Thirty-seven: Victory over two Foes

Read: Numbers 21:21-35

Summary: Kings Sihon and Og tried to hurt God's people; they paid the ultimate price for their attack.

Background and Comments

- Sihon rejected the Israelites' request to travel through his land and met the Israelites with a show of force. This was the last mistake Sihon ever made.
- Verse 35 tells us that the Israelites did not leave any survivors. This would be repeated time and time again when the Israelites entered Canaan. The Israelites were waging a "holy war" on behalf of God. Many of these nations had flaunted God for hundreds of years; the Israelite army was a judgement from God against them.

Lessons for Today

- These victories were important for a number of reasons. First, the Israelites acquired valuable property they could use as a base of operations before their conquest of Canaan began. Second, it showed the Israelites that God indeed was with them and that His presence meant military victory! God gives us victories for the same two reasons. First, these victories (whether it be a new job, healing from an illness, a restored friendship, etc.) give us benefits that help us in practical ways. Second, they remind us that God is with us and that He is powerful. Can you think of a recent victory that God has given to you?
- Verse 34 shows us that God was the supreme military commander of the Israelites. Imagine taking your orders from God Himself! God sometimes does not tell us exactly what to do (which job to take, when to move, etc.). Instead God tells us to make these decisions to the glory of God (we ask ourselves, "What will be good for my faith and the Kingdom of God?")

Read: Psalm 62; 1 Corinthians 2.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for fighting for me in this world. The devil is constantly trying to hurt or kill me ... You protect me against things that I never even see. Please continue this "round the clock" protection. Guide me to appreciate all that You do for me. I pray this in the name of Jesus; Amen.

Wednesday - Week Thirteen

Catechism Review

Read Questions 79-86

1. Read question 80 carefully. Why is abortion such a tragedy?

2. The Bible says that the government has the right to take a person's life if they have murdered someone. How should the government decide whether to use capital punishment or not?

3. In the King James Version of the Bible this commandment was translated "Thou shalt not kill." Why is the NIV translation ("murder") better?

4. Is smoking a sin? Overeating? Not exercising?

5. How can you be a better friend to people (be specific!)

Read: Psalm 63; 1 Corinthians 3.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, this world puts very little value on human life these days. Abortion continues to claim the lives of millions of little babies every year. So called "mercy killing" also accounts for numerous deaths in America and elsewhere. Lord, be merciful to us and do not treat us as our sins deserve. Guide us to see the absolute value that You put on human life. I pray this in the name of the One who came to redeem the lives of all people: Jesus; Amen.

Thursday - Week Thirteen

Lesson Thirty-Eight: Balaam

Read: Numbers 22-24

Summary: Balaam and Balak tried in vain to defeat the Israelites. God's hand protected His people.

Background and Comments

- King Balak reasoned that there were two reasons why the Israelites had success against Sihon and Og: 1) Sihon and Og's gods were not happy with them or 2) Israel's God was stronger than Sihon and Og's gods. Therefore he decided to cover all his bases by getting Balaam (a sorcerer) to secure the Israelite's God's favor. Balak's and Balaam's unbelief is staggering.
- The story of Balaam and his talking donkey make us smile. This self-absorbed false prophet had to listen to a lecture about angels given by a donkey! Perhaps the next time we wonder if God can use us to proclaim His Word it would be good to read through this story once again. If God can use a donkey He can certainly use us!

Lessons for Today

- Balaam at times sounds like a true prophet of the Lord. Yet down deep his heart was set on money (2 Peter 2:15). He thought that he could bring the Lord around to his own way of thinking. In other words, he thought he could turn the Lord away from the Israelites.
- Imagine Balak's frustration when Balaam continued to bless the Israelites and curse his nation! Eventually evil is frustrated by God ... although sometimes we need to wait for that to happen.
- God's power is again the main point of this account. Sorcery, foreign armies and evil plans were unable to frustrate God's plans. The same is true for the plans God has for your life!

Read: Psalm 64; 1 Corinthians 4.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for all the people who are working to make this weekend's worship services edifying and meaningful for us. Guide the organist and choir director as they prepare music. Bless my pastor as he studies Your Word and then prepares his sermon. Let me come to church ready and willing to listen to Your Word as it is applied to my life. I ask this in Jesus' name; Amen.

Friday - Week Thirteen

Life Questions

Topic/Question: Why don't people who belong to other churches sing in our services? Why can't they take communion in our church? What about the Boy Scouts?

Bible References and Considerations

- These questions focus us on the Bible's teaching about church fellowship. Here is a thumbnail sketch of what the Bible says:
 1. The invisible church includes all believers. Any person who believes that Jesus is his/her Savior will go to heaven (no matter what denomination they belong to). Visible churches are groups who have gathered together to worship (all the individual churches in town are visible churches). We cannot look into someone's heart to see if they are in the invisible church or not; we can't judge someone's faith. God does, however, command us to judge what people and congregations believe; we make these judgments based on the unchanging Word of God.
 2. God wants us to join with other Christians to worship, pray, send missionaries and other acts of faith. Since we cannot look into hearts to see if someone is a Christian or not the only way we can make decisions in this area is to look at the person's confession. God has made it clear that any false doctrine is serious ... and keeps us from joining in worship, prayer, etc.
 3. To join with others (in worship, prayer, etc.) who do not believe the same things we do says one of two things: 1) we believe the same things or 2) our differences don't really matter. Neither of those is true so we don't want to give that impression.

Practically Speaking

- Some people might ask, "What is wrong with the Boy Scouts?" The Boy Scouts consider themselves to be an organization with religious underpinnings. If the leaders lead in prayers in the meetings we need to ask ourselves if we want someone who believes different things about the Bible to be leading our young people in prayers. The whole merit (badge) system is at least in part based on finding favor in God's eyes; that goes against everything the Bible says about God's grace.

Read: Psalm 65; 1 Corinthians 5.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, this world says that there can be unity without agreement in doctrine. Guard me against this attitude. Amen.