

Life of Moses Study (December 6, 2020)

OPENING QUESTION:

SERMON DISCUSSION: How were you impacted by the sermon? What new thoughts or lessons did you discover? In what ways did you find yourself challenged and/or encouraged?

READ Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:13-16

NOTE: As the LORD had instructed, the people built the Tabernacle and God dwelt among them. His presence was evident in the cloud of fire over the tabernacle. A census was taken to select warriors, priests from among the Levites, and to arrange the tribes of Israel in preparation for their march into Canaan.

And the people complained! They complained about the food, they complained about the lack of water, they complained about being led into the desert to die, and they complained about Moses' authority. Despite God's visible presence and faithfulness to care for them, they complained because they did not believe Him. The repeated displays of unbelief resulted in their wandering in the desert for years.

The LORD instructed Moses to send spies into Canaan. All the spies, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb returned from their expedition and said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are" (Numbers 13:31). But Joshua and Caleb said "If the LORD delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us...only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land...the LORD is with us" (Numbers 14:8-9). The people wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb. But God said, "None of the men who have seen my glory and my signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised me shall see it. But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully. I will bring in to the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it" (Numbers 14:22-24). The LORD would only allow Joshua, Caleb and those under 20 years old to enter the Promised Land!

When the people heard they would not be allowed into Canaan, they mourned and said they would go to the place that the LORD had promised. Moses told them not to go "For there the Amalekites and Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following the LORD, the LORD will not be with you...but they presumed to go...the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them, even to Hormah" (Numbers 14:39-45).

Even Moses was guilty of unbelief when he did not follow God's directions and twice struck the rock at Meribah to produce water for the people (Numbers 20:2-13). As a result the LORD said to Moses, "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" (Numbers 20:12).

1. Thirty-eight years earlier, the Israelites had been defeated when they tried to enter Canaan (Numbers 14:39-45). Describe what happened in Hormah that brought different results (Numbers 21:1-3). Did the experience in Hormah impact the people's mindset? Explain.

2. Why were the Israelites going around Edom (Numbers 20:18-21)?

3. What are your thoughts about the people's impatience and complaints as they set out from Mount Hor (Numbers 21:4-5)? What was the "worthless food" they "loathed"? What would you have thought if you were in their place?

4. Moses had interceded on behalf of the Israelites numerous times. What is different this time regarding the LORD's response concerning the people (Numbers 21:4-9)?

5. Why may it have been challenging for Moses to make a bronze serpent for the people to look towards (Genesis 3:1-15; Exodus 20:4-6)?

6. The people said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you" (Numbers 21:7). Why was confession not enough to be relieved of the judgment (serpent bites)? What was their only escape from death?

7. How does the incident involving the bronze serpent relate to John 3:13-16?
"No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

8. Share principles evident from this week's lesson that you discover about sin and salvation?

9. Share attributes about the LORD evident in the lesson.