

## **Bible Study Lesson Summary, May 31, 2020**

*Today's lesson includes Days 75-81 on your reading guide.*

### **BOOK OF NUMBERS**

**Num. 14:** In this chapter Moses gets to be the savior of the people, begging for God's mercy on them. Unlike Jesus he has nothing to offer to God, so he is asking for mercy and not justice. But being a just God, God must then ask some price for this rebellion, so in vs. 23 God says, "not one shall see the land which I promised on oath to their fathers. None of these who have spurned me shall see it."

In vs. 39-45 the people try to get around the punishment and still get the Promised Land. They try to conquer it without God's help and are defeated.

**Num. 15:** In this chapter the people receive the instructions for forgiveness of sins. Note in vs. 22 that they must even seek forgiveness for "inadvertent" sins. Now we can barely get people to ask for forgiveness for sins they meant to commit.

In vs. 30-31 anyone who sins defiantly...has only himself to blame. This is important because we tend to blame our parents or the society, etc. In vs. 32-35 the Lord gives a death sentence for working on the Sabbath. We think nothing of ignoring the Lord's Day.

They are also instructed to wear tassels on their garments to remind themselves of the commandments.

A hin of oil, mentioned in the first part of the chapter, is about a pint.

**Num. 16:** A rebellion of 250 people wanting to be priests, so they can approach the Lord, come against Aaron and Moses. God kills them. This is why a vocation to the priesthood is a two-way street in the Catholic Church. A person may feel called to be a priest, but they are not ordained unless the bishop accepts them. The other problem we face is thinking we don't need the priest. "I can pray at home." Moses as the intercessor, and later Jesus, is the priestly image that reminds us just how important this job is.

**Num. 17:** Vs. 6 shows that the people still don't understand the message and blame the 250 deaths on Moses and Aaron. So more people die of the plague because of a further revolt so the Lord sets up a test of staffs. Vs. 23, "The next day, when Moses entered the tent, Aaron's staff, representing the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth not only shoots, but blossoms as well, and even bore ripe almonds!" This reaffirmed that the Levites were to be the priests and serve God. A tradition of the Church is that Joseph was chosen to be the husband of Mary in the same way. His staff was the one that bloomed out of many single men's staffs. This is why you see statues of Joseph with a blooming staff.

**Num. 18:** The Levites are to be the priests and so will not have their own land to till. This chapter outlines how they will survive. The other tribes are to pay tithes to them for their work as priests.

**Num. 19:** Lustral water, vs. 13, made holy by the ashes of a sacrificed red heifer, becomes a sign of baptism, which also forgives sin. Another translation for Lustral water is simply purification water. God wisely instilled a fear of touching or being near a person who had died in their tent, since they would not be able to identify the thing that killed the person. CSI was not available yet, not even a coroner's office.

**Num. 20:** In vs. 11, I had always wondered why Moses was punished for striking the rock twice, until I asked a rabbi. He explained that Moses struck it the first time as God had said. Water had not come out immediately so he struck it again as if he could get the water out by just hitting the rock harder himself. Vs. 10, "He and Aaron assembled the community in front of the rock, where he said to them, 'Listen to me, you rebels! Are we to bring water for you out of this rock?'" This showed that he was no longer trusting God but thinking he was the one making the great things happen. Vs. 12, "But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you were not faithful to me in showing forth my sanctity before the Israelites, you shall not lead this community into the land I will give them.'" More signs had been given Moses, so more was expected of him, and he failed.

Miriam, the sister of Moses, died at the beginning of this chapter. Aaron, his brother, died at the end of the chapter, but it could have been years apart.

In going through Edom, they do not want to start a war so they go around.

**Num. 21:** John 3:14 says: "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." The bronze serpent foreshadowed Jesus by saving the lives of those who had been bitten by serpents. Vs. 14 mentions the "Book of the Wars of the Lord." This text was lost over the centuries because it was not important to God to have it included in the inspired Scriptures. Psalms 135 & 136 mention some of these battles like the victory over Og, the king of Bashan.

**Num. 22:** The story of Balaam is fun. First Balaam is supposed to refuse to join the princes. Then he is allowed to go, under certain conditions, but then the Lord changed his mind and sent the angel which scared the ass, who then talked. It is awesome. Then he is allowed to go again under certain conditions.

**Num. 23:** Balak is determined to get what he wants from God, like you would a slot machine. But he is finding out that God is not forced by our will. Num. 23:22 and 24:8, "It is God who brought him out of Egypt, a wild bull of towering might." This refers to Israel but can also refer to Jesus coming out of Egypt. Balak tries to get different results by going to different places, probably because he thinks in terms of different gods. He does not understand the one God who is almighty.

**Num. 24:** Vs. 17, "I see him, though not now; I behold him, though not near; a star shall advance from Jacob, and a staff shall rise from Israel, that shall smite the brows of Moab..." The footnotes state that the Church Fathers have mentioned this as a Messianic prophecy, but it is a weak one. That might be because Balaam seems to be more of a seer than a prophet.

**Num. 25:** In vs. 1-2, "the people degraded themselves by having illicit relations with the Moabite women. These then invited the people to the sacrifices of their god..." This is a double

break of the commandments and death was the result. It is hard to imagine what this would have been like. Picture the men of Nebraska deciding they would go to Nevada and have their way with the woman of Nevada and then participating in the games of Nevada because that is what they do in Nevada. The people of Nevada would say it is great because that is what prostitution and gambling is there for. But God is not happy with the Israelites who should be focused on Him and His laws.

**Num. 26:** Another census, and we learn in vs. 59 that Jochebed and Amram of the tribe of Levi were the mother and father of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

Part of the purpose of this census might have been to help portion out the land of Israel when they got there. The bigger tribes would get better land. I am surmising this because vs. 63-65 lets us know that the original guys who had turned against God were now dead so these would be the ones that would go to the Promised Land. In other words, 40 years have passed since the other census

**Num. 27:** Notice that God makes an exception to take care of daughters who have no men (father or brothers) to give them status by law. This adds more clarification to the practical aspect of Jesus naming the beloved disciple to take care of Mary as He was dying on the cross.

Vs. 13, “taken to your people” is obviously dying.

Vs. 18, Joshua is to succeed Moses. Joshua means a man of spirit, very similar to the name Jesus. Some say it is just a different version of the same name. Either way, Joshua will now be the one to succeed Moses in foreshadowing Jesus.

## **The Book of Psalms**

**Psalm 77:** Despite all the problems Jesus trusts in the Lord.

**Psalm 78:** This psalm is about God and His mighty power. Vs. 20 “True, when he struck the rock, water gushed forth, the wadis flooded. But can he also provide bread, give meat to his people?” This remembering of the power of God while the people were in the desert foreshadows us on our pilgrim way and needing Baptism and Communion. Vs. 38, God’s mercy is that He did not destroy, but He did punish. That foreshadows the Father image that Jesus uses to help us understand God.

**Psalm 79:** A prayer of Jesus speaking as a part of the people of Israel and/or the Church in times of trouble.

**Psalm 80:** This psalm is like the last one in that Jesus is speaking for His Mystical Body. Vs. 9-18 refer to the vine that God is nurturing. Jesus obviously continues with that theme in His public ministry.

**Psalm 81:** This psalm is a dialogue between God and His people. Note in this psalm about God's work, that they remind us of the things of the OT that are foreshadowings of the NT. In vs. 6 we have Joseph coming out of Egypt as a foreshadowing of Jesus coming from Egypt as a child. In vs. 8 we have a reference to the waters of Meribah, which came from the rock; symbolizing the waters of baptism coming from the Church founded on the Rock. But the layout of the psalm starts with Jesus praying but then with the end of vs. 6 ("I hear a new oracle") He introduces the words of the Father and His hopes for His people. So the rest of the psalm is written to help us understand the Father's thoughts. (vs. 7-17)

**Psalm 82:** In vs. 7, Jesus talks about His Father and mocks the false gods because they do nothing. These man-made gods or men who think they are gods will die.

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

**Acts 13:** In vs. 9 we have Saul being identified as Paul for the first time. Remember that Jesus' first words to Saul in Acts 9:4 were: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Hearing his name once, would not have had an impact but twice focused the attention on the name itself. King Saul, his name-sake, had persecuted the anointed one, King David. This would have been an instant connection for Saul. But it would have taken a while to understand that to follow Jesus would mean having Jesus as his master or Lord. Someone named after a king, might convey an arrogant servant. The name Paul means small, so Saul was doing like John the Baptist and diminished while Christ increased. So by having himself called Paul, he was saying he was the Lord's unworthy servant.

The story in vs. 4-12, about the blindness of Elymas the false prophet and magician was a good sign from the Holy Spirit that opened the people up to the truth. It also helps show the Gospel is not about magic, but the power of God.

In vs. 21, Paul actually refers to King Saul. This would have finished the connection of why he now started to refer to himself as Paul.

Vs. 31 of Paul's address in the synagogue is noteworthy; "...and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem." Even though a couple Gospels have a shortened version of the time from Resurrection to Ascension, Paul clarifies that it was more than a couple days. Also notice how Paul uses the psalms to help the people understand the story of Jesus. This worked because he was in a Jewish synagogue. Starting in vs. 44 he is addressing Gentiles so he uses a different tact. Some believed some wanted Paul to go away, so he did.

**Acts 14:** In Iconium, modern Turkey they had mixed luck but left before getting stoned. In vs. 8-18 a cripple is cured and they face one of the problems that they will continue to struggle with,

having people think they are powerful gods, rather than realizing that it is Jesus who has the power.

In vs. 19 Paul is stoned, left for dead, prayed over and gets up and goes back into the city. Then they backtracked to the cities they had already visited and strengthened the spirits of the believers to realize that it would be hard for they would have to go through hardships to enter the kingdom of God.

In vs. 23 we hear that they appointed presbyters (priests) to help them. They Paul and Barnabas went back to give a report to the ones who had sent them from Jerusalem.

**Acts 15:** As I mentioned, the struggle between the Jewish and Gentile converts went on for a while. This Council of Jerusalem was a part of it. In vs. 7, we see who they saw as boss, Peter. But this struggle went on after this council until A.D. 70 when the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. You don't hear about it after that. Probably because the Jews were struggling with their own identity, much less their identity as Christians. Actually, for the non-Jewish Christians it became easier, they were no longer expected to be Jews and Christians.

In vs. 13-21, we have James moving forward from Peter's declaration and fine-tuning it, with the use of a quote from the Prophet Amos 9:11-12. This shows how the pope is in charge but it is up to the bishops to clarify those teachings for different circumstances. Then you have the final decision in vs. 22-35 is an Apostolic Exhortation from the first church council, the Council of Jerusalem. We still have them from their successors. Vs. 36-41 is a reminder that these guys are not perfect. They argue and disagree. We still have that also.

**Acts 16:** Paul keeps up his mission trips and vs. 5 say that the church "grew stronger in faith and increased in number." Then Paul went other places and met Lydia and she provided a home for them. Then in vs. 16-24 the devil made the fortune-teller slave girl say false things about Paul and Silas. Paul drove out the devil, which got him arrested because she had made money for her owners by contradicting him. They were tried, beaten with rods, and put in prison. During the night an earthquake freed them from their chains but they didn't leave so the jailer and his family were baptized. Possibly infant baptisms were a part of that family baptism. These baptisms were the reason Paul did not run from the prison when the chains came loose like I would have. Besides they might not have been done singing their songs.

When Paul revealed that he was a Roman citizen, which scared these Jewish magistrates, who then had to apologize.