

Study Guide Numbers 20-21

It's not just physical, it's more than that.

Introduction

This section marks a transition from the old generation to the new. Miriam, Aaron and Moses all die in this 40th year. They needed to learn that the wilderness experience was more than just a physical one, but that God had his purposes all along the way.

1. Complaining

Read Numbers 20:2-5. Notice the difference of being "in your face" vs. "on your face". Discuss how the people reacted to thirst, and how Moses and Aaron reacted. Why do you think it is important to get on your face before God when you are experiencing a "thirst" for something. What is happening when we get on our face before God (see 1 Cor. 10:4b).

2. Anger

Read Numbers 20:10-13. At this point (the 7th murmuring), the complaining got to Moses and he chose to react in anger. He succumbed to name-calling, self-exaltation, and disobeying God. As a result, Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land (although he does show up on the Mt. of Transfiguration in the afterlife!). There are consequences to our decisions, but God is also gracious with us. How could Moses have responded differently by doing some self-examination, and not stuffing his anger? How can we learn to deal with anger in healthy ways? Discuss.

3. Impatience

Read Numbers 21:4-9. Imagine having to go back into the wilderness. For the 8th time the people grumble, and God sends venomous snakes. When they cry out for help, God provides salvation- look to the bronze snake. It's interesting that Satan (the serpent) became our downfall when we got our eyes off Jesus. Share a time when you felt impatient. What is a good way to handle impatience? Discuss.

4. Read Numbers 21:16-17. Notice that the people had been traveling again from place to place to place. This time, instead of grumbling, they must have been processing differently. When God does provide water for them, they worship Him. Now read John 7:37b-39a. What is the advantage to putting your faith in Jesus when you "thirst"? What could be the impact of waiting on God? Discuss.

Numbers 20-21

Big Idea- It's not just physical, it's more than that.

Transition to a New Generation (Numbers 20-21)

¹And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and was buried there.

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Numbers 20:24a

“Let Aaron be gathered to his people...”

I. The Issue of Complaining (Numbers 20:2-9)

²Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. ³And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! ⁴Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? ⁵And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place?”

I. The Issue of Complaining (Numbers 20:2-9 *continued*)

⁶Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, ...” tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water...

Psalms 142:2 & 5

“I pour out my complaint before Him...I cry to you, LORD; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.’”

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1 Corinthians 10:4b

“...for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.”

II. The Anger Issue (Numbers 20:10-13)

¹⁰Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” ¹¹And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.

1. Quarreling

2. Self-exaltation

3. Disobedience

II. The Anger Issue (Numbers 20:10-13 *continued*)

¹² And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "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." ¹³ These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy.

Transition to a New Generation (Numbers 20-21)

Edom (Numbers 20:14-21)

¹⁴ Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom: "Thus says your brother Israel: You know all the hardship that we have met: ... ¹⁷ Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or vineyard, or drink water from a well. We will go along the King's Highway.

Transition to a New Generation (Numbers 20-21)

Canaan (Numbers 21:1-3)

When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive.

III. The Issue of Impatience (Numbers 21:4-20)

⁴ From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." "We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are."

III. The Issue of Impatience (Numbers 21:4-20 *continued*)

⁸ And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

John 3:14-15

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

IV. Spiritual Transformation (Numbers 21:4-20)

... Oboth, Iye-abarim, Valley of Zered, Arnon, Mattanah, Nahaliel, Bamoth (Moab)...

¹⁶ And from there they continued to Beer; that is the well of which the Lord said to Moses, "Gather the people together, so that I may give them water." ¹⁷ Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well!—Sing to it!—

John 7:37b-39a

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.

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Self-Examination

Preparation- Take a few moments in silence.

Invitation- Invite God into your thinking.

Review the Day- Reflect on the moments of the day.

Give Thanks- Thank God for each part of the day.

Confess- Invite God to bring wrong attitudes to mind.

Ask Forgiveness- Express your willingness to make right what is wrong.

Seek Spiritual Friendship- Talk to a trusted person what you are discovering about yourself.