

THE PENTATEUCH III: LEVITICUS-NUMBERS

WEEK 4

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① WILDERNESS EPISODES, POST SINAI

Kadesh Barnea
Murmuring
Census

② THE WILDERNESS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

1 Corinthians
Hebrews

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- ① Grapes, figs and pomegranates
- ② "... it certainly does flow with milk and honey..."
- ③ The people are strong, cities are fortified
 - Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Canaanites
 - Anakim (part of the Nephilim) are there

Bottom line: The land *is* good, and the people *are* beyond their ability, making Joshua's rebuke ring in their ears:

Numbers 14:8-9a—If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us in to this land and give it to us—a land flowing with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD, and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey [food].

- The initial command to observe the danger comes from God Himself. (13:1-2)
- “Would that we had died in Egypt” (14:2); “Let us . . . return to Egypt” (14:4)
- “Would that we had died in this wilderness” (14:2); God’s judgment is that they will die in wilderness. (14:28-30)
- “Our wives and our little ones will become plunder. . .” (14:3); The little ones are those who get to enjoy the promise land (14:31).
- “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” (14:4) They’ve already chosen their leaders in the 10 faithless spies.
- They were permitted to see the greatness of the land for 40 days (13:25); the judgment will be 40 years (14:34).
- They attempted to judge Moses and Aaron (14:10); Moses (and Aaron) intercede for the people (14:13-20).

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What is weird about this comment?

Numbers 11:5-6—We remember the fish we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all except this manna.

Cf. the following NT Passage:

Romans 6:20-21—When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

See too Psalm 73.

All of this death requires some attention. Is this overkill? How would you respond if a young believer or non-Christian asked you why God is responding so violently?

(Note the importance of seeing behind the question. Cf. Newman's *Questioning Evangelism*)

Why is God responding so violently?

- *Israel's Special Covenant Relationship*
Exodus 24:3— Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!”
- *God's Ownership of Israel*
God redeemed Israel from brutal slavery and infanticide, which gives him certain regal privileges.
- *God's Completely Righteous Character*
Habakkuk 1:13a—Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. (Psalm 5:3,4)
- *Wages of Sin*
Romans 6:23—For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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A set of small navigation icons typically found in Beamer presentations, including symbols for back, forward, search, and other slide controls.

Why would God call for censuses?

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- ① In preparation for the conquest, the number of fighting men would be of significant interest.
- ② The population of Israel is essential for distribution of the land.
- ③ It is a visible fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 17, 26, 35).
- ④ The fact that there are *two* censuses is entirely a function of Israel's disobedience! (Cf. Numbers 14:29—"your corpses will fall in the wilderness, all your numbered men")

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A tempting response to the apologetical question above is that God doesn't work that way any more.

1 Corinthians 10:3-5;11—They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

(Cf. Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30)

What it's **NOT** saying:

- You will go to hell if you sin.
- God will smite you for any discretion.

What it is saying:

- God is as holy as he ever was!
- God may (in his sovereign wisdom) chose to judge Christians on this side of eternity
- We must develop a posture of humility, heart of trust before this almighty God

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We will not even be able to graze the surface on this rich passage:

Heb 3:16-19 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

The above passage has similar lessons to I Cor 10 with some additional richness, related to *rest*: we may miss out on God's awesome blessings if we choose not to believe him.

What are some examples of this that you've seen?

- "I can follow God on my own."
- "All churches are the same, I can go anywhere and be fine in fellowship."
- "Lord, don't send me to speak to that person at work, I'm just too..."
- "It's too late for me. I've made too many mistakes. God has washed his hands of me."
- "I'd really rather get that extra hour of sleep than spend time with God today. I'll be more rested."

- ① Copan, Paul. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Baker Books, 2011.
- ② Hoffmeier, James. *Ancient Israel in Sinai: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Wilderness Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 2011.
- ③ Morales, L. Michael. *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the book of Leviticus*. IVP, 2015.
- ④ Sklar, Jay. *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*. IVP Academic, 2014.
- ⑤ Wenham, Gordon J. *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary*. IVP Academic, 1981.