

Numbers 16:41-48

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[0 : 00] Old Testament and the book of Numbers, chapter 16. The book of Numbers is quite a wonderful book and it's actually quite a neglected book.

Numbering His people.

And God ordains that. And He numbers them. He sets them around the tabernacle. Because God came to dwell in the midst of His people, did He not?

And He done that in the Old Testament. And of course He does that in the New Testament as well. But throughout the opening chapters of Numbers, we see God again setting His people by tribe around the tabernacle.

So that He can be right in the midst of them. But He's also teaching them. He's teaching them ordinances. He's regulating worship. He's teaching them about purity.

[1 : 15] He's teaching them all kinds of things. And in the midst of all this, in the midst of God living in the midst of His people, we still see all this rebellion by His people.

We see sin in the form of unbelief. Sin in the form of just outright rebellion against God's authority. That's actually kind of what we'll be reading about tonight in Numbers chapter 16. But we see all these things. But we also see the mercy of God extended.

Even so, even so His people that He has rescued, keep in mind, He's redeemed them. He brought them out by blood out of Egypt, by the blood of the Passover lamb.

He delivered them through the Red Sea. He has fed them in the wilderness with manna. He has given them drink from a rock. He has done all these things.

[2 : 14] And these people still have the sin of unbelief in their heart. Because they're still lusting after Egypt in the book of Numbers. They're still asking, why are we out here in this wilderness?

Why is all this happening to us? We had things better off back in Egypt. And that's the gist of about half of the book of Numbers.

Then we get to Numbers chapter 16. And in the first two-thirds, first three-quarters or so of the chapter, we have this rebellion that takes place.

It's a rebellion of Korah, of a man named Dotham, and a man named Abiram. And what's odd about this is Korah is a Levite, but Dotham and Abiram are Reubenites.

Reuben was told by Jacob in the book of Genesis. If you've ever read that, never studied through that, Reuben was told, you will never excel.

[3 : 20] You will never excel. And why was he told that? Because Reuben took liberty with one of Jacob's concubines. But he tells him in that.

Jacob tells Reuben on his deathbed. Jacob tells Reuben, he says, You are my firstborn. You are my strength. You are my might. Then he says, you are unstable as water. And you will not excel. And here is Reuben, or descendants of Reuben I should say, with a descendant of Levi, trying to take over the priesthood in Numbers chapter 16.

And we've been talking a lot about the priesthood on Wednesday nights here recently. And we've talked about that, talked about how the priests were the descendants of Aaron.

Levites were Levites. And Aaron was a Levite. But only the priests came from Aaron's seed. Not all Levites are priests.

[4 : 23] But all priests are Levites. Is how I phrased it on Wednesday nights. But here is Korah, not a descendant of Aaron. And here is Dothan and Abiram, not even Levites, let alone descendants of Aaron, trying to take over the priesthood.

God sends judgment upon them. The ground opens up. It swallows up Korah. It swallows up these other men. Fire comes out. Because Moses had told them, when they come to Him, they said, you're taking too much upon yourself.

You're taking too much upon yourself. Why is it that you're doing this thing? Is what they were asking. They said, you can give some of this to us. Moses knew what God had commanded. And He tells them, He says, alright then, you burn incense. You see how it goes for you. If you burn incense, which was a priestly duty. They did so, and fire came out from God and destroyed the men that were doing that.

As well as the ground opening up and swallowing up Korah, and Abiram, and Dotham. All that has happened in the text that we'll be covering, or just before the text that we'll be covering tonight.

[5 : 36] So all that being said, in Numbers chapter 16, beginning at verse 41, it says, But on the morrow, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.

And it came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation, and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared.

And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation, and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment.

And they fell upon their faces. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly into the congregation, and make an atonement for them.

For there is wrath gone out from the Lord. The plague is begun. And Aaron took as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation. And behold, the plague was begun among the people.

[6 : 46] And he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living. And the plague was stayed. Back to verse 41. But on the morrow, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.

One of the most fascinating things about this verse, about this whole account, is the very first words of verse 41, where it says, On the morrow. Which means, the very next day, after what I explained in the introduction, if you'd like to call it that, to this sermon, after what I explained about Korah, and Dothan, and Abiram, wanting to overtake the priestly duties, wanting to assume these things upon themselves, the ground opening up, and swallowing, not only these men, but their tents, and all those around them, everything to do with them, after this judgment had passed, and the people of Israel had witnessed the judgment of Almighty God come upon these people, it says, On the morrow, the very next day, after they had seen this judgment, it says, But on the morrow, all the congregation of Israel murmured against Moses, and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the Lord.

Not only the timing of this, the very next day, like they had witnessed the judgment of Almighty God, but also, what they are accusing Moses and Aaron of doing.

Moses did not have power to cause the ground to open up. Moses did not have power to cause the fire to come out. Yet the people, here in the congregation of Israel, are falsely accusing Moses and Aaron of killing the people of the Lord.

Folks, the world right now is in no better shape, and they make the exact same accusations, they say the same types of statements. People will hear a preacher preaching against sin, preaching against their lifestyle, preaching against their lack of morals, preaching against any number of things, and they will blame the preacher, they'll blame God, they'll blame Scripture, they'll blame Providence itself, they'll blame anything except for their own rebellion against Heaven.

[9 : 06] These folks here were blaming Moses and Aaron over something that they did not do. It was judgment from Almighty God because of a sin of rebellion of one of Korah and two of the Reubenites.

And here they were, saying, Moses and you have killed these people. Make no mistake, folks, you will be accused of being in the wrong. You will be accused of being judgmental.

I have been accused of being judgmental for doing nothing more than telling someone what thus saith the Word of Almighty God. And if you go out and you present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its entirety and in its purity and in its truthfulness, the world will come against you, the world will hate you just as these people here hated Moses and hated Aaron.

Jesus Christ said it Himself, if the world hates you, know that it hated me first. He said, you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. If you go out and you preach Jesus, the world doesn't like that because the world, if they even believe in a salvation of any kind, they want something to do with it. They want something to do with saving themselves. They want to say, look what I have done. Look what I have accomplished. We, as born-again children of God, we have accomplished nothing as far as salvation in our own lives is concerned.

[10:36] God accomplished it and He accomplished it through the sacrifice of His only begotten Son. Dear Christian, don't you ever, ever forget that truth.

It is all because of Jesus. We just sung it a little while ago. Jesus paid it all. He paid it all for your sakes and for my sakes. He took the suffering and He took the mockery and He took the shame and He took the beating.

He took the flogging. He took the crucifixion that you and I deserved upon Himself. And I praise God for that because even, even if I had taken all that stuff upon me, it would have done no good in light of all of eternity.

It would have done me no good as far as salvation is concerned. But Christ took all those things upon Himself that you and I, that you and I could have life with Him and have life everlasting, have eternal life with Him.

Verse number 42, It came to pass, when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation and behold, the cloud covered it and the glory of the Lord appeared.

[11:49] It came to pass when the congregation was gathered against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the tabernacle of the congregation and behold, the cloud covered it and the glory of the Lord appeared.

This cloud that had followed Israel all throughout their wilderness journeys, this cloud which was a manifestation of the physical presence of Almighty God with His people.

This cloud was over the tabernacle of the congregation. That was not such an unusual sight to the Israelites. It had followed them all throughout their wilderness journey, but there's a tag on the end of this that says, and the glory of the Lord appeared.

This is what was different about it. This is what was different about this cloud hanging out over the tabernacle of the congregation. It says that the glory of the Lord appeared.

Folks, the glory of the Lord appearing to you and I as born-again individuals that should bring us to worship, that should drive us to exaltation of the name of Jesus Christ.

[12:57] But the glory of the Lord appearing to someone who is unsaved, to someone who has not been born again, to someone who is still lost in their sin is a frightful, terrible, and dreadful thing.

The glory of the Lord appeared to these people here over the tabernacle of the congregation. The glory of the Lord. The glory of the Lord. Folks, you think about Isaiah.

In Isaiah chapter 6, when Isaiah witnessed the glory of God, when he witnessed God in the temple, and he witnessed the length of His train, and he witnessed all the glory surrounding him, the cherubim worshipping God, what did he say?

He said, Woe! Woe is me, for I am undone. This is what the glory of God should drive people to realize is their own inability to save themselves, their own unrighteousness, their own sin, their own filth, their own darkness.

The glory of God should show that. You think about Peter in Luke in chapter 5, after Jesus told him to shove out into the deep and put his net down. Peter said, Lord, we've toiled all night, and we haven't caught anything, yet at Thy word, I will let down the net.

[14:13] And they brought in such a draught of fish that it said that it break the net. They hollered for the sons of Zebedee to come help them. And started seeking both of their boats. And what did Peter say when he realized who Jesus was?

Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. That is what, that is what the glory of God does. It causes us to realize our sinfulness.

And it causes us to realize our need for Him. And whether we accept that or we reject that, it's completely and totally up to us.

But the glory of God appeared to these Israelites over top of the tabernacle of the congregation. Verses 43 through 45.

And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Get you up from among this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment.

[15:14] And they fell upon their faces. Again in 43, And Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of the congregation. I read nothing about the rest of Israel.

I read nothing about any elders of Israel. I read nothing about anyone outside of Moses and Aaron, which was God's chosen mediators between Himself and the nation Israel.

I read nothing about anyone coming before the tabernacle, before this cloud, and before the glory of God outside of them. Yet they went.

They weren't afraid. Now, they feared God. Don't you get me wrong. But they weren't afraid of the glory of God. And they went before the tabernacle. And verse 44 again, the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, verse 45, Get you up from among this congregation.

Not just get you up. Get you up. Get out of the way. Move over to this side. Don't you be hanging around these people. That's not what God was getting at. He says, Get you up from among this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment.

[16:22] And they fell upon their face. Judgment was coming. And that is why the glory of God appearing over the tabernacle of the congregation should have caused such a stir to these Israelites.

It should have caused them to see their sin. It should have caused them to see their rebellion. It should have caused them to see their rebellion against divine authority that belonged to Almighty God.

And God tells Moses and Aaron, Get up. After they had fallen on their face, Get up. Get up. What were they doing? Why did Moses and Aaron fall on their face?

You might say for worship. And they may have been a part of it. But I believe they fell on their face because of the context of what we're reading here. Praying for the nation of Israel.

Praying that God relent. Praying that God stay His judgment for just a little while. They fell on their face before the tabernacle and before the glory of Almighty God.

[17:27] And God says, Get up. Get up from this congregation that I may consume them as in a moment. Folks, sin brings death.

It is that simple. Sin brings death and it began in the garden with Adam and Eve. It began in Adam when he sinned and death started from that point forward.

Sin has brought death ever since sin entered in to the creation of Almighty God. It started with Adam in the days of Noah's flood. God flooded the earth.

Why? Because the thoughts of men's hearts were evil continually. Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain, they burned. Why? Not because God wanted a fire.

Not because He wanted to warm Himself up. But it was because of sin that the cities of the plain burned. And it has ever been that way. Sin brings forth death. Romans 6.23 says, For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

[18:29] Sin brings death. James reiterates that in his letter. He says, Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. This sin had brought forth the judgment of Almighty God.

And God says, I will consume them. As in a moment, judgment was coming swiftly. Judgment was coming quickly to these people. And it says again in verse 45, And they fell upon their faces.

They fell upon their faces. Now some might read this as, well, they're not doing as God told them to. They're bucking against God.

They're not following His commandments. Folks, I tell you now, this is the heart of what a true intercessor will do. This is the heart of what a true priest would do.

Of what a true child of God should do. You don't laugh at the judgment of Almighty God on sinful people. And we don't make light of the judgment of God on sinful people.

[19:35] But we intercess for sinful people. Imagine if every time someone come against you, every time someone that was lost come against you for your belief, for your faith in the only begotten Son of the Father.

Imagine if you just laughed it off. No, you pray for those people. You pray for those people because you were in their shoes at one time. You were there at one time.

I know I was. I was there. You pray for those people. If God can have mercy on me, God can have mercy on them. You pray for those people.

You intercess on their behalf. You do like Stephen. Lord, lay not this sin to thy charge. If they hate you, it's not you.

It's whom you're affiliated with. They hate Christ. And they hate the Gospel. And they hate the Bible. They hate the way of salvation.

[20 : 32] They hate these things. It's not you because I promise you if you went out, if one day someone comes against you and they fuss and they bicker with you and they make fun of you and they cuss you to your face, whatever the case is, and that night you're out at the honky-tonks with them, that night you're out at the dance places with them, that night you're out doing what they do with them, they'll no longer hate you.

Why? Because you're just like them. But when you continue, when you continue to walk the way that this blessed old book prescribes us to walk, the way that God tells us to walk, you walk contrary to their lives and that is what they hate.

When you walk a life that is righteous, when you walk a life that is holy, it is contrary to the way that the world walks. And they know that your walk is of God.

And that is what they truly hate. Moses and Aaron fell on their face before God. In verse 45. Verse 46. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar and put on incense and go quickly unto the congregation and make an atonement for them.

For there is wrath gone out from the Lord. The plague is begun. Moses gives Aaron instruction as to what to do.

[22 : 02] Aaron being the high priest of the tribe of Israel. Moses said unto Aaron, take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar. Not just any old fire.

Aaron's boys had already been killed because they had offered strange fire before God. You read about that account in Leviticus chapter 10. Moses gives Aaron strict instructions.

You take a censer. You take the tool. You take the instrument that God has prescribed. And you take the fire off of the altar that God made Himself.

Folks, I tell you now, this is a beautiful picture of how that man cannot create his own way unto God. God has made that way and that way is through Jesus Christ and He alone.

We can't take any old censer. We can't take any old bowl. We can't take any old dish or any old anything else that we want to take and put fire from anywhere that we want to and offer any type of incense unto God at any time that we want to.

[23 : 08] We will do it the way that God tells us to. Incense throughout Scripture is almost always a picture of intercession. It's almost always a picture of prayer.

But if you read this, it says, Moses, sit in there and take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar and put on incense and go quickly unto the congregation and make an atonement for them.

What do you think any time you read the word atonement in Scripture? What do you think of? I think of a blood sacrifice. Any time that atonement is mentioned any time that atoning is brought up in the Scriptures or atonement or atone of any kind I think of a blood sacrifice.

I read nothing about a blood sacrifice here but it is a priest someone whom God has told to do these things using the priestly instruments and using the godly fire that is doing this that is what makes an atonement.

I always though think of blood sacrifice but this Scripture here shows that atonement is not always by blood. Now, don't you get me wrong.

[24 : 19] I'm not discounting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ a bit in saying that. But Aaron did not have time to go out in the midst of the congregation and take this censer with the fire from off the altar and put incense thereon on the fire and burn it unto God plus kill an animal.

That is not the atonement we're talking about here. We're talking about pacifying the wrath of God. That verse ends with the line the plague is begun.

Moses told Aaron to go quickly. Go quickly unto the congregation. Don't hesitate. You grab the censer. You grab some fire. You take some incense with you and you go to the congregation and you make an atonement right then and there.

The plague has begun. It was already killing people. The judgment of God had already been unleashed on Israel.

And Moses was saying quickly do this thing. Verse 47 And Aaron took as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the congregation. And behold the plague was begun among the people and he put on incense and made an atonement for the people.

[25 : 37] Moses told Aaron to go quickly into the congregation. The very next verse we see Aaron running. He didn't hesitate. He didn't stop for a snack.

He didn't ask Moses if he was positive. It says that he did as Moses commanded and he ran into the midst of the congregation. Folks, this is a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ coming into a sinful world.

He came here regardless of how helpless we were. Regardless of how filthy and wicked we were. Regardless of all of this. Christ came into the world to do what?

To make an atonement. to make an atonement for us. He came into the midst of a wicked people that hated him. People will say well the Bible says in John chapter 1 he came into his own the Jews and his own received him not.

Who crucified him? The Jews did. Who nailed him to the cross? The Gentiles did. Why? Because Jew and Gentile alike hated Jesus Christ.

[26 : 45] They hated God. They hated this man that walked contrary to their life. Jesus Christ who never sinned in thought word or deed.

Born of a virgin lived a perfect sinless life was crucified on Calvary's hill was buried resurrected the third and appointed in glorious morning and has ascended to the Father.

This man the world Jew and Gentile like hated and yet he came into the world to make an atonement for them for us for those back then 2,000 years ago for those beyond 2,000 years or those beyond his birth on back further in history and anyone else from this point forward who will repent of their ways and believe on the gospel of Jesus Christ Christ came and made an atonement for them praise God why?

why did he do that? because judgment had begun verse 46 Moses said the plague has begun folks again the plague began in the garden in every graveyard that you see now every mausoleum that you see now every headstone that you see now is a testimony that the plague is still in effect because sin brings death but Christ came and he came not just because he wanted something to do he didn't come just because of anything he came to seek and to save that which was lost he said himself I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance that was me and that's you we're all sinners according to the Bible all are sinned and come short of the glory of God there are none righteous no not one we all stand in need of a Savior folks this picture in this entire passage of Scripture that we have read this evening shows the need for mediation and shows the need for intercession you and I cannot do it on our own it takes a mediator it takes an intercessor

Paul wrote to Timothy in the second chapter of 1st Timothy he said there is one God and there is one mediator between God and man that is the man Christ Jesus Christ is the only mediator now Aaron here was mediating yes Aaron here was interceding yes but folks his mediation and his intercessory actions were temporary Aaron eventually died Aaron died you can read about you flip over just a few chapters in the book of Numbers you read about Numbers chapter 20 Aaron's death God told God told Moses to take Aaron and his son Eleazar up on Mount Hor he said Aaron's going to die Eleazar's going to be the high priest you read about it again in Numbers chapter 33 you read about it again in Deuteronomy chapter 10 about the death of Aaron his mediation was temporary but folks Christ has arose he is arisen and he lives forevermore to make mediation and intercession on behalf of all of those that have believed on him and had to make sacrifices over and over and over he had to offer up incense over and over and over according to the way that God had prescribed him to do folks the book of the book of Hebrews in fact we covered it just this past

[30 : 27] Wednesday night in Hebrews chapter 9 it says neither by the blood of bulls and goats but by his own blood Christ entered into the holy place once one time he entered in and that's all it takes for Christ but Aaron's intercession and his mediation was temporal then it went on to someone else Oeazar then it went on to someone else after that and someone else after that folks Christ and every one of those high priests pointed forward to Christ being the ultimate high priest and Aaron took as Moses commanded ran into the midst of the congregation and behold the plague was begun among the people and he put on incense and made an atonement for the people just as Christ made an atonement for the people Aaron here makes an atonement for the people but Christ's atonement is so much more is so much more it is an everlasting atonement it is an everlasting washing it is an everlasting sacrament it is an everlasting salvation that Christ brings unto all of those that repent and believe verse 48 and he stood between the dead and the living and the plague was stayed my goodness what a picture of Jesus Christ he stood between the dead and the living

Aaron here in the midst of this plague that God had unleashed on the Israelites Aaron goes out into the midst of the congregation makes an atonement for them using the incense using the priestly instruments doing everything as was prescribed by God Aaron does this thing and it says he stood between the dead and the living I'll tell you now folks Jesus Christ did the exact same thing the Bible makes it very plain that before we are saved before we're born again we are dead in our trespasses and sin we are not just sick we are not just injured we are not just in need of help but we are dead laying at the bottom of an ocean of sin and it took God to reach down it took Him to pick us up and bring our heads up above water to where we could breathe and have life Christ came and He hung between the dead sinful man and the living which is God who is life Christ came and stood and hung I'm sorry hung between the dead and the living so that we could have a way unto that life only He who is life is able to impart that life and He is able and willing to impart that life unto everyone who what? repents of their ways and believes on Him and believes in His gospel believe the good news that although you are a sinner and although you are deserving of nothing more than the flames of hell for all of eternity just as that's what I am deserving am deserving of but despite all that God is a wonderful and magnificent and willing and able Savior and He will save your soul through the sacrifice and the bloodshed of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ that is tonight's message God bless you all that is who the fuck