

## **Bible Study Lesson Summary, Dec. 10, 2017**

*This Sunday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup>, your readings should be Day 78: Chapters 20-21 of Numbers, Psalm 79, and Acts 15:1-21.*

**This is a second warning or blessing, there will be no class on 12/24 or 12/31. You will have two weeks to catch-up.**

*At this point I want to add a comment about God's plan to have a Savior who would crush the head of Satan. He did not choose Eve to be the mother because she was not trustworthy. She had sided with Satan. As God waited He watched two things. He watched people come up with new and creative ways to sin. Then He watched for people who were smart enough to learn from the mistakes of others rather than follow the sinful leaders or create another new sin. Once the sins had all been started He realized Mary would not follow Satan so he protected her from Satan (Immaculate Conception) so Jesus would have a mother who was trustworthy and would not let Satan in to harm a vulnerable baby Jesus.*

### **ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

**Acts 10:** God is working to get people together. First he gives a vision to Cornelius in vs. 1-8. Then he gives one to Peter in vs. 9-16. Of course Peter was clueless until he found out about Cornelius' vision. If he was going to be a good Pope he had to be open to all the people who accepted God into their lives, even those Gentiles, vs. 24-43. Notice the prejudice that the Jews had against the Gentiles. This came from God but is now being reversed because prophecy said that the king of the Jews would be a universal king.

**Acts 11:** Back in Jerusalem the Jews still had to be taught this lesson of accepting Gentiles. Vs. 19-26, some of the people in Jerusalem had gone north to Antioch or modern Turkey. Barnabas was sent to give them encouragement. He also was looking for Saul. Vs. 27-30 is a mission relief trip by Saul and Barnabas.

**Acts 12:** Herod Agrippa, son of Herod the baby killer and brother of Herod Antipas the Baptist killer, also becomes a killer and beheads James. This is about ten years after the crucifixion. Please with the response he got for killing the brother of John, Herod arrests Peter. Just like in Acts 5 an angel gets Peter out. In vs. 17 this other Mary, mother of John Mark, thinks Peter is a ghost because they felt Herod would have killed Peter. This Herod died unpleasantly.

**Acts 13:** In vs. 9 we have Saul being identified as Paul for the first time. No one knows for sure what made this happen. The best guess is that Paul did it to keep the fear level down for the people he had persecuted and to distance himself from the person Jesus said was persecuting him. King Saul had persecuted the anointed one, King David. Paul means small so Saul was doing like John the Baptist had said and diminished while Christ increased. 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, vs. 4-12. It also helps show the Gospel is not about magic but the power of God. 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 them to go away, so they 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. 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.

## **THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

**Psalm 73:** In this psalm Jesus is talking about the ways of the wicked and how they seem to succeed. He even gets to the point in vs. 22 of saying: "I was stupid and could not understand; I was like a brute beast in your presence." So this seems to be a prayer of Jesus as He went through the temptation with the devil after His forty days in the desert.

**Psalm 74:** This is in the plural so it seems to be Jesus' prayer as He is in the Garden of Gethsemane and taking on our sins and all that goes with them. With our sins we have no chance with God but Jesus stands with us and prays for salvation.

**Psalm 75:** In vs. 2 of this psalm Jesus starts out by thanking God for us and then in vs. 3-4 speaks for the Father who reaffirms Him. Then in vs. 5-9 Jesus speaks to the sinners and warns them. But the psalm ends with the joy of Jesus as He praises the Lord.

**Psalm 76:** Jesus is praying about God's terrible and awesome justice. This is what the King of Heaven must do to keep the Kingdom safe for those who are good.

**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.

## **BOOK OF NUMBERS**

**Num. 6:** The Nazirites must have been amazing. My footnotes say Samson, Samuel and John the Baptizer were members. It was a tough vow and tougher dedication. I love the priestly blessing of vs. 24-26, "The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!"

**Num. 7:** In vs. 12 you hear of Nahshon, son of Amminadab, prince of the tribe of Judah. He is also mentioned in the genealogy in Matt.1:4.

**Num. 8:** This chapter is a repetition of previous chapters. Vs 24-25 again gives the age limits of 25-50 years old for Levitical service. John the Baptist's father and mother, Zechariah and Elizabeth, were said to be of advanced age. Since 30 was the average life span until the 1800's this would not be as old as Abraham and Sarah, but still past child bearing age.

**Num. 9:** This chapter gives instructions for the annual Passover observance. Notice that vs. 1 lets us know that this is only the second Passover. All of this law giving was to have happened in the first year in the desert. All of these laws were given as the Israelites and Moses were at Mt. Sinai. In vs. 21 we start hearing more about the cloud that guided them. Please realize just how amazing it was to have a cloud in the desert.

**Num. 10:** In vs. 1-10 the trumpets are their civil defense sirens. In vs. 33 on the Ark of the Covenant, the word of the Lord, goes with them when they leave the mountain of the Lord.

**Num. 11:** In vs. 15 Moses wants God to do the favor of killing him, because he can't stand the complaining. This time it is for meat. God answered. "There arose a wind sent by the Lord, that drove in quail from the sea and brought them down over the camp site at a height of two cubits from the ground for the distance of a day's journey all around the camp. I would guess a day's journey to be from 5-10 miles. That is a lot of meat, but God want it to come out of their nostrils and become loathsome to them. (vs. 20) I think of this as the OT reason why we don't eat meat during the 40 days of Lent. They complained and did get meat when they were going through the 40 years in the desert but this complaining did not make God happy. So we deny ourselves and hopefully don't complain. Notice in Vs. 10 "Moses heard the people, family after family, crying at the entrance of their tents..." Each by themselves could do nothing about their problems so God had Moses bring them together then he appointed 72 elders to help solve problems. This is God's version of community organizing. Vs. 26-27, Eldad and Medad didn't show up for the meeting but still were able to be a part of the 72. They had been on the list but didn't come, so I presume it is a sign that God can work through anyone who is open to his call even if they are not perfectly in alignment with God's orders. Because of God's wrath at the quail feast I don't think those two missed any other meetings.

**Num. 12:** This is another lesson not to mess around with God's anointed. Miriam becomes a leper because she and Aaron are jealous of Moses. Besides being jealous they seem to be prejudice. Moses had contracted marriage with a Cushite woman. Cushite means black and in this context that isn't just race for it is also an area that is now called Ethiopia. Miriam and Aaron have a problem with this. Vs. 10 says that Miriam became a snow-white leper. Some scholars believe this was God's way of saying, you want white, I will show you white. This would be God's way of telling us that prejudice against races would not be His will.

**Num. 13:** Scouts are sent to the land of Canaan and generate fear in the Israelites who still don't trust God. Like Jesus, Moses intercedes by invoking God's mercy. Notice that Caleb is the only one who is willing to follow the Lord and that he is the scout from the tribe of Judah, vs. 6.

**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 it is mercy and not justice. But being a just God He must then ask some price for this rebellion, so "not one shall see the land which I promised on oath to their fathers. None of these who have spurned me shall see it. (vs. 23) 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 that they must even seek forgiveness for “inadvertent” sins, vs. 22. 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 are 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 sacrifice 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.