

## Lesson 9 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2018

### The Sin of Moses and Aaron

#### **Lesson Scope:** Numbers 20

*References in brackets refer to the lesson scope unless otherwise noted*

#### **Lesson Focus**

In chapter 20, we see Israel again encamped at Kadesh. Here, thirty-eight years earlier, Israel refused to enter Canaan upon the evil report of the ten faithless spies. It seems Kadesh remained somewhat of a permanent home base during these thirty-eight years of wandering while the unbelieving generation died (Deuteronomy 1:46).

This is now the fortieth year of Israel's journey from Egypt. Miriam died apparently shortly after Israel arrived at Kadesh in the first month. Aaron died on Mount Hor on the first day of the fifth month (33:38).

We have seen Israel's unbelief, complaining, and rebellion in the last several lessons. This did not end with the death of the older generation. Human nature remained all too evident in their children, whom we study in this lesson. These attitudes and actions destroy joy, multiply discontent and fear, and bring one into direct conflict with the Sustainer of life.

The temptation to follow human impulse, rather than divine direction, faces every person in times of crisis. Spiritual leaders become especially vulnerable when they are confronted with failure in their followers.

This lesson is not an opportunity to find fault with our own leadership. Rather, it is a warning to each of us who as adults have some responsibility of leadership. For example, it is a special warning for you as you lead out in discussing this lesson.

In addition, it is a warning to all of us as followers, because it clearly demonstrates how our attitudes and actions encourage others (including God-ordained leaders) to failure or to faithfulness.

**Lesson Aim:** To be instructed by the disobedience of Moses and Aaron.

**Theme Verses:** [James 1:19-20](#). Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

## Lesson Text

### "The People Chode (quarreled) With Moses"

[Numbers 20:1-6](#) Then came the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there. <sup>2</sup> And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. <sup>3</sup> And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! <sup>4</sup> And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? <sup>5</sup> And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it *is* no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither *is* there any water to drink. <sup>6</sup> And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

### "Must We Fetch You Water?"

[Numbers 20:7-11](#) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>8</sup> Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. <sup>9</sup> And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. <sup>10</sup> And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? <sup>11</sup> And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*.

### "Ye Believed Me Not"

[Numbers 20:12-13](#) And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which

I have given them. <sup>13</sup> This *is* the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them. **Numbers 20:22-29** And the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor. <sup>23</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, <sup>24</sup> Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. <sup>25</sup> Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor: <sup>26</sup> And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered *unto his people*, and shall die there. <sup>27</sup> And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. <sup>28</sup> And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. <sup>29</sup> And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, *even* all the house of Israel.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **"The People Chode (quarreled) With Moses"**

1. Explain the foolishness of the people's words to Moses.
2. How did Moses and Aaron's response demonstrate wisdom?
3. How may we be called to use wisdom in response to challenge?

#### **"Must We Fetch You Water?"**

4. What may have caused the attitude shift from verse 6 to verse 10?
5. What was the tragedy of verse 11?
6. What are some situations in which we might fail because of frustrations?

#### **"Ye Believed Me Not"**

7. How was the Lord sanctified (20:13) when Moses and Aaron failed to sanctify Him (20:12)?
8. How can our faith sanctify God today?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

Chode (20:3) means quarreled. The issue was deeper than the need for water. The children of Israel did not see Moses and Aaron as God's servants, but rather accused them of manipulating the situation to bring

deliberate harm to God's people (20:4), when in fact, they owed their lives to Moses' intercession.

Moses and Aaron's response in verse 6 was what God asks of His children in time of need. His show of glory and direction gave testimony to the promise of Isaiah 57:15.

Moses' greatest strength, meekness (12:3), was the very area in which he failed. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Psalm 106:33 tells us that the people provoked Moses. He then demonstrated that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20).

A type of Christ was broken, and God punished Moses and Aaron for unbelief that resulted in disobedience (20:12).

Meribah (20:13) means "provocation, strife." This name was also used for the earlier location near Mount Sinai, where Moses first struck the rock (Exodus 17:6-7).

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"The People Quarreled With Moses"**

1. Extremity tends to bring extreme human reactions (20:1-2). For hundreds of thousands of people to be out of water is a crisis hard to imagine, and desperation no doubt caused their carnal response. Times of great stress bring to the surface either buried carnality or amazing moderation that can only come through Christ in our hearts. We must believe Romans 8:28 and in desperate times cry out to God. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24).

2. Discontentment and unthankfulness cause people to blame others (20:3-5). The crisis was lack of water but the congregation complained about the lack of grains and fruit! Unthankfulness leads to many other sins, such as blaming others for the difficulties for which we are directly responsible. If we cultivate thankfulness and contentment, the tests of life will draw us closer to God and His people rather than drive us apart from them.

3. In a crisis, we must turn to the Lord in prayer (20:6). We must first ask the Lord to take control of ourselves. Only then can He work His will through us.

### **"Must We Fetch You Water?"**

4. God's direction in His Word is very clear if we sincerely seek it (20:7-8). God clearly told Moses what to do to meet the need. The simple commands of nonresistance are abundantly clear, but do we follow them in daily life? The call to separation is easy to understand, but how do I practice it from Monday through Saturday? The Beatitudes are so well defined that even a child can understand them, but many adults fail to live them out. Could the struggles we have at times to find God's will merely be caused by unwillingness to accept the direction He has already given?

5. Those in authority must have a proper respect for God's authority (20:7-9). Those whom God places in authority must remember that they are also under authority (Matthew 8:9) if they are to be channels of blessing to their followers.

6. Uncontrolled emotions quickly lead to even greater failure (20:10-11). We are emotional beings, but we are also accountable to control our emotions rather than let them control us. Bringing every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5) will prevent unbridled expressions.

7. God graciously provides despite men's failure (20:11-13). What a display of the mercy and goodness of God as water gushed from the rock! This is not a license to carelessness, but rather a call to deep humility as we contemplate what we deserve and what our Father has provided.

### **"Ye Believed Me Not"**

8. Unbelief is the root cause of disobedience (20:12). Why do men sin? They do not believe God or His Word. Why do men call themselves Christians and ignore the teachings of Christ? They do not believe that Christ will finally judge them by His Word.

9. God punishes sin regardless of one's position or past record (20:12, 24, 28). God made it clear to Israel through Ezekiel that a long life of faithfulness will avail nothing if one sins at the last. Nor will God favor certain persons because of who they are or how much good they have done.

10. When men fail, God sanctifies Himself in them (20:13). God's Word will remain true and binding although men disbelieve and disobey it. God's holiness is not marred by man's sin. If men fail to honor God before their fellow men, His righteous judgments upon them will move

others to acknowledge His holiness.

Failure affects one's service and usefulness to God (20:12, 24-29). The reaping for some sins cannot be changed or annulled. Moses served faithfully as long as he could, spending his last days preparing Israel to enter the Promised Land. But he could have no part in leading Israel in, though he pled with God to be permitted to do so.

### **Important Teachings**

1. Extremity tends to bring extreme human reactions (20:1-2).
2. Discontentment and unthankfulness cause people to blame others (20:3-5).
3. In a crisis, we must turn to the Lord in prayer (20:6).
4. God's direction in His Word is very clear if we sincerely seek it (20:7-8).
5. Those in authority must have a proper respect for God's authority (20:7-9).
6. Uncontrolled emotions quickly lead to even greater failure (20:10-11).
7. God graciously provides despite men's failure (20:11-13).
8. Unbelief is the root cause of disobedience (20:12).
9. God punishes sin regardless of one's position or past record (20:12, 24, 28).
10. When men fail, God sanctifies Himself in them (20:13).
11. Failure affects one's service and usefulness to God (20:12, 24-29).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. Explain the foolishness of the people's words to Moses.

As the people were facing a deadly crisis, rather than ask for water, they expressed a desire to have died before! They referred to themselves as the congregation of the Lord when they were not allowing Him to be their Lord. If it had not been for the failure of the congregation to follow Moses and Aaron, Israel would already have been in the "land which [flowed] with milk and honey."

2. How did Moses and Aaron's response demonstrate wisdom?

God's desire for His children has always been that they call on Him in any kind of need or trouble. Moses and Aaron left those who wanted to confront them and turned to God. Falling on their faces shows humility.

3. How may we be called to use wisdom in response to challenge? If we are confronted with expressions of anger, we are called to respond with soft answers, "not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing." If our practice of Christian day schools is questioned, our reasons for our convictions should be given in humility and meekness. If discussions among brethren turn to arguments, may we respond in meekness. If ungodly neighbors seek a quarrel with us, will they learn to know us as peacemakers or as defenders of our rights?

4. What may have caused the attitude shift from verse 6 to verse 10? Perhaps relief at having clear direction from God on how to solve the problem caused Moses to lower his guard against doing or saying the wrong thing. Perhaps Moses meditated on the unfairness of the congregation's accusations as he was walking to the rock. Apparently his mind's eye left the Lord to look on men.

5. What was the tragedy of verse 11? One of the greatest leaders of all time fell victim to unbelief and disobeyed his Lord. By this choice, he barred himself from Canaan.

6. What are some situations in which we might fail because of frustrations? Parents may become frustrated with children's lack of obedience. Teachers may be discouraged with seemingly slow learners. We may be tempted to get upset if others repeatedly misunderstand us. We may think young people are much too slow to "grow up." We can become discouraged from repeatedly failing to accomplish our goals. We will become frustrated when we fail to wait on the Lord.

7. How was the Lord sanctified (20:13) when Moses and Aaron failed to sanctify Him (20:12)?

The Lord was honored in the dispensing of His righteous judgment. When Moses and Aaron failed to extol Him as the Supreme Authority by exact obedience, with sobering finality, God revealed again that He will not be mocked and that we will reap what we sow.

8. How can our faith sanctify God today?

When our faith motivates us to carefully follow the Word in obedience to authority, in kindness to our fellow men, in love for those who hate us, in separation from the world in heart and practice, in patient endurance of trials, in dispensing the cup of water to friend or foe, in allowing the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 to be our attitudes in daily life, then God will be sanctified in us.

## **Summarizing the Lesson**

God deals with each man and with each man's failures in perfect righteousness. The sin of the children of Israel did not excuse Moses' sin. Moses' position did not excuse his sin. Yet God, in His grace, forgave Moses' sin and continued to work through him, although not in the fullness of Moses' first hope.

May we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, which will keep us from sin then God will not need to be sanctified among us by the punishment of sin.

## **Research Guide**

1. Read Exodus 17:10-12 for a positive example of how to relate to leadership.
2. Study in Doctrines of the Bible "Support of the Ministry," pages 356-359.