

## Lesson 10 - 3 July 2011.

### Divine Provisions in the Wilderness

**Lesson Scope:** [Numbers 21](#)

#### Lesson Focus

Chapter 20 tells how Israel had requested permission to travel through Edom a shortcut of possibly one hundred fifty miles. Edom responded by refusing them passage and gathering an army to stop them (Numbers 20:20). In today's lesson. Israel began their journey around Edom (Numbers 21:4).

The trials of the journey soon caused the people to complain about the lack of food and water. Because of their complaining. God sent poisonous serpents among the people, causing many to die. The people responded in repentance, and God mercifully healed those who looked in faith at the uplifted brazen serpent.

In contrast to Israel's previous responses of complaining and chiding their leader, we have the inspiring example of people singing as. In faith, their leaders dug a well at God's direction. As the people faithfully followed God's leading, He provided the needed resources for them to journey steadily toward the Promised Land.

This lesson should be used to increase our appreciation for the divine provisions we enjoy. Also stress the conditions we must meet to receive those provisions. We cannot expect God to automatically bless us because we have been His people. We must continue to meet the conditions.

The Lord desires for His people progress and victory. In times of failure and conflict, He calls them to the faith and the commitment that appropriate His provisions.

**Lesson Aim:** To see how the Lord provides for man's spiritual well-being.

**Theme Verses:** [John 3:14-15](#). And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him Should not perish, but have eternal life.

## Lesson Text:

### Life.

#### *Numbers 21:4-9*

<sup>4</sup> And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. <sup>5</sup> And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is* no bread, neither *is there any* water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup> Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. <sup>9</sup> And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

### Sustenance.

#### *Numbers 21:16-18*

<sup>16</sup> And from thence *they went* to Beer: that *is* the well whereof the LORD spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water.

<sup>17</sup> Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it: <sup>18</sup> The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, by *the direction* of the lawgiver, with their staves. And from the wilderness *they went* to Mattanah:

### Victory.

#### *Numbers 21:21-25*

<sup>21</sup> And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, <sup>22</sup> Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink *of* the waters of the well: *but* we will go along by the king's *high* way, until we be past thy borders. <sup>23</sup> And Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness: and he came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel. <sup>24</sup> And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok, even unto the children of Ammon: for the border of the children of Ammon *was* strong. <sup>25</sup> And Israel took all these cities: and Israel dwelt in all the cities of

the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages thereof.

### *Numbers 21:31-35*

<sup>31</sup> Thus Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. <sup>32</sup> And Moses sent to spy out Jaazer, and they took the villages thereof, and drove out the Amorites that *were* there. <sup>33</sup> And they turned and went up by the way of Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he, and all his people, to the battle at Edrei. <sup>34</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, Fear him not: for I have delivered him into thy hand, and all his people, and his land; and thou shalt do to him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. <sup>35</sup> So they smote him, and his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land.

## **Questions for Study**

### **Life**

1. Why so soon after a glorious victory (Numbers 21:3) did Israel turn against Moses and God?
2. What did the plague of fiery serpents do for Israel?
3. What did the dying Israelites express when they looked at the serpent on the pole?
4. What are some divine provisions we might be tempted to disregard?

### **Sustenance**

5. What was the value of the people singing as the nobles dug the well?
6. What are some practical examples of our need to cooperate with others to experience God's blessing?

### **Victory**

7. Why did God require the complete annihilation of Israel's enemies?
8. List some principles for experiencing complete victory.

## **Analyzing the Passage**

The soul of the people was much discouraged (impatient or vexed) because of the journey. The added difficulty of journeying around Edom caused the people to become impatient with the hardships of the way. Rather than demonstrating faith and commitment, the people spoke against God and Moses.

By saying their soul loatheth (abhors or sickens at) this light (contemptible and worthless) bread, they were reflecting against God's ability to provide. The Lord responded by sending poisonous serpents. This helped the people realize their dependence on God, and they turned to Him in repentance.

The Lord then ordered Moses to make a brazen serpent (the form without the poison), as a type of Christ in His flesh without sin, who was lifted up to save mankind from eternal death (John 3: 14-16).

Moses placed the serpent of brass on a pole so those who were bitten could look on it. Beheld (Numbers 21:9) means "to regard or pay attention to" and indicates a greater degree of intensity than the word looketh (Numbers 21:8), which carries the idea of seeing or considering.

At Beer ( a well) Israel experienced the joy that comes when God's people work together in harmony to experience His blessings. From there they journeyed on, approaching Canaan from the east of Jordan. They defeated Sihon and Og whose fertile lands were then occupied by some of the tribes of Israel.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Life**

1. God's way is not always pleasing to the flesh (Numbers 21:4). The flesh seeks a way that does not involve hardships. God's way is the way that is best for us spiritually and will involve cross bearing and self-denial. We need to respond properly to the hardships of life and the practical expressions of self-denial asked of us by God's Word and His people.

2. The Lord delights in blessing His people and is not the cause of hardships (Numbers 21:5). By faith we need to believe that God is good. The hardships of life are not to discourage us, but are often blessings in disguise. We may not understand the purpose of our trials, but we accept that God's plan is the best. David said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalm 119:67).

3. When the Lord judges sin, man realises his helpless, sinful condition (Numbers 21:6-7). God mercifully allows us to face hardships and the painful consequences of our wrong choices so that we consider our ways. God would also have us to take heed to our own ways as we observe the difficulties of those who take their own way. God's purposes are always to bring men to Himself.

4. Only God provides the remedy for sin (Numbers 21:7). The world has many self-help programs, but they fail to remedy man's deepest need. God does not want to reform us', He wants to give us a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). Only through conversion and the Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts can we live above sin.

5. God's provision for sin becomes effective through faith (Numbers 21:7).

It was by faith that the dying Israelite looked to the serpent on the pole to be healed. By faith the sinner turns his back on the wisdom of the world and comes to Christ for healing.

### **Sustenance**

6. God is the source of living water (Numbers 21:16). Jesus said, "He that believeth on me shall never thirst" (.John 6:35). In contrast to the worldlings focus in life is on a decaying world, the child of God has an added dimension to life and continues to flourish amid trials because of his connection to the Source of life.

7. By cooperating with God, we experience the rich blessings and joy of redemption (Numbers 21:18). Only God can provide salvation, but if we want to access the provisions available for victory and growth we must cooperate with His direction. We must expose ourselves to the Word of God and sound teaching. We need fellowship with those who are enjoying a vibrant Christian life.

### **Victory**

8. Obedience provides the power to conquer new territory (Numbers 21:24-25, 34). In strength and strategy, we are no match for our enemy. The one we choose as our master is the one we will obey (Romans 6:16). It is only as we obey the directions in God's Word and accept the help of His body, the church, that we can be assured of victory and growth, both as individuals and as a body.

9. God provides for complete victory (Numbers 21: 35). Israel did not seek for a compromise to gain peace. Because they believed the promise of God, they were able to have complete victory. A complete victory led to a complete possession of the land. God has made it possible to be "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). If we claim the provisions available, we too can experience lasting victory over our enemy.

### **Important Teachings**

1. God's way is not always pleasing to the flesh (Numbers 21:4).
2. The Lord delights in blessing His people and is not the cause of hardships (Numbers 21:5).
3. When the Lord judges sin, man realizes his helpless, sinful condition (Numbers 21:6-7).
4. Only God provides the remedy for sin (Numbers 21:7).
5. God's provision for sin becomes effective through faith (Numbers 21:7).
6. God is the source of living water (Numbers 21:16).

7. By cooperating with God, we experience the rich blessings and joy of redemption (Numbers 21:18).
8. Obedience provides the power to conquer new territory (Numbers 21:24-25, 34).
9. God provides for complete victory (Numbers 21:35).

## **Answers to Questions**

1. Why so soon after a glorious victory (Numbers 21:3) did Israel turn against Moses and God?

After having been on the border of Canaan, they were turning their backs on it and journeying back into the wilderness. Perhaps some allowed themselves to doubt they would ever enter. They had the prospect before them of a long journey around Edom, and already the going had become rough.

2. What did the plague of fiery serpents do for Israel?

It helped them realize their sin of complacency. It helped them realize their dependence on God. Instead of blaming God for trying to kill them, they realized their dependence on Him for life.

3. What did the dying Israelites express when they looked at the serpent on the pole?

They expressed faith in God's provision for healing. They expressed obedience by looking at the serpent on the pole as God commanded. Coming as it did right after their rebellion and discouragement, it also expressed submission to God.

4. What are some divine provisions we might be tempted to disregard?

We might disregard God's Word, the church, godly leaders, simple Bible teaching and preaching, daily Bible reading and prayer, brethren and sisters in the faith.

5. What was the value of the people singing as the nobles dug the well?

It expressed faith that water would be found. It encouraged the nobles in their work. It involved the people and united them with the nobles as they dug to find water.

6. What are some practical examples of our need to cooperate with others to experience God's blessing?

We cooperate with God when we accept His leading in our lives. We cooperate as a church when leaders and laity pull together. Husbands and wives need to joyfully cooperate to experience God's blessing on their homes.

7. Why did God require the complete annihilation of Israel's enemies?

Complete victory led to complete possession. These lands were then occupied by some of the tribes and became part of the land of Israel. Any of the original inhabitants left would have been a spiritual detriment to Israel.

8. List some principles for experiencing complete victory.

We must be willing to die to self. We cannot reserve any area where we want to let our flesh rule. We need daily Bible reading and fellowship with others who live in victory.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

The years of journeying through the wilderness would have been not possible without divine provisions. The children of Israel realized this when they rebelled against God and lost His blessing. As we journey through life, it is important that our choices and direction of travel open to us the divine provisions. Without them we will not reach our desired home.

### **Research Guide**

1. Read Philippians 4:19 for a New Testament promise of God's ability to provide.
2. A map in a Bible handbook or Bible atlas will be helpful in tracing the travels in the wilderness.