

Numbers

6 November 2023

Lesson: 13

Numbers 20

For our admonition. I Corinthians 10:11

The Failure of Israel en route to Moab

Once again, the main outline is from the Open Bible, slightly edited.

Miriam died (v.1)

The congregation entered the desert of Zin. (See map). There they abode in Kadesh. Miriam died while they were in Kadesh and was buried.

Moses and Aaron Strike the Rock (v.2-13).

They could not find sufficient water in Kadesh. This roused the people to rebel again against Moses and Aaron (v.2). Note, carefully, their foolish complaints and comments (v.3-5).

Moses and Aaron respond as usual and fell upon their faces in prayer (v.6, cf., Nu 14:5; 16:22; 16:45). The humility and fear of the Lord in these two men amaze me. Fearful prayer needs to be our first response to any conflict.

God told Moses to take his rod and Aaron and to speak to the rock before the eyes of the people (v.8). Earlier, in Exodus 17:6, God told Moses to smite the rock. This time He told Moses to speak to the rock. However, in anger and disobedience to God's command, he again hit the rock twice, evidently with Aaron's encouragement (v.10-11). Israel was partly to blame (Ps 106:32).

Though Moses was a great man of God, this

one act of disobedience cost both Aaron and Moses the privilege of entering the Promised Land (v.12-13).

Edom refused to let Israel pass through (v.14-21).

Moses sent messengers to Edom asking for permission to pass through their land (v.14-17). He gave them a brief history of God's leading of Israel. He promised to follow the "king's highway" (a public road, Lange; for commercial caravans, JFB; direct road, Zodhiates) and to pay for any water or food they might consume as they passed (v.17). However, Edom refused to give them passage (v.18). The messengers gave more assurance, but Edom still refused (v.19-21).

Journey to Mt. Hor where Aaron died (v.22-29).

They then left Kadesh and went to Mount Hor. This site is unknown, but it is assumed to be a little east of Kadesh as it is near Edom (v.23).

God predicted Aaron's death and gave instructions (v.24-28). Aaron died as God had said (v.28). The whole congregation mourned for 30 days (v.29).

Principles for Us Today

Death is one of those unavoidable appointments that every human will eventually face if the Lord does not return first.

Even the most godly people may do wrong. They too suffer the consequences. We must let this be a warning to us not an excuse.

God can use disappointments to redirect our paths to fulfil his will for our lives.

Life and death are in God's hands and are not left to fate. Aaron died when God ordered it and so will you and I.

