

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question: Have you ever been bitten by something? Tell your story.

Pray: For God to help us understand the book of Numbers for our lives.

Read: Numbers 20:1-13 & 21:4-9

Context:

- How would you describe Israel's pattern of behaviour in Numbers?

What does the text say & mean (observe/comprehend):

- What's the problem with their complaint? Is it wrong to need water?
- What did Moses do wrong? What does this show about God's expectations?
- Why does God send serpents? Were they right to complain? Why a bronze serpent? And why does God show mercy?

How does the text point forward to Jesus:

- Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. How does the rock and the bronze serpent point to Christ?

What does the text mean for us (apply):

- What does anyone need to do to be saved from their sins?
- Do Christians walk away from Jesus? Once saved always saved?
- What do we need to learn from Israel in the wilderness? What does it look like for you to keep looking to Jesus this week?

Pray: that we would keep looking to Jesus for our whole lives.

Homework: Read Numbers 20-21

Remind: fill out AM survey

Praying to see 10% of the northern suburbs in gospel-centred churches & 250 by 2030 at Village Church who grow, gather, give & go, in love & joy to the glory of God

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Numbers is the fourth book in what is called the “Pentateuch”, the five books of the Torah. These serves as the foundational books of the people of Israel, giving context to their relationship with Yahweh, the God who is and who created all things.

Numbers takes place in the Wilderness. Between the Exodus, where God rescues Israel out of slavery to Egypt, and the Promised Land, where Israel will experience the fullness of God’s blessings. After rescuing Israel, Yahweh covenanted with Israel. He promised them blessing but in response requires obedience to his good law. The question of Numbers is, will Israel trust God and obey? Or will they rebel as they have already done in Exodus and Leviticus. And, how will God respond if they do?

For Christians today. We too live in the wilderness. In the time between our salvation by faith in Christ, and our enjoying the fullness of eternity in the promised land of the new creation. We too are called to obey Christ by faith.

Context:

- **How would you describe Israel’s pattern of behaviour in Numbers?**

Consider what we have seen so far. Several times now Israel has complained, rebelled, lacked trust/faith in God and failed to listen.

What does the text say & mean (observe/comprehend):

- **What’s the problem with their complaint? Is it wrong to need water?**

It’s not wrong for Israel to need/want water. The issue is how Israel behaves towards God. They don’t come to God or Moses with requests fuelled by faith (which would be reasonable based on God’s promises/past behaviour).

- **What did Moses do wrong? What does this show about God’s expectations?**

Moses was told to speak to the rock, not strike it with his staff. He has begun to trust in the ‘staff’ (which he knows how it works) rather than the God who gave him the staff. God desires faithful obedience even when it seems different or strange.

- **Why does God send serpents? Were they right to complain? Why a bronze serpent? And why does God show mercy?**

God sent serpents as a judgement on Israel for their sin. He may have used serpents as a metaphor for the nature of sin (as poison and ‘serpent/Satan-like’). But God gets Moses to raise up a representation of a serpent as a symbol of salvation. God shows mercy in a response to repentance in the face of his judgement.

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How does the text point forward to Jesus:

- **Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. How does the rock and the bronze serpent point to Christ?**

Paul says that the rock is Christ. Similar to how Jesus describes himself in John 6 as the 'bread of life', Jesus is the rock that was struck to provide us with living water. Also, Jesus on the cross is what/who we need to look to in order to be saved from the poison of sin. See also John 3:14

What does the text mean for us (apply):

- **What does anyone need to do to be saved from their sins?**

We only need to look to Jesus in faith and we can be saved from the poison of sin.

- **Do Christians walk away from Jesus? Once saved always saved?**

1 Corinthians 10 might seem to suggest that Christians can walk away from Jesus. Paul is speaking pastorally. People who call themselves Christian do sometimes walk away from Jesus. However, that's because they haven't listened to the warning or looked at the example of Israel. True Christians will listen/pay attention and will keep following Jesus.

- **What do we need to learn from Israel in the wilderness? What does it look like for you to keep looking to Jesus this week?**

We need to see the awful nature of our sin that causes us to complain and reject God's faithfulness. We also need to see God's ongoing faithfulness and his kindness in spite of our sins.

Encourage the group to reflect on what it looks like to look to Jesus and trust God's promises today.