

NUMBERS 16:36-50 (THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN)

Israel was chosen from among the nations to be God's own special people and to receive His favor. All other nations went their own way, and they lived and died apart from God. Only Israel was set apart to bring in Messiah, and until He came, only they received the atonement necessary to cover their sins in a temporary manner.

It has already been demonstrated that there was to be but one high priest, and until his death prevented him from continuing on, it was his responsibility to mediate between God and man, and to intercede on behalf of his people.

That was challenged by Korah, and the challenge failed. And it wasn't by human effort that it failed. It was because the Lord personally acted and destroyed him and his followers. It set the example for Israel, and Israel sets the typology for Christ to come.

Because God rejected any but Aaron, or his replacement from his line, then it is a message that the Lord was sending to us – "I will accept mediation for your sins, but I will only do so through one Person, My designated High Priest." That is then explicitly repeated in the New Testament. First by Jesus Himself in John 14:6, and then by Paul in 1 Timothy 2, our text verse of the day...

Text Verse: "For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus*, ⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:5, 6

When Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me," He was indicating exactly this. That means in this life and for all eternity. He is our access point to the unseen Father. At this time, it is for reconciliation to Him,

and for our continued need for mediation from Him. In the future, He will be the One through whom the glory of God will radiate for all eternity. He is our One and only access point in this regard. When Paul says that Christ is our one Mediator, he calls Him “*the Man Christ Jesus.*” It is His humanity which makes this possible. And Paul goes on. He says that He gave Himself a ransom for all.” If you pay heed to the coming sermon, you will see that repeated in picture, right from our verses today.

In fact, you will see the Person of Christ revealed in almost a dozen different ways today. But each one of them keeps demonstrating the simple truth that He is the One and only way to be restored to a propitious relationship with God. The theme repeats again and again, as it has throughout the books of Moses so far, and as will continue to be seen right through until the final page of Scripture.

So, if you are asking yourself today if it’s OK for you to go to a palm reader, a psychic, a Hindu priest, a Buddhist shaman, or an Islamic Imam, you should understand that God, the God of the Bible, has rejected these things. This world, filled with such spirituality, is a world that is at enmity with God. He has entered into His creation, and it is through this Man alone that we find restoration with God.

Be careful who you believe, even in supposed Christian churches. There is a straight path, and there are many which quickly wind off to destruction. This is the warning we should pay heed to. It is this lesson which is found in His superior word. And so let’s turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Sign to Israel (verses 36-40)

It was in the final verses of our passage last week that the ground swallowed up the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, along with all those

who dwelt there. After that, fire came out from the Lord at the sanctuary and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense there. The rebellion which had arisen against the Lord was ended by Him in the destruction of the offenders. With that accomplished, the narrative continues on with the results of that event. The fire from the Lord has gone out in judgment, but judgment also results in purification. As this is so, something more is required before the matter is settled. Thus...

³⁶ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

The Lord now speaks to Moses directly. We can assume that it is from the pillar of cloud which had just sent out the fire against the rebels. Aaron and Moses had been present at the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, but they have now returned to the area of the sanctuary and have seen the destruction wrought by the Lord. A cleanup of the bodies and articles is needed to cleanse the camp, but the Lord has specific directions for some of what laid scattered upon the ground. Those instructions are next given...

³⁷ “Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers

Whatever was left of the bodies of the men, if anything, nothing is said concerning their disposal. The matter is left unstated because it is irrelevant to the purposes of the Lord. The bodies would be unclean, and Eleazar could not touch them. Almost all commentators say that Aaron was not selected for this purpose because he might have become defiled by the corpses, and so Eleazar was chosen.

That makes no sense. Eleazar is also a priest, and he would also become defiled. If any bodies laid there, which remains unstated, then he would just not be the one to assist in the disposal. Picking up censers was simply not a task which the high priest would be expected to accomplish. However, being a priest, it was incumbent on his son Eleazar “to pick up the censers” because they were holy.

37 (con't) **out of the blaze,**

mi-ben ha'serephah – out of the burning. It is the same word used to describe the burning of the Lord which came upon Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's two eldest. This doesn't mean that the burning was still hot, it is merely a description of what had occurred. There was a burning, and the censers were to be picked up out of it...

37 (con't) **for they are holy,**

Out of the midst of whatever was left that was unclean, there was something that had been purified and even made holy. Although under different circumstances, the idea of what occurs in Numbers 31 partially explains why this is so –

“Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, ²³ everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification. But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water.” Numbers 31:22, 23

Fire itself has a cleansing effect on metals. How much more when it is the fire of the Lord's judgment. And this then translates into what is said in the New Testament concerning purification –

“For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. ¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it

is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." 1 Corinthians 3:9-15

The fire of the Lord is one of judgment, but in judgment, there is also purification for those things which can withstand the judgment. All that which is defiled will be burned up, but that which endures will be purified and made holy.

^{37 (con't)} **and scatter the fire some distance away.**

As noted in the previous sermon, the coals and incense were not that which was approved by the Lord for use in the sanctuary. The men brought fire which was not first sanctified through the Lord, and they added incense which was not approved for service of the Lord. Thus, these things failed to anticipate Christ in their makeup, and were unacceptable to be offered to the Lord.

Because of this, they were to be taken from the sanctuary and scattered out at a suitable distance to indicate the rejection of the offerings of these wicked men who had not been consecrated to serve before the Lord, and yet who arrogantly assumed that they could do so.

They failed to see that everything associated with the tabernacle, even to the finest detail, wasn't simply for show, but it was given to prefigure the coming Messiah – His redemptive work, and our position in Him – because of what He has done.

Unfortunately, the world at large, the Jews to this day, and a large swath of what is considered Christendom continues to fail to see this. Holiness does not come through dopish hats, solemn rituals, repetitive prayers, or showy offerings.

Instead, holiness comes through Christ Jesus, and it is only reflected in His people when they conform to His standards as given in this dispensation, known as grace. Being under grace does not negate the need to be holy. In fact, it highlights it, as Paul makes clear in 2 Corinthians –

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

‘I will dwell in them
And walk among *them*.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.’

¹⁷ Therefore

‘Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.’

¹⁸ ‘I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the Lord Almighty.’” 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

As we have already seen, those things which we do that are unholy will be burnt, and we will suffer loss. Our position in Christ demands holiness no less than it was demanded under law. In fact, it demands it even more so.

³⁸ **The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls,**

The Lord is as a Husband to Israel, but He is also as a King to them. Thus, the proverb is fitting to what occurred here –

“The wrath of a king *is* like the roaring of a lion;
Whoever provokes him to anger sins *against* his own life.” Proverbs 20:2

This is what happened to these men. They had sinned against their own souls, and thus they died before the Lord. One cannot help but see the comparison here with these men, to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira which is recorded in Acts. They had sinned against their souls by lying to the Holy Spirit, and they both died before the Lord. The judgment upon these men, and the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira both served a purpose though. In the case of these men’s censers, the Lord gives specific instructions...

38 (con’t) **let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar.**

Rather than an adjective and two nouns, the Hebrew has three nouns to describe what is made. The first is a unique word in Scripture, *riqua*, or “an expansion.” It comes from the verb *raqa* which means to beat out, or to spread out. And that, in turn, comes from a primitive root signifying to pound the earth, as if a sign of passion. One can think of a person laying with his face to the ground in misery at the death of a brother, pounding the ground and wailing.

The second noun is *pakhim*, or plates. That comes from the verb *pakhah*, meaning “to ensnare.” The third is the *tsippui*, or covering. It is a lot of detail to make a single point. And so, the Lord must be asking us to consider the picture being made here. One can almost taste the idea in how each of us treats our own state before the Lord.

We are sanctified as holy, but do we mourn over the things we do which the Lord finds unacceptable and in which we are ensnared? Sin is like a trap set for us, and when we allow it to catch us, it is what defines us. It is like a covering which is then viewable to all.

We will be presented before the Lord, but only so much as endures the fire of judgment will be brought forth. Are we beating the ground in passion over our misdeeds, honestly endeavoring to correct them? Or are we continuing to carry with us those things which the Lord finds impure and defiled?

Only that which is purified and which remains will be put on display. For the one whose life was defined more by sin than by holiness, there will not be much left after the judgment. This is the picture we are being given, and thus, the censers of these men were to be so on display as a covering for the altar...

38 (con't) Because they presented them before the Lord, therefore they are holy;

This is all that is left of these men's time before the Lord. Nothing is said of bodies remaining, even if they did. The only thing left of them is a bit of brass which they had carried with them. It is this, and nothing else, which others will see in order to be reminded of them. And that, only because the fire of the Lord had purified it. The connection to our lives in Christ is... rather astonishing. These men's censers were not acceptable as censers, and so they were re-formed according to the word of the Lord for a set purpose...

38 (con't) and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel."

The word is *oth*, a sign. A sign stands representative of something else. This doesn't say a memorial, as if they were to merely remember the occasion, but they were to look at it as representative of what happened. That word, *zikaron*, or memorial is coming in verse 40. But now we are told that it is to be a sign. As a sign, it thus conveys a message. That message is implicitly conveyed in the next words...

³⁹ So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers,

Censers are mentioned 10 times in this chapter; eight of those times it is referring to these 250 censers. However, only this once are they described as *nekhosheth*, or bronze. In the Bible, bronze mainly signifies judgment, but also endurance.

The judgment can be negative, such as in the case of bronze fetters being worn by those who have been sentenced for a crime, but it can also be one of purification and justification, such as in the cleansing of the people through the offerings made upon this altar.

These censers are first described here in this verse as a sign. They are to alert the people to God's judgment. It will be carried out in the people for offense, or it will be carried out on this altar in place of their offense. It is also as a sign to alert the people to their need for endurance in staying the course set out for them in the law which is highlighted through the sacrificial system. The sign of judgment and endurance is to be remembered in these censers...

³⁹ (con't) which those who were burned up had presented,

The sign is the brass in the form in which it is presented. It is an expansion of brass, as a sign of pounding the earth in passion. It is a plate of brass as a sign that man is easily ensnared in sin. And it is a sign in the covering of brass which tells man that his walk before the Lord is covered in His judgment, be it positive or negative. All of this is reflected in the next words once again...

³⁹ (con't) and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar,

There was in the fabrication of this covering a purposeful, passionate, and intentional hammering of the bronze. It was then placed as a covering on the altar which was already overlaid with bronze. It is the brazen altar, not the golden altar, to which this was applied. The golden altar, standing in the Holy Place, would not be seen by the people. However, the brazen altar would be, and so it was covered by this magnificent sign to the people, and...

⁴⁰ **to be a memorial to the children of Israel**

Here the word *zikaron*, or memorial, is used. The brass is a sign, but it is to be a memorial. This is something which brings to remembrance. And that which is to be called to memory is...

⁴⁰ (con't) **that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord,**

Korah was a Levite, but he was not a priest because he did not descend from Aaron. That was made explicit in the law, and yet he presumptuously came forward, along with the other rebels, and tried to usurp the priesthood. The sign of the bronze covering was to be used as a memorial to bring to mind the consequences of violating the law of the priesthood. This was so...

⁴⁰ (con't) **that he might not become like Korah and his companions,**

In the Hebrew, there is the understanding – in an absolute sense – that if someone were to do what Korah did, they would share in the same fate as befell him and his companions. Some might argue that this is not the case though. King Uzziah did exactly this in 2 Chronicles 26, and there it is said that leprosy broke out on his forehead. How can that be compared to Korah?

It is because it goes on to say that, “King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord” (v.21). Having leprosy meant that King Uzziah was as if dead to the throne, to the people, and to the house of the Lord.

In fact, the account then says that his son Jotham was over the king’s house and it was he who judged the people of the land. Other than physical death, the same outcome rested on Uzziah as on these rebels.

And it may be considered that Uzziah’s punishment was worse than that of Korah in one way, and comparable in another. He was trapped in a body of death while still living, whereas Korah was trapped in a living body in death – having been swallowed up alive by the pit. Uzziah failed to heed the warning, and he – in fact – became like those who offended the Lord in this way before Him.

⁴⁰ (con’t) **just as the Lord had said to him through Moses.**

This is the word of law. It was Aaron, and those who issued from him and who served as priests, that were authorized to offer incense before the Lord. Korah knew the law; Korah violated the law, the Lord determined the sentence, and the judgment of the Lord was rendered upon Korah.

*I will dwell in them, even as their breath of life
And walk among them, so I shall do
I will be their God, between us no strife
And they shall be My people, to them I will be true

Therefore, Come out from among them, I say
And be separate, says the Lord
Do not touch what is unclean; from it turn away
And I will receive you, according to My word*

*I will be a Father to you, and you My children
Yes, you shall be My sons and daughters, it is true
Says the Lord Almighty, and so I say again
Come out from among them, so you shall do*

II. The Very Next Day (verses 41-50)

⁴¹ On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the Lord.”

It wasn't weeks or months later, but the very next day that the entire congregation complained against Moses and Aaron. The word translated as complained is *lun*. It means to remain overnight, such as in lodging. The idea is that their minds remained unconverted by what happened, and thus they simply continued down the same path, grumbling against Moses and Aaron.

In this, they go even further by accusing them of killing the people of the Lord. Because the two hundred and fifty men were leaders of the congregation, it was as if they represented all of the people, even though Moses and Aaron had specifically prayed that the whole congregation not be destroyed. All they could see was that it was Moses who told the people to bring their incense before the Lord, and thus they have deduced that it was Moses' fault that they died. And it is true that Moses, believing the words of the law, knew the assured outcome, but this does not mean that he was responsible for their actions any more than he was responsible for King Uzziah's many centuries later.

The people wrongfully accuse Moses and Aaron of murder, but once again, an attack against them for something that the Lord did is actually an attack against the Lord. Thus, this cannot go well for the people...

⁴² Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared.

There was enough force behind the moaning that the people came in a united way against Moses and Aaron, probably to their tents which stood just before the entrance to the sanctuary. While standing there accusing them, they turned to see some aspect change in the cloud.

It always remained above the tent of meeting, but what probably happened is that it completely enshrouded it. In doing so, the glory of the Lord, which was between the cherubim above the mercy seat radiated out through the cloud, just as it did on the day when the tabernacle was first raised up. The cloud then, at the same time revealed and also concealed the Lord's glory.

⁴³ Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting.

Here it says they came *el pene ohel moed*, or "to the face of the tent of meeting." This is explained in verse 50 as being its door. As the glory of the Lord radiated out of it, they could not enter, just as they could not on the first day it was erected. Instead, it is at the door of the tent where they received the word...

⁴⁴ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

It is obvious that the presence of the Lord in this manner was a summons to come to Him, and to receive instruction from Him. It was also obvious, based on past experience, that this could only mean disaster for those who had challenged them. And so it is...

⁴⁵ “Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.”

Here is a word not yet seen in Scripture, *ramam*. It means to rise up above, or even to exalt. The words of this clause are identical to the words of verse 21, with this one exception. In verse 21, they were told to *badal*, or separate themselves from the congregation. Now they are told to *ramam*, or rise up from the congregation.

The intent of the change seems obvious. They were wallowing with those who were beneath them in dignity. The Lord is indicating that they are not just miscreants who should be separated from and then destroyed, but they are lowly refuse who should be risen above and destroyed. And so the Lord says to them, *he-romu mitok ha'edah ha'zot* – “You get up from this congregation.”

⁴⁵ (con't) And they fell on their faces.

It is the same reaction from them that was seen in verse 22. A second time the mediators of the Lord had been rejected by the people, and a second time they again refuse the admonition to remove themselves from them, but instead immediately move to mediate on their behalf. The immense love of Moses and Aaron for the people is seen in their continued care of them, despite their ill treatment from them.

⁴⁶ So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense *on it*, and take it quickly to the congregation

Korah felt that he was deemed holy to the point that he could perform the duties of the priests. It was his violation of the law of presenting incense before the Lord which proved that this was not so. However, the people

have rejected that, and thus they have rejected the Lord's decision concerning Aaron's priesthood.

That means that they stand as a people without a mediator. Aaron must rectify this by responding as their mediator and making atonement for them.

The way he is to do this is by taking *ha'makhtah*, or "the censer." It is not just any censer, but Aaron's censer used for high priestly duties which is now set in contrast to the 250 censers of the rebellion. *Makhtah* comes from a root meaning destruction or ruin. Thus, *ha'makhtah*, picturing the sole mediation of Christ, is to be used in the sense of removal.

Into that, he was to put fire. This would be from the brazen altar, the fire first lit by the Lord, and which signifies Christ's fire of purification. On that, he was to put *qetoreth*, or incense. The priestly incense was described in Exodus 30, every ingredient of which pointed to Christ and His work as revealed in Scripture. It truly was an astonishing study.

⁴⁶ (con't) **and make atonement for them;**

Atonement is normally made through a blood sacrifice, but the idea here is that in the burning of the incense upon the holy fire, there would be removal and purification. As incense pictures prayer, it is thus picturing the prayers of Christ the Man on behalf of His people, and the purification of the people by God through Christ.

As the ingredients of the incense picture Him, they are considered a sufficient offering of His life to God. If Aaron were to not make this offering, all the congregation would be lost. Moses knows this and proclaims...

46 (con't) **for wrath has gone out from the Lord.**

The word *qetseph*, or wrath, has only been used in Numbers 1:53 –

“but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no **wrath** on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony.”

That charge of the tabernacle failed. Korah was a Levite, and he failed to adhere to his assigned duties. The people, in turn, rejected the Lord's rejection of this, thus *ha'qetseph* or, “**the wrath**” which was promised had gone out, and because of this...

46 (con't) **The plague has begun.”**

This word, *negeph*, or plague, is only used seven times in the Bible and all are in relation to the people of Israel. The first was in relation to the blood of the Passover lamb saving the firstborn. The second was in relation to the redemption money for the firstborn. The third was used in relation to the Levites in place of the firstborn. That was seen in Numbers 8 –

“And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no **plague** among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary.” Numbers 8:19

The Levites had replaced the firstborn and were considered purified for the tasks of service. If the people approached unlawfully or incorrectly, the plague would result. It was the Levites who had the responsibility to ensure this would not occur, and yet, it was Korah, a Levite, who had violated this.

He received his penalty for what he did, but the people have claimed that what happened to him was unjust. Therefore, they are now considered to have approached the Lord unlawfully. Thus, Moses knows the plague must come.

The final time *negeph* is used is in Isaiah 8 where it is ascribed directly to the Lord in relation to the people of Israel –

“He will be as a sanctuary,
But a stone of **stumbling** and a rock of offense
To both the houses of Israel,
As a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Isaiah 8:14

That verse from Isaiah is then used by Paul when speaking of Christ in Romans 9, and by Peter – also speaking of Christ – in 1 Peter 2. In essence, Christ became the very plague upon Israel that the blood of the lamb, the ransom money, and the Levite was to protect them from. In their rejection of Him, they rejected what these types and shadows only pictured.

He is the Passover, He is the Ransom Payment, and He is the Firstborn. Israel’s rejection of these figures equates to Israel’s later rejection of Christ. Thus, He is *ha’negeph*, or “**the** plague.” Unless Christ personally mediated for them in prayer, which He did on Calvary’s cross, they would have been utterly consumed.

However, in their rejection of Him, they have suffered **the plague**, meaning Christ, these past two thousand years. He has become *ha’negeph* upon them, just as **the plague** came upon the congregation...

⁴⁷ Then Aaron took *it* as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people.

In rejection of the order of the Levitical priesthood, meaning Aaron and then the Levites below him fulfilling the place of the firstborn, they had rejected what these types pictured – Christ’s more perfect priesthood (Hebrews 2:17), and His standing as the Firstborn of God (Hebrews 1:6). In picture, it is Israel’s ongoing rejection of Him. The plague began, but Aaron ran into the midst of the assembly to stop it before it could totally consume them.

⁴⁷ (con’t) **So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people.**

The offering of incense in this manner is never prescribed under the law, but Moses knew that even though the law did not prescribe it, it was not prohibited either. In the case of the plague, it was the only possible expediency to make atonement, and in fact, it is this act which pictures what it says in Hebrews 7, that Christ, “always lives to make intercession” for His people. The incense, picturing Christ and His redemptive work, is sufficient for this purpose.

⁴⁸ **And he stood between the dead and the living;**

These words are set in contrast to the two hundred and fifty who offered their incense and were struck dead for their actions. The offering of Aaron is accepted because he was the qualified representative, with the proper censer, the proper coals, and the proper incense. Christ stands, even now, between the dead and the living for His people.

This, however, brings forward the concept of Christ, as displayed through the apostles, in a remarkable way. The message of the apostles, meaning Christ’s Person and ministry, is that which brings life. Further, a rejection of it brings death. Aaron stood between the living and the dead bearing his incense, and this then appears to be what Paul was referring to in 2 Corinthians –

“Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. ¹⁵ For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?” 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

For Israel of today, it is the aroma of Korah and of death leading to death. However, someday the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ will be realized for them in life, leading to life...

⁴⁸ (con't) **so the plague was stopped.**

The word for “plague” here, and in the next two verses, is not the same as the previous two. This is *magephah*, a slaughter. In the act of providing atonement, the slaughter of the people ended. The idea here is beautifully stated by Matthew Henry –

“Observe especially, that Aaron was a type of Christ. There is an infection of sin in the world, which only the cross and intercession of Jesus Christ can stay and remove. He enters the defiled and dying camp. He stands between the dead and the living; between the eternal Judge and the souls under condemnation. We must have redemption through His blood, even the remission of sins. We admire the ready devotion of Aaron: shall we not bless and praise the unspeakable grace and love which filled the Saviour's heart, when he placed himself in our stead, and bought us with his life? Greatly indeed hath God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Matthew Henry

⁴⁹ **Now those who died in the plague were fourteen thousand seven hundred, besides those who died in the Korah incident.**

The specific number here is an interesting addition. The speculation on what its spiritual significance is could probably go on and on. Suffice it to say that seven is the number of spiritual perfection. The number here is a multiple of 7×2100 . Along with those who died in the Korah incident, you would be up to somewhere around 15,000 people.

This shows that a large number died there in the wilderness due to the arrogance and folly of one main perpetrator, and a few followers with him who were then excited into a larger crowd of miscreants. From there, the entire congregation was set to be destroyed.

Jude specifically warns about false teachers and that those who hear the word should earnestly contend for the faith which has been once delivered to the saints. The consequences for failing to do so can lead to a huge number being misled and ultimately destroyed. Such is the case with those who follow Ellen G. White, Charles Tazz Russel, Joseph Smith, and countless others who have come in and drawn away large numbers who now face the consequences for following in their footsteps.

The mediation of Aaron was successful, the plague was stopped, and with that it says...

***⁵⁰ So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped.**

It seems like an anticlimactic ending for such a marvelous chapter, but it really isn't. Aaron is a type of Christ, the High Priest. Moses is typical of Christ, the Lawgiver. The Tent of Meeting pictures Christ's humanity which covers His deity inside. The door is actually two-fold.

When an animal is said to be presented at the door of the tent of meeting, it is actually presented at the brazen altar which prefigures Christ's sacrifice.

It is that which then symbolically allows access through the door of the tent itself. Thus, we have a picture which is developed here.

At one point is the High Priest, the Lawgiver, the Sacrifice, and the Door to God's paradise. All of that is seen in the Person of Jesus. It is He who has stopped the plague upon fallen man, and it is He who will stop that plague which still comes after and destroys Israel. The slaughter continues, but someday, He will stand in their midst and His offering will be the dividing line between the dead and the living. For them, it will finally be the diffusing of the fragrance of Life, leading to life. May that day be soon.

Closing Verse: "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises." Hebrews 8:6

Next Week: Numbers 17:1-13 Filled again with life's breath... (Life from Death) (33rd Numbers Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. It may seem at times as if you are lost in a desert, wandering aimlessly. But the Lord is there, carefully leading you to the Land of Promise. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Mediator Between God and Men

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

These words He was to them then relaying

"Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest

To pick up the censers out of the blaze, as I now say
For they are holy
And scatter the fire some distance away
The censers of these men who sinned against their own souls
Let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar
-----as to you I now tell
Because they presented them before the Lord
Therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign
-----to the children of Israel

So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers
Which those who were burned up had presented
And they were hammered out as a covering on the altar
To be a memorial to the children of Israel
-----and this is what it represented
That no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron
Should come near to offer incense before the Lord
That he might not become like Korah and his companions
Just as the Lord had said to him through Moses
-----according to that word

On the next day all the congregation
Of the children of Israel, that great horde
Complained against Moses and Aaron, saying
“You have killed the people of the Lord

Now it happened, when the congregation
Had gathered against Moses and Aaron
-----towards mayhem they seemed geared
That they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting
And suddenly the cloud covered it
-----and the glory of the Lord appeared
Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of meeting
And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying
“Get away from among this congregation
That I may consume them in a moment
-----as to you I am now relaying

And they fell on their faces
So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a censer
-----and put fire in it from the altar
Put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation
And make atonement for them; in this you must not falter
For wrath has gone out from the Lord
The plague has begun; that great and terrible sword

Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded
And ran into the midst of the assembly, there he went
And already the plague had begun among the people
So he put in the incense and for the people made atonement
And he stood between the dead and the living
So the plague was stopped

Now those who died in the plague were
-----fourteen thousand seven hundred
That's how many of them dropped
Besides those who died in the Korah incident
So Aaron returned to Moses at the door
Of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped
It had ceased and the plague was no more

Lord God, we are even now in a wilderness
And we are wanting to be led by You
Without You to direct, our lives would be a mess
And so be our guide, O God; You who are faithful and true
We long for the water in this barren land
May it flow forth from the Rock, our souls to satisfy
Give us this refreshing, spiritual hand
And may we take it, and to our lives daily it apply

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to you for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...