

Week 3—Numbers 11

Begin each day of your study by asking the LORD to speak to you through His Word.

Day 1

1. Do you think complaining is a serious thing? Why or why not? Why don't we take it as seriously as other sins?

2. Read Numbers 11:1-3. What pattern do you see in these verses? What is Moses' role in the relationship between Israel and God? Why is it necessary that the people had a mediator between them and God?

3. Who plays the role of intercessor/mediator for us today? What do the following verses say about this?

Romans 8:34—

Hebrews 7:25—

Hebrews 8:1-6—

Hebrews 9:14-15—

John 17:6-26—

1 Timothy 2:5-6—

What do these verses mean to you? Spend time rejoicing that Christ is our perfect mediator and intercessor.

Day 2

1. Read Numbers 11:4-9. Why is it so tempting for us to remember the past fondly? Is the past really as “rose-colored” as we tend to remember it? What are some ways you have found yourself allowing the past to lead you to complaining about the present?

2. Do you think the Israelites really enjoyed all these things as slaves? What does this teach us about ourselves?

If only we had meat to eat! —As in Exodus 16, the people began to complain about their diet, forgetting all the LORD has done for them. As the NIV Bible study suggests, “Certainly meat was not their common fare when they were slaves in Egypt. Now that they were in a new type of distress, the people romanticized the past and minimized its discomforts.”

2. Read the note below and notice how grumbling works. Where does it start? How does it spread? How could this relate to the church? Should we cut ourselves off from those who most need the gospel (Matthew 9:12)? So how do we stay on guard against spiritual diseases that can so easily infiltrate and infect our community?

Rabble—This was a term used for the non-Israelite mixed group of people who followed the Israelites out of Egypt and lived on the “outskirts” of the camp (see v. 2). This was part of Israel’s mission, but this group would also be a source of recurring complaints within the camp that would then spread to others.

3. How appetizing do you find the narrator's description of manna (vv. 7-9) compared with the food from Egypt (vv. 4-6)? What does this say about the Israelite's attitude? Why would this make the Lord so angry? Is it just the fact they are complaining or is there something deeper behind their complaining?

The LORD became exceedingly angry—In Exodus 16:4 God said that the reception of manna (“bread from heaven”) as His gracious gift would prove to be a test of their obedience. Although they had repeatedly seen God’s miraculous works, including the provision of manna, they respond with complaining instead of trusting God. Instead of focusing on what God had done for them, they focus on what He has “failed” to do for them.

4. How can looking to the future instead of the past or even present circumstances as followers of Jesus help us conquer the temptation to grumble? How can the following verses help us stay focused and joyful no matter our situation?

Philippians 3:17-21—

1 Corinthians 12:40—

1 Corinthians 12:51-58—

2 Corinthians 4:18—

1 Peter 1:3-6—

Revelation 21:1-8—

Day 3

1. Read Numbers 11:10-15. In the original Hebrew of vv. 11-15 Moses refers to himself no fewer than 20 times. What does that show us about his state? What was the result? What should have been the result (see 11:2)?

2. Which terms capture Moses' emotional anguish for the burden of teaching this vast people alone? Have you ever felt this way? Why or when? How did you handle it? What does Moses do right? What does he do wrong?

3. Read Numbers 11:16-17. What is God's solution to Moses' complaint? What solutions might He have for when we find ourselves complaining or despondent?

Day 4

1. Read Numbers 11:18-30. Why did the Lord promise to give the people meat "until it came out of their nostrils"? What does He want to teach them about lust? What does James 1:14-15 say about this?

Is the LORD's arm too short—According to John MacArthur, "The Lord's patience and mercy toward His people were truly remarkable. Again and again He provided for them, and again and again they rebelled against Him. In spite of this, the Lord continued to patiently demonstrate that He had been faithful in the past and would be in the future."

2. In 11:29 Moses stated his desire that all God's people become prophets. What does this say about Moses? Would you have the same desire? Why or why not?

Elders—According to Michael LeFebvre, “The tribes of Israel had elders long before their ordination by Moses. Moses’ ordination of the elders is not the beginning of the elders in Israel but is the beginning of their organization as undershepherds teaching God’s Word as revealed through Moses. The elders had previously served as community heads, each representing his own clan. There were 70 clans among the 12 tribes (compare Numbers 26:1-65). It is the vocation of spiritual eldership that continues to be the backbone of the shepherding of Jesus through His church (1 Tim 3:1-7; 1 Pet 5:1-5).”

3. How does Joel 2:28-32 along with Acts 2:1-22 fit into this for us today? How would you define prophecy here? What do 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 and 14:29-40 say about prophecy in the church?

The Spirit rested on them—As the ESV study Bible notes, “When this passage (like most of the Old Testament) speaks the word of the Spirit, it is focusing primarily on the empowering of the Spirit for the service to the people of God, more than an internal, personal experience.”

Day 5

1. Read Numbers 11:31-35. Where do you see God's judgment in this passage? Where do you see His mercy?

Kibroth Hattaavah—Literally this means “graves of craving.” God sent a severe plague in response to the people’s lust, and as a result many died on account of their rebellious ingratitude and sinful cravings.

2. Can you relate to the people’s complaining and craving in chapter 11? In what kinds of circumstances of situations do you find yourself being tempted toward this same reaction? What can you learn from this chapter about dealing with such temptation?

Conclusion

1. What most stood out to you as you studied Numbers 11 this week? *Why* do you think this was the case?

2. What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to *do* as a result of this? Be prepared to share with your group!