

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY IN THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

### PART THREE – CHAPTERS 9-12 GOD CALLS SOME TO BE LEADERS. HAS HE CALLED YOU?

The first two sections, chapters 1-8, explored some of the common problems that occur after we have known the Lord a short while - our eternal security,(chapter 1) our part in the local church,(chapter 2) relating our Christian faith to ordinary life,(chapter 3,4) our close relationships,(chapter 5) positive alternatives to what once filled our lives,(chapter 6) what is the cross about,(chapter 7) and how can we make a difference in the world?(chapter 8) Now Numbers moves on to the subject of leadership.

Q1. Why was no one allowed to miss out on the Passover? Why was there special provision for those who had had contact with death? How do these instructions relate to leadership? The pillar of cloud was the way God guided their movement from place to place. How does this explain the way He still guides? What is the role of a leader in the guidance of other Christians?(Numbers 9)

The first feast of each year for the Israelites was to be the Passover which looked back on the escape from Egypt and how the first born of Israel escaped the fate of the first born sons of Egypt. It looked forward to Jesus' death and resurrection which is the only basis for Christian experience. No-one was to miss out on the Passover as none of us should miss out on the cross. There is nowhere else to start life. Back in chapter 5, three situations were described which would exclude an Israelite from fellowship. One was contact with the dead. Special provision was made for anyone who missed the Passover because of contact with death to celebrate it one month later. Anyone who did not bother with the Passover was excluded. Any outsider on the other hand was welcome. The cloud by day which became a pillar of fire by night which had first led the people from Egypt to Sinai now hovered above the Tabernacle. It represented the presence of God. Every move it made was an indication to the people to move. It is the awareness of God's presence in us as His peace which is the key to staying where we are or moving on day by day. Learn to be aware of Him and His plan.(chapter 9)

Q2. On what occasions were trumpets to be blown? What New Testament references can you find to trumpets? How do the Old and New Testaments present the same ideas? Is a leader to be someone who can blow his own trumpet? How does the story of Hobab illustrate Matt.10:37 and Luke 18:29? Did he do as Moses asked (Num.10)?

Silver trumpets were the means of communication from Moses and the Levites to the rest of the tribes. There were different signals to bring everyone together, or only the leaders. There were signals warning of attack by an enemy, or simply when it was time for everyone to move on. Special signals marked special days and the offering of certain sacrifices. All signals were to be a reminder of God's presence and love for them. When the signal to move came for the very first time, every tribe responded and the sub-tribes of Levi each did their part. Before leaving Hobab, Moses' brother in law, expressed his wish to stay back in his traditional land but Moses urged him to join the Israelites and he did. The Israelites moved for 3 days before God told them to stop and camp. Jesus describes God's trumpet which will warn us when we are about to be gathered to heaven.(Matt.24:31) Paul confirms the same promise.(I Cor.15:52; I Thess.4:16) Rev.8 and 9 describe a series of trumpet warnings of terrible events. God wants to get and keep our attention. We need to hear God's signals in our hearts to move or stay on earth, or one day to heaven.(chapter 10)

Q3. What does manna represent for the Christian? How and why do we get bored with manna? What does chapter 11 teach about the responsibility of leaders when this happens to other Christians? Why did God give them quails in response to their grumbling?

The plan for living the Christian life with God in the centre, cleansing and leading His people, had been carefully prepared and began to be put into practice. Surely for people in such a privileged position with God nothing could go wrong? Trouble began as it so often does with grumbling, muttering under our breath, first to ourselves and then to our neighbours, and eventually to God. First it was simply about adversity of any kind. Their short memories had forgotten how hard it had been to be slaves in Egypt. Often the Bible talks about fire as God's means of judgement and cleansing.(I Cor.3:13-15) It is painful but necessary. Moses prayed for their forgiveness and the pain for the moment was over. Quickly they were complaining again, this time about their boring diet of manna. Jesus described Himself as the bread which came down out of heaven, the eternal manna.(Jn.6:26-34) He is our totally sufficient food, satisfying every hunger and need we have. We can so easily be misled into thinking that there are more tasty ideas about life than the Christ of the Bible. Moses heard the people weeping and expressed his frustration to God. The Lord recognised that Moses was slipping into the mistake of carrying everyone's problems on his shoulders alone and gave him 70 helpers, as He had previously given him a large team to help him in Exod.18. To serve beside Moses, God equipped them with His Holy Spirit. Training others who can walk, empowered by the Holy Spirit, beside us in our task is a vital secret of effective leadership. When God acts He does so in superabundance.(Eph.3:20) They wanted some meat so the Lord gave them all they could eat for a month and more so. But for some their greed was fatal.(chapter 11)

Q4. Was the Cushite woman whom Moses married Zipporah (Exod.2:21)? Why do you think Miriam and Aaron criticised this marriage? Should we speak out if we think a friend has married someone who was not God's choice? Is this not part of a leader's job? How did God deal with Miriam? What is the lesson of this story for today (Num.12)?

Leaders commonly grumble about each other and the personal choices other leaders make which is none of our business. It is dangerous and divisive.

The Cushite woman Moses married could not have been his first wife, Zipporah who was a Midianite. Midian was a son of Abraham by his third wife, Keturah,(Gen.25:4) and therefore would have looked similar to the Israelites. Cush was a son of Ham whose name means 'black' so Moses' second wife would have been a black African. Aaron and Miriam's disapproval of her was probably racial. She obviously was not an Israelite. While God would later command His people not to marry outside their nation, this was a spiritual instruction not a racial one.(Num.25) It may well be that Zipporah had died by this time but we are not told. Nowhere in the Bible are we given authority even as senior leaders like Aaron and Miriam to make this kind of decision for someone else.(I Thess.4:11) Our authority is simply to preach the Word so that God can make His will known to those who hear, on whom they should marry or any other life choice. Aaron and Miriam were playing the role of God, which is sin. Yet God forgave Miriam as He forgives us when we interfere in His business.(chapter 12)