

NUMBERS 11:16-35 (BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ASK FOR)

A person becomes a true Christian by having faith in Christ. The requirement is given, and when it is met, he becomes a part of that holy body. But, unless you think a bit too highly of yourself, you'll have to admit that you aren't the perfect Christian. And in fact, every one of us is on a different level. Still speaking of saved believers, there are some very faithful souls, and there are any degree below that, right down to those who have fallen back into the world's way, having even forgotten the commitment they made.

As Christians, we can find sufficiency in the Lord, or we can keep looking back to the world, hoping to find delight or satisfaction in something else. I'm not opposed to people buying a lottery ticket, especially when the jackpot gets up to a billion dollars. A two dollar investment could pay off rather well there. But there are people, including Christians, that seem to lust after the lottery, or the next big thing at work, like a promotion, or the next faster car that they can buy.

Having any of these, or countless other things, is not wrong in and of itself. It is the attitude concerning those things that can be, and usually is, wrong.

Is it wrong to eat quail? Is it wrong to think, "Gee, I'd like to have quail for dinner?" No. This isn't wrong. But it would be wrong if someone said, "Ever since I became a Christian, I haven't been able to afford a single quail for dinner. I used to have quail all the time. This deal stinks." It's not the quail; it's the attitude.

Where we find our ultimate sufficiency is where we will find our fullest joy. If we really love quail, even if it is completely unavailable, but we are still content in Christ, then it doesn't matter if we don't have quail.

Text Verse: He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens;
And by His power He brought in the south wind.
²⁷ He also rained meat on them like the dust,
Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas;
²⁸ And He let *them* fall in the midst of their camp,
All around their dwellings. Psalm 78:26-28

The person who says, "I can afford the lottery ticket and this should be fun to see what happens," is in a completely different position than the person who says, "I sure hope I win the lottery. That will pay off all my bills." If you have bills you can't deal with, the last thing you need to do is be buying lottery tickets.

But normally, the people who can afford them the least are those who will spend the most on them. When they get what they ask for, it will almost always turn into a curse. The number of lottery winners who are in worse shape than before they won is huge. They weren't responsible before they had the money, and they won't be responsible after they get it. They got what they asked for, and it didn't profit them at all.

Today we will see a group of people who are unsatisfied with that which is of the highest value of all. In turn, their hearts turn back to what they first had, not realizing that what they want will never satisfy. If you can't be satisfied in the One who made the quail, you sure won't be satisfied with the quail He made. Let us remember that only the Lord can truly fill every need and desire we have. Anything less will disappoint. This is one of those important lessons we find 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. You Shall Eat Meat (verses 16-22)

¹⁶ So the Lord said to Moses:

It was in the preceding verses that Moses, overwhelmed with his duties and responsibilities, said that he was not able to bear all the people alone. He simply could not foresee any relief from the box in which he found himself, and so he poured out his anguish before the Lord. It is with this context being understood that we come to these words now.

Rather than, “So the Lord **spoke** to Moses,” it says, “So the Lord **said** to Moses.” As we have seen in the past, the subtle change in wording, from *daber* (spoke) to *amar* (said), indicates that the task requires a partnership and people working together. It may seem like trifling, but it isn’t.

¹⁶ (con’t) “Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them;

Here we have two different distinctions being made. The first are the *zaqan*, or elders. The word comes from *zaqan*, or beard. It thus signifies someone who is old, recognizable because of his pronounced beard. Secondly, they are noted as *shoterim*, or officers. This word comes from an unused root which probably signifies, “to write.” Thus, they were old men who were also some type of magistrate or scribe. The only other time this word has been used was in Exodus 5.

The Lord is directing Moses to gather together seventy of such advanced and skilled men. They have years of experience, and they have skills already developed to conduct affairs necessary to bear authority over others. The Lord is not asking simply for Moses to gather together friends, but truly qualified men.

Of the number seventy, Bullinger defines it as “...spiritual order carried out with all spiritual power and significance. Both spirit and order are greatly emphasized.” The very context of the passage confirms this as being exactly what the number identifies. The seventy here in this verse are said to have been later used as the basis for the number which formed the Sanhedrin in Israel, seventy men with a leader, like Moses, appointed over them. It is also the same number that Jesus sent forth in Luke 10:1.

¹⁶ (con’t) bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you.

The Lord has completely overlooked the plea of Moses which closed out the verses in the previous sermon. Moses had said, “If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in Your sight—and do not let me see my wretchedness!” Instead of rebuking Moses, He simply redirects him to a new path that will correct Moses’ inability to handle the congregation by himself.

This is evident because these men are being brought forward to the tent of meeting to stand together with Moses. This is the place of ordination as much as it is the place of seeking God’s mercy. That has been seen in the ordination of the priests and the Levites. Now a new group is set to be ordained for a new purpose...

¹⁷ Then I will come down and talk with you there.

The Lord is already speaking to Moses, and so this seems like a superfluous statement, but this is not an unnecessary set of words. First, it is an act of honor to Moses that he would be addressed while these men were there. The Lord is still setting him apart even in the act of raising up those who stood around him.

Secondly, the fact that the Lord will speak to Moses while the leaders are at the tent of meeting is an assurance that they are acceptable to be there. As the Lord had said in the past, "...none shall appear before Me empty-handed." And yet, they have not been asked to bring anything but themselves before the Lord. Instead of presenting a gift, they are presenting themselves, and it is they who will be given something...

17 (con't) I will take of the Spirit that *is* upon you and will put *the same* upon them;

There is one Spirit, and He is indivisible. What is being conveyed here is not that the Spirit upon Moses will be lessened, but that the gifts which Moses is endowed with will likewise be endowed to these men in whatever measure the Lord determined. This is confirmed by Paul's words which say –

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all." 1 Corinthians 12:4-6

It is the Lord who distributes to each one individually as He wills. He had willed to have His Spirit rest upon Moses in certain gifts, and now He would allow that same Spirit to rest upon these men. Just as the lamp in the tabernacle was lit, one lamp to the next without diminishing the light of the first lamp, so these men will receive the spiritual gifts of Moses without diminishing his. There is one fountain from which the Spirit proceeds. That fountain will now be directed to flow to these men...

17 (con't) and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear *it* yourself alone.

With the Spirit imparted to them, the heavy burden which overwhelmed Moses would be relieved. That "spiritual order carried out with all spiritual

power and significance,” as explained by Bullinger, would be sufficient to handle the burden so that Moses will never ask the Lord to take his life again.

18 Then you shall say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat;

In Exodus 19, the Lord instructed that the people consecrate themselves before His appearance to them on Sinai when He gave them the Ten Commandments. In Jeremiah 12:3, the prophet asks the Lord to consecrate (prepare) the people for the day of slaughter. The idea here is, “Prepare to meet your God” in the way that He determines. In this case, it is at the same time a mercy bestowed upon Moses, and it is also a judgment to be wrought upon the people. That is why the two accounts are interlaced as they are. That this is judgment upon them is next seen...

18 (con’t) for you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, “Who will give us meat to eat? For *it was well with us in Egypt.*”

The Lord heard their weeping, but it was a weeping of complaint where verse 10 said, “the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused.” They openly and directly lied when they said “*it was well with us in Egypt.*” They may have had meat to eat, but things were not well with them. It is they who cried out in their bondage, and it is God who responded to their cries. They had meat while in bondage. Now they have no meat while in freedom. To show them how sinful their complaining is, he will show them the difference between the two...

18 (con’t) Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat.

Their complaints were directed against the Lord, and in judgment He would give them what they asked for, and more...

¹⁹ You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days,

In Exodus 16, the Lord sent quail to the people along with the manna. That appears to have been one day, and it was prior to the giving of the law. Despite complaining, they had not yet been given the law, and so the Lord graciously provided for them in their complaints. Now, after the law is given, he will righteously give them what they ask for in their complaints as judgment upon them. The counting of the days in an upward manner indicates this...

²⁰ but *for* a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you,

Whether the quail came for thirty days, or whether they were given enough quail to last them for thirty days, the Lord has promised that they would have quail sufficient for thirty days of meals. It would be such a vast amount that they would over-indulge in it and come to loath it. The words, “until it comes out of your nostrils” are probably both metaphorically and literally spoken, though at the time Moses conveyed the words to them, they would have only taken it metaphorically.

²⁰ (con’t) because you have despised the Lord who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, “Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?””

The idea here is that the Lord will remind them exactly why they came up out of Egypt. With the memory of the meat they ate wiped away because of it becoming so distasteful to them, they would no longer look back on what was positive, but instead would only remember what was negative. The bondage of Egypt would hopefully be seen for what it rightly was. And so the giving of the quail in this manner is a necessary step in order to cut the people’s dependency on desiring that which could never satisfy.

²¹ And Moses said, “The people whom I *am* among *are* six hundred thousand men on foot; yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they may eat *for* a whole month.’

He is incredulous. It’s clear that he believes what he just heard, but it would require a miracle. This is also one of those verses that shows that this was not recorded by some later writer. Instead of citing the exact number from the census, or instead of rounding that number up and including all the counted Levites, or even giving a superlative number which included all the women and children, Moses speaks out the number of those counted as ready for warfare, and he rounds the number down. This would hardly be what a later writer would record. Despite this, the amount of meat it would take to feed only six hundred thousand would be huge. Multiply that times thirty days, and what would be needed?

²² Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to provide enough for them?

Scholars here sharply chide Moses for failing to believe. That may be true to some point, but Moses hasn’t disbelieved. He only cannot understand how it could otherwise come about. They had flocks and herds. His question is whether that is the Lord’s remedy for it. If so, that would totally deplete the supply. What he asks reflects the words of the apostles who questioned Jesus at the feeding of the five thousand. They asked, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and given them *something* to eat?” In both, they are looking at what is expected of them more than how the Lord would otherwise resolve the matter apart from them. That second option is then explicitly stated by Moses...

²² (con't) **Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to provide enough for them?"**

The very fact that Moses asks this indicates that he knows it cannot happen apart from God. They are nowhere near the sea, and so it is something that would truly be miraculous to otherwise occur. He has been told to tell the people they will eat meat for a month, and he wants to be able to explain how when he goes to them. The stress of the complaints, and the pressure of the burden on him, causes him to want more than just the word that it will happen, but an explanation of how it will come about. But the Lord doesn't give that, he simply proclaims that His word will be realized...

*You shall know that I am the Lord your God
I will make it evident in the works I do
Be confident that as in this earth you trod
I have given sufficient evidence to you*

*I prevailed over the law, which no one else could do
I showed that I am the Holy One of Israel
And then I went to Calvary's cross for you
And so of My works, you are to tell*

*I proved My sinless life when I broke death's chains
In the resurrection, I proved that I have set you free
Now the only thing which remains
Is that You reach out your heart and receive Me*

II. And the Spirit Rested (verses 23-30)

²³ And the Lord said to Moses, “Has the Lord’s arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether what I say will happen to you or not.”

It doesn’t say, “arm.” It says, “hand.” “Has the Lord’s hand been shortened?” The hand is what provides, it is what gives out, it is what demonstrates ability to sustain. The Lord rhetorically asks if His ability to provide and keep on providing has somehow become limited. The obvious answer is, “No.” It doesn’t matter how He will provide, the fact that He has spoken means that He will provide. Moses needs to simply accept Him at His word, and to trust that His word is true. And apparently, he does...

²⁴ So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle.

The words, “So Moses went out,” indicate that he had been conversing with the Lord in the tent of meeting. After that, he passed on all of what the Lord had said and gathered those chosen as elders together, placing them, as it says, “around” the tent. This probably means in a semi-circle in front of the tent, facing its front.

²⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud,

The cloud, which remained above the spot where the mercy seat was within the tabernacle, physically moved from there to confirm that His presence was absolutely there with them in what was about to occur. There could be no mistake that what would come about was purposeful. From there...

²⁵ (con't) **and spoke to him,**

This is exactly what He said He would do in verse 17. It confirms that Moses is still set apart from those who are about to receive the Spirit, and it shows that the men are accepted before the Lord by the invitation of Moses. The speaking of the Lord to Moses is a foreshadowing of what is recorded concerning Jesus in relation to those with Him in John 12 –

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, “I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again.”

²⁹ Therefore the people who stood by and heard *it* said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

³⁰ Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake.” John 12:27-30

²⁵ (con't) **and took of the Spirit that *was* upon him, and placed *the same* upon the seventy elders;**

Again, as He said He would do, the Lord performs His word. Each step is in confirmation of His words to Moses, and it is a purposeful event which could not otherwise be denied by any who saw it occur.

²⁵ (con't) **and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again.**

Here is the first use of the verb *nava*, or prophesy, in the Bible. It comes from the noun *navi*, or prophet. We are not told what they prophesied, and so for us it doesn't matter what they said or sang. It simply indicates an

uttering forth of praise of, or of the will of God. What matters is that the same Spirit rested on all, demonstrating that the Spirit that was upon Moses was sufficient to meet the challenges he faced, even if he was not. Now, that same Spirit would be with the seventy who would work with Moses to meet the challenges as a united whole.

That they never prophesied again simply means that they were not called to be prophets. Instead, they were called to be assistants to the prophet. The Spirit is One, and He apportions the gifts according to His wisdom.

²⁶ But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one *was* Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they *were* among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp.

The name Eldad means Whom God Loves, in essence Beloved of God. Medad means Beloved. A written notice, as the Hebrew indicates, had been made for them to come. However, and without giving the reason for it, they were still in the camp. But they were chosen, and the Spirit rested upon them, just as among the others. This was sufficient to show that the Lord was not constrained to the area of the tabernacle, just as Ezekiel's calling showed that the Lord was not constrained to the area of Israel. Likewise, the book of Acts shows that the Lord is not constrained to any location or people group, but that His Spirit extends beyond any supposed borders which we tend to mentally impose on Him.

The names of these men seem to have been especially chosen by the Lord to show that whom God loves, and those who are His beloved, are never out of reach of the bestowal of His Spirit. As they are the only two named elders, they are thus representative of all of them.

²⁷ And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”

The Hebrews says, “And **the** young man.” It doesn’t say who he is, but he is singled out by the definite article. However, it is likely that it is Joshua. The same term, *naar*, or “young man,” is used of him in Exodus 33:11, which was within the past year. Regardless of his actual age, he is considered a young man in relation to Moses.

What may have happened, is that Joshua, being Moses’ assistant, was the one who was sent out with the written names of the seventy chosen men. Sixty-eight had arrived, and Eldad and Medad were probably the last on the list. Before they even had a chance to gather themselves together and head to the tabernacle, the Spirit came upon them. In seeing this, he was so concerned about what had taken place that he made a beeline for Moses to tell him what was going on. This seems likely because...

²⁸ So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, *one* of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!”

The Hebrew doesn’t say, “*one* of his choice men.” It says, He was Moses’ assistant “from his youth.” This verse explains the previous verse. Joshua had been Moses’ assistant from his youth, and he is still a young man who preciously guarded the relationship, desiring Moses to be held in proper esteem. For these people to be in the camp prophesying, Joshua must have thought that it disparaged Moses’ authority in the eyes of the people. This same general thing happened at the time of Jesus’ ministry, as recorded in Mark 9 –

“Now John answered Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.’

³⁹ But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is on our side. ⁴¹ For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.'" Mark 9:38-41

At all times, one must contemplate who he is looking to honor. In the end, it is the Lord, above all else, that deserves that from us. Moses understood Joshua's misguided passion, and he gently rebukes him for it...

²⁹ Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake?"

Moses knew that Joshua was jealous of the gifts bestowed upon the men, possibly because he had been Moses' assistant, and yet he did not receive the Spirit, but more directly because he was Moses' assistant and he wanted Moses' authority to not be diminished. But Moses felt otherwise...

²⁹ (con't) Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets *and* that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!"

Moses was so far from having an ego, that he would have enjoyed full fellowship in the Lord with all of the Lord's people. And in fact, it would have been a relief to him. The very grief he faced, and which had led him to the point of despair, would be fully lifted from him if this were the case. One cannot help to think that his plea here is actually given as a foretaste of what would occur in the giving of the New Covenant in Christ. His words are a hopeful anticipation of a time when this would come to pass. Sadly, however, though all of the Lord's people have received of His Spirit, we still, more often than not, do our best to run our lives apart from HIM. Even Moses will be found to do so in the pages ahead. None of us are exempt from listening to our own selves and shutting out the word of the Lord and the leading of the Spirit.

³⁰ And Moses returned to the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

This is the last time that the role of these elders is mentioned. We have no idea how they assisted Moses, or under what circumstances. The account itself stands as a witness to the fact that it happened because Moses felt unable to bear the weight of the people of the camp alone. And yet, it testifies to the fact that the Spirit, whether alone on Moses, or spread out among many, was sufficient to the task. With the matter settled, the men returned to the camp to consecrate themselves for the next day, as instructed.

What we have in these verses is a snapshot of Christ's ministry. He had, in the first 15 verses of the chapter, been pictured in the manna. The people had rejected that and lusted after other flesh. That was reflective of Christ's words in John 6:27. He told the people not to labor for food which perishes, but for the food – meaning Himself – which endures to everlasting life. He is the manna pictured in the wilderness. Israel rejected that and wanted something else, something temporary and corruptible.

During that same earthly ministry, Jesus appointed seventy to go forth and tell of Him and His kingdom. They were given the ability to perform His work on His behalf, just as these men are appointed to assist Moses. As I noted, there were only two named elders and thus they are representative of them.

In the New Covenant, believers are called both Beloved of God and Beloved throughout the epistles. They represent those who have been endowed with the Spirit. They were first given a special dispensation of it for the time of Christ's earthly ministry, but that eventually went out to all followers of Christ after His work was complete. The parallels are given to show us these patterns to lead us to understand that Christ is the fulfillment of the pictures found in Moses and the Old Covenant.

*The flesh which God has sent, it is food indeed
It is sufficient to fill us and give us life anew
And when we have partaken, we will then follow at the lead
Of our Lord, who has given Himself for me and you*

*The dew of heaven has left behind a gift for us
There is bread enough for all to eat
And this only pictures the coming Messiah, Jesus
Oh my! How delicious is this Bread... so very sweet*

*Thank You, O God, for filling our souls in such a way
You have granted us life through Your Son
And so we will exalt You through Him, each and every day
Until when at last this earthly life is done*

*Then we shall praise You forevermore O God
As in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall forever trod*

III. Graves of Craving (verses 31-35)

³¹ Now a wind went out from the Lord,

v'ruakh nasa me'et Yehovah. It is the same word, *ruakh*, used to indicate the Spirit in the previous verses. It is not coincidence that the Spirit and the wind are both mentioned and which use the same word in these passages. The connection should not be missed. This is a divinely appointed wind which is intended to instruct the people in no less a way than the Spirit was also given to do.

³¹ (con't) **and it brought quail from the sea and left *them* fluttering near the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on the other side, all around the camp, and about two cubits above the surface of the ground.**

The Hebrew here is highly debated, but what is certain is that there was a whole o' heap of quail, regardless of how it is translated. In this is a new and very rare word, *guz*. It signifies "to pass over (or away) rapidly." The wind which arose came and it came suddenly. The birds were completely caught up in it, and they were deposited all around the camp. They were probably so exhausted from the turmoil of the wind, that they would be easy pickings, hardly even able to flutter away.

The *selav*, or quail, is only found four times in the Bible. Once was in Exodus 16, twice here, and once in the 105th Psalm while referring to this time in the wilderness. The word is derived from *shalah*, meaning "to prosper." That idea comes from a root meaning "to be quiet" or "to be at ease." The connection between the words is that quails are fat and slow in flight because of their weight, and so they are given this name.

These would have blown up from the region of the Red Sea, but what is miraculous is that it occurred exactly at the time the Lord said it would, and in the amount that made His promise possible. A day's journey on either side and all around would be miles and miles of quail, worn out and ready to be captured, plucked, and laid out for drying...

³² And the people stayed up all that day, all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail (he who gathered least gathered ten homers);

One thing we know for certain is that it is not a Saturday. Other than that, we can only speculate about much of what is said. The Lord sent so many quail that the people were gathering for as much as 36 hours. A homer is

the largest measure used in the Bible, and it is used at times, such as in the piling up of frogs during the plague of Egypt, to indicate a massive amount.

The number ten is used several times in Scripture to denote a large, indeterminate amount as well. Therefore, the idea is that the one who gathered the least gathered great heaps. In their gathering, they would catch the bird alive and wring off its neck, draining its blood, and then adding it to their ever-increasingly large pile.

The excitement of the gather, however, would be replaced with a sense of loathing soon enough. Like anything, too much of a good thing becomes a bad thing.

³² (con't) **and they spread *them* out for themselves all around the camp.**

Here is another new word, *shatakh*, or “spread.” It is used of casting out grain, or spreading out one’s hands. It is used twice in this verse and just four more times in Scripture. In this, they took the quail and spread them wherever there was space for them to be dried out in the sun.

³³ **But while the meat *was* still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague.**

The account goes directly from the gathering to the eating and its resulting plague. There are various ideas about when this occurred. Some say “before it was chewed.” Some say, “before it came to an end,” meaning before all of it was consumed. No matter what, their cravings eventually caught up with them. Here the word “plague” is *makah*. It is one of the promised punishments first noted only weeks, or at best a couple months, before in the explanation of the punishments the people could expect for disobedience. In Leviticus 26:21, it said –

“Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more **plagues**, according to your sins.”

This was a foretaste of what lay ahead for Israel when they would walk in a manner contrary to the Lord. They lusted after the things of the world, the lust of the flesh, and they suffered because of it. So much so, in fact, that it says *va'yak Yehovah ba'am makah rabah meod* – “and struck Yehovah the people plague great very.” The superlative nature of the words indicates that many fell. The people would not only loathe the quail because of overindulgence, but because it had so greatly plagued those who died among them.

³⁴ **So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah,**

Qivroth ha'taavah means, literally “graves the lusting.” *Qivroth* comes from *qever*, a grave, or a place for burial. *Ha* is the definite article, and *taavah* means desire. That was first used in Genesis 3 –

“So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* **pleasant** to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate.” Genesis 3:6

It isn't by chance that this is the second use of *taavah* in Scripture. Just as Eve looked to the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, instead of being obedient to the Lord, here the people have looked to the lusts of the flesh and not to the provision of the Lord. His manna, picturing Christ, and the quail of Exodus 16, provided as a picture of Christ's death, was replaced with an unhealthy lusting for something more.

In Exodus 16, they complained due to hunger, not yet having the manna. Further, that was before the law was given. Here, they complained despite the manna, and it was after the giving of the law. They left the Lord and

turned their hearts back to Egypt, even after He had fully provided for them. In this, the people forfeited their lives as examples of what we too can expect in turning back to the world and away from God's provision found in Christ.

³⁴ (con't) **because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.**

Here the verb form of grave, meaning "to bury," and the verb form of craving are both used, giving the basis for the name of the place. The *avah*, or craving, is first used here, and it is the basis for *taavah*. The naming of the place is, as often happens for places and for people, the result of the surrounding circumstances.

³⁵ **From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth, and camped at Hazeroth.**

As noted, Kibroth Hattaavah means Graves of Lusting. Khazeroth is the plural of *khatser*, or village. Therefore, it means "Villages." The people were probably immensely happy to depart from their first sad stop along the way to Canaan. There, the Lord burned among them, and then He caused the plague to destroy many. Their yielding to the lusts of the flesh, and their inability to trust the Lord and to be satisfied in His provision was a memorable lesson.

In the end, the lesson of the quail needs to be explained. The quail are mentioned in only two accounts, Exodus 16 and here. Other than that, the Psalms merely reference what occurred here. In Exodus 16, the quails came at specific time of day which looked forward to Christ's cross. In the morning, they had manna, a picture of Christ's body given for us. It was a one time, and for all time, sacrifice, after which it was expected to be sufficient for the people. But here, they lusted again for meat, not finding sufficiency in Christ. This is why the manna was highlighted in verse 6. There

it said, “but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna *before* our eyes.”

They had come to partake of Christ in an unworthy manner and they suffered because of it. The parallel is found in Paul’s word to the Corinthians that we remind ourselves of every week during the Lord’s Supper –

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. ³⁰ For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

Israel failed to accept the provision of the Lord. They failed to find sufficiency in Him. And, they lusted after those things Egypt provided. The scholar Keil notes that –

“God purposed to show the people His power, to give them flesh not for one day or several days, but for a whole month, both to put to shame their unbelief, and also to punish their greediness.” Keil

That practically matches what Paul said to those in Corinth. He said, “Therefore, when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” The people complained and the Lord burned among them. They complained against the manna. Moses couldn’t bear the weight of the people, despite the *ruakh* which was on Him. The Lord took of the *ruakh* which was on Moses and placed it on seventy others. But Moses was excited by the prospect of all the Lord’s people having the *ruakh*. After that, the Lord then sent a *ruakh* to bring quail to the people. The people ate the quail and many died.

When the *ruakh* went out from the Lord, it brought what the people complained after. Those who were ungrateful or uncaring about the Lord paid the penalty for their disobedience. The lesson for us is to be careful what you ask for. James says –

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? James 4:4, 5

These types and shadows from the Old are intended to instruct us on life in the New. Now, everyone of the Lord’s people has been given the Spirit, and that Spirit yearns jealously. Let us not crave what the world provides, but let us find sufficiency in Christ alone. He is the Bread from heaven, and He is fully capable of satisfying our souls, if we will simply accept His provision.

Please, turn your hearts to Christ, be satisfied in the Lord, and have faith that what You have is exactly what He desires for You. This doesn’t mean not to strive to be your best and to attain the best, but to do so knowing that the Lord is sufficient for you as you strive ahead. Seek Him first and all good things will be added to you, according to His wisdom, not yours.

Closing Verse: “So they ate and were well filled,
For He gave them their own desire.
³⁰ They were not deprived of their craving;
But while their food *was* still in their mouths,
³¹ The wrath of God came against them,
And slew the stoutest of them,
And struck down the choice *men* of Israel.” Psalm 78:29-31

Next Week: Numbers 12:1-16 Being defiled is its own marked stamp (Unclean and Shut Out Of the Camp) (22nd 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.

Be Careful What You Ask For

So the Lord said to Moses:

“Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel

Whom you know to be the elders of the people

And officers over them; as to you I now tell

Bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, this thing you shall do

That they may stand there with you

Then I will come down and talk with you there

I will take of the Spirit that is upon you

-----and will put the same upon them, so to you I submit

And they shall bear the burden of the people with you

That you may not yourself alone bear it

Then you shall say to the people

‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat

For you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying

“Who will give us meat to eat?

For it was well with us in Egypt, it was a culinary treat

Therefore the Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat

You shall eat, not one day, nor two days
Nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, it's true
But for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils
And becomes loathsome to you
Because you have despised the Lord who is among you
And have wept before Him, saying
“Why did we ever come up out of Egypt?
These unhappy words to me you were relaying

And Moses said
“The people whom I am among are on foot
-----six hundred thousand men
Yet You have said, ‘I will give them meat
That they may eat for a whole month! Tell me that again!
Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them?
To provide enough for them, so I ask
Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them?
To provide enough for them... that is one major task!

And the Lord said to Moses
“Has the Lord's arm been shortened a little or a lot?
Now you shall see whether what I say
Will happen to you or not
So Moses went out and told the people
The words of the Lord
And he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people

And placed them around the tabernacle, according to the word
Then the Lord came down in the cloud, and spoke to him
-----and took of the Spirit that was upon him
And placed the same upon the seventy elders – these chosen men
And it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them
That they prophesied, although they never did so again
But two men had remained in the camp:
The name of one was Eldad, yes – Eldad it's true
And the name of the other Medad
And the Spirit rested upon them too

Now they were among those listed
But who had not gone out to the tabernacle
Yet they prophesied in the camp
Their gift of prophecy they did tackle
And a young man ran and told Moses, and said
“Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp
-----by the Spirit they are being led!

So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant
One of his choice men, answered and said
“Moses my lord, forbid them!
They are prophesying as by the Spirit they are led
Then Moses said to him
“Are you zealous for my sake?
Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets

And that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!
-----that He would this move make
And Moses returned to the camp, so we know
He and the elders of Israel, to the camp they did go
Now a wind went out from the Lord
And it brought quail from the sea
And left them fluttering near the camp
About a day's journey on this side and on the other side
-----about a day's journey

All around the camp, yes all around
And about two cubits above the surface of the ground
And the people stayed up all that day, all night
-----and all the next day
And gathered the quail, but not by the pound
(he who gathered least gathered ten homers)
And they spread them out for themselves in the camp all around
But while the meat was still between their teeth
Before it was chewed, so the account does state
The wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people
And the Lord struck the people with a plague very great

So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah
Because they buried the people who had yielded to craving there
From Kibroth Hattaavah the people moved to Hazeroth
And camped at Hazeroth, yes that is where

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...