

# ISRAEL'S 40<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

## Numbers Chapter 20 thru 21

The number 40 in scripture often represents the fullness of testing. Moses' lifespan of 120 years could be broken down into three 40 year periods, each period of 40 years represented a completion of God's testing in Moses' life. Jesus fasted for 40 days, Moses fasted food and water for 40 days twice, and Israel wandered 40 years in the wilderness before entering into the Promised land.

As the human mind would think and natural reasoning would comprehend, the final stages of the completion of 40 would reveal, at least outwardly, how well things are progressing. For example, when a country selects young men to go to battle, they first prepare them in training and the learning of their weapons of warfare, before that country would ever send them forth to battle. The final days and weeks of preparation would reveal how well equipped and prepared for battle their soldiers are. Only the fittest and skilled, those that are physically at their peak, would qualify and be sent forth to war. And so it is with the world and human reasoning. But the Word of God instructs us otherwise, “for my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.” (Isaiah 55:8) We often carry a mentality with us of human rationale into the things of God. We receive a prophecy, and in our own mind and strength go forward to bring forth the desired result. Abraham thought that he was fulfilling God's directive of bringing forth seed when Ishmael was born. Ishmael was not the promised seed, but Abraham believed that for the first 13 years of Ishmael's life. We often are deceived into believing we are fulfilling the will of God as we put our hands to the work, only to find out later it was not so and we actually are frustrating the plans of God. May God help us!

Chapters 20 thru 25 of Numbers reveals how different the last year, the 40<sup>th</sup> year, really was in comparison to how we might think. The 40<sup>th</sup> year, Israel's final year in the wilderness was one of extreme difficulties, hardships, and unknown pathways than ever before experienced. It was clearly the most difficult year, out of all the years Israel passed through the wilderness. Miriam died during this final year. She was the prophetess that sang about the horse and rider being thrown into the sea, in reference to Pharaoh's army being drown in the Red Sea, 39 years before. Here the people of God again complained, “Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?” (Num. 20:3-4) These are the same words uttered during Israel's first year in the wilderness. (Note: Exodus 14:11, 16:3) Haven't they learned anything in 39 years? Still complaining, still

murmuring. It would appear that no ground has been gained in Israel's soul during their training in the desert.

So the people of God sinned yet again before the Lord. But Wait! Something else is about to occur that has never happened in the entire wilderness journey. Moses, the man of God, the man that God has used all these years to bring divine guidance, direction, exhibiting the wonders and power of God, and bringing to Israel the ordinances of God, FAILS! How could this be? This is the final year! The people of God need the man of God more than ever. They are about to cross over into the Promised land. How can the man of God fail them now? And within their hearts came the questioning murmur, "How could GOD fail us now?" Beware, brethren, of putting our trust in anything, even very good things and people, and not solely in Christ! For surely in this final stage of testing, we shall experience "the removing of those things that are shaken, ...that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." (Heb. 12:27b)

"Wholly lean on Jesus' Name" shall be our song.

Moses, the lawgiver, was commanded to speak to the rock, but as tradition would have it, Moses struck the Rock, twice! Striking the rock many years before worked, why won't it work now?! Often times, we do the same. What worked with the Lord before, we assume will work again. The prayer that worked last year, we try again. But we are finding that it is not working like it used to. This is creating confusion in the hearts of God's people, wondering why nothing is happening. Has God lost His power? Though the thought is not always spoken, the thought is there. And so we do err in our hearts, as the scripture says, "Not knowing His ways." God is looking for a people that are walking with and knowing Him! Not methods that worked in the past, not following formulas, but FOLLOWING THE LAMB! God is allowing nothing that worked in the past to work now, outside of that which is birthed out of union with Him. If the mountain is not being moved with prayer as before, let us NOT continually repeat our prayer out of vain repetition, consternation, frustration, or even demand, but let us seek the Lord to find out why the mountain is not being moved and obey the Lord.

Now, what happened next could be quite baffling to some. Water came out of the rock immediately after striking it. It appeared that Moses was once again in God's favor. Beware of immediate blessings! They may not always indicate the approval of the Father. Much like giftings in the body of Christ, they can deceive. Giftings can flow, but they do not always indicate the Lord Himself is directing. How do you know? How do you discern? Only by relationship with the Lord birthed out of

experience and maturity of walking with Him. In this day and age, it has been a very trying time for the people of God, just as it was for Israel. Past experiences, past ways, even formulas that worked, will not work today. It is the 40<sup>th</sup> year and God must prepare us for the circumcision that lies ahead!

Suffice it to say, Moses' failure was an unexpected turn of events that no one ever anticipated. And so is much of the 40<sup>th</sup> year. The law never brings us into the Promised land, only a walk with Christ. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, ...But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Gal. 3:24-25)

Israel's next step, during this final year, finds them requesting passage through the land of Edom which is the most direct route to the Promised land. Israel is not only denied passage, but God seemingly agrees with Edom and instructs the people of God "to compass the land of Edom". What? After all their travels around the mountain, now when Israel is ready to move into the land God has promised to them, God NOT only tells His people to NOT engage the enemy, but to circle around them! And circling around the land of Edom, puts them on the other side of the Jordan river, another major obstacle facing them before entering into Canaan land! No wonder the scripture says, "the SOUL of the people was much discouraged because of the way." (Num. 21:4b) Not many souls, but one soul, the very soul, or heart beat of the people! One people, one body, and that one people are totally discouraged. What is happening? Nothing makes sense? Has Moses lost his touch with the Lord? How could this possibly be the way? Something is drastically wrong! Or so it seems to the natural reasoning man.

Just prior to all of this happening, Aaron dies and Israel mourned his death 30 days. Aaron, the spokesman for Moses, the voice that Israel became accustomed to hearing when they heard the words of God, has now passed off the scene. A time of mourning and reflection. 39 years and now Aaron is gone. 39 years and Aaron never made it in! What is happening? How will Israel ever handle the passing away of Moses only a few months later? Nothing seems to be going right, and yet those who were counting the years, knew that this was the 40<sup>th</sup> year, the final year of God's pronounced judgment. God had clearly spoken that Israel would wander 40 years in the wilderness for their sin of unbelief when Israel believed the report of the 10 spies, rather than the 2 that declared Israel was able to go up and take the country. Now, 39 years later, the 2 spies who brought that good report were still standing! Declaring it is a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey. After 39 years, the land hasn't changed, but God was doing a work within His people that would finally make them fit to possess the land of their possession. But the way in wasn't through man's

reasoning or strength. The way in was (and always will be) through weakness. The way to perfection is always through weakness! "...My strength is made PERFECT in weakness." (II Cor. 12:9a)

It has been said, "The greater the move of God, the weaker the vessel." If we, as a people, are awaiting the greatest move of God the world has ever known, how weak shall these vessels be? Can we expect any strength of flesh to survive the day of His appearing? How totally broken shall these vessels be that shall carry the strength of the Lord? Shall any human reasoning enter into the manifold planning of the Lord's ways in this hour? Wasn't this Israel's problem as they wandered seemingly aimlessly around the land of Edom? Isn't this our problem today? However, brethren, it wasn't wandering aimlessly. It had intent and purpose in the heart of God.

We are, without question, in the 40<sup>th</sup> year of our travels in God's plan. Not literally one year, but on the final journey, the last lap of the race into the fulfilled promises of God. Israel did not look too good on this final lap and neither do we, the body of Christ. Israel was still murmuring and complaining. "All have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God." Confused and bewildered; and discouragement was at an all time high. Surely this could not be the people God has been preparing all these years! No hope here! God could not possibly use this people! And so the devil's accusations come up before His throne day and night against this people. (Rev. 12:10)

As we look at the world events around us, the enemy is rapidly closing in ranks on the church at large. In the world, where greed and prosperity govern the hearts of the people, the church is drowning in lukewarmness and compromise. It has lazily found a place of comfortableness where it can somehow co-exist with the world. This thought process has crept into all levels of the church, and not one level is exempt. There is that which is choking out the seed and making it unfruitful. Though there is 30, 60, and 100 fold, compromise will not allow the church to succeed on any level; it simply becomes unfruitful, as the scripture declares.

If we want to get a good look at what is happening to the church, we only need to look at natural Israel. Natural Israel is a mirror or a type of spiritual Israel. Surrounded by enemies on all sides, Israel is 444 times smaller than the USA, 1/640<sup>th</sup> of the land mass of the surrounding 22 Arab states, with the world land mass 6,875 times larger than that of Israel. According to the population, only one in every thousand persons in the world are of Jewish descent living in Israel. And yet, this small country with its minimal population is become "the burdensome stone for all people... though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." (Zech.

12:3). The odds are overwhelmingly stacked against Israel in every way. And so it is with the church today. Brethren, we are living in the last days where all of scripture shall be fulfilled. It is not only a glorious thing that God shall do in these last days, it is **ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL** that we come forth in maturity for the survival of the church and those in humanity destined for salvation. We must not only survive, **WE MUST OVERCOME!**

The outright slaughter of the church in all nations has never been higher. The true Christian, and even those who simply wear the name of Christ, are, in some form or another, under attack in all nations. “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood...” (Acts 2:20a). The moon is a type of the outer court church (it has no light of its own, but reflects the light of the sun). The moon church being turned into blood is martyrdom. The outer court church, the indefensible part of the church not directly under the headship of Jesus Christ, is being martyred at alarming rates. This part of the church is being “...given unto the Gentiles...” (Rev 11:2) and shall be trampled under foot. There is becoming no place on earth in which to hide, as our only hope is to be hidden in Christ. To gain the secret place of the Most High requires commitment, sacrifice, and a total surrender to the living God, that we would live in full fellowship with Him. Christianity is being pushed out of the nations, disappearing from the Middle East as a whole, and outlawed in many major countries such as Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and the list goes on. If any of us were living in those countries today, we would not be saying the end is coming, we would declare emphatically, “**THE END HAS COME.**”

And so it is, we who desire to go all the way with the Lord, in typology, are in the 40<sup>th</sup> year in the wilderness. Helpless and powerless it would seem. Israel was given direction from the Lord not to go against Edom, the land of Esau, the brother that lost the blessing and sold the birthright. This does not make sense. Surely God wants us to go to war against these enemies; these principalities and powers! Why are we not given the command to go up against them instead of compassing around the enemy's territory? Surely God's ways are very discouraging to our carnal understanding.... “the carnal mind is enmity against God ...” (Romans 8:7a). May we always remember to, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and **LEAN NOT UNTO THINE OWN UNDERSTANDING.** In all thy ways acknowledge HIM, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

The truth is that Israel fought very few enemies during its 40 year journey. Why? God was dealing with the things in Israel's soul that needed to be replaced with God's nature. “And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was

in thine heart...” (Deut. 8:2). Three things Israel learned in the wilderness: 1) they were humbled 2) they were tested, and 3) their heart was revealed that they might repent. And so God is dealing with our souls till the humbling, the proving, and repentance by revelation is complete.

And yes, they were still murmuring! The word “murmur” in the Hebrew is the word “loon”. The definition of loon is: to stay, obstinate, dwell, tarry, lodge all night, a confidential complaint, expression of grievance or resentment, a continuous sound, a stream. May God deliver us from Mur Mur ing; continually dwelling on the negative.

Discouraged because of the way. Are any of us that are going on in the Lord really happy where we are? Would we not have chosen a different place, somehow a different direction than the pathway we are on? “The soul of the people was much discouraged because of THE WAY”. The greatest cause of offense, according to scripture, is a lack of understanding. (John 6:60-66, 16:1) When we don't understand what is happening, the enemy comes in with doubts and worries, fears and depressions. The enemy simply has a field day in the minds of the saints. And behind every one of those discouraging thoughts come live demons of darkness to bring upset and torment to the saints, and many are losing their sleep at night. More saints are coming under depression and sleepless nights, troubled by nightmares and fears than ever before. This is simply because they don't understand what is happening to them. And when offenses come, many begin to lose their their faith and confidence in the Lord.

And what about these fiery trials that are trying us? Don't we believe it is some strange thing that has somehow come upon us? And yet the scripture admonishes us that it is not some strange thing that has come upon us, but actually perfectly designed of the Lord to perfect us. (I Peter 4:12)

Some are so very discouraged, that they are looking to the world, its financial systems, its logic and counseling, its entertainment and fleshly ways, its ways of coping with problems, its way of escape.

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (II Cor. 4:8-9)

May we, in all of our troubles, pray and faint not, nor turn to the arm of flesh for our deliverance. Though our deliverance may not come speedily, let us NOT try to bring it forth of our own devices. God always has the answer and will not tempt us above our ability to cope, but in all our ways, He provides a means of escape.

“And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our SOUL loatheth this light bread.” (Num. 21:5)

The very next verse, “And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.” But God always has an antidote. God sent the fiery serpents, but then God directed Moses to make a serpent of brass and place it high on a pole for all of Israel to see. If a man looked, he would live! Fiery serpents... God's judgment. A serpent of brass... God's remedy (deliverance, salvation). All that was required was to look upon the brazen serpent and live. It is hard to imagine anyone refusing to look and choosing to die. And yet, many today refuse to look to Christ today and be saved!

This is one typology of this event in Israel's history which we have heard preached in many evangelical messages. However, there is another principle that we need to apply directly to us, the true Israel of God. Remember, God had His people all alone with Him in the desert. God was dealing with His people, Israel, and so God is dealing with us today, His people, the church. In some ways, He has us all alone, RIGHT NOW! This is not God dealing with the world, this is God dealing with His people and some are refusing to look to Him for life.

At present the body of Christ has been plagued with sickness and disease as never before. The plagues of Egypt are just as common amongst God's people as those in the world. In this arena, there seems to be very little difference between the world and the people of God. We certainly can see in Egypt in the book of Exodus, from the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, that God did sever or separate His people, and that none of the plagues from that point on would come upon Israel. As a people, we have not yet arrived at this point, but we are on the threshold of crossing over. However, we cannot push this point, and demand or command that we are there. Remember, one of the lessons of the wilderness journey was that God was humbling His people.

Concerning this area of sickness and disease, we must walk very humbly before the Lord as every situation is very unique and we must hear from God clearly. It is very humbling for a son of God who walks and believes the word of the Kingdom, to submit to the physicians of this world, the “pharmakeia” sorcery and drugs of this world. However, if after seeking the direction of the Great Physician, and He leads us in that pathway, we cannot in our pride insist that God will heal us in the manner we prescribe. Many sincere and Godly people have stood on a word that was not

God breathed and have ended their life before it was time. Pride and presumptuous sin, brethren, can cost us our lives.

On the other hand, if we run to the physicians of the world for our healing as king Asa did, we can be equally in trouble. "...yet in his disease he (Asa) sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians." (II Chron. 16:12b). We must get a direct word from the Lord and proceed very humbly and carefully in the pathway as each situation is different and no two situations are alike. God may lead us to the doctors for diagnosis and yet, not go the pathway of their counsel and recommended procedures. Let us hear God clearly and live to the glory of God!

Also, one of the greatest sins plaguing the people of God is falsely judging a brother or sister's situation, especially in this area of sickness and disease. We seem to feel we need to have an opinion on what someone else needs to do. May God help us to always walk in love and know that each man will stand before God alone, as we are called to stand and strengthen our brother or sister. The sin of Job's comforters was that they judged Job's condition falsely, though they were wise men of God. God sent them to comfort Job, but instead they judged. In the end Job had to pray for his friends before they were restored.

It is very important to note that between the time when some of the Israelites were bitten by fiery serpents and the word of remedy concerning the brazen serpent, something absolutely essential happened. Without this happening, the remedy would have never come! "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee..." (Num. 21:7a). The people of God truly recognized that their murmuring had brought them to a place of unbelief and sin. Something had truly happened! The people of God had repented before, but something was truly different this time! Maybe a culmination of events over the years and godly sorrow brought them to this finished place of repentance. Whatever the case may be, something clearly changed in the soul of the people! The breaking was complete.

The remedy was given by God and those who looked upon the brazen serpent lived. Brethren we are so close to crossing over, however, we must let the Lord complete His work within us. Israel, from this point on, was on the move. They traveled forward to Oboth, to Ijeabarim, to Zared, to Arnon, to Beer. Israel was on the move and so shall we also! Notice the difference in the heart of the people. As Moses gave the direction on where to dig for water, the people did not murmur. "Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it" (Num. 21:17). Notice who led the actual digging of the well. "The PRINCES digged the well, the NOBLES of the



people digged it, by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves.” (Verse 18). The leaders actually got their hands dirty as they applied faith to the word of God.

Now Israel was ready to fight some battles, and to take down the principalities that stood before them. First on God's list was the Amorites. The Amorites were the mountain dwellers and they symbolized pride. In true humility the powers of pride are broken. (Matt 23:12, I Peter 5:6) Humility and brokenness are no longer just events and experiences, but a way of life. The two witness company of overcomers spoken of in Revelation 11, were “clothed in sackcloth.” This was not their clothing at the beginning of their ministry, it was their clothing THROUGHOUT their ministry. They were truly a humble people, broken of the Lord. They will proclaim, just as Jesus said, “I can of mine own self do nothing.” And again they will say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

The days to follow would still contain more victories over the king of Bashan, and the enemy would study Israel even more and try to send Balaam to prophesy against them, which would not succeed. Seventeen chapters in the book of Numbers have been devoted to this final year, the 40<sup>th</sup> year, before Israel would cross over into the Promised Land. Seventeen chapters! It must have been an important year for God to devote 17 chapters of the Old Testament to this final year. And so it is important to God, the final work of completion that He desires to do in us!

Though some of Israel would be tripped up by the cunning devices of the enemy, God was (and still is!) preparing an army for the miraculous crossing of the river Jordan, to prepare Israel for the circumcision on the other side, in the Promised Land. Can you imagine, in the natural, an army of recently circumcised men going forth into battle? The typology is clear. The walls of Jericho will clearly come down before an army completely weakened of their own flesh. The flesh man will not be able to gain any victories in the Promised Land. God is yet again saying, “my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

The last 5 chapters of the book of Numbers not only rehearses the last 40 years of their wilderness journey, but also the hope that lies ahead for all of Israel, even their inheritance in the Promised Land. There is an inheritance the Lord is bring us into, as we also are becoming His inheritance! “For the joy that was set before Him...” Brethren, we are that joy! “...behold, I (the Lord) create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.” (Isaiah 65:18b). We are becoming His inheritance even as we are inheriting Him!

God bless you brethren.

brother David Walter