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**Day 41 – February 10**

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## **Establishment of a Nation (1525 – 1400 BCE)**

### ***From Kadesh to Moab***

### ***Moses' Journal of Israel's Trek***

**Readings: *Numbers 20:1-29; 21:1-35; 33:1-49***

### ***Reflections:***

- It is amazing that the people still have a bad attitude after all this time. Yet their complaint is rooted in a legitimate need. God wanted to show them that he does want to meet their needs. The command to speak to the rock would emphasize that it was God and God alone. Moses is minimized in his role by God using this way of doing a miracle. Moses misses God's heart though on two counts. First, he is angry at the people. He calls them rebels when there is no indication that God is declaring this. Second, Moses is full of pride. He says “we” will bring water from the rock rather than God will. Also, he hits the rock twice making him the center. God still completes the miracle but the consequences are that Moses will not enter the land. We should note that his sister has just died. He is a very old man. I guess after all those years of being friends with God, Moses still did not fully get it. Moses is the best example of a friend of God in the story of Israel but he is still considered less than John the Baptist according to Jesus. Jesus says in Luke 7:28, “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.” What is fascinating is that in Christ we are greater than John, Moses or anyone else in the story of Israel because of the grace of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit in us, working in our weakness.
- So we learn from this story that it is not moral sin or breaking the law that is the biggest concern to God but rather pride and arrogance. Moses doesn't seem to complain about this judgment but simply accepts it.
- Israel tries to pass through peacefully at first. Israel doesn't even fight at first.
- Aaron's death shows the passing of his calling to his son and how he was still honored even after failing as a leader a number of times.
- Israel finally does go to war and God enables them to wipe out those in the land. Here we see that God is using Israel as a means of judgment against these people.

- Once again the people complain and the judgment of snakes comes on them again. Lesson: We humans never learn.
- The bronze snake is a powerful symbol. It is a picture of the serpent, evil being judged, particularly an image of Satan being destroyed. God in this brief passage sets up a symbol that will be used when his son dies and is hung on wood. Everyone who looks at his son will be saved, not by works or by their righteousness but by an unbroken gaze of faith, complete trust. As he hangs on the wood, he himself will take our sin, becomes an object of wrath and dies. In his death Satan will be destroyed. What a powerful image of God's healing and grace coming through faith and simple trust.
- We should note that there is a later reference to the bronze snake. It later has to be destroyed because the Israelites begin to worship it. They see it as possessing magical powers. Even today people will worship the cross and see it as a good luck charm or source of magical powers. 2 Kings 18:1-4 states, "In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the **bronze snake** Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)"
- This passage contains a reference to the book of *Wars of the Lord*. This book has never been found but it gives further evidence that the Israelites kept record of what God had done for them.
- Israel continues their early victories when still seeking safe passage through peaceful means. Again, when we read these accounts of war and mass slayings, we should be glad we live under the reign of Christ, the prince of peace.
- The final account outlines their records of everywhere they went. This may sound a bit boring but it was important to remember how God had led them. This was their national journal of God's leadership for their community.