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## Sowing the Word

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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."

Numbers

### Numbers 11-12

February 25th- March 3rd, 2010

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So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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## Helpful Study Resource:

*Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter

## Online Help:

*Numbers: The Incomplete Christian Life* by Ray C. Stedman

<http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/2987/0204.html>

[http://preceptaustin.org/numbers\\_commentaries.htm](http://preceptaustin.org/numbers_commentaries.htm)

## Commentary:

The commentary used with permission throughout  
this booklet is:

**With the Word Bible Commentary**

**by Warren W. Wiersbe.**

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

# Outline

- I. Israel at Sinai: PREPARATION (1–10)
  - A. Counting - a Census of the people (1)
  - B. Arranging - ordering campsites around the Tabernacle (2)
  - C. Assigning - Counting the Levites, their duties assigned (3–4)
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- II. Sinai to Kadesh: FRUSTRATION (11–20:13)
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  - C. Saving - Bronze serpent (21:1–9)
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  - E. Protecting - Balak and Balaam (22–24)
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  - N. Expecting - Settlement of Canaan described (34–36)















## Cross References

Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:1–13, NKJV)

He caused an east wind to blow in the heavens; And by His power He brought in the south wind. He also rained meat on them like the dust, Feathered fowl like the sand of the seas; And He let them fall in the midst of their camp, All around their dwellings. So they ate and were well filled, For He gave them their own desire. They were not deprived of their craving; But while their food was still in their mouths, The wrath of God came against them, And slew the stoutest of them, And struck down the choice men of Israel. (Psalm 78:26–31, NKJV)

They soon forgot His works; They did not wait for His counsel, But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul. (Psalm 106:13–15, NKJV)

# With the Word Bible Commentary

## Numbers 11

This is a chapter of complaining!

***Complaining about bread (1–9).*** God was leading them, so the people had all they needed; yet they complained again. (See Phil. 2:14–15.) Their grumbling was evidence of the unbelief that would keep them out of the Promised Land. Had they been grateful for God's goodness and obedient to God's guidance, they would have saved themselves a great deal of misery. Let's remember that the next time we are tempted to complain about the providence of God. "The slaves of sin rarely grumble at that slavery; it is their slavery to God they grumble at," said George MacDonald.

***Complaining about burdens (10–25).*** Moses was grieved when they criticized both him and God. Could they improve upon the manna that came from heaven? Why did they crave food from Egypt? Had they forgotten their bondage in that land? Moses did what you must do when people disappoint you: he took it to God in prayer and told God just how he felt. God met the need, encouraged His servant, and punished the rebels.

***Complaining about blessing (26–35).*** Zealous for Moses and his position, Joshua told him to stop the two men from prophesying. James and John made a similar mistake, and Jesus had to rebuke them (Luke 9:49–50). If all of God's people were praising God by the Spirit, they would not be complaining! The Jews got what they asked for, but they lost the spiritual enrichment that comes when people walk by faith (Ps. 106:15). Have you learned to be grateful for unanswered prayer?

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Nu 11:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

# With the Word Bible Commentary

## Numbers 12

***The leader denounced (1–3).*** If you are in a place of leadership, expect criticism, even from members of your family. It happened to Moses, David (2 Sam. 6:20–23), and the Lord Jesus (Mark 3:20–21). Moses' wife was not the real reason for their criticism. Aaron and his sister were jealous of the authority God had given Moses, and they wanted him to share it. Perhaps they were reacting to what God did for the seventy elders (chap. 11).

***The Lord displeased (4–10).*** Moses did not defend himself; he waited for God to act. If we defend ourselves, we may hinder the Lord from defending us. Next to death, becoming a leper was the worst thing that could have happened to Miriam.

***The nation delayed (11–16).*** How often people turn for help to the very ones they have criticized! In his meekness, Moses did not rejoice at his sister's punishment; instead, he prayed for her (Matt. 5:43–48). Because of their sin, Aaron and Miriam delayed the march of the nation for a whole week. The sin of criticism is far more serious than most people realize (Matt. 7:1–5; James 4:12).

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Nu 12:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## *“Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?”*

Numbers 11:11

Written by: *C H Spurgeon*

Taken from: *Morning and Evening*

Our heavenly Father sends us frequent troubles to try our faith. If our faith be worth anything, it will stand the test. Gilt is afraid of fire, but gold is not: the paste gem dreads to be touched by the diamond, but the true jewel fears no test. It is a poor faith which can only trust God when friends are true, the body full of health, and the business profitable; but that is true faith which holds by the Lord's faithfulness when friends are gone, when the body is sick, when spirits are depressed, and the light of our Father's countenance is hidden. A faith which can say, in the direst trouble, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," is heaven-born faith. The Lord afflicts his servants to glorify himself, for he is greatly glorified in the graces of his people, which are his own handiwork. When "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope," the Lord is honoured by these growing virtues. We should never know the music of the harp if the strings were left untouched; nor enjoy the juice of the grape if it were not trodden in the winepress; nor discover the sweet perfume of cinnamon if it were not pressed and beaten; nor feel the warmth of fire if the coals were not utterly consumed. The wisdom and power of the great Workman are discovered by the trials through which his vessels of mercy are permitted to pass. Present afflictions tend also to heighten future joy. There must be shades in the picture to bring out the beauty of the lights. Could we be so supremely blessed in heaven, if we had not known the curse of sin and the sorrow of earth? Will not peace be sweeter after conflict, and rest more welcome after toil? Will not the recollection of past sufferings enhance the bliss of the glorified? There are many other comfortable answers to the question with which we opened our brief meditation, let us muse upon it all day long.

***“Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”***

Numbers 11:23

Written by: *C H Spurgeon*

Taken from: *Morning and Evening*

God had made a positive promise to Moses that for the space of a whole month he would feed the vast host in the wilderness with flesh. Moses, being overtaken by a fit of unbelief, looks to the outward means, and is at a loss to know how the promise can be fulfilled. He looked to the creature instead of the Creator. But doth the Creator expect the creature to fulfil his promise for him? No; he who makes the promise ever fulfils it by his own unaided omnipotence. If he speaks, it is done—done by himself. His promises do not depend for their fulfilment upon the co-operation of the puny strength of man. We can at once perceive the mistake which Moses made. And yet how commonly we do the same! God has promised to supply our needs, and we look to the creature to do what God has promised to do; and then, because we perceive the creature to be weak and feeble, we indulge in unbelief. Why look we to that quarter at all? Will you look to the north pole to gather fruits ripened in the sun? Verily, you would act no more foolishly if ye did this than when you look to the weak for strength, and to the creature to do the Creator's work. Let us, then, put the question on the right footing. The ground of faith is not the sufficiency of the visible means for the performance of the promise, but the all-sufficiency of the invisible God, who will most surely do as he hath said. If after clearly seeing that the onus lies with the Lord and not with the creature, we dare to indulge in mistrust, the question of God comes home mightily to us: “Has the Lord's hand waxed short?” May it happen, too, in his mercy, that with the question there may flash upon our souls that blessed declaration, “Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.”

***“He had married an Ethiopian woman.”***

Numbers 12:1

Written by: *C H Spurgeon*

Taken from: *Morning and Evening*

Strange choice of Moses, but how much more strange the choice of him who is a prophet like unto Moses, and greater than he! Our Lord, who is fair as the lily, has entered into marriage union with one who confesses herself to be black, because the sun has looked upon her. It is the wonder of angels that the love of Jesus should be set upon poor, lost, guilty men. Each believer must, when filled with a sense of Jesus' love, be also overwhelmed with astonishment that such love should be lavished on an object so utterly unworthy of it. Knowing as we do our secret guiltiness, unfaithfulness, and black-heartedness, we are dissolved in grateful admiration of the matchless freeness and sovereignty of grace. Jesus must have found the cause of his love in his own heart, he could not have found it in us, for it is not there. Even since our conversion we have been black, though grace has made us comely. Holy Rutherford said of himself what we must each subscribe to—“His relation to me is, that I am sick, and he is the Physician of whom I stand in need. Alas! how often I play fast and loose with Christ! He bindeth, I loose; he buildeth, I cast down; I quarrel with Christ, and he agreeth with me twenty times a day!” Most tender and faithful Husband of our souls, pursue thy gracious work of conforming us to thine image, till thou shalt present even us poor Ethiopians unto thyself, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Moses met with opposition because of his marriage, and both himself and his spouse were the subjects of an evil eye. Can we wonder if this vain world opposes Jesus and his spouse, and especially when great sinners are converted? for this is ever the Pharisee's ground of objection, “This man receiveth sinners.” Still is the old cause of quarrel revived, “Because he had married an Ethiopian woman.”

*My servant Moses is faithful:... with him will I speak  
mouth to mouth.*

Numbers 12:7-8

Written by: *F B Meyer*

Taken from: *Out Daily Homily*

The meekest of men was vindicated by God Himself. He held his peace, but his Almighty Friend spoke up for him. It is thus that the meek inherit the earth and rejoice themselves in the abundance of peace. Oh, keep still, ye afflicted and tormented souls, God will not let you be trodden underfoot, if only you commit your cause to Him, and are faithful in all that He has committed to you. Notice to what faithfulness leads! The vision of God is not given to great intellectual ability or mental gift; but to those who as servants are faithful in the administration of God's Household, and the performance of such duties as are entrusted to them by the Great Householder. Such are they that enjoy the face-to-face fellowship, and the mouth-to-mouth speech.

These words about Moses are quoted in Hebrews 3 (see note Hebrews 3:5), as though it was pleasant to the Holy Spirit to commemorate in all ages the faithfulness of him servants: and there is this further thought added, that the Household is one, and that all dispensations are included in its precincts. "Whose house are we." It is inspiring to know that we are in the same house with Moses, and may have the same blessing. Are God's dealings with you in dark speeches, in mysterious and perplexing enigmas? Be patient and faithful in well-doing: He is but testing you, and soon He will say, I have called you not servants, but friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but all things I have heard of the Father I have made known unto you.