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## Becoming Christlike – Learning How from Old Testament Kings and Prophets

### Session 9 – Numbers 15:37-41

We began this series with the goal in mind to look at several Old Testament kings in order to see their obedience or disobedience, look at the fruit or consequences, and apply that learning to our own lives.

We want to know who God is, who we are, why we are the way we are, what changes do we need to make to become Christlike. We often stop and consider the Scottish prayer that Alexander Begg so frequently recites:

Make the book live for me, O Lord!  
Make the book live for me.  
Show me thyself.  
Show me myself.  
Show me my savior.  
...and make the book live for me!

We are now in our ninth session of foundational material. As I study and prepare one topic leads to another, and I feel the leading to share what I am seeing.

Today we are going to look in depth at just 5 verses in Numbers. These verses have been revelatory to me and should be instructional to you as well.

#### **Numbers 15:37-41**

**37** The Lord said to Moses, **38** “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. **39** And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow<sup>e</sup> after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. **40** So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. **41** I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God.”

You may think you are aware of the tassels God had commanded here, you may recall Christ had tassels on his garments, you may think of the woman with the issue of blood who wanted to just touch the hem of his garment to be healed.

#### **What is so great about these five verses.**

We will glean many things from just this short section:

1. How God has communicated truth to man
2. The lengths God has gone to in order to help man be obedient
3. The significance and meaning of every single word in God’s Word. God has a purpose for everything he says, when He says it, how He says it, where He says it, to whom He says

it. As Psalm 12 says every word is pure. Every word is God-breathed. Every word here has a significant meaning.

4. Why God has us do the things He has commanded both in the OT and today.
5. The nature of man and what man does without God's divine intervention. What man does when left to go his own way.
6. What is possible with obedience; the great opportunity of being in fellowship with God.
7. The importance of context, the immediate context, remote context, and the context of the entire Bible
8. How much truth can be hidden to people. They can read it, but it takes re-reading, study, prayer and the spirit of God working in us to see the depth of meaning.

## Context

We will go back to Numbers 13 to look at the immediate context prior to the 5 verses for today.

The COI are out of Egypt. They have crossed the Red Sea. Moses has been given the Law. They have moved up toward the Promised Land. The 12 spies have been sent in. 10 of the 12 come back saying "No! There are giants in the land, stronger than us, fortified cities we can't go in!" 2 of the 12, Joshua and Caleb, come back eager to enter into the fantastic, promised land because God is and will be with them.

### Numbers 14:11

**11** And the Lord said to Moses, "**How long will this people despise me?** And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"

God considers them to despise Him by not believing in His protection to take them into the promised land after all he had done and shown them in bringing them out of Egypt, parting the Red Sea, feeding them. He wants to start over with Moses, similar to when he started over with Noah.

**12** I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they."

Moses intercedes for them with success.

**36** And the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation grumble against him by bringing up a bad report about the land— **37** the men who brought up a bad report of the land—died by plague before the Lord. **38** Of those men who went to spy out the land, only Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive.

The 10 spies who had come back fearful and unbelieving of God's promise and put that fear into the COI were all killed by a plague. Only Joshua and Caleb remained alive.

Now the COI change their mind and tell God they want to go into the promised land. Moses tells them not to go. It is too late. They have sinned. God is not going to be with them. But they persist and are defeated.

**42** Do not go up, for the Lord is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies. **43** For there the Amalekites and the Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword. Because you have turned back from following the Lord, **the Lord will not be with you.** **44** But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, although neither the ark of the covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed out of the camp. **45 Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them, even to Hormah.**

They experienced defeat upon defeat because of their unbelief.

So we have seen that in chapter 14 God was ready to destroy his people and start over with Moses. Then in chapter 15 we see the remarkable character of God. As soon as Moses intercedes for them and He forgives them, God is again ready to go.

In the beginning of Numbers chapter 15 God is giving particular instructions about how burnt offerings and peace offerings are to be done. He had commanded the offerings in Leviticus 1–7 but had not given the details.

It is the same with us. When we have sinned, we may want to wallow in our shame and guilt and disappointment with ourselves but once we confess God forgives and is ready to move right on with us.

#### **Numbers 15:27-35**

**27** “If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. **28** And the priest shall make atonement before the Lord for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. **29** You shall have one law for him who does anything unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them.

Here God has given the Law concerning unintentional sin.

**30 But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. 31** Because he has **despised the word of the Lord** and has broken his commandment, that person **shall be utterly cut off**; his iniquity shall be on him.”

BUT the person who sins intentionally, with a high hand, with arrogance, pride, being rebellious shall be cut off, utterly cut off...shall die suddenly. (suggest reading commentaries on this.)

Why? Because he has despised the word of the Lord and broken his commandment.

So the clear instruction or **doctrine is laid out** about what the consequences are when someone sins intentionally.

Then a clear example is given about a sabbath breaker **showing the practice**:

**32** While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, **they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. 33** And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. **34** They put him in custody because it had not been made clear what should be done to him.

**35 And the Lord said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death;**

This is not them interpreting the law and applying it themselves. This is God's command. This seems extreme! But God sets the standard of what is true and what is to happen when someone violates his law. If he had been allowed to live, then the example of this man's disobedience would spread and infect others who would think it was okay to disobey God's commandments.

**all the congregation shall stone him** with stones outside the camp.” [36](#) **And all the congregation** brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the Lord commanded Moses.

God had ALL participate in this stoning of the disobedient man.

Why?

So ALL would see, ALL would know the penalty for breaking the sabbath. ALL would hopefully learn to respect the commandments of God.

So that is the context for verses 37–41 of Numbers 15, our focus verses today. God is showing them the seriousness of sin and not to take it lightly.

We saw recently in Jeremiah where the COI took their idolatry, and disobedience lightly.

People today take God's Word lightly. They don't believe it is true. But IT IS TRUE. What it says is going to happen is definitely going to happen!

The COI knew the blessings and curses. God warned them over and over with the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He so loved them he warned them consistently to try to get their attention to come back to the law and be obedient.

Here we are in 2023. We KNOW the Book of Revelation is going to happen. We know that we are saved from the wrath to come. We also know we will all stand before the judgement seat of Christ. We should be making our choices in light of that.

So with this context set, we now come to the 5 verses in Numbers that are the topic of this teaching. Right on the heels of someone disobeying and getting stoned to death.

#### **Numbers 15:37-41**

[37](#) The Lord said to Moses, [38](#) “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner.

Make tassels through all their generations with a cord of blue to indicate the glory of God. The priest wore blue, and this was to be a reminder to them that it was the priesthood of all believers. Every believer is important, and every believer is to be obedient.

God did not make the tassels for them. He commanded them to make them. They had to participate, think about what these were and why they were needed.

[39](#) And it shall be a tassel for you **to look at and remember** all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow<sup>e</sup> after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after.

They would daily, multiple times daily LOOK AT them and REMEMBER all the commandments of the Lord and TO DO THEM. (Remember this is right on the heels of someone Not doing them and getting stoned to DEATH, the wages of sin is death! The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord!)

In order to remember them they had to know what they are. They had to read, study, and know the commandments. They were to follow God's heart, not follow after their own heart and own eyes.

This is so contrary to our culture today where everyone talks about following their heart. Our eyes lead us everywhere in the course of this world...the adversary's world... if our eyes are not set and fixed on the things of God.

Blessed – Obedient – Look at & Remember – All commandments – To do – Be holy to God

**40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments** and be holy to your God.

We want to do selfishly what is of benefit to us. We always have the choice of what we will look at, what we will follow, what we will do.

People today lie, steal, cheat, lust, gamble, watch porn, eat, drink that's part of the allure the world puts before peoples' eyes.

What counteracts the world's allure to our eyes?

In the Old Testament God gave them visuals and activities to participate in. Here God is giving them these tassels to look at as a constant reminder throughout all their generations.

Twice Joshua set up stones as a memorial so that when their children would ask what this is for they would be able to tell them.

God tried to occupy their senses to help them remember and do his commandments. They had the feasts which took time, planning, preparation. They had the daily sacrifices. All to occupy them and direct them to God.

Sin separated man from God. Ken who manages the website has been studying sin and various aspects of it. He recently encapsulated it like this:

“Sin represents the lack of or even the destruction of a vital relationship with the creator of the universe, the one true God who is all powerful yet all loving.”

We are designed to be in that vital relationship with God. God wants the best for us.

God did everything He could to keep them on track. What has God given us today? If born again we have holy spirit in us as a constant daily reminder. We have the nine manifestations of holy spirit to operate. We then manifest the fruit of the spirit. We can remember at every moment.

God instructed them to “write the word on their hearts.” Per Jeremiah we have the Word written on our hearts.

**Jeremiah 31:33**

**33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,

declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people

The spirit of God in us enables us to lean into God. We can choose to look to Him or to be distracted by the things of the world around us. We have to put the Word into our minds. We have to flood our minds with the truth of the Word. We have to choose to pray, read, study, fellowship, serve. What we choose to do is going to be based on what we have put into our minds.

God's Word is adamant about training up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Westminster Press book about childrearing quote:

“By the time I write this my wife and I will have said ‘No’ 237 times today or so it seems. ‘No, don’t pull the cord out of the outlet. No don’t throw your food off your tray.’ We want our 1-year-old son to know the great news of the gospel, we also want him to obey the Bible’s commands because obedience is good for him.”

It goes on to say the children need to know what is right or wrong even though they are inclined to do what is wrong.

#### **Deuteronomy 6:6-9**

**6** And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. **7** **You shall teach them diligently to your children** and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

This happens to be ALL THE TIME.

**8** You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. **9** You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

God commanded them to surround themselves with his Word. The Ascetic Jews take much of this literally and wear phylacteries, little boxes that contain scripture. This was not intended to be literal. The idea was to keep the Word in one's mind, in one's heart, to help them to obey all the laws all the time.

Today we have the written Word, holy spirit within, and fellowship with other believers to help us be grounded and God-centered. Do all the things that are going to assist us in doing the Word.

#### **Numbers 15:39**

**39** And it shall be a tassel for you **to look at and remember** all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow<sup>e</sup> after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to where after.

Think of the members of our bodies: eyes, ears, nose, hands feet...people use them all in the wrong way. The (devil's) world is designed to lead us astray.

#### **I John 2:16**

**15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life<sup>c</sup>—is not from the Father but is from the world

Old Testament – Don't follow your own eyes

New Testament – All that is in the world – desires of the flesh and of the eyes, and the pride of life is not from the Father

### Numbers 15:39 Parallel Renderings

NIV	ESV	NASB	KJV	HCSB
<p><sup>39</sup> You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.</p>	<p><sup>39</sup> And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after.</p>	<p><sup>39</sup> "It shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot,</p>	<p><sup>39</sup> And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:</p>	<p><sup>39</sup> These will serve as tassels for you to look at, so that you may remember all the LORD's commands and obey them and not become unfaithful by following your own heart and your own eyes.</p>

It is clear that God equates following after one's heart and eyes to be spiritual adultery. To whore after something is to leave the one you are married to, the one you are to cleave to (GOD) and attach yourself to someone, or something other than God.

Our minds should jump to the gospels where Christ said

Deny yourself and follow me  
Imitate me  
Come! Be like me!  
Forsake all and follow me  
Pick up your cross and follow me

We have holy spirit to help and enable us to do this.

The cross was the implement of death. Christ had to die to make this available. We have to die to self in order to make Christlikeness a reality.

#### Numbers 15:40

**40** So you shall remember and do all my commandments and be holy to your God.

Every word has meaning as I said at the outset. Our minds should go back to the call of Abraham, to the Law in Leviticus – "Be ye holy as I am holy"

God's desire for man all the way back to Genesis was to be like Him, he created man in His image. Truth, Purity, Holiness, Righteousness...all that He is.

Be ye imitators of God as dear children – Ephesians 5:1

Now in the New Testament we are to act out our new identity, with holy spirit in us enabling us.

#### Romans 12:1-2

**1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers,<sup>a</sup> by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God**, which is your spiritual worship.<sup>b</sup> **2** Do not be conformed to this world,<sup>c</sup> but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect

Contemplate how Numbers 15:37-41 can bring in all of the Bible, all of God's intentions for man, what He did to enable man to be obedient, the incredible accomplishment of Christ to be obedient and then make righteousness and holy spirit within possible. Now having holy spirit within will remind and enable us to become Christlike if we do our part in immersing ourselves in the Word and having our minds aligned with the mind of Christ.

There are not a lot of people interested in doing this. This is genuine discipleship because it costs us, it requires us to die to self and to the world.

[41](#) I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God."

Remember I am the Lord your God! I created you. I saved you. You are to be in a relationship with me. You are to be holy and to be obedient to this section of scripture.