Numbers - Commentaries by Henry Allan Ironside

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 19

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“The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace”— Numbers 6:24-26.

THIS was the blessing of the High Priest in Israel and it is, in a fuller sense, the blessing that is pronounced upon His people today by our Great High Priest, because of the finished work of the cross. The face of God now shines resplendent. Fullness of grace is extended to all who believe. The countenance of the Lord is lifted up upon us in happy approval, for peace has been made by the blood of the cross.

—A. P. Cecil.

Daily Sacrifice, February 1

“Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion” —Numbers 24:19.

EVEN self-seeking Balaam had to confess. “Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion.” It was in the mind of God from the beginning to set up on earth a nation which should be for the display of His glory, and over which the King of His appointing should reign forever. This was confirmed to David and his house. Christ Jesus, of David’s seed through Mary, is the One in whom the promise is fulfilled. As long as Israel walked in obedience to God and in the hope of the fulfillment of His Word, they enjoyed national prosperity and were invincible in warfare. As a typical people they show what God desires to see in any nation to whom His truth is committed. True piety is a bulwark against evil from without and delivers from dissension within.

—Alice Monteith.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 24

“God is not a man that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent; hath He said and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken and shall He not make it good?”— Numbers 23:19.

FROM “the top of the rocks,” Balaam saw further than he had ever seen before, and learned lessons to which he had previously been a stranger. Among these was the immutability of God’s counsels. No power of man or of Satan can thwart His purpose. His Word shall stand forever! What comfort is this to the soul who trusts Him. He has promised eternal blessing to all who believe and He cannot go back on His solemn declaration. This is where faith rests: on the assured testimony of Him who cannot lie.

—Paul Gerhardt.

Daily Sacrifice, January 31

“It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” —Numbers 21:9.

BRASS is a symbol of judgment. The serpent is a type of sin which has poisoned the entire human race. The brazen serpent represents Christ as made sin for us on the Cross—there bearing the judgment that our guiltiness merits. In the wilderness when the bitten, dying Israelites looked to the uplifted serpent they lived. Nothing else was needed. There was life in a look.

Our blessed Lord has interpreted this for us in His words to Nicodemus, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14,15).

A. T. Pierson.

Daily Sacrifice, January 30

“The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” —Numbers 20:12.

GOD will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him. Grace does not set aside government. The Lord is very jealous of the order of His house. Those who are in covenant relationship with Him are responsible to obey His voice. The more light given, the greater is the responsibility

resting upon the recipient. God will not be trifled with. What might be in great measure overlooked in the case of one of lesser privileges may be considered a very grave offense on the part of one who has been signally honored of God. The lapse of a greatly used and well-instructed servant of Christ is far more serious than the same offense on the part of one comparatively ignorant of divine truth and who has had lesser opportunities of service and testimony.

—Charles Wesley.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 23

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments ... and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue”— Numbers 15:38.

BLUE is the heavenly color. The ribband of blue on the border of the Israelite’s garments was to remind the wearer that he belonged to the God of heaven and was responsible to act accordingly. So believers today are to walk as heavenly men and women in the midst of all the sin and corruption of this world. Our citizenship is in heaven. We represent another country. Here we are but strangers and pilgrims. The heavenly character should ever be manifested in all our words and ways.

—M. Bowley.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 22

“And they came unto the brook of Eschol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs”—Numbers 13:23.

GOD permitted His people to see and taste, while still in the wilderness, of the fruits of the land to which they were bound. And so He does today. It is by the Holy Spirit that we who are journeying on to the rest which remains for the people of God, enjoy while here on earth an earnest of that which we shall delight in, in all its fullness, for eternity. In Romans 8:23 the apostle writes of “ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit.” Here are our Eshcol grapes and the pomegranates of Canaan. All that we enjoy of Christ now is by the Spirit. He delights to take of those things which concern our Risen Lord and reveal them unto us. May it be ours to appreciate and enjoy His gracious ministry.

—Mary Bowler

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 20

“Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it”— Numbers 13:30.

THE name “Caleb” means wholehearted, and it was well suited to the character of the man who bore it. When the ten spies brought back their evil report of the land and made the heart of the people to melt, it was Caleb who quieted the troubled host by saying, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30). And when all the people murmured against Moses and Aaron and were on the verge of setting up a rebel captain to lead them back to Egypt, Caleb joined with Joshua in endeavoring to dissuade them from their evil purpose and to encourage them to go up in dependence upon God, and take possession of the inheritance He had promised them.

So when the rest were doomed to wander in the wilderness until all the men of that generation had passed away, these two faithful warriors were preserved alive as witnesses, to the unchanging purpose and omnipotent power of the Lord of hosts (Num. 14:1-30).

Forty-five years afterward we see this doughty old chieftain, at the age of eighty-five, claiming his portion, as promised by God, and entering into possession of Hebron and its surroundings. It is a marvelous picture of the energy of faith in one who was not of double heart, but wholly devoted to the Lord.

—F. R. Havergal.

Continual Burnt Offering: Daily Meditations, January 21

“When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it”— Numbers 11:9.

THE dew is a type of the refreshing influence of the Holy Spirit of God, “He shall be as the dew unto Israel.” The manna speaks of Christ Himself, the Living Bread who came down from heaven to give His life a ransom for many. He came in the power of the Holy Spirit, taking the lowest place on earth. The manna lay upon the ground—so that every Israelite when he stepped out of his tent in the morning had to do one of two things: he must trample it beneath his feet or gather it up for his food. So Christ today is either spurned or received in faith as Saviour.

—S. O’M. Cluff.

Daily Sacrifice, January 29

“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”— Num. 11:4.

THE people of Israel, influenced by the murmurings of the mixed multitude, despised the manna and complained because they had no other food. They lusted for the delicacies of Egypt, but they forgot the taskmasters’ whips. When people get out of fellowship with God, the things of the world become attractive again. But Israel’s backslidings brought judgment, and this is ever the result of departure in heart from the Lord (Prov. 14:14).

—L. Oakley.

Daily Sacrifice, January 28

“It came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran”— Numbers 10:11, 12.

THE Book of Numbers gives us the account of the wilderness experiences of the children of Israel. It is the book of testing, covering the forty years between Sinai and the entrance into the land of Canaan.

For us as Christians there are many salutary lessons to which our attention is called in the New Testament, where we are told that “all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types): and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). Their many failures are held up as warnings to us, lest we also go astray by unbelief and self-indulgence. The only path of safety is that of implicit obedience to the Word of the living God. To turn aside and follow the path of our personal inclinations is bound to result in failure, dishonor to God, and loss to ourselves.

It is well to remember that the wilderness was no part of God’s purpose for His people, but it was part of His ways with them, to bring them to a realization of their own frailty and the untrustworthiness of their own hearts, in order that they might learn to depend entirely upon Him.

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