Numbers 20-21: Conquest of Israel

Numbers 20

Moses' Error at Kadesh

- The people complained again

Israel and Edom

- Moses speaks to king of Edom in humility about how they are both descendants from the same blood
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Death of Aaron

- Priesthood is transferred to Aaron's son

Numbers 21

Canaanites Defeated

- King of Arad was not like Edom - he did not deny them passage through his land, but straight up just attacked them instead.
- They have to take the long way around Edom which means passing through Arad, the Amorites and Bashan
- God allowed them to be defeated by the king of Arad as if to show them that they are weak without Him. But once they depended on Him they conquered
    - When there is a sin I used to fall into, but I started to overcome it... and then after a long time, I fell into it again - I am sorrowful. But it becomes a lesson for me that I did not conquer the sin on my own or with my own strength, but with the help of the Lord. And I have to depend on Him. So I rush to repentance and confession.

The Bronze Serpent

- The Israelites complain again... probably because they have to go the long way around Edom so they say "have you brought us up out of Egypt to die?" and they even criticize the Manna. When they complained before, God didn't punish them but gave them everything they asked for... but this time, God sends serpents
- When Moses intercedes, God does not remove the serpents but commands him to make a bronze serpent. God did not take away the temptation right away, but opened a door for salvation out of it.
- He turned their evil into a blessing with the Bronze Serpent
  - The Lord Jesus Christ commented on the Bronze Serpent in John 3:14-15 (the verse before the famous John 3:16)
    - "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:14-16)
  - The Fathers comment on the Bronze Serpent
    - "Christ was slain, so that those bitten by the serpents would look up at Him, lifted up on the cross." (Augustine on Psalm 74)
    - "The lifted up serpent refers to the death of Christ on the cross; As death came through the serpent; its symbol became the portrait of a serpent. While the serpent's bite was deadly; the death of the Lord is a life-giver" (Augustine)
    - "He did not kill the serpents, but turned their bites not deadly... The bites of lusts actually work even in the believers; Yet he who looks up toward Him who is lifted up on the cross, would despise the passion; hence diluting the poison by the fear of the commandment" (St Gregory of Nyssa)
  - The Bronze Serpent is a type of the Cross
    - It looked like a Cross
    - "Lifted up" (John 12:32)
    - The Cross is death... and also salvation from death. As we say in the hymn of the Resurrection "By his death He abolished death"
    - The Bronze Serpent was a serpent that had no poison, just as Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, but without sin (Romans 8:3)
    - In Genesis we read that God cursed the serpent (Genesis 3:14) - St Paul describes that Christ "became a curse for us" to redeem us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13)
    - Bronze Serpent was seen by all people - Christ was crucified publicly
- What happened to the Bronze Serpent?
  - Hezekiah the king "broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan" (2 Kings 18:4)

Moving to the Plains of Moab

Sihon King of Amorites Defeated

- They asked Sihon if they can pass and he would not allow them... but instead, he came at them with his armies and fought them. Israel defeated them and took possession of their land.

Og King of Bashan Defeated

- Og was also delivered into their hands by the Lord

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