

Give Them a Shepherd

Numbers 27:12-23

March 7, 2009

Intro

We now see Israel preparing to enter into the land that God promised them, the land of Palestine. At this point, they are camped on the eastern side of the Jordan River, just north of the Dead Sea.

The verses that we are studying today, however, are focused on the relationship between God and Moses. God told Moses to go to the mountain of Abarim where he would be able to see the land which God had given to the sons of Israel. God then reminded Moses why he would not be allowed to enter into the land of promise himself; because Moses had rebelled against God's command at the waters of Meribah. It was there that Moses had misrepresented God to the congregation. They were striving with Moses because they had no water, but God wanted to demonstrate His provision by having Moses simply speak to the rock and provide water for them, but instead, Moses represented God as being angry with them.

So it was because of Moses' rebelling against God's command that he was not allowed to enter Palestine. But God was merciful and gracious to allow Moses to see with his own eyes the land that He would give to Israel.

And it is here that we gain insight into the heart of a shepherd. We see this both in how Moses responded to God's correction as we see this in his heart to ask that the people be given a shepherd.

I. There is Maturity in What We Do Not Do

- 1 The first lesson to learn really comes from what Moses did not say. We can imagine that Moses would have been bitterly disappointed.
 - A. Accept what comes from God's hand
 - 2 Moses could easily have blamed the people for provoking him into an angry response. Clearly they weren't having their best day when they started complaining about having no water and we can imagine how Moses could have been worn down from leading these difficult people for so many years.
 - 1 He could have appealed for mercy on the basis of Israel being such a difficult people, surely God would understand.
 - 2 But we don't see Moses arguing with God at all. He accepts God's decision.
 - 3 He did not blame the people or become angry with God for this decision.
 - 4 This might remind us of Job's response when difficulties came into his life, though Job was clearly a righteous man... Job's wife told him to let go of his

integrity and curse God and die...

Job 2:9-10, Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Illus – King David wanted to build the temple for God, but was not allowed to. That honor was given to his son.

- 5 There are many things that happen in our lives that we do not understand and may cause us to wonder what God is doing, but our faith tells us that God’s hand is over all things and that we can trust him to order our steps.

Psalm 37:23, The steps of a man are established by the Lord, And He delights in his way.

- 6 By the way, did Moses *ever* get to enter into the Promised Land? Yes! We see him even talking with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration in the New Testament!

Matthew 17:2-3, And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

B. God gives us a hope of what is to come

- 7 God brought Moses to the mountain of Abarim so that he might have a look at what was to come for the nation of Israel.
- 8 There was a spiritual thing that God was doing here with Moses because what God showed him was far beyond what the human eye could see.
- 9 We have further insight into this occasion in Deuteronomy chapter 34.

Deuteronomy 34:1-4 What Moses could see

- 10 There are other examples in scripture where God gives a hint of the blessings yet to come.

Illus – Paul was allowed to have a look into heaven itself.

2 Corinthians 12:3-4, And I know how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

Illus – John was allowed to see the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

Revelation 21:10-11, And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

11 When God told Moses that he would be gathered to his people, he was also giving him a view of what comes after death. What a great encouragement to us as well.

Illus – there were some leaders of Israel in Jesus’ day, called Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection. What a tragedy, they had no hope beyond this life.

Matthew 22:29, 32, But Jesus answered and said to them, “You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God... He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

12 God gives us a hope of what He wants to do in our lives when he says...

1 Corinthians 2:9, However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”

Illus – He gives us the Holy Spirit as a pledge, a down payment, of the good things to come.

II. Jesus is Our Shepherd

1 When Moses heard that he would be gathered to his people, he asked God that the people be given a shepherd.

A. Sheep need a shepherd

1 Moses was a shepherd for forty years, so he knew something about sheep and he knew that if there was no shepherd, it would not be good.

2 **Sheep have no survival instincts.** Sheep seem to be unaware of the danger of things around them. They do have fear when there is danger, but all they know to do is to run.

3 Without a shepherd, the sheep will scatter where they are easy prey for predators.

Matthew 26:31, Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”

4 **Sheep have no defenses.** When attacked, the only thing sheep can do is to run. But the problem is that they cannot run very fast. They cannot out run any of their

predators.

Illus – even squirrels can attack and defeat sheep. True story.

- 5 Sheep do not have teeth that can defend them, so they are basically defenseless without a shepherd.
- 6 **Sheep have no homing instinct.** In other words, sheep easily lose their way.

Isaiah 1:3, “The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.”

Illus – there is a story of a man in Israel who had robbed someone, but left behind his donkey. The officials simply untied the donkey and followed him to his master's home, where the thief was promptly arrested.

Illus – if you've ever rented a horse, you know that he knows where the barn is and you can hardly keep him from turning back to it.

Illus – there have been many famous stories of dogs and cats who cross mountains and rivers to find their owners, sometimes even traveling hundreds of miles.

- 1 This is why Moses said to God, "that the congregation may not be like sheep which have no shepherd."

B. God wants shepherds after His heart

- 7 In verse 18, God said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.”
- 8 God gives shepherds who have God's heart in shepherding the sheep. But the greatest example is Jesus himself...

John 10:11-16 One flock and one Shepherd

- 9 This was God's heart for Israel all along...

Ezekiel 34:2, Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

Ezekiel 34:4, The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.

- 1 When Jesus was restoring Peter after Peter had betrayed him he said, “Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep.”
- 2 The main thing that should show the heart of the shepherd is the love they have for the sheep.

1 Corinthians 13:1, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

C. He restores my soul

- 10 Psalm 23 was written by perhaps the best known of all shepherds, King David. Yet Ironside said, “Psalm 23 is probably the most beloved, yet least believed of all the Psalms.”
- 11 When you read through Psalm 23, you see the heart that God has for the sheep.
- 12 **I shall not want.** He is my provision, my hope, and my resource.
- 13 **He makes me to lie down.** There are four things required before sheep will lie down. They must be free from fear. They must be free from strife. They must be free from parasites. They must be free from hunger.
- 14 ‘Green pastures’ means good food. But the shepherd must keep the sheep moving or they will eat the roots out of the field.

App – we want to keep the sheep moving through the word of God and not just camp at our favorite passages.

- 15 **Besides still waters.** This means there is peace. The shepherd does not lead them into turbulence or conflict, but in peace.
- 16 **He restores my soul.** This is God’s great concern in our lives that our souls be restored. He builds up, He edifies, He sets our lives on a rock, a solid foundation.
- 17 **He guides me in the paths of righteousness.** His Word guides the path of our lives and leads into that which is right and good.

Psalm 119:105, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

- 1 **His rod and staff comfort me.** The fact that God disciplines us is a certain sign to us that we are indeed His children.
- 2 **I will dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.** This is one of the most beautiful thoughts to me. That we are invited to behold the beauty of the

Lord...

Psalm 27:4 One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.