

Dire Consequences

Numbers 20.1-13

May 10, 2020

Introduction:

- **THIS IS A SAD CHAPTER.** The deaths of Miriam at the beginning (20:1) and Aaron at the end (20:22-29) frame a dispute of the Israelites over water at Kadesh (20:2-13) and Edomite refusal to let the Israelites pass from Kadesh through their territory (20:14-21). The chapter is united by the location at Kadesh and the fact that Aaron dies at Mount Hor on the way around Edom for his failure with Moses regarding the water (20:24). The gloom of this chapter is only implicitly relieved by the fact that Israel and its high priestly office survive to trudge on toward better days.¹

Explanation of the Text

What can we learn from this passage?

1. No one is exempt from God's judgment
 - Justice is the equal application of the law to all people; no one is above the law
 - 1 Peter 1.17 - God judges without partiality
 - Don't presume upon grace
2. Losing your temper can have dire consequences
 - It cost Moses the opportunity to enter the Promised Land
 - James 1.20
 - In your anger do not sin- Ephesians 4.26
3. It's a dangerous thing to steal God's glory
 - vs. 10 -- Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?
 - Nebuchadnezzar; Acts 12.23
 - Colossians 3.17 -- And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

¹ Gane, R. (2004). Leviticus, Numbers (p. 670). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

4. Anyone is capable of stumbling

- No one was closer, more familiar, more intimate with God than Moses
- 1Corinthians 10.12 -- So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!
- Be humble, make yourself accountable to someone, and avoid spiritual danger zones

Conclusion:

- The death of Miriam followed by the death sentence passed on her brothers makes this one of the most tragic sections of Numbers. Yet these verses stand as a reminder of:
 - the holiness of God and
 - the sinfulness of men (cf. 1 Cor. 10:4-12), and
 - the need for faithful obedience (Heb. 3:7-4:13).