

## **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

### **Bible Study Notes**

**10-13-21**

### **Numbers 11**

#### **Fire From the Lord - Verses 1-3**

<sup>1</sup> Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. <sup>2</sup> When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down. <sup>3</sup> So that place was called Taberah, because fire from the LORD had burned among them.

**11:1** The Israelites complained, and then Moses complained. But God responded positively to Moses and negatively to the rest of the people. Why? The people complained to one another, and nothing was accomplished. Moses took his complaint to God, who could solve any problem. Many of us are good at complaining to each other. We need to learn to take our problems to the One who can do something about them.

#### **Quail From the Lord - Verses 4-6**

<sup>4</sup> The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! <sup>5</sup> We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. <sup>6</sup> But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

**11:4** The rabble refers to a mixed crowd of Egyptians and others who had followed Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 12:38).

**11:4-6** Dissatisfaction comes when our attention shifts from what we have to what we don't have. The people of Israel didn't seem to notice what God was doing for them—setting them free, making them a nation, giving them a new land—because they were so wrapped up in what God wasn't doing for them. They could think of nothing but the delicious Egyptian food they had left behind. Somehow they forgot that the brutal whip of Egyptian slavery was the cost of eating that food. Before we judge the Israelites too harshly, it's helpful to think about what occupies our attention most of the time. Are we grateful for what God has given us, or are we always thinking about what we would like to have? We should not allow our unfulfilled desires to cause us to forget God's gifts of life, food, health, work, family, and friends.

#### **Manna From the Lord - Verses 7-9**

<sup>7</sup> The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. <sup>8</sup> The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into loaves. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. <sup>9</sup> When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.

**11:7-9** Every morning the Israelites drew back their tent doors and witnessed a miracle. Covering the ground was white, fluffy manna—food from heaven. But soon that wasn't enough. Feeling it was their right to have more, they forgot what they already had. They didn't ask God to fill their need; instead, they demanded meat, and they stopped trusting God to care for them. "Give us meat to eat!" (11:13) they complained to Moses as they reminisced about the good food they had in Egypt. God gave them what they asked for, but they paid dearly for it when a plague struck the camp (see 11:18-20, 31-34). When you ask God for something, he may grant your request. But if you approach him with a sinful attitude, getting what you want may prove costly.

### **The Complaint Of Moses - Verses 10-15**

<sup>10</sup> Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. <sup>11</sup> He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? <sup>12</sup> Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? <sup>13</sup> Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' <sup>14</sup> I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. <sup>15</sup> If this is how you are going to treat me, please go ahead and kill me—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin."

**11:10** And the anger of the LORD was greatly aroused; Moses also was displeased: The childish weeping of the people not only angered the LORD; it displeased Moses as well. This frustration drove him in frustration to God. Moses certainly had a better reason to complain to God; it wasn't as if he yielded to intense craving as the children of Israel did. Yet, even his complaining is not good, and shows a lapse in his trust in God. Moses seems caught off-guard; surprised that the people would be so rebellious so quickly after such a strong warning at Taberah; leaders are apt to do the wrong thing when they are caught off-guard!

**11:11** Why have You afflicted Your servant? Moses responded to God the way many of us do in a time of trial. He essentially said, "God, here I am serving You. Why did You bring this upon me?" It's easy to say God did not bring this upon Moses - a carnal and ungrateful people did. Yet, though God did not directly afflict Moses with this, He ultimately allowed it.

God allowed this for the same reason God allows any affliction in our lives - to compel us to trust in Him all the more, to partner with Him in overcoming obstacles, and to love and praise Him all the more through our increased dependence on Him and the greater deliverance He brings.

**11:15** If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now: Moses was extremely frustrated. He poured out an emotional, pained, fed-up, "I'm sick and tired of this" heart to the LORD. "If You really love me LORD, kill me right now" is not a correct prayer from the head, but it is a honest prayer from the heart. God will not answer Moses' request; but He will answer the prayer of his heart. When we are overwhelmed with such feelings, it is good for us to take them to the LORD, and let go of them, rather than brooding on them ourselves.

## God Helps Moses By Sending Elders To Assist Him - Verses 16-17

**16** The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the tent of meeting, that they may stand there with you. **17** I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the power of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them. They will share the burden of the people with you so that you will not have to carry it alone.

**11:16** Whom you know to be the elders of the people: Moses was not to pick men whom he thought might become elders; he was to pick men who were already known as elders because of their wisdom, conduct, and ministry to others. Elders are made by God, but recognized by men. That they may stand there with you: The first call of the elders was simply to be there with Moses, before the LORD. They were a support and strength to Moses just by their presence.

**11:17** I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them: The elders must have the same heart, the same vision, and same Spirit that was on Moses. If not, there would be no agreement among the leadership of the nation and disaster could result. They shall bear the burden of the people with you: The elders were there to help Moses carry the spiritual load - to help him care for and minister to the people, and to be a support for him in the ministry. God's help was going to come to Moses through the support of godly men. This is a customary way for God to meet our needs.

## God Promises To Provide Meat For Israel - Verses 18-20

**18** "Tell the people: 'Consecrate yourselves in preparation for tomorrow, when you will eat meat. The LORD heard you when you wailed, "If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!" Now the LORD will give you meat, and you will eat it. **19** You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, **20** but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—because you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"'"

**11:18** Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat: This was not a blessing. God promised to answer the desire of Israel's heart; but not in a way that would be a blessing to Israel. Sometimes the LORD chastises us by giving us what we ask for - what our intense craving cries out for.

**11:20** Until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you: God promised to give them so much meat they would become sickened by it. This was because they denied and doubted the goodness of God's deliverance. It is dangerous for a Christian to entertain the thought, "I wish I had never decided to follow Jesus. I had it better in the world." Such thoughts, if they come, must be put away immediately. We can never deny or doubt the goodness of God's deliverance.

## Moses Reacts To God's Promise To Provide Meat For Israel - Verses 21-23

<sup>21</sup> But Moses said, "Here I am among six hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, 'I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!' <sup>22</sup> Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?" <sup>23</sup> The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

**11:21-22** Moses had witnessed God's power in spectacular miracles, yet at this time he questioned God's ability to feed the wandering Israelites. If Moses doubted God's power, how much easier it is for us to do the same. But completely depending upon God is essential, regardless of our level of spiritual maturity. When we begin to rely on our own understanding, we are in danger of ignoring God's assessment of the situation. By remembering his past works and his present power, we can be sure that we are not cutting off his potential help.

**11:23** How strong is God? It is easy to trust God when we see his mighty acts (the Israelites saw many), but after a while, in the routine of daily life, his strength may appear to diminish. God doesn't change, but our view of him often does. The monotony of day-by-day living lulls us into forgetting how powerful God can be. As Moses learned, God's strength is always available.

## The Spirit Comes Upon The Seventy Elders - Verses 24-30

<sup>24</sup> So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the tent. <sup>25</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied—but did not do so again. <sup>26</sup> However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup> A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." <sup>28</sup> Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" <sup>29</sup> But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" <sup>30</sup> Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

**11:26-29** This incident is similar to a story told in Mark 9:38-41. The disciples wanted Jesus to forbid others to drive out demons because they were not part of the disciples' group. But this type of narrow attitude was condemned by both Moses and Jesus. Beware of putting limits on God—he can work through whomever he chooses.

**11:29** Moses was looking forward to the day when all God's people would experience the pouring out of God's Spirit. The prophet Joel recorded God's promise to pour out his Spirit on all believers (Joel 2:28-29), and this was fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). Believers today can be sure that they have the Holy Spirit when they become Christians (Romans 8:9). We also can pray to live by the Holy Spirit's power (Galatians 5:16-26). If you wish to have the Holy Spirit's power, pray for him to fill your life with his presence and strengthen you to follow Christ.

## God Helps Israel By Providing Meat For Them - Verses 31-35

<sup>31</sup> Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It scattered them up to two cubits deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction. <sup>32</sup> All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. <sup>33</sup> But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. <sup>34</sup> Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food. <sup>35</sup> From Kibroth Hattaavah the people traveled to Hazeroth and stayed there.

**11:31-32** Now a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quail: Miraculously, God directed a huge number of quail to the camp of Israel, where they were killed and could be eaten. Quail make a migration over the Sinai wilderness every year; it has been recorded that Arabs living near this region could catch between one and two million quails during their autumn migration, using nets.

The quail came all around the camp - that is, on the perimeter. When the Holy Spirit was poured out, it drew men into the center of the camp - right into the middle of the people of God. To get the quail, they had to go outside of the camp - away from the people of God. God's best for us is always toward the center of the camp, not on the outside.

**11:34** Craving or lusting is more than inappropriate sexual desire. It can be an unnatural or greedy desire for anything (sports, knowledge, possessions, influence over others). In this circumstance, God punished the Israelites for craving good food! Their desire was not wrong; the sin was in allowing that desire to turn into greed. They felt it was their right to have fine food, and they could think of nothing else. When you become preoccupied with something until it affects your perspective on everything else, you have moved from desire to lust.

**11:34-35** So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah: They named the place Kibroth Hattaavah - which means "Graves of Craving." How many have had their cravings be their grave? How many have lived in spiritual death because they yielded to their cravings, and never found victory over their lusts?