

THE LAME DUCK GENERATION

A painter was busily painting the side of a building. His boss was pushing him to hurry. The painter told the foreman that an accident might occur if he was rushed, but no matter, the deadline had to be met. And just as the painter had warned, a wet brush slipped out of his hand, and dropped from about 40 feet.

The painter leaned over the edge of the scaffold, and saw the brush falling toward his boss. He shouted, "Quack, quack, gobble, gobble." The brush smacked the boss right on the noggin. Later the foreman asked, "When you dropped the brush, why didn't you warn me?" The painter replied, "I did warn you. Didn't you hear me shout, 'duck, turkey!'" Hey, I have to admit that was a pretty *lame duck!*

A lame duck is also a bird that's been shot, but still manages to fly. You know it won't be long before it's forced to descend, but for the moment it remains in the air. A politician who loses a re-election still serves out his term. He's still in the air, but it won't be long before he'll be forced to land. He's called a *lame duck*.

The adult Hebrews who left Egypt became the lame duck generation. After God's miraculous efforts to win their freedom, He brought

them to Mt. Sinai. There He took this band of slaves, and equipped them to become a great nation. He gave them His law, established leadership and organization, and taught them how to worship Him. After 13 months they were ready to enter the Promised Land.

But in chapters 13-14 they balked. They buckled under unbelief. God proved to them over and over, in unmistakable ways, His faithfulness to His promises. But instead of trusting the Lord, they acted like turkeys... and they failed to enter in.

And as a result they became the lame duck generation. God told Moses their children would enter the land, but not the adults. The generation of Hebrews that exited Egypt wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until they were all dead.

The last half of Numbers focuses on the final term of the lame duck generation. They're still *flying* - but one by one they're *dying*. There's a bumper sticker that reads, "Be nice to your children. They'll choose your nursing home." The second generation wouldn't have to - their parents would all die in the wilderness.

Ashes of the Red Heifer

from the other sacrifices. I believe it paints a brilliant picture of the sacrifice of Jesus.

The heifer was to be without blemish - never yoked, or innocent. Just like Jesus. It was sacrificed before the High Priest. Jesus was tried before the Priest before He was crucified. The heifer was burned outside the camp, and likewise, Jesus was sacrificed outside the gates of Jerusalem.

Verse 6 tells us the heifer was burned along with three items. A stick of cedar wood - Jesus was sacrificed on a wooden cross. A piece of hyssop - hyssop held the potion that moistened Jesus' lips. And a strip of scarlet - which symbolized the scarlet blood spilt from Jesus' precious side.

The main distinction of the sacrifice of the red heifer was its permanence. All the other sacrifices were repeated continually, but not the sacrifice of the heifer. Only seven red heifers were sacrificed in all Hebrew history - one by Moses, one by Ezra, five after Ezra. A single heifer was offered during any one lifetime. The sacrifice of Jesus deals with all sin once and forever.

When a person was deemed unclean, he was sprinkled with the ashes of the red heifer. This is how it worked - the ashes were mixed with running water. Then a branch of hyssop - a spongy plant - was dipped into the solution and the ashes were sprinkled on the unclean person.

This is a powerful picture of the work of Jesus. *How does the work of a man 2000 years ago, effect a person today?* The answer is symbolized in this ritual. Water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit - hyssop, a type of God's Word. Thus, the effects of the cross are carried by the water of the Holy Spirit, which is applied to the heart when a person puts their faith in the Word of God.

The ritual produced a ceremonial cleansing, but the reality it represents effects a spiritual cleansing in the heart of the believer. (Hebrews 9:13-14)

The ashes of the red heifer also relate to end times events. Since the rebuilt Temple will be purified with this ritual, there are rabbis today who are trying to breed an actual red heifer. According to rabbinical tradition, a heifer does not qualify if just two of its hairs are red, so it's taking some time - but it's interesting that the work is underway to prepare for a rebuilt Temple. It's all a definite precursor to the last days event described in the Bible.

Chapter 19 discusses the mysterious ritual of the ashes of the red heifer - a ritual that's puzzled the rabbis for centuries. It was unique and varied greatly

Bible Scan - Numbers 15-36

NEW HEBREW TESTAMENT

AARON'S BUD

In chapter 17 God sees fit to settle the issue of the rod once and for all. All 12 leaders of each of the 12 tribes submit their staffs to Moses. Each man's name is written on his rod, then the rods are laid before God in the Tabernacle. In verse 5 God says, "And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you."

You might say God *goes out on a limb* to decide this question once and for all.

The next day, Moses enters the Tabernacle, and discovers only Aaron's rod has budded. He turns to Aaron, hands him his rod, and says, "This bud's for you."

According to verse 10, Aaron's rod was kept "as a sign against the rebels". Hebrews 9:4 tells us that along with the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, and a jar of manna – Aaron's rod was kept in the Ark of the Covenant as a perpetual reminder that the priesthood belonged to the family of Aaron.

There's another interesting point about Aaron's rod. This is a hot insight. When you see this, you'll realize this rod was a *hot rod*. A rod or staff was a former branch, or tree trunk. It was once alive, but is now dead. And in essence, what God did to Aaron's rod was to bring it back to life, so it could bud almonds. God resurrected Aaron's rod to prove he was the chosen intercessor.

And it was all a type of Jesus. Jesus died, and was brought back to life – and His resurrection was proof that He was God's chosen intercessor for mankind.

Hey, the graveyard is full of dead rods – Buddha, Mohammed, and every other false Messiah lie there dead with no buds. But Jesus is alive - His work blossoms all over the world. Jesus is the only Man whom God has authorized to intercede for you and me. He is the only means by which a man can be saved.

Devotion Box - The Zeal of the Lord

Numbers 25

It took decisive action from Phineas to stop the plague.

Sometimes a situation gets so desperate someone has to say, "*enough is enough*", and do something drastic to stop the rebellion. In verses 10-13 God commends Phineas, "because he was zealous with My zeal".

We also need an "*enough is enough*" attitude. We need the zeal of the Lord - not to take life, but to spread the words of life. Sometimes a sin in our family, or work place, becomes so blatant we have to speak the truth in love. Sometimes a sin in our own life can root itself so deep we have to apply some drastic repentance to end its attraction.

Is it time in your life to say, "*enough is enough*"?

CLIMBING THE LADDER?

Moses told Korah and his coup, "You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!" It's sad- God allowed the Levites to help the priests in the ministry of the Tabernacle – now they want to take over.

Guys, it's easy to start out just wanting to help – thankful for an opportunity to serve - but over time you forget your place, and want to take over. Korah had *taken on* a few duties, now he wants to *take over* the ministry.

The next day – we're not told, but it must've been *at high noon* – the showdown took place. Moses drew a line in the sand, and told the people to distance themselves from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram – the rebel leaders.

Then he says in verse 28, "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will. If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD."

And that's exactly what happens... Korah hoped to climb the ladder of success, but he and his buddies end up headed in the opposite direction. When the 250 leaders who sided with Korah try to escape, verse 35 says a fire from God consumed them.

Korah discovered the attitude that works in business, has no place in the family of God. Ministry is not a ladder to climb. Position and authority are not gained by power-plays and take-overs - they're handed out by God. You'll be happy and successful in ministry when you are content serving the Lord in the place He puts you.

Devotion Box - Duty or Delight?

Numbers 18:17

After God puts the Levites in their place, He reminds them in Numbers 18: 7, "I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service."

Guys, whenever spiritual service becomes a duty, or a right, or a job - our attitude begins to deteriorate. Ministry needs to always be viewed as a privilege. It's a delight, not just a duty.

Take a moment to check your attitude toward the ministries in which you're involved. Has your attitude begun to deteriorate?

Beating Your Burro

Three times the Angel of the Lord stands in Balaam's way, but each time only his donkey sees the Angel. Balaam is a spiritist, but his jackass has more spiritual discernment than he does. That's probably the case with most so-called "spiritists", "channelers", or "fortune tellers".

Each time the donkey swerves off the path to avoid the Angel, Balaam gets angry at the donkey. He starts beating his burro. He's at fault. He's to blame, but he takes out his frustrations on the most convenient target – his donkey.

Guys, this is what we often do. We get out of God's will. We begin to experience detours, and run into walls. Rather than look at our own lives and the direction we're headed, we vent our anger, and take out our frustrations on the most convenient target - usually the wife, the kids, a co-worker.

Hey, your life isn't turning out the way you'd hoped – but it's not your family's fault – it's not the boss or pastor's fault. It's time to consider, it might be your fault! Perhaps God is graciously prodding you back inside the white lines of His will. There's an old AA saying that's true, "If I am not the problem there is no solution."

Finally the donkey swerves to miss the Angel, and Balaam hits a wall. Have you hit a wall lately? Maybe God knows you're heading in the wrong direction, and it's His way of steering you back in line. Balaam, though, goes ballistic. He's beating the donkey with a stick, when suddenly, God does a miracle. The donkey talks...

Verse 28 is Sandy Adams' life verse: "the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey" – here's my ministry in a nutshell. If God can speak through a donkey, He can use me.

But then God does a second miracle – an even greater miracle - verse 31, "the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face." The only miracle tougher than opening the mouth of donkey, is to open the eyes of proud, greedy, selfish member of the human race. God does both!

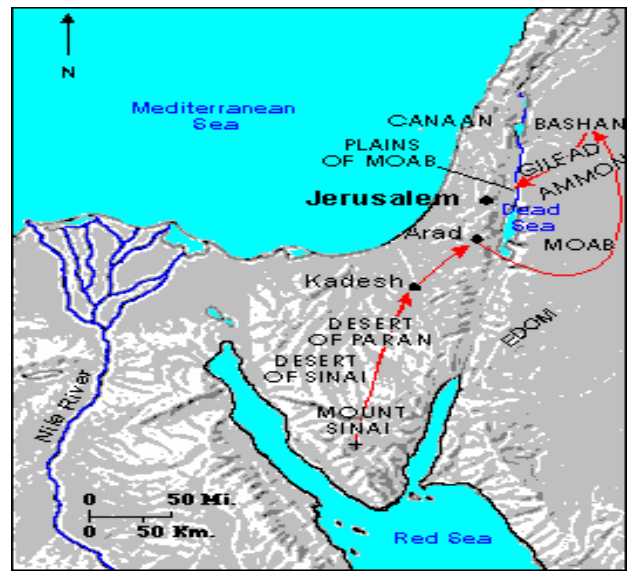
Devotion Box - Misrepresenting God

Moses made a mistake that cost him dearly. He misrepresented God. Moses comes out screaming at them, and calling them "rebels". Moses vented 38 years of frustration on these people.

That was not God's attitude. God loved these people, and was starting over and was prepared to be as patient with the new generation as he had with their parents. God told Moses to speak to the rock. Moses instead struck it!...

And without realizing it, Moses marred the beautiful picture God was painting for His future generations – even for us. In 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul speaks of the rock in the wilderness, and says, "that Rock was Christ" – and Jesus needed to be struck - *how many times?* Only once! He died once and for all for the remission

Places in Numbers



Devotion Box - What's Irritating You?

Numbers 33:55 warns the Hebrews, "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell."

This is also a warning to us. Ignore the sin God wants to delete from your life, and it'll end up an irritant, a thorn. The habit, the place you frequent, the bad influence – if you tolerate it you'll end up constantly harassed.

I know believers who get so pestered, so defeated in the spiritual life, they end up giving up on God. But who's the one to blame? They are. They chose to live with the enemy rather than drive it out. Don't you make the same mistake!

of sin. Today, to receive forgiveness all you have to do is speak to the Rock.

Moses spoiled the symbolism. He marred the picture. He took crayons and colored over a Rembrandt. He misrepresented God, and it cost him. Because of his disobedience to God Moses was excluded from entering the Promised Land.

Moses will get'em to the border, but it is Joshua who will take'em across.

Guys, ministry is full of frustration. All too often people aren't receptive, or they don't live up to the truth they've been given. The minister is tempted to lose his patience. But the leader's job is not to express his opinion. It's to represent God, and God has enormous patience. His love, mercy, and grace are boundless. The job of any servant of God is to represent the Lord - not his own opinion or feelings.

Bible Scan - Numbers 15-36

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - November 21, 1999

11/23 Women's Thanksgiving Prayer, Praise & Potluck at 10:00 a.m.

11/23 Ladies Evening Bible Study: Potluck at Karen Redman's home. Call 770-972-1439 for details.

11/24 HS Impact & Café will not meet due to Holiday

11/25 Happy Thanksgiving & Many Blessings to You and Your Family!

(The church office will be closed 11/25 & 11/26)

11/28 Tickets available in both foyers for the Ladies Christmas Tea to be held on 12/11 at 2:00 p.m..

Cost \$5/person, and tickets are to be purchased in advance. Please use this special occasion as an outreach opportunity by inviting friends, family and co-workers.

Next Bible Scan - November 28 - Deuteronomy 1-34

"because he was zealous with my zeal."

- Numbers 25:13

Bible Scan Memory Verse

THE BRONZE SERPENT

Numbers 21:8-9

In John 3:14-15, Jesus said, "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." Jesus Himself saw in these instructions another portrayal of His work upon the cross, but here the symbolism is tricky.

In Scripture bronze is a symbol for judgment, but the serpent is symbolic for sin and Satan – the venom of sin

now flows the spiritual veins of every man, and produces death - so why would Jesus be represented by a symbol of sin?

2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us Jesus was made sin for us. He took possession of our sin, and died in our place. On the cross of Christ God judged sin and Satan. They were penalized – their power destroyed.

Now all a man needs to do to be healed of the venom of sin – is what the Hebrews did to be healed of the viper's poison - just look with faith to where sin has been judged - the cross of Jesus.

Quitting on the Brink of Blessing

In Numbers 32, three tribes decide to take their inheritance on the east bank of the Jordan River - Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. But this angers Moses, and he tells them why in verse 7, "why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them?"

These three tribes want to quit just before the finish line. The nation is on the brink of blessing, and they want to settle for second best. This is our problem...

Rather than going all the way with God, we get right on the *brink of blessing* – and since the brink of blessing is better than the *sink and stink of sin* – we figure that's as far as we might ever hope to go anyway – and we stop short. Don't do it. Press on. Have faith. Enter in to all the goodness God has for you.