

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NUMBERS

"Regulations About Sin, Sabbath, and Tassels" Numbers 15:22-41

THE BACKGROUND

1. The great disobedience of chapters 13/14 form the backdrop for this chapter (15). The following chapter (16) forms the other side. It records Korah's horrendous rebellion.
2. It must not be forgotten that the "adult" population which rebelled would surely not enter the promised land (14:30). On the other hand the "children" would get into the land (15:2). They needed to know that the way to worship God and walk with Him had not changed (15:1-41).
3. Instructions have been given for grain (+ drink) (vv. 1-16) and ground meal offering (vv. 17-21). These are very specific and their very sameness for all indicate a congregational levelling i.e. all are treated alike.
4. Now come three more items of concern for which details are necessary "when ye come into the land" (v. 2).

1. ABOUT SINS vv. 22-31

N.B. Two verses are used to emphasize the utter necessity to consistently observe all the commandments. No time is given for failure--ever. Talk about a demanding God, there you have it (vv. 22-23)!

a. Inadvertent sins vv. 24-29

1) Of congregation vv. 24-26.

This is a reference to a national sin.

This is a sin "without the knowledge of the congregation." It is done therefore "away from the eyes of the congregation." The text also says it is done "by ignorance" or "unwittingly" i.e. "by wandering off" or "by mistake."

It must be noted that a relevant offering is required (v. 24). God's holiness can never be compromised. Atonement is possible. Indeed forgiveness is granted (v. 25).

"All" the congregation are involved (vv. 24, 25, 26). Any resident alien (v. 26) is responsible in the same way.

God does not trifle with sin. However, the sacrifices did not take away sin; it was the pure grace of God (14:18).

2) Of individuals vv. 27-29

The same general arrangement is made here as above. The offering is different. but the responsi-

bility is the same. God does not belittle sin at any time and with anyone.

b. Advertent sins vv. 30, 31

These are sins committed presumptuously i.e. with a high hand (cf. Ex. 14:8). Those who so sin do two further horrible acts: 1) They reproach the Lord i.e. revile the Lord (v. 30). This is a very strong word and only found here in the Pentateuch. 2) They despise the word of the Lord. This verb is only found one other time in the Pentateuch (Gen. 25:34).

For these sorts of sin, there is no offering, no atonement, no forgiveness. Rather, there is sudden death i.e. cut off from among God's people (v. 30).

NOTE: It is always true that those who reject the evidence of God's holy love to such an extent that they cannot recognize it when they meet it--they are unforgiveable (cf. Mt. 12:32; Heb. 10:26ff).

2. ABOUT SABBATH-BREAKING vv. 32-36

It is very possible that this is an example of a high-handed sin. Think of it. Here is a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath. Presumably this was an intent to build a fire (Ex. 35:3). That subtle suggestion is high-handed with God.

Intentional sin is not down played. It receives the most fearful punishment--death by stoning (cf. Lev. 24:10-23). There are 11 offences punishable by stoning (Ex. 21:28, 24; Lev. 24:15, 16; 20:2-5; Deut. 13:1-5; 6-10; 17:2-7; 21:18ff; 22:22ff; Josh. 7:25). Stoning is found in the N.T. also (Acts 7:59; 14:5).

NOTE: It is true that a grace-age believer is not subject to the sabbath, yet it can never be suggested that the standard under grace is intended to be lower than that under law (cf. Isa. 58:13, 14).

3. ABOUT TASSELS vv. 37-41

Offerings, sins, sabbath, and now clothing is part of the instruction details regarding devotion to God.

a. What they are v. 38

A "Fringe" is actually a tassel on the corner of the garment (cf. Deut. 22:12). Blue color thread was incorporated in the tassel. Perhaps this is of the sky symbolic of God's glory (cf. Esther 8:15; Num. 4:6; Ex. 26:31, 36; 28:31, 37). Our Lord wore them (Mt. 9:20; 14:36)

B. How they serve v. 39

The tassels were a reminder of God's law so that the wearer would do them. They were to draw away from self (cf. Deut. 6:6-9).

SO WHAT? God's sovereign claim is given. God's indicative precedes His imperative i.e. before God tells us what to do, He shows us His loving care for us (v. 41). He is the powerful Redeemer, hence worthy to be our Lord. Amen.