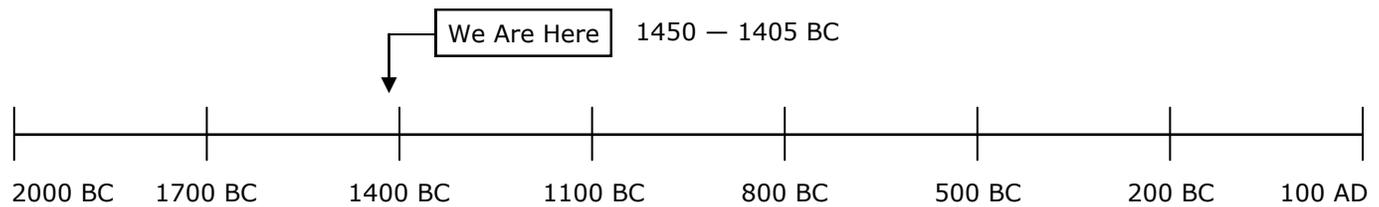


Nip It in the Bud

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Week 10: March 5-11 — *Numbers 19-36*

19.2% Complete — 295 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Map of the Exodus (p.101), Overview of Bible History (p.37)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Forty years have passed since the Israelites rejected God's gift of Canaan; as a consequence, they have wandered the desert, only to allow God time to remove that generation and to raise up their children. Very little was written about that forty years; what is documented is the second approach to Canaan. Along the way, a few notable events took place.

1. **Un-neighborly Neighbors:** Along the way to Canaan, Israel was met with opposition...

Edom (descendants of Esau) — To save time and energy, Moses asked if the Israelites could cut through Edom, but the King refused and Israel had to go around (*Num. 21*).

Arad (a tribe of Canaanites) — The King of Arad seized what he thought to be an opportunity and attacked Israel on their march. Israel destroyed them (*Num. 21*).

The Amorites — The Kings Sihon and Og were not hospitable to the Israelites either, but they attacked them. However, Israel prevailed and seized every town (*Num. 21*).

Midian — While passing through, Israel was seduced to worship the gods of the Moabites and Midianites. As a result, God ordered Moses to destroy them (Midianites, *Num. 31*). The prophet Balaam was killed for his part in instructing Moab/Midian in how to hurt Israel.

2. **Settling Down** (*Num. 32*): After Israel defeated the Amorites and conquered their land, they noticed that it was good for their herds and flocks. Thus, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh settled in that land; it was their portion of the inheritance of the Promised Land. However, they agreed to help the other tribes fight for Canaan.
3. **Under New Management:** As Israel drew closer to Canaan, God instructed Moses and Aaron to pass the torch of leadership to their successors. Thus, Aaron's son Eleazar received the holy garments and assumed the position of High Priest (*Num. 20:22-29; 25:6-13*), while Moses commissioned Joshua to replace him (*Num. 27:12-23*); he will take Israel across the Jordan and direct the wars against Canaan.
4. **New Orders:** After Israel's dismal 40-year trek through the desert, God instructed Moses to take another census, which resulted in 601,730 men (compared to 603,550 the first time). The census helped Moses and Joshua to divide the land of Canaan fairly, according to the numbers. The locations of each tribe's land was to be determined by the sacred lots. Since the Levites did not inherit any land, 48 cities were given to them.

- Prophetic Passages
 1. **Prophecies of Balaam** (*Num. 23, 24*): King Balak of the Moabites, being very concerned about the Israelites, demanded that a sorcerer named Balaam come and curse them for him. Although Balaam agreed (for profit), he soon found out that God was too much for him, and, instead of cursing the Israelites, he blessed them four times. One prophecy in particular that is important is found in *Numbers 24:7*, where God foretold of Israel's dominance over their enemies, specifically the Agagites. King Saul will battle the Agagites, Esther will defeat Haman the Agagite, and Jesus will oust Judas (an Agagite).
 2. **Curse of the Canaanites** (*Num. 33:50-56*): As Israel prepared to enter Canaan, God told them to eliminate the Canaanites; they were to leave no remnant of them. He then warned them that if they didn't annihilate the Canaanites, they would become a nagging problem that would cause Israel to stumble and fall, all of which did happen.
- Pictures of Christ
 1. **Bronze Snake** (*Num. 21:4-9*) foreshadowed the spiritual healing that will take place as hurting people look to the Son of Man who will be lifted up on the cross (*John 3:14, 15*).
 2. **Star of Jacob** (*Num. 24:17*): God can use even a sorcerer like Balaam to prophesy the coming of the Messiah, who is the "star of Jacob." Note that it may have been this prophecy that caused the wise men to follow the star to Bethlehem and find Jesus.
- Personal Application
 1. **Moses' Madness** (*Num. 20:1-13*): Although it seems odd that God would not allow Moses to enter the Promised Land, there is an important lesson here. Just as God held the people accountable for their actions and did not allow them to enter Canaan because of their discontentment and faithlessness, so He held Moses accountable to his actions. In his anger and pride, Moses took God's place before the people and seemingly brought forth water in his own power; we must never overstep God's authority, nor must we attempt to undermine God's glory and direct it to ourselves. It is clear that His standards of righteousness are the same for everyone (see also *Psalms 106:32, 33*).
 2. **Nip It in the Bud**: Several times this week, we read of instances when God hit fast and hard at those in sin. For example, there was the incident with the snakes biting complainers (*21:4-9*). There was the time that Israel committed idolatrous and immoral acts with the Moabites, and God killed 24,000 of them. There was Phinehas, the Priest, who took quick action against two sinners and killed them before the people (*25:1-18*); and there was Israel's attack of the Midianites (*31:1-24*). The point is that we should treat sin as God does and nip it in the bud, before its grip on us drags us into a life of shame.

The Bottom Line

We must be vigilant to *confess* and *confront* our sins before they take *root* in our lives.

Questions to Consider

1. Can you recall any leaders, like Moses, who ended their careers or lives in disappointment because of sinful indiscretions? How do those examples serve as a warning to us?
2. Can you think of a sin that starts out innocently, yet if not nipped in the bud can take root and become difficult to overcome? Has this ever happened to you? When and how?