

Bible Commentary – 1 Corinthians – Chapter 4

We present to you our commentary on 1 Corinthians. In our study we will make use of the usual tools of exegesis but we will also support our conclusions by making reference to numerical clues in the Scripture. Our purpose is to show how spiritual numbers can be a valuable study aid. You will find a chapter by chapter exegesis on Page 99 BIBLE of our website www.biblenumbersforlife.com

COMMENTARY

Summary of main points in the text:

- An apostle is one who is a servant of Christ entrusted with the mysteries of God (v.1)
- The LORD will judge each man's work and consider the counsels of his heart (v.5)
- All boasting of men is unjustified since the gifts given to men for service come from God (v.7)
- 'Instructors in Christ' who exalt themselves behave like kings among commoners (v.8)
- True apostles are not to exalt themselves but to meekly endure harsh treatment (v.9-13)
- Paul urges the believers to "imitate me" (v.16)
- Timothy will remind the believers of "my ways in Christ, as I teach in every church" (v.17)
- Paul may have to discipline: "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (v.20)

Parallel passage (Numbers 20)

1 Corinthians 4 is the 137th chapter of the New Testament.

Numbers 20 is the 137th chapter of the Bible. In Numbers 20 is the account of the Israelites quarreling with Moses and Aaron at Meribah. They said the desert is not a place of "grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there any water to drink" (v.5). The LORD commanded Moses to "take the rod and you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock." (v.8). Moses and Aaron gathered them together and Aaron said "Hear now you rebels! Must we bring you water out of this rock?" Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod, and water came out abundantly (v.10-11). Because Moses "...did not believe Me, did not hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel", the LORD promised that Moses and Aaron would not lead his people into Canaan (v.12).

Moses sent polite letters of filial appeal to the King of Edom [Edom is descended from Esau the full brother of Jacob] asking permission to pass through his land: "we will not pass through fields or vineyards or drink from wells, but we will pass on the King's highway" (v.17). Edom said "you will not pass through lest I come out against you with a sword." (v.18) So Edom came out to the border of his land with an armed force to resist the passage of the children of Israel through his land.

The LORD announced that Aaron would die on Mount Hor which overlooks Edom. His son Eleazar replaced him before he died (a great shame). Moses and Aaron climbed Mount Hor in full sight of the congregation. Moses stripped Aaron of his priestly garments and put them on Eleazar. Aaron died then Moses and Eleazar came down. The congregation mourned for Aaron for thirty days (v.22-29).

Interpretation of the parallel passage:

The entire passage of Numbers 20 deals with **the qualifications of spiritual leadership**. First the congregations complained Moses and Aaron were unfit to lead because the people were thirsty. Then the LORD cut the service of Moses and Aaron short because of their unbelief in disobeying instructions. Finally, the closest relatives to the children of Israel, the children of Edom, esteemed the honor of Moses and Aaron very little because they did not trust them to keep their word and guide the children of Israel through their land harmlessly. Aaron was publically disrobed before the people. Surely as humiliating a rejection of spiritual leadership as one could imagine.

What happened? **Moses and Aaron lost their composure and behaved themselves carnally** not spiritually. They lost respect for the people they served. They turned on those with quarrels and called them names: **"You rebels!"** They lost respect for the God they served and disobeyed his instructions. They lost respect for the rod of God's authority and turned it into a weapon to do violence – striking the rock - that did not threaten them - even twice.

In summary, **Moses and Aaron exalted themselves** above the people and above the LORD. They took judgment literally into their own hands and used their authority (rod of God) to do harm and violence. Instead of being servants of God, they became lords over the people. In so doing, **they distorted God's message**. He told them to **"speak to the rock"** in the presence of the congregation. This was intended to demonstrate the spiritual power of confession of the mouth and the humility of prayer. Instead they turned the scene into a carnal demonstration of physical abuse in the name of spiritual authority.

Paul draws a vivid comparison in 1 Corinthians 4 between the seeming endless sufferings of true apostles compared to the vanity and boastings of teachers who would exalt themselves over the flock. True apostles like Paul are committed to live a life of perpetual servitude to God and to the people of God. **True apostles take beatings and receive humiliation**, but unlike Moses and Aaron (in this horrific instance) **they refrain from striking back at their accusers**.

The public disrobing and death of Aaron underlines the point that workers who do not walk humbly before God but who exalt themselves over the people are a disgrace. **God will judge them and shame them**.

Spiritual Numbers

1 Corinthians 4 is the 137th chapter in the New Testament. The number 137 means '**Quarreling**'.

1 Corinthians 4 is the 1,066th book in the Bible. The number 1,066 = 13 x 82 which means "**Rebellion**" (13) <to the> "**Throne of God**" (82). The leadership sin that Moses and Aaron committed was disobedience to the command of the LORD, they rebelled. Instead of honoring the authority of the LORD, they exalted their own authority before the LORD.

There are 21 verses in 1 Corinthians 4. The spiritual number 21 means '**Lawlessness**'. This is fascinating because **the sin of Moses and Aaron was not to eliminate law**, as the word lawlessness might suggest, **but to replace God's law with their own law** (or rules). Thus, a spiritual leader could appear very law abiding, according to their own rules, but in fact be terribly lawless relative to God's rules.

The first verse in 1 Corinthians 4 is the 71st verse in the book. The number 71 means '**Judge**'. The last verse in 1 Corinthians 4 is the 91st verse in the book. The number 91 means '**Wicked Judged**'. Put together with the 21 verses in 1 Corinthians 4 the message is: '**Judge**' (71) <is> '**Lawless**' (21) <result> '**Wicked Judged**' (91). The judge is supposed to judge the wicked. When the judge is wicked, the LORD judges the judge!

The gematria of all the verses in 1 Corinthians 4 is 210,239. The number 210,239 = 83 x 17 x 149 which means: '**Nations That Hate God**' (83) <opposes> '**Victory**' (17) of '**Defender of Faith**' (149). The application here is Edom, the nation that hated the God of Israel, stood opposed. They would not permit free passage to the people whose God is the LORD.

There was sin in the camp of Israel. The people sinned by quarrelling with the servants the LORD appointed. The servants quarrelled with the people and with the LORD. The result was the nation could not gain free passage through their enemies. Because of all the quarrelling and rebellion the **LORD did not gain them the victory**. Instead, Israel was met with armed soldiers at the border and had to detour.