

Exegetical Notes, Numbers 15:32-41

"Some People Just Don't Get It"

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NUMBERS 15:32-41

Verses 32-36

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. ³³ Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, ³⁴ and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him.

³⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp." ³⁶ So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses.

- The specific commandment of God says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to YHWH your God; in it you shall not do any work...." (Exodus 20: 8-10). This man was caught collecting wood on the seventh day. This was a clear violation of the command of God.
- Remember that Israel had just been severely punished for not following the specific instructions of God. (See Numbers 13-14) In the opening section of Numbers 15 God made it clear that he was concerned about every detail of the law. This man's action shows that he had not taken God seriously in these matters. For whatever reason, he felt that HE need not keep the law of God.
- The man was caught in the act of violating the Sabbath law and brought to Moses and Aaron because it was not clear how he should be punished for his crime.
- Moses inquired of YHWH and was told by God that the man must die because of what he had done. The man was to be stoned to death outside the camp. So the man was taken outside the camp and stoned to death for violating the command of God.

Verses 37-41

The LORD said to Moses, ³⁸ “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. ³⁹ You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. ⁴⁰ Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. ⁴¹ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God.’”

- God then ordered the Israelites to wear tassels of the corners of their garments, each tassel having one blue cord or thread in it. These tassels were to serve as a reminder to all the people of their obligation to keep the law of God. The tassels would help the Hebrews remember that it was a serious matter to violate God's commands.
- The passage ends with the double pronouncement, "I AM YHWH, YOUR GOD." Israel must remember that YHWH is her God and serve/follow/respect him as such in all matters without question.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Some People Just Don't Get It*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)