

NUMBERS 34-36

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Numbers chapter 34 as we continue our study through the Word of God and tonight we will be finishing up the book of Numbers.

I hope you have found this book to be an interesting adventure as well as being helpful in your walk with the Lord.

Make no mistake about it, God has so much for us and yet, many times we don't appropriate those things into our lives because of *UNBELIEF!*

We have seen how the children of Israel, because they did not believe in the promises of God, refused to enter into the Promise Land and that unbelief caused all those who were twenty years old and up to die in the wilderness!

Now we see the next generation preparing to enter in.

And like then, we see today the turmoil of the human soul because people, like the children of Israel, refuse to surrender to the Lord.

It all boils down to this and it is really simple. If your feet are not placed firmly upon the Rock, Jesus Christ, you will fall, you will stumble! It is not that you might, you will because in our own strength, we will never accomplish all that God wants us to do and many times, we become the frozen chosen. In other words, we go nowhere, we are not walking as God has called us to walk!

You see, God did not give to us the book of Numbers as a filler book, but to teach us lessons of faith, as we look at the examples of others, specifically the children of Israel.

It is as J. Vernon McGee wrote in his commentary on the book of Numbers, *“It has given us only a glimpse into the lives of God’s people during the wilderness experience. Marked by failure, rebellion, complaining and tears, it provides valuable lessons for our own lives as we move through the wilderness of this world.”*

As we move into Numbers chapter 34 tonight, we will see Moses give to us the boundaries of the Land of Canaan, the Promise Land. And he will also appoint people who will divide the land when they enter in.

With that said, let’s begin our reading this evening in Numbers chapter 34, starting in verse 1 and see what lessons the Lord has for us as we conclude the book of Numbers.

NUMBERS 34

VERSES 1-2

God is now going to give them the borders of the Promise Land, the land of Canaan.

Now, what is interesting is that we don’t see the boundaries of the land on the east side of the Jordan River, where the 2½ tribes; Ruben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh were settling.

Why is that?

Very simply, it was not the land God promised them. They were so close to taking what God had promised them and yet these 2½ tribes settled for far less and God does not even mention their borders here with the rest of the nation!

Notice that this is a done deal as the Lord said, **“When you come into the land of Canaan”** not that they might make it in or there is a good chance they will enter in!

Make no mistake about it, God gave to the children of Israel the land of Canaan.

And please understand that they did not earn it or deserve it, but God freely gave it to them.

Now, in saying that, they would also have to go into the land, walk by faith, and drive out the enemy.

Folks, how true that is in our own lives. God has given to us the victory, an inheritance and yet, we must drive out those enemies in our lives.

In other words, we need to release those things that are holding us back, keeping us from growing, those fleshly desires. God has given to us the victory, but we must let go of those things that are holding us back, we must drive them out of our lives in a sense, just as the children of Israel will have to do!

Remember, the Promise Land is not a picture of heaven, it is a picture of the Spirit-filled life and our walk!

VERSES 3-5

Here God tells them the borders of the southern part of the land. There is some debate regarding the Brook of Egypt, some feel it speaks of the Nile River. I tend to see this as the Wadi el-Arish, which is the area in the south around Kadesh Barnea.

VERSE 6

The western border is very easy; it is the Great Sea or the Mediterranean Sea.

VERSES 7-9

Their northern border extended some 50 miles north of Damascus; some areas did extend a little farther to the north.

VERSES 10-12

The eastern boarder had its boundaries around the Sea of Chinnereth or the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.

As I have said, the 2½ tribes that remained on the east side of the Jordan River, not crossing over into the Promise Land are not mentioned here with the rest of the tribes.

Yes, their allotment of land was given to them back in Numbers 32:33-42. This was the area of the Transjordan, but it was not the land of promise and thus, they are not mentioned with the rest of the inheritance of the children of Israel, the other 9½ tribes plus the Levites.

Now here's the thing. The children of Israel never fully took possession of all the land that God had for them.

King Solomon probably came the closest, but all the land promised by God to them was never appropriated into their lives.

How about in your life, are you appropriating all that God has for you?

VERSES 13-15

Moses makes a division here of those who entered into the Promise Land by faith and those that did not.

How sad that they felt comfortable living outside of the land that God had for them.

I wonder how many Christians, how many times we do the same. God gives to us the best for our lives, how we are to walk, where we are to walk, and we settle down because it is more comfortable not going any further.

Not only that but think of it like this as F. B. Meyer reflected on the following truth, that the description of the boundaries of the land reminds us not only of our inheritance, but also of our borders, our limits.

He wrote, ***“We may expect to be blameless, but not faultless, till He present us to Himself: to be delivered from temptation, but not freed from its assaults: to be kept in perfect peace, but not secured from the pressure of adversity: to be dead to sin and self, but not daring to say that either is dead within us: to be delivered from this present evil world, as to spirit and temper, though still called to inhabit it as its salt and light. Take possession of every inch of God-given territory in Jesus, but beware of going beyond it.”***

Yes, it is not always easy, but it truly is what is best for our lives, this walk of faith. All those 2½ tribes could do was look across the Jordan River and see the Land of Promise, they refused to go and take their families to the place that God promised them!

VERSES 16-17

Why do we see Moses pick Joshua and Eleazar the High Priest to divide the land once they entered in?

Think about it! For 40 years the children of Israel were murmuring and complaining about all kinds of things and now all this land! That would have been a mess.

“I want the land by the Sea!”

“No way, that is my land!”

And I am sure fights would have broken out over areas of land that more than one tribe wanted. All the arguments that would have taken place over dividing up this land. But the Lord tells Moses to take the spiritual leader, Eleazar and the national leader, Joshua, and they are to divide up the land and that should put an end to all the potential murmuring and complaining, and maybe even fights!

Folks, we even see this today as God has established leaders to oversee various things.

For instance, in the home God has placed the husband to be the spiritual leader.

In the church God has the pastor as the spiritual leader.

They, in a sense can divide things up, put things in order as they are led by God to help prevent any murmuring and complaining or even battles!

VERSES 18-29

Not only were Joshua and Eleazar to oversee this division of the land, but one leader from each of the 12 tribes of Israel would be the representative of their tribes.

Thus, if people had a problem, were complaining of what they received, they needed to go to their leader. But the issue isn't how the land was divided up because God was working through godly men. It was truly a matter of the heart!

There may be times in your own life and maybe you are going through one of those times right now, where you are upset with God for the lot in life you have received.

Folks, it is not the matter of the lot that has been given to you, it truly is a matter of your own heart.

You see, whatever you have received, God is in control, and He is allowing things in your life for a reason. Thus, instead of complaining, surrender to Him and walk by faith, thanking Him for all He has given to you!

The bottom line is this. Our satisfaction will only be found in the Lord. I know, people think if they have this or have that, they will be satisfied. That is not true.

“Oh, if I just got that promotion, things would be perfect!”

How did that go?

“If I only had this man or that woman in my life, things would be great!”

How did that go?

“If I only had this amount of money, I could just relax!”

How did that go?

And we can go on-and-on, but the reality is, true satisfaction is only found in the Lord.

We are looking for love in all the wrong places! Not to say that a promotion is bad. For marriage, I am so thankful for the wife that God has given to me. Money, well, I have never gone hungry!

But true satisfaction is only found in the Lord and as you rest in Him, then you will be thankful for all that God has given you.

It is as David said in Psalm 17:15, **“As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”**

You see, it all begins with the Lord and flows from that relationship!

Now let me see if you have paid attention here. What tribe is missing in this list of land that was to be given to the children of Israel?

The tribe of Levi!

Why is that?

Because the Lord was their portion as they were to care for the Tabernacle, and they were scattered throughout the land of Israel to teach the children of Israel the things of God!

In Numbers 18:20 we are told, **“Then the Lord said to Aaron: ‘You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.’”**

We will see God speaking of the cities that the Levites would live in as we read on in Numbers chapter 35.

NUMBERS 35

VERSES 1-3

Yes, the Lord was their inheritance as we read in Numbers 18:20, but keep in mind that they did need a place to live and thus, God is telling them that within the land given to the 12 tribes of Israel, a portion was to be given for the Levites to live.

Also, they were to be given land not only to live in but also for their livestock to live and graze in.

And what we see is that the Levites were spread throughout the land of Israel, throughout the nation!

Regarding this, one writer tells us, *“We do know of priest-towns, however, in later Scripture. Anathoth is the most celebrated (Joshua 21:18; 1 Kings 2:26; Jeremiah 2:26, 32:7-8); yet Bethel (Judges 20:18; 1 Samuel 10:3; 2 Kings 17:28), Nob (1 Samuel 21:1, 22:19), and Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:3) also come to mind.”* (Allen)

VERSES 4-5

The Levites had land that was just outside the cities.

VERSES 6-8

Spread out throughout the land would be 48 Levitical cities.

Six of those 48 Levitical cities would be cities of refuge, which we will cover in a few minutes.

Also, these cities were to be distributed proportionally throughout the land and the larger the population, the more Levitical cities there would be.

What is the point?

The point is this. That no matter where you went in Israel you would be close to a Levitical city.

Why was this so important?

They were spread out throughout the land because the priests were to teach the children of Israel the things of God. They were there to help them grow in their walk with God. They were there to answer their questions.

If all the Levites remained around the Tabernacle and later the Temple, most of the nation would be on their own, sheep without a shepherd in a sense!

How does that relate to us today?

Peter tells us in I Peter 2:9-10, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”**

Folks, as Christians we are all a “**royal priesthood.**”

In other words, God has spread out His people all over the land!

VERSES 9-12

Here we see God making a difference between manslaughter and murder.

If you accidentally killed someone, you could flee to one of the cities of refuge that were sprinkled throughout the land; three on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west side of the Jordan River, up in the north, the middle and southern portion of these lands for safety. It is here that your case was heard, and judgment made.

You see, in that culture in Israel and in other cultures, if someone killed let's say your brother, murdered him, you had the right to avenge his death by killing that person.

In Genesis 9:6 we are told of this command for capital punishment for murder. We are told, “**Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.**”

Now, if you were able to flee to one of these cities of refuge and you did murder someone, they would hand you over to the avenger of blood so that he could put you to death!

There was no safety for someone who committed murder. If you did not make it to one of these cities of refuge and you murdered someone, they could kill you on the spot.

Keep in mind that these cities of refuge were Levitical cities and thus, the priests would oversee the verdict of the situation and determine if the person was to be handed over to the avenger of blood or to be free in the city of refuge.

VERSES 13-14

In Joshua 20:7-9 we are told of these six cities of refuge, where they were located.

We are told, **“So they appointed Kedesh in Galilee, in the mountains of Naphtali, Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and Kirjath Arba (which is Hebron) in the mountains of Judah. And on the other side of the Jordan, by Jericho eastward, they assigned Bezer in the wilderness on the plain, from the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh. These were the cities appointed for all the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwelt among them, that whoever killed a person accidentally might flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stood before the congregation.”**

Again, these cities were close to all and that obviously was important if you accidentally killed someone, and the avenger of blood was coming after you!

VERSE 15

Notice that this protection for manslaughter was not limited to the children of Israel, it was a place of safety for all who would enter in, unless it was murder that you committed as we will see in the next few verses.

Now let me also say this and this applies for all sin, even for murder.

Anyone today can flee to the city of refuge, which is Jesus Christ, and they can find refuge from the Judgment of God. I am not saying that if you committed a crime like murder, you would not have to pay for your crime on this earth, you will. But Jesus paid in full the penalty for your sin and there is no sin that you can ever imagine that is stronger than His love for you! All can be saved no matter what they have done!

And please understand that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

(Romans 8:1)

VERSES 16-21

Here were some things that God gave to them to help them determine if it was murder or an accident, manslaughter.

And again, if it was murder then this person was to be put to death by the avenger of blood, usually a close relative of the victim. And did you notice that even murder done in anger is still murder, it did not justify your actions!

What does this say regarding God?

Very simply, God is for capital punishment!

I know that may be hard for some people to swallow, but we have read this in Genesis already this evening.

Way back in Genesis 9:5-6 He established capital punishment as we are told, **“Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.”**

Murder is a capital offense and I realize not all of you may agree with that, but it does still apply today. We are created in the image of God and to murder someone, God requires your life for that offense. There is the sanctity, the sacredness of life!

Now there are those that would call me a hypocrite for this.

What do I mean by that?

They would say that on the one hand I stand against abortion, the murder of innocent children in the womb and yet I am for capital punishment, which, to them is murder!

Give me a break! They truly are not the same thing and if you think that way, sorry but your elevator does not go all the way up to the top floor, you have a screw loose.

Let's use some common sense here. Explain to me why abortion is legal and the death penalty for someone who has murdered a person should not be put to death, you want it to be illegal!

Again, help me out and tell me what crime that unborn boy or girl committed that you have murdered them in the womb?

There was none.

The bottom line is this and this is what God has said. If you murder someone, not manslaughter, you deserve the death sentence! It is so clear and yet, man loves to interject things that are not Biblical, to make the Bible say what they want it to say.

VERSES 22-24

Yes, all murder is killing but not all killing is murder and that is what we see here!

If death was clearly accidental, then he was not guilty of murder and he would not be turned over to the avenger of blood.

And folks, the decision will not be made on pure speculation, but both sides of the story will be heard and taken into account before the priest makes the judgment!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“The fact that a man slayer reached one of those cities did not ensure him against inquiry and investigation. It rather made such inquiry necessary and thus gave him opportunity of explanation and ensured the certainty of just action.”* (Morgan)

VERSES 25-28

After the judgment has been made and it was determined that he was innocent of murder, he would remain in the city of refuge and have to remain there until the High Priest has died. Yes, even if they were innocent of murder, this would profoundly impact their life!

But, if he left the city of refuge before the death of the High Priest, then if the avenger of blood saw him outside the city, he could put him to death, he left the walls of protection, the place of refuge where he was safe!

Spurgeon gives us this insight into what took place here at these cities of refuge. He wrote, *“He would have a fair trial; but even if he were found innocent, he must stay within the city, into which the avenger of blood could not by any possibility come. If he went out of the city, the avenger might kill him. He was therefore to suffer perpetual banishment, even for causing death accidentally, in order that it might be seen how much God regarded the rights of blood, and how fearful a thing it is to put a man to death in any way.”*

VERSES 29-30

God puts a safeguard in regard to capital punishment. You could not put a person to death on the word of one person, but you needed two or three witnesses to establish the truth. This was protection for the one accused of the crime, it could not just be hearsay, but the matter had to be established by witnesses.

Today in the church we might not murder someone physically, at least I hope we don't, but we can murder them with our mouth by murdering a person's reputation.

Paul, in I Timothy 5:19 tells us regarding accusations made against leaders in the church, but this can apply to anyone, "**Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.**"

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, "**Listen to no accusation [presented before a judge] against an elder unless it is confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. [Deut 19:15.]**"

Please understand that it is "**witnesses**" and not "*gossips.*"

If the matter is false then put it away, don't repeat it or let it continue on!

Thus, before you accuse someone of doing something, make sure you have your facts right and you need to confront that person first instead of gossiping and saying it all over town or all over the church!

VERSES 31-32

In other words, you couldn't buy your way out of murder; you would have to suffer the consequences of your actions.

And even if you were innocent of murder, you couldn't buy your way out of the city of refuge; you had to wait until the death of the High Priest, which could be a year, 10 years, 20 years or more! In other words, you could spend your lifetime in the city of refuge!

VERSES 33-34

Has blood defiled our land?

I believe so.

We see that murderers go free, there are murderers on death row for years and years and years and this does defile our nation!

Murderers are to be judged fairly and then the sentence is to be carried out! The blood of the slain cries out before God because we refuse to judge righteously!

One last point before we move on, and this is in regard to the cities of refuge.

Unger wrote this,

According to the rabbis, in order to aid the fugitive it was the business of the Sanhedrin to keep the roads leading to the cities of refuge in the best possible repair. No hills were left, every river was bridged, and the road itself was to be at least thirty-two cubits broad. At every turn were guideposts bearing the word "Refuge," and two students of the law were appointed to accompany the fleeing man and to pacify, if possible, the avenger, should he overtake the fugitive.

- The New Unger's Bible Dictionary

You wanted to give the fugitive a chance to get to the city of refuge and have his case heard, and thus, they had to keep the roads clear!

Before we get into Numbers chapter 36, let me give you some background information to this chapter.

Back in Numbers 27:1-11 we are told, **“Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying: ‘Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the Lord, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father's brothers.’ So Moses brought their case before the Lord. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ‘The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father's brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them. And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: “If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers. And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.”’ And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the Lord commanded Moses.”**

Now there is going to be a question relating to this female and tribal inheritance here in Numbers chapter 36 that Moses will deal with.

NUMBERS 36**VERSES 1-2**

They are preparing to ask their question and it is related to the daughters of Zelophehad.

Remember, Zelophehad had died and had no sons, only daughters and the land was to be passed on to his daughters so that it would remain in the family and in the tribe.

And back in Numbers chapter 27 we see God, through Moses, declare that if a father had no sons, the inheritance should then go to the daughters.

But there is a concern here. Let's read on and see what that concern is all about.

VERSES 3-4

This was a very legitimate concern for the other tribes.

What was the problem?

The problem here is if they married outside of their tribe, then the land would go to the tribe of their husband, and it would cause a mess.

The tribal lands would be all mixed up.

So again, this was a very good question, a very real concern that needed to be dealt with.

VERSES 5-9

The solution was simple. They were to marry only within their own tribe if it were daughters who were getting married, if they received the inheritance from their father because there were no sons.

Thus, the land would stay within the various tribes. If she did marry outside the tribe, she then would forfeit her inheritance, and it would go to someone else in the family instead.

Thus, the land would be kept within the various tribes.

VERSES 10-12

These daughters of Zelophehad, all five of them obeyed what the Lord said through Moses, and they married within their own tribe, they married their cousins.

VERSE 13

The book of Numbers opened up with the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai and now, over 38 years later they are on the boarder of the Promise Land, on the eastern side of the Jordan River, across from Jericho!

What a journey it has been. It took them only one day to get out of Egypt and yet, it has taken forty years for Egypt to get out of them!

As I close this evening and we conclude the book of Numbers, let me leave you with these words from William MacDonald, who wrote,

Three things stand out in the book of Numbers:

The consistent wickedness and unbelief of the human heart.

The holiness of Jehovah, tempered with His mercy.

The man of God (Moses) who stands as a mediator and intercessor between the sinful people and a holy God.

The human heart has not changed since Numbers was written. Neither has the holiness or mercy of God.

But Moses has been replaced by his Anti-type, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Him we have strength to avoid the sins that characterized Israel, and thus avoid the displeasure of God which they incurred.

In order to profit from what we have studied we must realize that “these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition” (1 Cor, 10:11).

- William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary, p. 199

Folks, may we not only know these things we have studied, but may we apply these things to our lives, taking those steps of faith, walking as the Lord leads us, walking by faith and not by sight!

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PROMISE LAND



THE TRIBAL ALLOTMENTS



THE TRIBAL ALLOTMENTS



LEVITICAL CITIES



CITIES OF REFUGE

