

### Quick Review

- Genesis – Book of Beginnings – The Ruin of Man –  
Sovereignty of God in Creation and Election
- Exodus – Book of Redemption –  
Power of God in Delivering His People from Bondage
- Leviticus – Book of Holiness –  
How to Worship God and Walk in Holiness

We left off Leviticus with the nation still at Mt. Sinai receiving detailed instructions on how to approach a holy God in worship and then how to respond by walking in holiness. We spent a good deal of our time on the typological aspects of the sacrifices and the feasts. But we noted that there was almost no plot to the book. As we move forward into Numbers, there is plenty of plot and geographic movement as the nation is mobilized to journey to the Promised Land in preparation for conquering it and possessing it as God's gift to them. But what should have been a short 11 day trip turns into a prolonged 40 year delay of wilderness wanderings.

- Numbers – Book of Discontent, Unbelief and Failure –  
Kindness and Severity of God

**Romans 11:22** Speaking in the context of God's sovereignty in Election of the nation of Israel and then grafting in the Gentiles to the tree of faith -- "*Behold then the kindness and severity of God*"

Title: LXX – Gk: *arithmoi* (cf. arithmetic) = Latin Vulgate "*numeri*" – English – "Numbers"  
2 Numberings:

- 1:2 -- Original Generation 603,550
- 26:2 -- New Generation 601,730 2 – 2.5 M people in total

#### **Purposes of the census:**

- determining their military strength;
- division of the land was to be on the basis of the numbers in each tribe

Authorship: Moses -- Pentateuch is a literary unit – same arguments apply as we mentioned earlier –

- **external evidence** – Jews, Samaritans and early church gave clear and consistent testimony to Moses; NT passages that cite events (**John 3:14**, etc.) and attribute them to Moses in the wilderness;
- **internal claims** – more than 80 references that God spoke to Moses; use of third person was a common practice

I was trying to think of a board game that might capture the theme of Numbers.

- I first thought of Life – circuitous path to reach the end time goal
- Maybe Monopoly – lot of emphasis on acquiring property – so many different versions – probably could come up with a wilderness wandering version -- maybe more appropriate for the possession of the Promised Land later in the book of Joshua
- Sorry – now we are getting closer – certainly it is painful to be bumped back to your original starting point and have to begin all over

- I settled on Chutes and Ladders – 2 steps forward and then 3 steps backward in dramatic fashion – all sorts of dramatic stories in Numbers – a ton of action

But God is not playing games in this book. Just as we need to take sin seriously; God takes sin very seriously and is quick to discipline His people – sometimes coming close to threatening them with extinction were it not for faithfulness to His covenant commitment.

#### Big Idea:

PERSISTENT COMPLAINING, UNBELIEF AND RESISTANCE TO LEADERSHIP DELAY THE MOBILIZATION OF GOD’S TROOPS FOR CONQUEST AND POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

Key Verse: Numbers 14:11 *“The Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?’”*

#### Expanded Summary: (Timothy Ashley)

The story is rather simple. Israel is counted by Moses, Aaron, and the leaders in order to prepare for the march to Canaan and life in the land following the conquest (**chs. 1–4**). After further exhortations to holy living and preparations to depart from Mt. Sinai (**5:1–10:10**), Israel leaves the holy mountain for Canaan (**10:11–12:13**). Spies are sent out from the oasis of Kadesh-barnea to reconnoiter. When they return to Moses and the people, their report is split. The majority say that the land and its inhabitants are too mighty to be taken.

The minority (Caleb and Joshua) say that, since God had promised victory, he would bring victory for Israel, despite the strength of the land and its people. The people of Israel choose to believe the majority and are ready to go back to Egypt (thus rebelling against the leadership of Yahweh as well as that of Moses and Aaron) when God intervenes and punishes their disbelief and disobedience. Because of their sin, every person over the age of twenty would wander and die in the wilderness without coming into possession of Canaan. They would wander forty years, until the whole generation was dead (**chs. 13–14**).

The Israelites decide to try to make things better on their own. Unassisted by God (or Moses), they try to conquer the land but are humiliated in defeat (**14:40–45**). So for nearly forty years the people wander around Kadesh-barnea in the wilderness until all that generation dies (**chs. 16–19**). They then return to Kadesh-barnea, and are told to set out once again for Canaan. They depart from Kadesh-barnea and travel to the plains of Moab, just outside the land of promise (**chs. 20–21**).

Along the way, they win some battles, showing that the tide is turning (**21:1–4, 21–35**). Just outside Canaan, the people are blessed by Balaam, a foreign seer (**chs. 22–24**). After his blessing, they sin further at Peor and are punished again (**ch. 25**). On the plains of Moab a new census is taken to mark the new beginning (**ch. 26**). The people wait for further instructions for life in the land of Canaan, where Joshua will lead them after the death of Moses (**chs. 27–36**).

**Chuck Swindoll:** More than just a history lesson, the book of Numbers reveals how God reminded Israel that He does not tolerate rebellion, complaining, and disbelief without invoking consequences. He taught His people how to walk with Him—not just with their feet through the wilderness but with their mouths in worship, hands in service, and lives as witnesses to the surrounding nations. He was their God, they were His people, and He expected them to act like it.

Geographic Progression: [Map]

**1. Mount Sinai (Numbers 1–10)**

- The Israelites began their journey at Mount Sinai (Horeb), where they received the laws and instructions, including the establishment of the Tabernacle. This was the starting point of their wilderness journey after their exodus from Egypt.
- They stayed here for about a year, during which they set up the Tabernacle, conducted a census, and were given laws and instructions for the priesthood and sacrifices.

**2. The Wilderness of Paran (Numbers 10–12)**

- The cloud of God's presence guided them throughout the wilderness journey, lifting from the Tabernacle when it was time to move.
- After leaving Mount Sinai, the Israelites traveled through the Wilderness of Paran. Their first stop after Sinai was Kadesh-Barnea, located at the southern edge of Canaan.
- It was from Kadesh-Barnea that Moses sent the 12 spies to scout the land of Canaan (Numbers 13). The report from the spies led to the people's rebellion and refusal to enter the Promised Land, leading to God's judgment.

**3. Kadesh-Barnea and the Rebellion (Numbers 13–14)**

- The failure to trust God at Kadesh-Barnea caused a 40-year period of wandering in the desert as God declared that the current generation would not enter the Promised Land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.
- During this time, they remained in the desert, moving between various locations in the Wilderness of Zin.

**4. The Wilderness of Zin (Numbers 20)**

- It was here that the Israelites, once again, complained about the lack of water, leading to the incident where Moses struck the rock to bring forth water (Numbers 20:1–13).
- At Kadesh, Moses was denied entry into the Promised Land because of his disobedience in striking the rock instead of speaking to it, as God had commanded.

**5. Mount Hor (Numbers 20:22–29)**

- Moses and the Israelites moved to Mount Hor (on the border of Edom), where Aaron died. His son Eleazar succeeded him as the high priest.

**6. The Plains of Moab (Numbers 22–36)**

- The final stage of their journey, after wandering for 40 years, was the Plains of Moab, located on the eastern side of the Jordan River, directly across from Jericho.
- It was here that the Israelites camped before entering Canaan. This is also the area where Balaam, a non-Israelite prophet, was summoned to curse Israel but ended up blessing them instead (Numbers 22–24).

- The book ends with a census of the new generation of Israelites (Numbers 26) and instructions for entering the Promised Land.

#### Thematic Structure of the Book:

### **I. (1-10) FIRST GENERATION OF GOD'S TROOPS MOBILIZED FOR CONQUEST – Focusing on Obedience to God's Instructions**

**Location = Mt Sinai / Duration = 20 days**

### **II. (11-25) DELAY DUE TO PERSISTENT COMPLAINING, UNBELIEF AND RESISTANCE TO LEADERSHIP –**

#### **Focusing on Testing, Unbelief and Failure**

**Location = Wilderness / Duration = 38+ years**

### **III. (26-36) SECOND GENERATION OF GOD'S TROOPS MOBILIZED FOR CONQUEST – FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO RELAUNCH THE MISSION –**

#### **Focusing on Renewed Faith and Obedience**

**Location = Plains of Moab / Duration = about 5 months**

#### **WHY STUDY THIS BOOK? 4 Key Reasons:**

- 1) To learn important lessons about the **character of God**  
especially His faithfulness, His covenant love, His holiness, His hatred of sin and His justice.
- 2) To see the deep-rooted nature of **sin and its consequences**  
leading to persistent unbelief, complaining, rebellion and challenging of spiritual authority. This should help us to guard against presumption.
- 3) To be encouraged that God provides a **second chance**  
to a nation that experienced abject failure as a new generation arises with the opportunity to enter the Promised Land – having learned the lessons from faithlessness but now with a new humility. There are significant lessons about repentance and forgiveness.
- 4) To learn **contentment** while **submitting to spiritual leadership**

### **I. (1-10) FIRST GENERATION OF GOD'S TROOPS MOBILIZED FOR CONQUEST**

#### **A. (1-4) ORGANIZATION OF THE MILITARY TROOPS**

1. (1) Census of the Military Troops – Men of War
2. (2) Geographical Organization of the Military Camp by Tribe
3. (3-4) Consecrated Service of the Levites (Assisting the Priests)

Lessons:

- When is a census appropriate and when is it not? Directed by the Lord and not intended for confidence to be placed in numbers
- God is a God of Order and structure, not confusion or chaos
- Everything should center around the Presence of God – understand what is most important
- Only Aaron and his two sons (Eleazar and Ithamar) and their descendants were priests; the other Levites were set apart to assist them with the service of the tabernacle

**B. (5-6) PURITY AND SEPARATION OF THE MILITARY TROOPS**

1. (5) Purity of the Military Troops – Avoiding Defilement

- a. (:1-4) Avoiding Physical Defilement
- b. (:5-10) Avoiding Interpersonal Relationship Defilement
- c. (:11-31) Avoiding Marriage Defilement

Lesson: Must always remember that we are ultimately engaged in a spiritual conflict (even in the case of Israel where physical fighting was going to be required); so **avoiding defilement** is key

2. (6) Separation of the Military Troops – Via Nazarite Vow

Voluntary vow – either man or woman; generally taken for a short period of time; some for life; some since birth – responding to some act of God’s goodness or grace in life; expression of thanksgiving

- a. (:1-8) Requirements of Separation and Dedication to God – 3 Prohibitions
  1. Could not touch wine or grape juice
  2. Could not cut his hair = dedication to God
  3. Could not come into contact with any dead body
- b. (:9-12) Renewal of Separation Vow if Defiled
- c. (:13-21) Ratification of Fulfilled Separation

Our Lord was a Nazarene (from Nazareth) but not a Nazarite – He drank wine and touched dead bodies; John the Baptist and Samson were Nazarites; cf. our expression of dedication

**Rom. 12:1-2**

**C. (6:22-27) GOD’S BLESSING ON THE MILITARY TROOPS – AARON’S BENEDICTION**

1. (:24) God’s Blessing and Protection
2. (:25) God’s Favor and Grace
3. (:26) God’s Presence and Peace
- (:27) Epilogue – God’s Promise to Bless Israel

**D. (7:1 – 9:14) RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MILITARY TROOPS**

1. (7:1-89) Instructions Regarding the Offerings of the Tribal Leaders
2. (8:1-4) Instructions Regarding the Seven Lamps
3. (8:5-22) Instructions Regarding the Cleansing of the Levites
4. (8:23-26) Instructions Regarding the Length of Service of the Levites

## 5. (9:1-14) Instructions Regarding the Observance of Passover

### E. (9:15 – 10:36) GUIDANCE FOR THE MILITARY TROOPS

#### 1. (9:15-23) Guidance from the Cloud and Fire Representing the Presence of the Lord

Read from text --

Divine Guidance tests our patience and our dependency upon the Lord. As parents we are very familiar with the constant badgering of our kids with the age-old question: “Are we there yet?” We want to control our journey. We are uncomfortable with uncertain expectations regarding timing and destination. Imagine the difficulty of the Israelites in trying to consistently obey this unpredictable guidance provided by the Lord on their journey to the Promised Land. We need to look for lessons regarding how we discern the Lord’s guidance today and how we manage our expectations and commit to obedience in confidence of the Lord’s faithfulness in leading us.

God was teaching His people **dependence on Him**. Days and weeks may pass, and the cloud did not move. Then suddenly, perhaps when least expected, the cloud moved! Both the continuance and the change alike were the will of God! Israel had to be ready to break camp at a moment’s notice. Imagine the inconvenience! Some were impatient with God when he delayed moving. Some were impulsive and wanted to get ahead of God.

Assurance of God’s Presence with His people – that is the Assurance of Victory. We know we are in the right place – the place of God’s choosing.

#### 2. (10:1-10) Guidance from the Silver Signal Trumpets for Worship and Mobilization

**Vs. 2a** – For summoning and Moving Out

**Vs. 9-10** – For Fighting and Feasting

#### 3. (10:11-36) Guidance Directing the Military Troops to Depart from Mt. Sinai

**10:11** -- Most commentators argue that this passage begins the **second major section** in the book of Numbers – since they base their outline on the geographical location markers. My outline has the second section starting with the next paragraph in **11:1** since that is the thematic division for when **things start to go bad for the nation of Israel** with their grumbling and challenging of authority. In either case, this text comes at a very important juncture and marks the culmination of all of the **preparations** that the nation has been making to set out on their journey to the Promised Land. It is a momentous occasion when the cloud finally lifts and the Lord directs His people to set out on their wilderness journey. We see much faith and optimism as their vision is focused on the visible reminders of the favorable presence of their covenant God = the cloud and the ark of the covenant. God goes before them as their Victorious Warrior to lead them into battle as they are properly arrayed in order by their various tribes. Sadly, their unity and obedience and commitment to spiritual authority will quickly erode as they encounter various pressures and trials.

## **II. (11-25) DELAY DUE TO PERSISTENT COMPLAINING, UNBELIEF AND RESISTANCE TO LEADERSHIP –**

### **Focusing on Testing, Unbelief and Failure**

**Location = Wilderness / Duration = 38+ years**

#### **A. (11-20) WINDING DOWN OF FIRST GENERATION**

##### **1. (11-12) Series of Complaints Representing Crises of Authority**

Numbers is one of my **favorite books**. I still remember a message I heard in college entitled: “Satan’s Will for Your Life” – such an interesting perspective. I knew of the Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis, but I had never thought much of Satan’s agenda. He wants us to doubt the Lord’s goodness and faithfulness and providential care. Here you have the Israelites complaining about everything.

### **11:1-3 -- AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF FAITHFUL PROVIDENTIAL CARE, GOD’S PEOPLE RESPOND TO THE PRESSURE OF ADVERSITY WITH GRUMBLING AND COMPLAINING THAT BRING SEVERE DISCIPLINE**

**Discontent Feeds Unbelief** – Once you exchange thanksgiving for murmuring and complaining, you lose vital confidence in the Goodness of God, in the Wisdom of God, in the Providence of God, in the Presence of God.

Complaints had been tolerated earlier (**Exod 15:24; 16:2; 17:3**), but henceforth God would judge it (**11:4, 19, 33; 14:2; 16:3; 20:3; 21:5**), and that would require Moses’s intercession.

- First, the people grumbled about general conditions (**11:1–3**),
- Then troublemakers carped about their reliable—and therefore repetitious—diet of manna (**11:4–9**).
- Moses chimed in, moaning about his impossible responsibilities (**11:10–15**).
- Miriam and Aaron protested Moses’s prophetic leadership (**12:1–16**).  
LEADERSHIP ENVY (WHICH CHALLENGES GOD’S AUTHORITY)  
RECEIVES GOD’S DISCIPLINE OF SHAME AND HUMILIATION

- Complaining reached an unforgivable crescendo when the people rejected not only their daily provisions but even their very salvation in the Promised Land (**14:1–4**).
- It continued with Korah’s Rebellion (**ch 16**).

### **CONFIDENCE IN THE SUFFICIENCY OF GOD’S POWER TO MEET NEEDS IS THE ANTIDOTE TO ALL COMPLAINING AND TO FRUSTRATION IN LEADERSHIP**

Also a good barometer for your spiritual maturity is **1 Thess 5:16-18** “*Rejoice always; <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing; <sup>18</sup> in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*” Make sure you are carrying out God’s will and not Satan’s will for your life.

##### **2. (13-14) Cowardly Report of the Spies and Rejection of the Promised Land**

(:18) Overall Mission = Scope out the Land and the People

- a. Scope out the Land  
    *“And see what the land is like,”*
- b. Scope out the People
  - 1) Regarding Strength  
    *“and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak,”*
  - 2) Regarding Numbers  
    *“whether they are few or many.”*

(:19-20) Specific Data to Gather

- a. (:19a) State of the Land  
    *“And how is the land in which they live, is it good or bad?”*
- b. (:19b) Condition of the Cities  
    *“And how are the cities in which they live,  
    are they like open camps or with fortifications?”*
- c. (:20a) Agricultural Prospects  
    *“And how is the land, is it fat or lean?”*
- d. (:20b) Forestry Prospects  
    *“Are there trees in it or not?”*
- e. (:20c) Sample of Fruit  
    *“‘Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land.’  
    Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.”*

(:28-29) Alarming Details Regarding Prospects for Conquering –  
Magnifying the Difficulties --

- 1) (:28a) People are Strong  
    *“Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are  
    strong,”*
- 2) (:28b) Fortified Cities are Difficult to Conquer  
    *“and the cities are fortified and very large;”*
- 3) (:28c-29) Tough Enemies are Entrenched and Difficult to Drive Out  
    *“and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.”*
  - a) Amalek  
    *“Amalek is living in the land of the Negev”*
  - b) Hittites and Jebusites and Amorites  
    *“and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the  
    Amorites are living in the hill country,”*
  - c) Canaanites  
    *“and the Canaanites are living by the sea  
    and by the side of the Jordan.”*

(:30-33) Two Contrasting Recommendations Regarding Prospects of  
Conquering Canaan

- 1. (:30) **Positive Recommendation** – Overcomer Mentality of Faith =  
Victory is Assured  
    *“Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘We should by*



*all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.”*

2. (:31-33) **Negative Recommendation** – Grasshopper Mentality of Disbelief = We are Going to be Crushed

a. (:31) Conclusion = Impossible Task – Viewed Apart from Faith

*“But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us.’”*

b. (:32-33) Supporting Arguments

*“So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying,”*

1) (:32b) Tough Place to Wage War

*“The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants;”*

2) (:32c) Enemy = Giants Compared to Our Size

*“and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size.”*

3) (:33a) Legendary Nephilim Would Oppose Us

*“There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim);”*

4) (:33b) **Grasshopper Mentality – this is the key point of failure**

*“and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”*

**Chap. 14** – Immediate judgment – **The Forty Years of Wandering**

- **Incident:** Due to the Israelites' lack of faith and disobedience, they are condemned to wander in the wilderness for forty years until the unbelieving generation dies off.
- **New Testament Reference:**
  - **Hebrews 3:7-19:** The author of Hebrews warns Christians not to repeat the mistakes of the Israelites who "*hardened their hearts*" and failed to enter the promised rest because of unbelief. He compares this to the spiritual rest offered in Christ.

*“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness.”*

- Resulted in that generation losing the privilege of possessing and enjoying what God had given to them; we have spiritual inheritance of peace with God and victory over sin – but we must possess it in faith
  - Rest (tranquility of soul) in the believer's life comes through faith
  - Opportunities must be taken by faith

3. (15) Worship Requirements for Living in Canaan

4. (16-17) Legitimizing of Aaron's Priesthood

## The Rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16)

- **Incident:** Korah, along with Dathan and Abiram, leads a rebellion against Moses' leadership. God punishes the rebels by causing the ground to open and swallow them, with fire consuming others who followed them.

- **New Testament Reference:**

- **Jude 1:11:** The New Testament epistle of Jude warns against rebellion, citing Korah's rebellion as an example:

*“Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion.”*

- The rebellion is often seen as a cautionary tale about pride, division, and rejecting God's appointed leaders.

5. (18) Distinctive Role and Support of the Priests and Levites
6. (19) Laws on Cleansing
7. (20) Passing Away of Failed First Generation

## B. (21-25) CRANKING UP OF SECOND GENERATION

1. (21) Initial Victories and Challenges

## The Serpent in the Wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9)

- **Incident:** The Israelites, while wandering in the desert, speak against God and Moses, leading to God sending venomous snakes among them. Many Israelites die, but when they repent, God commands Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. Those who look at it are healed.

- **New Testament Reference:**

- **John 3:14-15:** Jesus references this incident when speaking to Nicodemus. He compares the lifting up of the bronze serpent to His own crucifixion, saying:

*“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”*

- The comparison highlights the theme of salvation and healing through faith.

- Illustration: Dr. Fullerton used this story in sharing the gospel message with college students in his little apartment over a dinner of a hamburger patty and green beans
- [cf. testimony of how Spurgeon was saved – Look and Live (deacon preaching when pastor couldn't; just a few people there on snowy day)]

*I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair until now had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further, I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if they could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache. The minister did not come that morning; he was snowed up, I suppose. At last, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. Now, it is*

*well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He was obliged to stick to his text, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was,--'*

***LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED,  
ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.  
Isaiah 45:22KJV***

*Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do,  
"You man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live."*

*I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said,--I did not take much notice of it -- I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me. I had been waiting to do fifty things, but when I heard that word, "Look!" what a charming word it seemed to me! Oh! I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and **simple faith** which looks alone to Him. Oh, that somebody had told me this before, "Trust Christ, and you shall be saved."...]*

## 2. (22-24) Treachery of Balaam – complicated story

**Raymond Brown:** News of Israel's conquests spread quickly throughout Moabite territory. Balak, its ruler, was distraught at the prospect of an invasion, particularly as the travelers had just conquered the Amorites, a people who had earlier subdued Moab. His disturbed mind hit on a bright idea: he would seek supernatural help rather than rely solely on military strength. Why not call in a widely acclaimed soothsayer, Balaam from Mesopotamia, and pay him handsomely to put an inhibiting curse on the Israelites? Balak's soldiers could then engage in battle with a people whose prospect of military success was blighted from the start.

- **the error of Balaam** – he was a mercenary false prophet that was motivated by selfish gain; God used a speaking donkey to restrain him from cursing Israel -- **2 Pet. 2:15** -- "*loved the wages of unrighteousness*"
- **Doctrine of Balaam** – **Rev. 2:14** – "*who kept teaching Balak to put a tumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality*" -- counseled the children of Israel to intermarry with the heathen which he knew would so pollute the people of God;  
Tempts God's people into **compromising positions** (in morality, in theology, etc.); knowing those will be disqualifying for use and service by God

[**Chap. 31** – Lord's full vengeance poured out on Midian]

## 3. (25) Spiritual Harlotry, Divine Judgment and Priestly Intervention

### **III. (26-36) SECOND GENERATION OF GOD'S TROOPS MOBILIZED FOR CONQUEST – FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO RELAUNCH THE MISSION – Focusing on Renewed Faith and Obedience**

**Location = Plains of Moab / Duration = about 5 months**

A. (26:1–32:42) The Preparations for the Conquest and Possession of the Land

#### **27 – Leadership Transition with commissioning of Joshua**

Joshua provides both continuity with the past and development of a new kind of leadership for the future. It is clear, however, that, even though the leadership has been passed ritually to Joshua, Moses continues to exercise the leadership as long as he is alive. Moses and Joshua may be partners in leadership from now until the end of **Deuteronomy 28** but Moses is clearly the senior partner; Joshua himself will not come into the leadership until “*Moses my servant is dead*” (**Josh. 1:2**).

**32 – Tribes of Reuben and Gad Request permission to settle in Gilead** = Trans Jordan territory rather than within Canaan, the Promised Land

#### **COMPROMISING REQUEST TO POSSESS THE LAND EAST OF THE JORDAN (ALREADY CONQUERED) BECAUSE OF ITS SUITABILITY FOR LIVESTOCK – DESIRE FOR INSTANT GRATIFICATION OR JUSTIFIABLE IMPROVED PLAN?**

- Initial Angry reaction from Moses
- Compromise worked out where they would cross the Jordan and help conquer the land before returning to settle in Gilead

So this chapter is an **interesting and complex study**. It follows shortly after the story of Balaam — another occasion where the will of God had been expressly communicated, but God allowed the prophet to pursue his alternative path and meet with Balak. Everything cannot be painted as black and white. There seems to be more involved than a simple substituting of instant gratification for faith in the promise of God. The reasonable arguments made by the two tribes, the endorsing role of Moses, and the resulting blessing of God must all be evaluated along with the initial proposal that seems misguided.

**Is compromise always wrong?** Sometimes a compromise can be reached on the basis of a principled moderation. Other times a compromise can repudiate principle entirely. Of course, some principles matter more than others!

#### **(:6-7) Denial Based on Two Fundamental Objections – Visceral Response**

1. (:6b) Compromises the Solidarity of the Mission

“*Shall your brothers go to war while you yourselves sit here?*”

2. (:7) Compromises the Commitment Needed to Pursue the Promise of the Lord

*“Now why are you discouraging the sons of Israel  
from crossing over into the land which the LORD has given them?”*

B. (33:1–49) The Review of the Journey in the Wilderness

C. (33:50–36:13) The Anticipation of the Conquest and Possession of the Land

**33:50-56 -- FINAL MARCHING ORDERS FOR CONQUERING AND POSSESSING  
CANAAN -- OCCUPYING HOLY LAND REQUIRES EXTREME EXTERMINATION OF  
THREATS TO COVENANT WORSHIP**

1. (:52) Drive Out the Inhabitants so They are No Longer a Threat  
*“then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you,”*
2. Destroy Their Idols so They are No Longer a Temptation  
*“and destroy all their figured stones,  
and destroy all their molten images”*
  4. Demolish Their Worship Shrines so They are No Longer a Distraction  
*“and demolish all their high places;”*

Reminder: Big Idea

PERSISTENT COMPLAINING, UNBELIEF AND RESISTANCE TO LEADERSHIP DELAY  
THE MOBILIZATION OF GOD’S TROOPS FOR CONQUEST AND POSSESSION OF THE  
PROMISED LAND

Housekeeping Note – go to my website to access any past SS lessons in our Survey Thru the  
Bible series – [navigation explanation]

Blogs – 28 sermons covering most of the book

Full Commentary – includes additional notes; some devotional application questions

**CONCLUSION:**

- **1 Cor. 10:1-14** – Paul summarizes the story of **Israel’s failure** in the book of Numbers, warning Christians of temptation and urging them to be careful – Do not be idolaters; don’t commit sexual immorality; don’t test the Lord; don’t grumble; **learn from the negative examples from Book of Numbers**; God is always right and good; when He makes promises He will always fulfil them in His own time and way; cf. Moses crying out to God: How are you going to provide meat for so many people? *Is the Lord’s hand too short??* (**Num. 11:23**) Nothing is beyond God’s Power.

**TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL -- INCLUSION IN SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGE NO  
GUARANTEE OF PARTICIPATION IN SPIRITUAL SALVATION**

**I. (:1-5) THESIS PROVED: GOD’S REJECTION OF THE UNBELIEVING  
GENERATION OF EXODUS WILDERNESS WANDERERS**

**II. (:6) THESIS APPLIED BY WAY OF WARNING: GUARD AGAINST THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH = MAJOR PITFALL**

**III. (:7-10) THESIS ILLUSTRATED FURTHER: FOUR OT EXAMPLES OF MORAL FAILURE AND DEVASTATING JUDGMENT (UNGODLY BEHAVIOR ON THE PART OF THE SPIRITUALLY PRIVILEGED . . . FOLLOWED BY DIVINE JUDGMENT)**

- A. (:7) Guard Against Idolatry (Ex. 32:1-6)
- B. (:8) Guard Against Immorality (Num. 25 or Ex. 32?)
- C. (:9) Guard Against Insurrection / Presumption – Testing God (Num. 21:5-6)
- D. (:10) Guard Against Ingratitude / Discontent (Num. 16:3-41)