

The Bible From 20,000 Feet

Part 19: Numbers ch. 26 – 36

Tuesday Night Bible Study, January 27, 2009

--OUTLINE:

- FINAL PREPARATIONS BEGIN FOR ISRAEL TO START THEIR CONQUEST OF CANAAN
- SELECT LAWS REVIEWED AND EXPANDED
- SUCCESSOR CHOSEN FOR MOSES AND A FORESHADOW OF CHRIST IN THE LIFE OF MOSES
- GOD'S JUDGEMENT ON THE SIN OF THE MIDIANITES AND INSIGHTS INTO WHY A LOVING GOD WOULD ORDER THE MASS EXECUTIONS OF THE POPULATIONS OF CANAAN
- FORESHADOW OF CHRIST IN THE CITIES OF REFUGE

FINAL PREPARATIONS BEGIN FOR ISRAEL TO START THEIR CONQUEST OF CANAAN

- in Numbers ch. 26 we see Israel camped on the plains of Moab on the border of the promise land...
 - they are about to engage in war against Canaanites.
 - but this war will be unlike any other war... on the plains of Moab before entering Canaan they learn that the enemy to be feared is not the Canaanites but sin within themselves.
 - in Numbers 25 God sent a plague that killed 24,000 Israelites because of their sin of committing harlotry with the Moabites.
 - 40 years earlier they learned a similar lesson when they failed to take the land of Canaan because of their unbelief.
 - so the enemy to be feared is the enemy within... sin and unbelief – the flesh!
 - just like Israel would be invincible with God's power so we too can be spiritually invisible through Christ...
 - we can be spiritually victorious in any situation.
 - we can say with the apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
 - but when we walk in our flesh we can fail at all things.
 - Jesus said, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

--Israel numbered so that land could be divided among tribes in proportion to their size

- land divided by casting of lots (old testament method for determining God's will)
 - Num 26:52-56: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 53 "To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names. 54 To a large tribe you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance. Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them. 55 But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers. 56 According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller."

--text points out that Caleb and Joshua (and Moses) are the only people in second census who were in the first census

- Num 26:64-65: "But among these there was not a man of those who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest when they numbered the children of Israel in the Wilderness of Sinai. 65 For the LORD had said of them, "They shall surely die in the wilderness." So there was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun."

--in ch. 32 we encounter yet another episode of Israel's incessant tendency to stray... which in reality shows their humanness and points to the authenticity of the Old Testament record. If it was a history made up then you would expect Israel to not have so many failures.

- Israel first reaches the promise land and then wants to run back to Egypt, then after 40 years of wandering in the desert Israel arrived back at the border of the promise land and quickly became entangled in harlotry which causes 24,000 to die (ch. 25), then in ch. 32 the tribes of Reuben and Gad jump the gun and want to settle on the east side of the Jordan.
 - Moses warns them about not repeating the same mistake of the previous generation that died in the wilderness and then allows them to settle on the east side of the Jordan only if they join the rest of the tribes in the conquest of Canaan.

--in ch. 33 Moses records every place where they camped during their 40 years in the wilderness.

--in ch. 34 God gives specific boundaries to the land that He was planning on giving Israel in their conquest of Canaan.

SELECT LAWS REVIEWED AND EXPANDED

--chapters 28-30 reviews laws concerning offerings and vows...

--Israel's history of being quick to forget what God commanded is one reason why God gives them this solemn reminder at this turning point in their history.

--by reviewing laws concerning offerings God is touching on the heart of the law and the central focus of daily life in Israel, for it is by offerings through the ceremonial law that atonement was made for Israel's sins and fellowship with God was maintained.

--Numbers 28:1-2: "Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Command the children of Israel, and say to them, 'My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.'"

--regulations for vows included in the review of offerings because many times offerings were given when people made vows; another probable reason for covering vows at this time was in response to a current events in Israel's camp (such as was the case with the inheritance laws in ch. 27)

--in ch. 27 and 36 inheritance law given for special circumstance...

--in ch. 27:1-9 a law is given for when daughters are the only surviving family and no brothers to receive father's inheritance; in this circumstance the inheritance would pass to the daughters.

--in ch. 36 an addendum is given... if daughters carried the inheritance then they could only marry within their father's tribe so that the father's land would not be transferred to another tribe through marriage, thus preserving the original tribal land distribution.

--interesting example of how God communicated with Moses through the tabernacle... appears that Moses essentially had a conversation with God; he asked God about the question and God replied, "The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right..." (27:7)

--exciting side note – zoom out to big picture...

--God is essentially the King of Israel and Moses simply carried out His orders. God reigned through the tabernacle in Israel which was eventually replaced by the temple in Jerusalem.

--Because of Israel's persistent sin the voice and glory of the Lord faded and eventually disappeared.

--the time that God reigned from the tabernacle/temple in Israel was a foreshadow of the day when He will reign over the entire earth from Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom!

--at which time we will be His administrators in glorified bodies!

--the backbone of His government will be His children from all ages in perfect, glorified state, incapable of sin... opposed to the hopelessly sinful government of Israel.

--as the Lord spoke to Moses about governing Israel so He will speak to us about governing the world!

--Revelation 20:4-6: John in his Revelation vision saw a glimpse of this future... "Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. **And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.** 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but **they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.**"

SUCCESSOR CHOSEN FOR MOSES AND A FORESHADOW OF CHRIST IN THE LIFE OF MOSES

--God commands Moses to go to the top of a mountain from which he can see the Promise Land and reminds Moses that he can't enter the promise land because of his sin.

--Numbers 27:12-14: "Now the LORD said to Moses: "Go up into this Mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel. 13 And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. 14 For in the Wilderness of Zin, during the strife of the congregation, you rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes."

--it isn't until the last chapter of Deuteronomy that Moses ascends the mountain and dies.

--as we saw in the previous study, the disqualification of Moses foreshadowed salvation apart from the law through Christ...

--Moses represented the law...

--John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

--Luke 24:44: "Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses [*in the following passage the Law is referred to as simply "Moses"*] and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."

--Luke 24:27: "And beginning at Moses [*here the law is referred to as "Moses"*] and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Through all the years of Israel's wilderness wandering Moses proved to be a man of exemplary character and faith, yet just one mistake prevented him from entering the promise land.

--The disqualification of Moses is a picture of all of mankind's predicament under God's standard of perfect righteousness... we could be 99.9% perfect with only one small mistake and we would still be disqualified from entering heaven!

--The only way around God's standard of perfect righteousness is qualification through Christ – by His righteousness being credited to our account!

--Colossians 1:12-14: "...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

--Romans 3:21-22: "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."

--Romans 4:22-25: "This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." [*speaking of Abraham's faith being credited to him as righteousness*] 23 The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. 25

--God chooses Joshua to be Moses' successor and commands Moses to perform an inauguration ceremony for him.

--Numbers 27:15-23: "Then Moses spoke to the LORD, saying: 16 "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, 17 who may go out before them and go in before them, who may lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep which have no shepherd." 18 And the LORD said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; 19 set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. 20 And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. 21... 22 So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. 23 And he laid his hands on him and inaugurated him, just as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses."

--the inauguration of Joshua began the transfer of authority from Moses to Joshua which would be complete when Moses died after climbing Mt. Abarim.

GOD'S JUDGEMENT ON THE SIN OF THE MIDIANITES AND INSIGHTS INTO WHY A LOVING GOD WOULD ORDER THE MASS EXECUTIONS OF THE POPULATIONS OF CANAAN

--God commands Moses to assemble a group of 12,000 soldiers to execute the Midianites because they caused Israel to commit harlotry under the counsel of Balaam (Numbers ch. 25).

--the Midianite cities were burned to the ground and everyone was executed except virgin women (those who had not participated in harlotry with Israel), which prevented any resurgence of the Midianites and the sin that they harbored.

--this battle against the Midianites is a picture of what would continue all through the conquest of Canaan as Israel exterminated the populations of Canaan.

--one question that naturally arises is how on earth could a loving God not only condone but command such ruthless execution?

--Israel's conquest of Canaan and execution of Canaanite populations is a form of God's judgment on sin...

--Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death..."

--it is a law of the universe that all sin has to be exterminated.

--the extermination of sin means the extermination of sinful people.

--the only thing that changes this equation is God's grace...

--Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

--in reality the most devastating outpouring of God's judgment on sin has yet to happen... in Revelation 9:15-16 we read that during the Great Tribulation an army of 200 million demons will kill 1/3 of the earth's population!

--today that would amount to 2.2 billion people!

--Revelation 9:15-19: "So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. 16 Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. 18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed — by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. 19 For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm."

--Scripture seems to indicate that the rapture will occur before this period of unprecedented judgment... 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10: "...Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." (see also Revelation 3:10, Luke 21:34-37)

--Israel's participation in the judgment (opposed to God striking the Canaanite nations with plagues) required Israel to walk by faith... rather than standing back and waiting until their enemies were gone they had to march into battle and depend on God in the face of their enemies.

--Israel's participation also served as a graphic reminder to them of the consequence of sin and to emphasize how God had called them to be a holy nation. God wasn't destroying sinful nations to be replaced by another sinful nation but He was destroying sinful nations to be replaced by a holy nation.

FORESHADOW OF CHRIST IN THE CITIES OF REFUGE

--cities of refuge designated...

--in Genesis ch. 9 God enacted a law that required the penalty of death when a person took somebody's life – death for death.

--Genesis 9:6: "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man."

--this law pointed to the sanctity of life and the seriousness of taking one's life.

--in Exodus God gave Israel a law that provided an exception where a person who commits manslaughter (accidentally takes someone's life opposed to murder) would be spared from the sentence of death.

--Exodus 21:12-13: "Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. 13 However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate."

--in Numbers ch. 35 God gives further instructions for this new law and designates certain cities as "cities of refuge" where a person guilty of manslaughter could flee for immunity to the Genesis law of death for death.

--the new law in Exodus couldn't go into affect until the land of Canaan was settled and cities of refuge established. God never intended for there to be a 40 year delay.

--protection in the cities of refuge from the consequence of manslaughter provide a fascinating foreshadow of protection in Christ from the consequence of sin.

--rather than giving the Levites regions of land in Canaan like the other tribes, God gave them 48 cities throughout all the regions where they would administer the ceremonial law.

--six of these Levitical cities were designated "cities of refuge".

--if found guilty of manslaughter then the guilty person was protected from the sentence of death based on Genesis 9:6 as long as they stayed in the city of refuge to which they originally fled.

--when the high priest died then their legal status would change and they would no longer be guilty of manslaughter and therefore could live anywhere once again.

--Numbers 35:24-28: "the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments. 25 So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood [*the relative of the person killed who would carry out the execution of the guilty person*], and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled... But after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession."

--just like the death of the high priest changed the legal status of the manslayer so the death of Christ (our High Priest) changed our legal status! Through the death of Christ we are no longer guilty of our sins!