

LESSON 27: NUMBERS 26 - 36
AUGUST 1, 2012

OVERVIEW

- . The second census – Numbers 26:1 – 27:11
- . Appointment of Joshua to succeed Moses – Numbers 27: 12-23
- . Offerings, feasts and vows – Numbers 28 – 30
- . Midianite war – Numbers 31
- . Division of the land – Numbers 32 – 36

THE SECOND CENSUS – NUMBERS 26:1 – 27:11

- . Comparison of the two census in Numbers
 - . First census (Numbers 1-3) taken thirty-eight years earlier at the Desert of Sinai
 - . Census taken just before the Israelites leave the Sinai and begin march north to Canaan
 - . Primary purpose of census was to inventory men available for fighting
 - . Census involved only men over twenty
 - . “All the men . . . who were able to serve in the army”
 - . Phrase mentioned over and over throughout Numbers 1-3
 - . Total number of men in census was 603,550
 - . Second census (Numbers 26:1-27:11) taken just weeks before Israelites are to cross in to Canaan
 - . Entire census consists of a new list of men, except for Joshua and Caleb
 - . In accordance with God’s judgment, all the men in first census have died over the last thirty-eight years
 - . Based on the story of the scouts in Numbers 13-14
 - . God was so angry he said “No male over twenty will set foot in Canaan”, resulting in thirty-eight years of wandering
 - . Purpose of second census is much different than the first
 - . Second census is to determine size of each tribe, so land distribution could be handled accordingly
 - . “The land is to be allotted to them as an inheritance based on the numbers of names” – Numbers 26:53
 - . The sum total of the second census is almost identical to the first
 - . The second census is 601,730 (26:51), less than a 2000 person difference from the first
 - . Indicates that despite the hardships of the desert and the numerous judgments God has sent upon His people, God’s power to accomplish His will was unaffected

- . Levites represent a special case and they are separated from the census
 - . The Levites who were to serve as the priests and head of all church functions, were to have no land to distract them
 - . Levite distribution will be covered more thoroughly in Chapter 35
- . The second special case involves Zelophehad's inheritance
 - . Zelophehad, from the tribe of Manasseh, had no sons and five daughters
 - . Inheritance laws stated that all land inheritance was to pass from fathers to sons, with the oldest son getting a double inheritance
Deuteronomy 21:15-17
 - . Zelophehad, with no sons, stepped forward and agreed this would result in his name being unfairly removed from the record
 - . Moses takes this petition before the Lord who says, "the women are right, the inheritance should be theirs"
 - . This is an interesting insight into how law developed in Israel
 - . When any unusual case arose, Moses took it to God, whose decision then became precedent

APPOINTMENT OF JOSHUA TO SUCCEED MOSES – NUMBERS 27:12-23

- . God tells Moses he is about to die – Numbers 27:12-13
 - . Moses doesn't dispute God's decree, or petition for more life
 - . Instead, he asks that a successor be appointed "So the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd" – Numbers 27:17
- . God chooses Joshua
 - . Moses foremost assistant for many years
 - . Joshua held steadfast in his faith in God in Numbers 13 when all the other scouts, except Caleb, doubted God's ability to provide
 - . Joshua was very different than Moses
 - . Moses was more aggressive, whereas Joshua was a plotter
 - . Moses had a great deal of charisma, Joshua was not very exciting
 - . Contrast between Moses and Joshua illustrates that the emphasis is not on the leader, rather on God and His ability to work His will through the leadership
 - . As leaders in the church we need to remember that we are only part of the flow of God's actions
 - . We need to be faithful in the role that God has assigned us

OFFERINGS, FEASTS AND VOWS – NUMBERS 28 – 30

- . Offerings – Numbers 28:1-15
 - . Details of these offerings have already been described in great detail in Exodus 29:38-41 and Leviticus 1-7

- . What's unique about Numbers 28 is that it lists the specific number of sacrifices to be offered by the priests on each day of the year
 - . What it shows is how the number escalates from the daily (2 lambs) to the Sabbath (4 lambs), etc.
- . Over the course of a year, offerings totaled 113 bulls, 32 rams, 1086 lambs, more than a ton of flour and 1000 bottles of oil and wine
- . Offerings were designed to continually remind the people of who they were, who their God was and their enormous need to respond to Him in overwhelming gratitude
- . The scope of these sacrifices helps us appreciate how the ultimate fulfillment of the perfect sacrifice (Christ) eliminates the need for all these other sacrifices, for all times
- . Feasts – Numbers 28:16-29:40
 - . The section on offerings and feasts blend together because the offerings were made on feast days
 - . The purpose of these verses is to highlight the number of offerings, not to describe the feasts which have been done elsewhere
- . Vows – Numbers 30
 - . Vows were to be taken seriously, not to be entered into lightly
 - . Some vows, however, could not be kept
 - . Leviticus 27 provides the chief legislation for each case
 - . Numbers 30 deals with the special case of how women taking vows are affected in certain situations
 - . A father or a husband's objection over a vow takes precedent over a woman's decision
 - . If a father or a husband does nothing to object, then the woman has authority to act on their conviction
 - . Vows were serious and not to be treated lightly
 - . Jesus did not mention vows but did warn about oaths, "Simply let you yes be yes and your no be no" – Matthew 5:37
 - . The important thing about making vows is that our word can be trusted
 - . We should be known for our integrity

THE MIDIANITE WAR – NUMBERS 31

- . Why is this story included in scripture
 - . It happened and is therefore a part of the history of these final days before the assault of Canaan
 - . It is a foretaste of the conquest itself
 - . The conquest involved the attempt to exterminate the Canaanite people
 - . The account concludes the story of Balaam
 - . Here we learn the full impact of Balaam's advice to the Israelites and the wrath of God

- . The moral issue
 - . How could God command such a thing? How could God tell His people to go in and slaughter an innocent nation?
 - . The first problem is that we tend to look at these issues from a judgmental point of view
 - . When we judge a person or people to be guilty then we can say that God's wrath was justified
 - . Conversely, when we judge a person or people to be innocent then we can't understand why God allows bad things to happen, or even worse, instructs bad things to be carried out
 - . We also tend to take these situations and personalize them
 - . Why hasn't this happened to me
 - . Why am I still living
 - . Were these people (the Moabites) really bad in God's eyes, and I'm not as bad
- . The teaching of Jesus on these issues
 - . Repent or perish – Luke 13:1-5
 - . Pilate and the Galileans
 - . Devout Galileans were at the temple in the very act of worship
 - . Soldiers of Pilate descended upon the temple and murdered them
 - . Tower of Siloam
 - . Fell over and killed many innocent people
 - . Jesus' reply; instead of trying to process this by rendering judgment on these people, think of ourselves and seek God's mercy for our own transgressions
 - . Repent and be saved
 - . Jesus goes on to say that regardless of whether or not bad things happen to us, we need to consider our own condition and seek God's mercy and be willing and wanting to repent – Luke 13:22-30
 - . It is not justice we need from God but His mercy

THE DIVISION OF LAND – NUMBERS 32-36

- . The Transjordanian tribes – Numbers 32
 - . The tribes of Reuben and Gad petition with Moses to settle their people on the Jordanian plains, east of the Jordan River
 - . The semi-arid plains are perfect for grazing their larger herds
 - . Israelites have already conquered this land
 - . The two tribes would rather not disrupt their people

- . Moses is angry – Numbers 32:6-15
 - . Moses thinks these tribes are trying to abandon the rest of the Israelites and not help in the fight for Canaan
- . Reubenites and Gadites reassure Moses
 - . Tribes are willing to fight alongside the other tribes in Canaan until job is done
 - . After victory, the men will return to these lands to settle
- . Moses approves request
- . Stages in journey – Numbers 33
 - . Most of the chapter written as a sort of obituary looking back at important events all associated with Moses
 - . Also serves as reminder to Israelites of how the Lord has helped them
 - . A means to prepare themselves for what lies ahead
 - . Chapter ends with instructions to utterly destroy Canaan
 - . Otherwise, “those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides” – Numbers 33:55
 - . Only section in book that actually claims Moses as author – Numbers 33:2
- . Boundaries of Canaan – Numbers 34
 - . Southern boundary – Desert of Zin
 - . Eastern boundary – Transjordan
 - . Western boundary – Mediterranean Sea
 - . Northern boundary – Mount Hor
- . Priestly cities and cities of refuge – Numbers 35
 - . The priestly cities where the Levites will live
 - . Forty-two cities where they would live
 - . Additional six cities designated as cities of refuge
 - . The cities were surrounded by reasonable grazing lands where they would graze their herds
 - . The cities were scattered throughout Israel so all the peoples would have access to the priests
 - . Fulfill God’s promise, “I will scatter them (Levi and Simeon) in Jacob and disperse them in Israel” – Genesis 49:7
 - . Originally a punishment against Levi and Simeon for their leading a massacre of the Shechemites
 - . The Simeonites eventually blended into the land of Judah
 - . Cities of refuge – Numbers 35:6-34
 - . Israel believed in an “eye for an eye” justice system
 - . If an injustice occurred to a family, they had every right to seek out the avenger and return an equal weighted punishment
 - . This created problems, however, if the situation was an accident, and could lead to great injustice

- . Therefore, six cities of refuge were appointed
- . If a person was involved in an accidental killing, instead of waiting for revenge, they could flee to one of these six cities for safe refuge
- . Cities were scattered equally throughout Israel
- . This did not exclude these people from a trial
 - . Once in city, the accused was to appear before elders
 - . If elders judged the death accidental, the person was admitted to the city where they could live until death
 - . If guilty, he would not be allowed to live in city
- . Inheritance of Zelophehad's daughters – Numbers 36
 - . Granted a portion of land as their father's inheritance
 - . If they married outside the tribe, this would create a problem as to which tribe would inherit the land
 - . Therefore, it was decided that the women must marry within tribe
 - . The daughters married cousins on father's side so the inheritance remained within tribe of Manasseh – Numbers 36:11-12

NEXT LESSON IS WEDNESDAY AUGUST 15, 2012: DEUTERONOMY 1 -26