

# **SAVED TO SERVE**

## **Numbers**

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Numbers," by C.H. MacIntosh
- "Numbers," by R.K. Harrison
- "The Life Application Bible," Tyndale House and Zondervan
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### **Numbers 1**

#### **ORDER ESTABLISHED**

In observing the completion of the Tabernacle and the establishing of an acceptable way of maintaining fellowship with God through the offerings of God's choice, I am impressed by the way God organized a tribe of ex-slaves into a well-functioning society. God does not leave us the way we were in our past. Slaves are no longer slaves. Idol worshippers are no longer worshipping gods made by man's ideas. The past is dead to those "who are in Christ Jesus." After 400 years of slavery under the harsh control of sinful men, God established order under His direction to preserve His people from chaos and undisciplined living.

Genesis tells us of God's choice of one man of faith, Abraham. After giving a brief overview of half of human history, we are told of God's election of this one man and then unfolds in Exodus, the book of redemption, how He looks upon those who He has chosen to be His people. They are given the privilege of acting in personal faith in Him and then by His power, God enables them to leave the bondage of the world and sin, to walk in liberty by personal faith in Him. He makes every provision for our need and then gives us the choice to believe Him and take that provision for ourselves as an act of faith in Him. Fellowship with God is maintained by appropriate worship and communion that has been established on God's terms as is taught in Leviticus. How that new life, new liberty and new worship is worked out is demonstrated in Numbers.

I picture in my mind an orderly tent city of over two million people spreading outward from the Tabernacle where God dwelled that was located right in the middle of the camp. He was the gathering center and from the safety of His light by fire by night, and the covering shelter of the cloud from the wilderness heat by day, every person could know where the tribe he was a part of was and their dwelling was located. By gathering unto Him, there was no question as to where one should be.

Starting life over as a redeemed people called for each one of them to submit to God's authority rather than the authority imposed at the end of a slave-driver's whip. This new authority for them and us comes from a Living Source that is based on love, not force. The call of God to service is not unfair because He gives Living Power from the Holy Spirit within us to do what God wants in God's way. That Living Power gives us the wisdom to do divine service with love, wisdom, and with the reasonableness of our ability from the Living Center to whom we are gathered - and He blesses that effort with His perfection. That makes our service acceptable.

Christians are not alienated by the sin-loving world as mere liberated slaves, but because we are motivated by the love and grace we have received to live for God. The blessings associated with being a "new creation in Christ Jesus," "children of God," "sons of God," and "heirs of God" are not at all like what comes from an on-going pedigree of human generation. The new birth and new life of a Christian makes each true child of God aware of the fact we owe everything to Him. We have been justified by His grace. Every one who has been saved by God's grace has repented of their sin to God and has put faith in Christ alone as our Savior from sin. All adopted children in God's family have justified God by admitting God is righteous and we have condemned ourselves as helpless sinners unable to make ourselves fit for His glory. Redeemed souls can say we know we have passed from death to life. There are inward changes to which the Holy Spirit within bears witness.

God's holiness is the foundation for our relationship with Him. He did not isolate Himself from His people in the past nor does He now even though He is unseen. There is evidence of Him being with us in daily life, and because He is holy, He wants a holy people to have fellowship with Him. The journey of faith of a believer in Christ is characterized by continual progressive growth in grace and knowledge as we learn more of Christ through God's Word as we experience the truth we practice.

Moses heard God speak in the wilderness of Sinai, and He speaks to us today in the spiritual wilderness in which we live. Perhaps God Has allowed us to live in the wilderness of separation to keep us from being distracted by what goes on around us. Much of what is being done in "God's name" is merely a sort of upgraded worldliness that is more righteous than openly evil practices. Our spiritual life and direction are not left to our own opinions and ideas, otherwise biblical Christianity would be the chaotic so-called "Christianity" that has confused the world.

To establish and maintain order, Moses and Aaron were told by God to choose a tribal representative from the twelve tribes, excluding Levi. Those men were to stand as leaders among the people of the nation of Israel. A nation was being formed and it was not to be a haphazard multitude of ex-slaves each doing their own thing. The census that was taken of the twelve tribes, excluding Levi, showed there were 603,550 men from twenty years old and upward to the age of those who had lost their strength to go to war, probably fifty years old. The Levites were not numbered because they were the guardians of the Tabernacle and its environs, as well as being responsible for the movement and maintenance of the Tabernacle. They were God's possession for God's service. All the children of Israel would have numbered two million or more people with a very imposing size of an army of men available for military purposes. The taking of the census not only gave information to those who led the people, but it would make every family understand they were involved in the life of the nation.

The order of the census of men from twenty to approximately fifty began with the sons of Leah, then Rachel's, then the two handmaid/concubines with whom Jacob had sons. The twenty days or so that it took to establish the number and the order were not wasted days. In order to do what God intends, it often takes time, and it certainly deserves the uttermost care to make sure what is done is according to God's will and word. God does communicate with humanity. He used speech, actions and the written word to make sure we know what His desire is.

The Levites knew what was their responsibility when the nation moved forward. They were appointed by families to set the Tabernacle up, to move it with order and respect when the cloud and fire indicated. To take the Tabernacle down and put it up, the Levites had to be ready, and every person knew their work and service. The "charge of the Tabernacle of testimony" was no small matter. The charge of the house of God today is a very important work, and is not left up to us to decide how things are to be done.

Numbers is a book that describes the faithfulness of God and His love and grace to man in spite of disobedience and unbelief. The first chapter establishes God's demand for orderly service in view of battles that were to be fought. We are not just on a casual stroll through a favorable world. The system that hated our Lord Jesus Christ when He was here hates those who follow Him. "All that live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." God's work is to be conducted decently and in order in keeping with His character and what He wants ours to be like.

**Numbers 1:16-17.** *"These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel. And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by their names:"*

#### **THE RENOWNED.**

*Out of the ordinary, not just one of the pack;  
Something is different in him, that others lack,  
There is something about this man, and those with him;  
That makes each one of them, stand out from other men.*

*The congregation knows, these men are well-known;  
They have taken responsibility, these men have grown  
To be distinguished, above their other peers,  
And have become notable over these past years.*

*Their names are public knowledge – can be counted upon.  
Their reputation for right decisions has been previously shown.  
People look up to them, when guidance they need.  
And when they make a statement – others will heed.*

*They have a glory, but it is not in themselves.  
They have the respect of all, for their firm resolve.*

*These men are known to be those who can be trusted.  
Their humility shows even when they are celebrated.*

*They have been called by the older, to stand apart.  
They are called to lead the flock, with all of their heart.  
These renowned are among them – tried and proven.  
The honor they receive, is not taken, but given.*

*Let each man who God appoints; who steps out to lead;  
Be sure his notability, is honor in deed.  
Not just word and names, or titles one holds;  
Gives the right to renown - it must come from God.*

*And when others see that God has given His approval;  
The people will acknowledge; his leadership is notable.  
We can trust those who God trusts, and follow the guide;  
A man of renown, leads with God at his side.*

*"O God who sees and knows the heart of every person; I pray today for those who have been called by Thee to step out of obscurity into leadership. Let each one of them be men of a humble heart. Let each one desire and maintain a spirit of wisdom. May each one, recognize the work to which he has been called, is a work, not a position. May each man be a listener and take time to make decisions that will affect others. May he not act in haste or prejudice and with partiality. May his spirit be Christ-like and his voice be kindly. May he have courage and humility; be a man of grace and truth; be righteous and a man of peace. Give to Thy servants what they don't naturally have but need, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 2**

### **ORDER IN THE CAMP**

As an observer looking on from a distance, I am impressed with the arrangement of the large moving nation of millions of people, both when on a march forward and when stopped. There was a design and order that preserved cleanliness in the camp so no one was too far away from the Tabernacle in the center where God dwelt in the middle of the camp, or the outside border. By placing the tribes in prescribed positions, God made it possible to maintain unity in the best possible way. Those who know each other best, both the strengths and weaknesses, lived together where their own flag was raised. Each tribe had its own standard (flag) and perhaps families had a similar one to identify it. Every man had his place and duties to his family, to his tribe and to the dwelling place of God. Each knew where he belonged and was expected to stay there. We all have been assigned responsibilities by God and are obligated to fulfill and keep them. There will be conflicts we have to face in life. There is the challenge between law and grace, and our obligation to each. There is conflict between the Holy Spirit within and the flesh that tries to control me. There is conflict in the life of a believer between the powers of darkness that constantly tempt us, and the commitment to follow the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

Believers need to know their own flag - to whom we owe our allegiance. There are all kinds of Christian organizations and groups that try to claim my attention and time. But I am committed to those I know who follow the Word of God as given to us in the Bible as the only source of instruction for our belief and conduct. The Divine Teacher and Guide in such places is the Holy Spirit.

In the camp of Israel no one needed to compare his position with others nor be jealous of another person's place, work and ability. God made that decision for them. God has a design that governs all that happens. It is our privilege to be part of that great design and to function in it according to the ability God has given us. God is occupied with and concerned about everything we do. As long as the Israelites followed God's order, they were successful. The same is true in the house of God today. To continue in the spirit of obedience to God's Word, and faith in Him to enable us to accomplish His will, we will then be successful.

Judah, Issachar and Zebulun were on the east side of the Tabernacle, and were to lead the nation when they moved. There was a very practical reason for this - they had the most men. Those three tribes formed the spear-point of the march. Their united strength would be very intimidating to any of the enemy tribes who observed the movement of that great migrating company. Moving right in order behind the first three tribes were Reuben, Simeon and Gad with the third largest number of men fitted for battle. They were in the order

in which they could be fighting for their women, children, possessions and the security of the non-combatant Levites who were carrying the Tabernacle and its furniture which traveled right in the middle of the host of people. The house of God was surrounded by those who were willing to die for it.

As the Tabernacle would pass by in the order of the march, the tribes of Rachel's children: Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin, the smallest group, stepped forward in order to guard the Tabernacle and Levites from behind. Then moving into the line of march from the north were the tribes of Dan, Asher and Naphtali, the second largest group to provide a large rear-guard to the movement. Enemies who would try to attack from behind would find a very formidable army to face. This whole pattern of design God made, is the strongest way of moving forward securely. The weak and strong moved all together providing safety by the efforts of the strong and continual support and supply by those who were weaker as they did what they could to preserve their families, tribe, nation and the dwelling place of God.

To watch a work of God controlled and directed by God, and willing and obedient participants who love the Lord, is a wonderful thing to see. The Lord's Supper carried out in a biblical way has been a wonder to some who have watched from the observer's seat. Interaction between people who are committed to God and to the assembly of His people, does not have to be organized like a business. When a person knows they are in the right place, and has an awareness of the gift or gifts God has given them, then in confidence in the leadership of the Holy Spirit, they do what they can and it meshes with all of the rest of the assembly. Some will do more than others because of the ability God gives, but there is no reason for dispute or jealousy. We are all under the same banner.

The order God had directed to Israel would maintain a defensive position, preserve tribal and family identity and preserve and maintain cleanliness in the camp. Jealousy and rivalry would be reduced and unity would be preserved as the whole camp would unite in loyalty and obedience to God who dwelt in their midst. The order of the camp would also make it easier to manage and govern the affairs of day to day living when they were in one location. When the time came, they reached the promised land, the same order would make dividing the land according to tribes much easier. Culture and family identity were able to be maintained over the coming years, and family genealogies could be more easily kept. By means of the order and design God gave, travel was more efficient and without confusion. The setting up of the encampment of a tent city of about twenty square miles could be done with a minimum of confusion. God's ways are always best. The whole book of Numbers teaches us the benefit of doing things according to God's design. It also gives warnings when we take things into our own hands to do things in our own way.

Another purpose of the book of Numbers deals with the needs of our souls that we might be ready for divine service for God and be fruitful in it. We learn from chapter two the blessings and reasons for order in the activities of God's people and how we relate to the house of God. For those within the congregation every person could be assured and confident of their own significance for the good of the whole group. Everyone could be assured of the safety and security, not only of the people, but the place where God put His name. Each person could know and be satisfied with the role he or she had to fill. They didn't need to compare what they did with what others did. It would have been wonderful if the Israelites had been willing to leave God's design and order alone. But human beings what they are, self-interests often come in and disrupt what works so well when we follow God's order.

**Numbers 2:2.** *“Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch.”*

#### **THEIR STANDARD.**

*Arrangements are carefully planned – 12 square miles of order is obvious from far away.*

*Each tribe in its place – everyone knows where they belong.*

*The rectangle shape around the tabernacle has a reason.*

*Protection for the holy place where God dwells.*

*North, south, east and west – the 12 tribes have their place to be at every stop.*

*And there within that group, the standards are raised.*

*Each one different, unique, special in color and shape;*

*There are reasons behind this too – families are identified.*

*Organization of this kind is an effective way to govern and manage a large group.*

*Huge numbers of people and yet easily found by those looking for them.*

*Fanned out from the tabernacle looking for the ensign;*

*One goes past from tribe to tribe, clan to clan and then to the family.*

*Keeping things orderly makes dividing the land in a future day much easier.  
There will be no problem knowing who is who, and what family belongs where.  
Culture and heritage, not last name is how they are known.  
Each family is pitched by his own standard – his father's ensign nearby.*

*Genealogies are kept in this way in detailed order, proving their true pedigree.  
Membership in God's chosen nation has to be provable for coming inheritance.  
Generation after generation need to pitch by the banner of the father's house;  
Then can the proof of each person's identity be kept in tact.*

*Travel is efficient when a banner waves above – the children know where they belong.  
As we travel to our heavenly home – we need the stability of our own standard.  
Our place of abode is stable even though we are passing through the wilderness.  
Our position in the nation is not to be something we ignore.*

*We stay where we belong, we rally to the ensign of our fathers.  
We gather where the standard we belong to still waves above our home.  
When we obey God's plan, there is no confusion, no question as to where I should be.  
I camp around the tabernacle, where we have been for a lifetime and our fathers too.*

*The ranks around are shifting, the tribes are being confused, the nation in disorder.  
But I will still go to the flag I recognize; the ensign of our fathers is still flying.  
This is the standard that I claim for myself – my own banner.  
I will gather here, in this way, to this banner – because I believe this is God's plan.*

*"Father in heaven, I have been in this nation for a lifetime. I have been gathered under this banner since I was born. I believe this ensign to be the one Thou dost recognize as the place for me. By Thy grace and keeping power – here I will stay. Keep me please, from having wandering feet and a discontented mind. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

### **Numbers 3**

#### **ORDER IN THE TABERNACLE**

Both the Tabernacle and the firstborn were hallowed by God. The Tabernacle as the dwelling place of God, and the firstborn for the service of God. But because of the event of the children of Israel in making a golden calf to worship while Moses was on Mt. Sinai speaking with God, the Levites alone came over to Moses when the call went out, "Who is on the Lord's side?" From that time on the tribe of Levi took the place of the firstborn of the children of Israel. Levi had been prophesied by Jacob to be a belligerent tribe who didn't see parents, family or children. But God is able to take those He chooses and make them into the kind of people He wants us to be.

There were three identifiable groups in the congregation in the wilderness. There were the warriors from eleven tribes in the nation. Then there were workers, the Levites, who were non-combatants responsible for the house of God. And there were also worshippers from every tribe but the priesthood from Aaron's family were the representatives of the people to God, and from God to the people. The tribe of Levi had been notably cruel and perhaps would be the last group of people who would be expected to do the work of the Lord. But there came a time when they all had to be washed, shaved completely with a razor, and then go to the altar with two bullocks. As those bald-headed men placed their hands on the sin-offering, they were identified with that sinless animal as the substitute for their sin. Then they went from that bullock to the other one and put their hands on its head as a burnt-offering to God by which they would be accepted for service because of the perfection of the sinless sacrifice - a type of the perfections of Christ.

The whole tribe from Aaron and his sons including all others too, remind us of the exceeding grace of our Sovereign God who cleanses us from all sin. God expects self-judgment from us to deal with polluting habits, typified by all those men shaving themselves with a razor and presenting themselves to God as they really were. The call of God to special service is no light matter. Those warrior-like people now became those on whom God had laid a special work to be done for Him. They were numbered from one month old and up. The affairs of those involved in spiritual work affects our children from earliest days. How careful we must be when speaking for the things of God, the work of God, the people of God and the Word of God.

Little ones around us may not say anything, but impressions are being made that will last a long, long time. It wouldn't be hard to imagine young people learning from their parents how to serve God acceptably by watching, listening and participating with them in the work they do for the Lord.

The priests including all the families of Moses and Aaron were positioned in front of the Tabernacle facing east. On the north side of the Tabernacle was the family of Merari who carried the boards, sockets, posts and pins when the Israelites were on the march. The family of Gershon carried all the Tabernacle coverings, the veil and the curtains of the courtyard. The family of Kohath carried the furnishings and the furniture of the Tabernacle. That gathering center was protected by those who were called by God to serve Him and who guarded that place with their lives.

To serve the Lord in any way as workers for Him is a great privilege and that work deserves our best efforts. Hallowed service is honorable of whatever kind it is. To those looking on from a distance, when those guardians of the Tabernacle gathered to move the Tabernacle, it would have looked like the whole tent-building just melted down into bundles and burdens moving along in the middle of two million people. When the cloud or pillar of fire stopped, the Tabernacle would quickly be raised like a growing thing before the eyes of those observing. Each person doing what God wants in the work to which we are called, fits perfectly with the work of those with whom we share our life in fellowship.

**Numbers 3:3.** *“These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office.”*

#### **TO MINISTER.**

*It is honor, high honor to assist in that which is holy.  
God is holy – God's throne is holy – God's name is holy.  
God's house is holy – God's Word is holy – God's judgments are holy.  
To be involved in such a work demands a sense of awe – and worship.*

*To benefit God's people in any way at all, is an important work,  
To help such, is to attend to their needs in a way that may seem unimportant.  
To succor those who are cast down in some of life's trials, is needed.  
To satisfy some need that would be otherwise left undone, is an act of grace.*

*To minister to a holy people is an honor, because these are the people of God.  
To wait on the Lord – and on His people, is one of the blessings we have.  
To advance by ministering in some way, something yet unfinished;  
To promote a work that God began – is a privilege of one who is called to minister.*

*To distribute to others, in God's name, that which God has given, is a responsibility,  
A trust, that has been delivered into the hands of one who ministers.  
To aid in an effort that is eternal in its nature, is honor in service.  
To content the One who has delivered something of value to me – is to minister.*

*To answer to a call from One who is superior in every way - is to minister.  
To attend to the business, He has given to me as a steward - is to minister.  
To forward the plans entrusted to me, and bring a work to completion - is to minister.  
To supply anything that is lacking by stepping into the need - is to minister.*

*“O Holy God, it is no small thing for me to speak for Thee. Whether the messages are for saints or sinners; the number of listeners is small or large – give me the sense of the importance of what I am saying. May the hearers understand this is a word from the Lord. May both hearers and speaker be convinced that God has spoken; that this is more than just a form of teaching and preaching to which we have become accustomed. May the Spirit of God be free to speak. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”*

#### **Numbers 4**

##### **ORDER IN MOVING THE TABERNACLE**

I see through the eyes of the historical record the Israelites watch the pillar cloud rise from the Tabernacle as evidence of God's will that it is time for them to move forward. Aaron and his sons, the family of priests, go into the Tabernacle, each to their varied tasks to cover the furniture in the ways God had prescribed. The veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holiest is taken down and moved forward to cover the ark. Then a

leather covering was put over the whole thing, and over that there was placed a third covering of blue. That was the only piece of furniture that was covered with a colored cloth so everyone would know where the ark was when they were moving. No one would be able to carelessly approach that ark in peril of their life.

Any time changes are to be made in the service of God in which we are engaged, we must be careful this is being done according to God's will. There may be times when something must be done in order to further the Gospel and fulfill the commission the Lord Jesus Christ gave before He ascended into heaven. In reaching out to new places, we must commit ourselves to doing that work according to the Word of God. In making any additions or subtractions regarding assembly practices, it is incumbent on us to be sure God has His place in the center of that work.

The table of showbread with the bread on it was covered with a blue cloth and all the vessels used in relation to that table were placed on that cloth. Over them was spread a scarlet cloth, and over that was the leather covering wrapped around it. Each article of furniture: the golden altar, the lamp stand and brazen altar were covered in a designated way. The lamp stand and golden altar were covered in blue, and the brazen altar in purple. Over these the covering of leather was placed. Blue typifies the testimony of heavenly things here on earth. Such things give us spiritual light by which we can understand divine truth, the reason and value of worship as sweet incense, and fellowship with God Himself. Scarlet speaks of the price of redemption by blood and as a redeemed people we can come into the house of God without fear and find our spiritual food in God. Purple is the royal color that reminds us of God's satisfaction that He finds in His Son, the Lamb of God, who fulfilled all God's righteous demands when He was sacrificed on the cross in our place.

When all the furniture was properly covered, the Kohathites from thirty to fifty years old stepped up to carry those burdens out of the Tabernacle and carry them as designated by God. The Gershonites then came to remove the cloth fence around the courtyard, the roof coverings and all the equipment that was needed to hold those things together and in place. Right behind them came the family of Merari from the west side of the Tabernacle to take the posts of the fence, the boards of the Tabernacle, the sockets that kept the wood off the ground, the pegs and all the things used for the structure of the Tabernacle. Every man knew what he was responsible for and a holy order was maintained in the dismantling of the Tabernacle into movable parts so it could be moved to another location.

Some of God's people are involved in, and responsible for, unseen activities in the work of the Lord. Others have a work to do that is related to the Lord's people themselves, and others have a more open and public work to do. When everyone knows the part of the whole work for which we are responsible, the work of the house of God goes well. If one person is missing or refuses to do what is their responsibility, the whole work suffers.

The Tabernacle would seem to melt down before the eyes of those looking on. In the same way when the destination was reached, it would rise like a growing thing as it quickly took shape and the cloud settled down upon it again. Those who are in the strength of their lives, need to be exercised before God as to how they can fulfill their work in harmonious fellowship with all those laboring in God's things.

Our service for God is not based on what is convenient for me, or what I like to do best, but on where God has placed me and on what I am capable of doing. Anything we do for the Lord; we are to do it with our might. We usually have twenty years or so when our strength is upon us and we can bend our best efforts to accomplish suitable goals for the Lord. Let us do what we do with an enthusiastic heart for God and in fellowship with those around us who have the work of God burning in their hearts.

**Numbers 4:47-48.** *"From thirty years old and upward, even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation even those that were numbered of them, were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore."*

#### **FROM THIRTY TO FIFTY.**

*Life can be thought of in various ways;  
By the number of years or the number of days.  
But life thought of like God, is usually quite different.  
For Him a millennium is not long, or a day is sufficient.  
For in God's plan of things, "times of visitation,"  
Are special times, like the "day of salvation."*

*Yet God, in great wisdom, still knows we are men;  
He states His designs, so we are ready for when  
His will is made known to us, and we step out in faith;  
To take up the cross or the work He has placed  
In our hands to do, we are to do it with our might;  
And if done in God's time and way, works out just right.*

*Our length of life now spans three-score and ten;  
And if there is strength, may go farther, but then;  
There does come a time when the appointment is made;  
And death's day arrives, just the way God has said.  
So, life now is lived with the future in view;  
When each gives account, for the things that he knew.*

*In ancient times past, things were similarly done;  
The Lord's people were aware of the work yet to come.  
There were training times set for preparing to work,  
For years in advance, lest his calling he shirk,  
A young man would know in his twenty-ninth year,  
All other claims ended; he had a burden to bear.*

*When he became thirty, and for the next twenty years,  
His most serious obligations, were in the burdens he bears.  
Others could do what they wanted for gain;  
But his responsibility was to be ready for when  
The cloud moved and the people of God,  
Moved once again at the call of His Word.*

*Others could carry what one time he did;  
But now his strong shoulders carried only what God said.  
For twenty years running this man in his strength,  
Was one of a small band who were called at length,  
To carry only what God wanted of the house of worship,  
To the place God chose, and there to have it set up.*

*The years of my life between thirty and fifty,  
Are the years if lived for self, are full of productivity;  
But out of the millions who live life for "me;"  
Is a small band of men called out of obscurity;  
To serve God in their strength and with a full heart;  
They give God their best, with their eyes on the "mark."*

*Others may prosper and get all that they want;  
But those who God calls; He gives from His grant.  
The best that is offered to God, these men share,  
Their inheritance and blessings come from the burdens they bear.  
The same is for us in this day that we live,  
From "thirty to fifty" our strength will we give.*

*"Father God, who calls us by Thy mercies; with the little strength I have left, I do want to serve Thee. I want to be as productive as I can be. I know I am not as vigorous as I was nearly twenty years ago at 50, but I pray Thee to give me strength for this day; to serve my generation who is in great need of the Gospel. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 5**

### **ORDER THAT MAINTAINS PURITY**

Purity among God's people and in God's house is never to be taken carelessly or treated with indifference. Chapter five of Numbers deals with areas of the life of those have been called to be a holy people because we belong to a holy God. There is corporate judgment that affects all of the people. Individual judgment is expected by every person as they live in the world and among sanctified people. God Himself acts in judgment when it comes to those areas of our life that have to do with motivation and inner desires.

There is a principle of discipline, the purpose of which is to deal with defilement among the corporate body of God's people. In Israel during the wilderness journey, there was the demand of separation from the children of Israel by anyone who had infectious disease or who had contact with a body that had already begun to decompose. Transmittable diseases historically have decimated whole societies because those who were infected were not quarantined. Redemption was the basis of God being willing to dwell in the midst of His people. Discipline is the basis of God continuing to remain with them. The sin of one man, Achan, is an example to us of how one undisciplined act can stop the advance of all the people of God as they seek to further the work of God. We should never underestimate the impact of the sin of one person on a whole congregation of people.

Sending a disease-infected person outside the camp of Israel to a safe but isolated place preserved all of God's people from having the same problem. One who is in the fellowship of an assembly of God's people should judge themselves first as the Holy Spirit within them guides. However, they may not be willing to do this. In the corporate body of an assembly, judgment must be given time to act, and must be allowed to produce the benefits of changed behavior without bias or prejudice. Discipline by the people of God does not only affect the one who has done the wrong, but affects all who are linked with that person by personal or corporate association. Lust brings sin, and sin left not judged brings a contaminating negative effect upon all. The charge to be holy is not just to individuals but to all the people of God.

The universal, or dispensational, Body of Christ cannot be judged by men because it extends through the centuries of this Church age and is unseen in all parts of the world. The local assemblies of God's people are responsible to judge doctrine and the morals of all who claim entrance into that fellowship. An assembly is not a haphazard gathering of people who come together on occasion, but is a unified body of saints who share one faith, one hope, one baptism and testify to that publicly in the place they live. We are not called upon to judge the motives of those within that fellowship, but we do have the biblical responsibility to judge their ways.

The unity of the Body of Christ is not touched when discipline in the house of God is maintained. We do not judge those without, but only those within the assembly. Our faith and ethics should be consistent. Ethical teaching and living by faith should be the same. If they are not, then there is guilt that is real. Whether judgment is corporate or individual, there is no real easy forgiveness for the sinning believer. Sin has to be faced and dealt with.

Freedom from guilt requires a legal pardon. A legal pardon comes at the high cost of a life forfeited for sin. The trespass offerings of the Old Testament foreshadowed the cost paid by Christ for our freedom when He gave His life. Restitution on the part of one who has acted unjustly and created a problem, a division or a loss of some kind on another person, does not mean revenge is the solution. The individual who did wrong was required to repay in full the consequences of His action and add to it the payment of twenty percent of its value to the person he wronged. Only if there was no one alive of the wronged family to which the one who sinned could pay that fine, was the fine paid to the priest as the representative of the government of God. There is the expectation that a person would judge himself and with a tender conscience, make full restitution plus the one fifth part added. A tender conscience on the part of a Christian is morally attractive to those who have been wronged or who observe a dispute between people. If we treat holy things, and even moral things, lightly when there has been a wrong committed, that leads to a shallow attitude in everything.

Sometimes there are individuals who are very self-centered and don't realize there are consequences to the words they say when gossip and accusations are made. Suspicion on the part of a husband as to his wife's behavior, or what are his expectations of her, are not treated lightly by God. He arranged a law by which jealousy would be fairly dealt with. Unbecoming behavior towards men and flirting with men, would raise the suspicion of a husband that there was some immoral activity on the part of his wife. If he had reason to believe his seed was adulterated, he was certainly justified in seeing that the sin problem was dealt with in a just manner. If there was suspicious behavior or harassment of his wife by another man, perhaps he would have reason to consider whether there was some reciprocal activity on her part. But if he, for some spiteful reason, acted with jealousy against his wife, the law of jealousy would hopefully make him to stop and consider the effect of his jealousy against his wife and the testimony of God's people.

God does not permit the on-going suspicion of evil, let alone the act. If there has been unfaithfulness to the vows taken, there are consequences to that action. At the time Israel was in the wilderness, consenting adultery was dealt with by death. If there was suspected infidelity that was not admitted to, the jealous husband could take his wife to be judged by the priest. If she was innocent, she had nothing at all to fear, even though she might be terrified by the act of her husband and the authority of the law. There would no doubt be natural worry because of having to stand before the priest when one is charged with a capital crime. The jealousy offering was similar to the sin offering. The actions taken by a jealous, suspicious husband was then taken to the highest possible court - the court of divine judgment. Not only now is the sin of adultery to be searched out, but also the sin of suspicion and jealousy had to be examined. Neither person can escape the consequences. There is no escape for a guilty person. The same process that would declare the guilt of the guilty one, would declare the faithfulness of the innocent one.

When that offering was made, God was involved in the matter. He would settle the matter visibly and without question. The "dust" of death, and the "water" of the Word mixed with the writing material would be there to settle the charges. There was a statement of the charges made. Then the woman was presented to the priest who would carry out the process of judging. She would be made to swear an oath and then drink the mixture as prescribed by God. The outcome would be unmistakable to everyone - the husband, the priest, the woman and any who were involved in the event. Ultimately the whole camp would know if she was found guilty of the charge. Moral integrity was in view in this legislation.

Adultery would defile the holiness needed to maintain a tribe's purity. The nation's uniqueness and separation depended on that purity. The oath made would work to her benefit if she was innocent. Her husband, and every other jealous husband would not act in haste on his suspicions if she was innocent. He would be exposed as a petty, jealous man who would not thereafter be easily trusted. It was the Lord who would bring about the physical changes if the wife's guilt was exposed. How careful we must be to avoid any moral defilement that would lead us astray and bring us under the judging hand of God. And how careful we must be before laying any unsubstantiated charges against another person. Suspicion and gossip, defiles any person who engages in it, and any person who listens to it. We need to bring our hearts and minds into control to obey God and guard ourselves against anything that hinders other. There is nothing that is hidden from the Lord.

**Numbers 5:7.** *"Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed."*

#### **THE FIFTH PART.**

*Restitution – not revenge.*

*The concept – new at that time – was*

*Unique, because it stopped a cycle of wrongs.*

*Pay-back time was not bloody.*

*This way – there could be a stop.*

*The fifth part took care of that.*

*Robbery, a trespass, a law broken –*

*Now was the time to get your rights met.*

*The guilty was found out.*

*The guilty was confronted.*

*The guilty was condemned.*

*He faces that – and the fifth part.*

*Restoration takes place;*

*The loss must be paid for in full.*

*The wrong must be made right.*

*The loss is only part of it all –*

*Trauma, suffering, the upset caused –*

*The fifth part is added – to compensate.*

*Apologies, though appropriate, are not enough.*

*Awareness of guilt and acknowledgement –*

*Right though they are – is not enough.*

*Tears of repentance and sobbed out words;*

*Not enough to fully make restitution.  
The fifth part is required.*

*The victim has a right to what is his –  
After all, he earned it or received it legally.  
The loss must come back in full –  
But how is the lesson learned by all involved?  
What makes them able to look at each other?  
The fifth part!*

*Measure the full amount – make up the full value.  
Let all see and know its worth.  
The accounting is important to the solution.  
Put it down in writing – not guess-work;  
20% has to be added to the sum -  
The whole, plus the fifth part.*

*Twenty years of sinning? Four years of serving.  
The fifth part is 20% of the same thing – compensation.  
Thirty years of holding back what belongs to God?  
10% of \$500.00 per week = \$50.00 to give to God.  
You forgot? 30 years: \$72,000 + 18,000 = \$90,000.  
The fifth part added thereto.*

*We don't strike back and claim unfairness.  
Vengeance is not the answer God allows.  
Apologies are nice – and right – and expected.  
Restitution of that which was lost is fully made.  
But I must go farther – in my life or whatever –  
I must add the fifth part.*

*"O God of righteousness and fairness: I have tried to keep my accounts up to date so that what is gained is not lost to the dirt and chaff of this world. Give me spiritual eyes to see where true value lies. Enable this world-prone mind, to rise above what the natural man sees as important, and look at everything through eyes anointed with eye-salve from above. Keep me back from keeping back – that which belongs to Thee and others is not mine. Neither is the fifth part. Amen."*

## **Numbers 6**

### **ORDER FOR SEPARATED PEOPLE**

When a person of the nation of Israel wanted to experience a higher degree of communion with God, they had the choice of taking voluntarily upon themselves the vow of the Nazarite. The word "Nazarite" means to separate or be separate. It may have been that a person was going to take a new role in leadership or some other service for God that prompted one to take this vow. This desire was not to be taken lightly by anyone because the vow is between the individual and God. When one takes a vow, it is important that the terms of the vow be kept. "It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay." A person taking the vow of a Nazarite was deliberately setting himself apart from others in a literal way in order to fulfill the terms of his vow.

There would be a number of reasons why a person would want to take this vow. There is the commitment to holiness on the part of an individual that demands separation from all that is going on around us. Character development would be a result of separating from peer pressure. There would be no doubt some specific goals rather than just a general personal interest. Vows were made to God as a promise in response a favor God had showed him. Involved in making vows of separation is worship, celebration for some particular reason, thanksgiving for benefits and dedication for a purpose. Whatever were the reasons, the vow was voluntary but when made, they were binding.

In the Nazarite himself there would be external evidence that could easily be seen by those around. He would drink no wine nor eat anything that came from a grapevine. That would testify to the fact his joy was not mere human joy but that he was finding his joy in God. He could not cut his hair or shave during the time the vows were upon him. This was a sign of personal humiliation to a man living at that time. During the duration of the vow he would not be allowed to touch a dead body either by choice or by accident. If that

happened for any reason, the vow was canceled and he had to start over again. Defilement is not always a deliberate act on the part of an individual, but we are defiled at times by what goes on around us.

I have to ask myself, "What do I really want from my Christian life? Am I willing to sanctify myself in order to serve God?" The standard of morality and conduct in a Christian's life is high. It is a divine standard. The Lord Jesus Christ sanctified Himself. He made Himself of no reputation. He was wholly consecrated to "do always the Father's will." I need to ask myself also, "Do I demand my rights or am I willing to surrender them? What really is the purpose of my life?" When I know who I am before God, and desire to please Him, I won't be involved in trying to split hairs to see what is allowed and what is not allowed. When one is consecrated to God this does not affect our eternal security, but it does affect our communion with God. Self has to be judged and the demands of self have to be forsaken in order to have the fellowship and joy of communion. The Lord Jesus said He would not drink of the fruit of the vine until He comes in His glory and sits on David's throne over Israel. His days of separation from Israel will then be over.

At the conclusion of the days of the Nazarite vow, there was a specific procedure to follow. The doves or pigeons were brought to the priest. Holiness was in view even as the burnt offering, the value of Christ to God, was offered. Then the sin offering was made, the value of Christ to us. The trespass offering was for the value of Christ for the sins we have committed. The meal offering and drink offering indicates the fellowship we have with God. The Nazarite brought all of these and also whatever else he could afford to give to the Lord. It was an expensive act on his part on his part but his appreciation shown to God was worth whatever cost it involved. It is never right to try to save what we have when we are offering to God. A frugal offering is more of an insult than a blessing. A backslider can be restored to fellowship with God, but time spent out of fellowship with Him is wasted time that can never be recovered.

What a wonderful blessing God gave Moses to bless the children of Israel with!! Like a benediction, but much more, were the words he said. These words were a blessing to live by daily. In the Hebrew language the first lines composed three words. The second line is made up of five Hebrew words and the third line of seven Hebrew words, seven being the number of completion as a way to bring peace.

The first line of the blessing is that God would favor and protect His people with His own oversight and personal guardianship. The second line of the blessing was that God would be pleased with His people and His grace, mercy and compassion to be real to them in each day of their life. Then the next part of this blessing was that God would give His approval to His people in a way that would give them His peace. God's keeping power was in this blessing. His personal presence with His people is in this benediction. Eye contact with them would be seen when we look at Him by faith and the peace He has, He would give to His own people.

The Lord Jesus Christ did this Himself shortly before He died, and we are able today to live in the good of these wonderful blessings given so long ago to His earthly people. The children of Israel will appreciate this even more in the day of His appearing.

**Numbers 6:24-26.** *"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."*

#### **THE BLESSING.**

*Hope conveyed – divine favor asked for the benefit of another – a blessing: Please Lord!*

*"Bless and keep" them – favor and protect them – there are so many pitfalls.*

*They need a hedge around them and the gaps all filled in so the enemy cannot enter.*

*Make the joy of Thy blessing a reality that they cannot miss or ignore.*

*"Make Thy face to shine" upon them – look upon them with pleasure.*

*Give the delight of heavenly light – surpassing any light of earth or men.*

*Let the darkness flee from them because of the light of Thy countenance.*

*Give them a glimpse of the light of Thy glory and grace – be pleased to do this.*

*"Be gracious unto them" – they may not understand the peril they are in.*

*Let the evidence of Thy grace turn them back; away from all other attractions.*

*Stop them from ignoring the obvious – the mercy directed toward them for a lifetime.*

*Even though they seem oblivious – be merciful and compassionate toward them.*

*“Lift up Thy countenance upon them” lest they forget it is in Thee they live and move.  
Let them be reminded of the evidence of a gracious God at every turn.  
Challenge them to turn towards Thee as Thou dost turn toward them.  
Have them to want more than anything – Thy divine approval.*

*“Give them peace” – real peace; not peace like the world gives or wants, but the real thing.  
Peace like a river flowing from Thy throne has to be experienced, not explained.  
Let the “peace of God” fill their hearts and minds – and let it show to others.  
This blessing I ask for others – I have enjoyed myself. Thanks, from a grateful heart.*

*May this blessing I ask for others, be a benefit to them, and others through them.  
May this blessing demonstrate to the world through them, and me, Thy love.  
May this blessing encourage any who come under the influence of this divine balm.  
May the enjoyment of this blessing provide a model of caring that brings glory to Thee and Thy great name.*

***“O gracious Father, I ask this ancient blessing to be as updated as today, upon those we seek to reach on this Lord’s Day and on this first day of a new Gospel series. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”***

## **Numbers 7**

### **ORDER IN GIVING GIFTS**

The events written about in this chapter took place before the census of the nation was taken. The Tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year after Israel left Egypt. That was when Moses sanctified and dedicated the Tabernacle and the glory of God settled into the Holiest where God would live among His people. This was followed by the consecration of the priests. Then for twelve days after that the giving of the gifts mentioned in this chapter took place. Following this, the census was taken on the first day of the second month, and on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the cloud lifted and they took their journey away from Sinai on the way to Moab.

God has a timetable of events for the lives of His people and the assemblies of God's people who are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our responsibility is to be aware of what God's will is through doctrines and principles taught in His Word, and to submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all of our activities. We should never that the words of God lightly because of who He is and the fact that we are very limited in our understanding of divine things. His Word and His Spirit must be our guides in any service we do for Him. What is done for God is not forgotten no matter how small or large it may be.

Even though the Israeli tribes were different in size, there was equality in what they gave to the Lord. Each of the twelve tribes brought the same things in the same amount. The work of the building of the Tabernacle had been done willingly without any coercion and the same was true when each tribe brought their gifts for the use of the Tabernacle. Of interest is the fact that the gifts were presented in the order of the tribe's position around the Tabernacle, and in the order they followed when traveling. The gifts they brought were costly, but each was on equal footing despite the differences in size and position in the camp. Each came in the same way and each had a special designated day to present what they had to give. None were overshadowed by any other.

The giving of gifts and free-will offerings to the Lord begins in the heart and mind of the giver. Even though every gift brought to God in Israel was the same, God made note of and repeated every single thing every time. Every act of service we might do; every gift we give to God is important to Him. Even though it may be the same as that which is given by others, God does not generalize that which has been done. Every leader's name was mentioned. What he brought to give on behalf of his tribe was not overlooked. God is impartial and accurate in His accounting of that which is done for Him. The substance was noted as to what it was and how much. When we give to God, the way we give it is also known by the Lord who "loves a cheerful giver." Giving grudgingly and/or comparing what we give with what another gives, takes away its value. A "hilarious giver" enthusiastically gives to God what he or she can, and knows that God knows the heart and motive behind the gift.

As all those gifts accumulated for the work of the Tabernacle, it was made plain what their uses would be. The wagons would be for the use of the Gershonites and Merarites to carry the heavy parts of the Tabernacle as was suitable. The plates, bowls and other utensils were designated for use in appropriate places. The animals were given for the sacrifices to be made. The dedication took place as God had intended. God and His people were in happy fellowship together. What a wonderful time that must have

been. It was then Moses went into the Tabernacle as the responsible leader of the people and God spoke to him from the mercy seat.

The Voice of God that spoke then linked what had happened, with what God intended to happen next. The Voice was heard audibly a number of times as recorded in the scriptures. Every word that God says, whether audible or written, is equal in importance. It reminds us that God knows everything we do and the motive behind it. He has His reasons for making some things clearly known, and withholding our knowledge of other things. He is the Sovereign God and He knows what is best for us. He knows the end from the beginning and has the right to expect us to trust Him and obey His word. What we can and should do are always plain and easy to understand by those who are willing to act on His guidance. Even the giving of unsolicited gifts is not to be done in a careless manner or haphazard way. He deserves our best every time and in every way.

**Numbers 7:89.** *“And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of One Speaking unto him from off the Mercy Seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and He spake unto him.”*

### **THE VOICE.**

*All is in order; the work is all done.  
The pattern was followed; the last day has come.  
The house of God sits in its glorious splendor.  
From all parts of the camp, each tribe brings its tender.  
But something is missing.*

*The tabernacle in the center, is in just the right place.  
The fence is erected giving just the right space.  
The people are watching; this belongs to the nation.  
The place where they meet is the tabernacle of the congregation.  
But something is missing.*

*Then each day there came the cart with its load;  
Each tribe in its order to bring fine gifts to God.  
Silver plates the right size full of flour so fine;  
Sprinkling bowls too, full of flour, all there in a line.  
But something is missing.*

*Golden dishes filled with sweet incense are unloaded and set.  
Twenty-four bulls; sixty rams, goats and lambs – no more to get;  
The heads are all raised and each person is looking;  
“What is wrong, what comes next, why are we waiting?”  
Something is missing.*

*Moses goes in, and then his tingling ears hear,  
The voice of God speaking from the mercy seat there.  
God has taken His place among His people that day.  
And in a similar fashion, God still meets us this way.  
God’s voice is heard.*

*The form’s not enough, though it looks good to the eye.  
The trimmings and trappings don’t mean God is nigh.  
We need the assurance God is here in our midst.  
When He speaks through His Word, then He is our trust.  
God speaks.*

*When God speaks to us, the wise all will listen.  
What He tells us to do, we will haste to His bidding  
To find and get guidance for all He calls us to do.  
His Voice in His Word, is not missing to you.  
With reverence and awe, we know nothing is missing.*

*"O Righteous God who is plenteous in mercy and grace: I come again today to ask of Thee, 'Please speak to us this night!' Speak through the power of Thy Word; speak through the power of the Gospel. Speak through the clay lips of men. Let no person come out of the meeting tonight without hearing the Voice of God. May some of them heed the Voice of God. I pray in the name and for the glory and honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 8**

### **ORDER IN SPIRITUAL SERVICE**

Those who had brought their gifts from each of the twelve tribes may have understood the significance of what they did as far as man is concerned. But before spiritual service before the Lord could commence for the Levites who would serve God at the Tabernacle, the lights on the lampstand had to be lit in the Holy Place by Aaron the priest. All of those individual lamps were made from one solid piece of gold, and they had to give light in a special way so light would show on the table of showbread (testimony) and the golden altar (worship). Before the consecration of the Levites could take place, the light had to be shining and everything arranged as God intended, so the Levites who would come to serve there would know how things were to be done. They would not be able to change things to suit themselves.

Any service for God we are called to do for Him must be done according to the light we have in the Word of God. The lampstand is a type of Christ and His light is shed abroad through His people. We do not have the right to do God's work in a way that suits us personally. The light He gives governs the service we do. It affects our testimony (the table) and our worship (the golden altar). The true worth of what we are and what we do is seen in the light of the sanctuary of God's holiness.

The order in the spiritual service to which the Levites were to be consecrated that day was: first, there was the symbolic purifying water sprinkled on them as a testimony to the fact they were separated unto the service of the Lord. Then they shaved themselves all over testifying that they were cut off from their past habits and past life-style. From then on everything they did was to represent their Lord and what was important to Him. Their clothes had to be washed and they had to be clean before they were consecrated to God's service. Unlike the priests who had new clothes, the Levites retained their personal clothes and personal identity, and were used in that capacity.

Our service for God doesn't call for us to change our personality or natural abilities and talents, but we are to use them now for higher service. All that we are and have belongs to the Lord so He can use us in a way that fulfills His purposes. In order for there to be value to a work we are involved in, we must be clean ourselves in life and spirit, and then do that to which we are called in the light of Christ. The Levites camped around the Tabernacle to keep away those who would come in an improper way to meet with God. If one tried to enter into the courtyard or Tabernacle without entering by the door, a plague would fall on God's people. We do have to exercise care and vigilance over the things of God, because "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." It is the responsibility of those who are about God's work to give proper direction to those who have a sincere desire to come God, and also to warn those who want things their own way, of the consequences of such action.

The offerings, both the burnt offering and sin offering, were made on behalf of the Levites, after which the Levites were brought out to stand in front of the Tabernacle and all the congregation of Israel. All of the tribes would come and identify themselves with the Levites who were taking the place of their firstborn in the service of God. Probably there was a representative of each tribe who would lay his hand on the Levites. That shaved tribe of men in clean clothes were set apart by God and the tribes to serve God on behalf of the whole congregation. It is a very important work to fulfill when we are called to represent and serve men before God. The outward form of cleanliness and the shaved body of separation should show the inward heart and mind of the true servant. What I do in God's name should be service for Him from my heart. The eating of the portion of the wave-offering typified the Levites were like the wave-offering in their participation with God in His divine purposes. The purification and the act of dedication led to a lifetime of consecration by the Levites.

Between the gifts the leaders of the tribes gave and the consecrated service of the Levites, was the lighting of the lampstand. What we give and how we serve in our service has to be done in the light of Christ. He comes between what we give and what we do. He is the One who makes labor and gifts acceptable to God. That keeps us from being careless about God's things. The Levites were "wholly give" to God. They were doubly given. That means they were God's because they were children of Israel, and now they were God's in sanctified service. They were consecrated to Him. All other interests were subservient to that fact. It is an important consideration on our part that not only are we saved by God's grace, but we are saved to serve.

This should be the highest consideration when we make decisions. The choice may not seem important at the moment, but the effects are eternal.

When a Levite male reached age twenty-five, he began what appears to be an apprenticeship. For five years he would learn how to do everything that pertained to the Tabernacle and the service of the Tabernacle so there would be no mistakes when he assumed responsibility at age thirty. He would learn how to make incense properly, how to check animals over for perfection, how to raise and lower the Tabernacle properly and how to fulfill his duties without there being any time gaps or mistakes. Some of the articles to be carried or duties to carry out would need to be done by a man who is in the strength of his life. For twenty years he "bore the yoke." If one was sharing a load with others and dropped his corner of the load because of weakness, it would affect all of the others and perhaps bring defilement on those things that were holy. Some things are best to be done when we are young.

But when a Levite reached age fifty and retired from burden bearing, he was not finished his work. His work was changed to suit his age. He was given lighter duties to perform in the Tabernacle. Everything about spiritual service needs to be orderly whether it is open and obvious to the public, or inside and hidden from the eyes and scrutiny of men. By the time a man is fifty years of age he should not have to be trying to impress people with the amount of effort he puts into the things of God. Older men are in a position to give advice and counsel based on experience. There is a charge to fulfill, a work to do in the years of our strength, and there is a charge to fulfill in our older years. The vows of God are on us.

**Numbers 8:19a.** *“And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel:”*

#### **A GIFT.**

*The firstborn was for God, whether man or beast.*

*Sanctified, set apart for holy things.*

*It started in Egypt – God took them to Himself.*

*The firstborn needed a substitute God accepted – or else*

*It would die – except when God looked on the blood.*

*The Substitute was given because it belonged to God.*

*But a change had come by God's own plan;*

*When it came to the firstborn – He would substitute a man.*

*Not now from each tribe would the firstborn serve,*

*But from the whole of the nation one tribe God would choose.*

*And Levi's tribe was taken from among all of the nation,*

*To be God's gift to the whole congregation.*

*Not just one, but all were called to be separate.*

*The whole tribe was chosen to be God's servants.*

*This was not humiliation, but the highest possible honor.*

*They were chosen to serve the congregation for ever.*

*The rest of the nation was free to do their own thing,*

*The Levites were for God, substituted for them.*

*For twenty-five years, the men were called upon to bear;*

*The furniture of the tabernacle, until their fiftieth year.*

*They bare the burden of holy things, God wanted strong men.*

*They would not drop or be careless in the work they were given.*

*At twenty-five they had grown wiser and had physical strength.*

*By fifty the work had physically taxed them at length.*

*These people did not stop working for God at that time.*

*Their duties were different, and they could counsel the men.*

*Those that came after would profit from their experience.*

*Those that went before, would learn again the difference*

*Of serving with the body or serving with the mind.*

*Each of us must serve, but service is not all one kind.*

*I'll never see twenty-five or even fifty again;  
But though I'm older now there's a work I've been given.  
To the people of God and of the next generation,  
I am responsible to pass on the things that have shaped  
My life and my work, so that others can see,  
How they can serve God and true servants will be.*

*"O God of all grace: I am humbled here in Your presence this morning by the fact that You have allowed me to continue in service for the people of God and Your Kingdom, these many years. I have been an unprofitable servant and yet here I am again, preaching the Gospel with a young man who is very able in the things of God. That he is one who was saved in meetings we had in the past is a great joy. To see him serving You so capably is delightful to me. I don't know if I have anything more to give him, but if so, make it clear to me and acceptable to him. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 9**

### **ORDER ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

There is not a chronological order in these first chapters of Numbers. There is more of a moral order as we learn the value of orderly service in the things of God. In chapter nine there are two areas of teaching regarding order. The first is order in the keeping of the Passover and then order in making changes as in moving forward. Neither of these are daily events in which we need to know God's will, but are important events we can anticipate will happen according to God's already revealed will. These are special occasions that affect our whole life and we dare not approach them with indifference or thinking we can adapt them to meet our preference. The Passover was a once-a-year event that was associated with a week long festival of the nation. It could be counted on to happen every year on the same day of the year. The command to move meant everyone had to be ready to act on a moment's notice without any advance warning.

The Passover was kept in Egypt the first time as the blood of the lamb placed on the door posts and lintel of Israeli homes testified to the redemption of God's providing as the foundation of everything they had. The blood of the lamb applied was the basis of the redemption of Israel and the blood of Christ is the basis of our redemption. The Passover kept in the wilderness one year later testified to the fact that deliverance from the difficulties and dangers of wilderness living is on the basis of redemption. When the children of Israel reached the promised land, victory there was by virtue of redemption. In each of these places whenever the Passover was kept, the people were reminded of who they were and how they had been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. The reason for keeping the Passover yearly was so the nation would remember the redemption God provided for them. The time they were to keep it was ordered by God as well. It was to be held on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening by regulation from God. Those who were unable to keep it on that day due to defilement or distance got advice from Moses regarding the claims of God, and Aaron regarding the grace of God. In reply to Moses inquiry, God allowed those legitimate absentees to keep the Passover by themselves one month later.

The feast itself consisted of roast lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs - nothing else. This was the reminder of deliverance from Egypt. Even for those who faced the unexpected events of desert living, or defilement by contact with a dead body, or the distance of travel: they had to partake of the same things one month later after the days of their purification and preparation had taken place. The standard can never be lowered when it comes to the things of God. There are those who want to change what God has made plain to us in His Word, and arrange things to suit themselves for the sake of convenience or personal preference. That is the difference between what is counterfeit and what is real. God never fails in His promises, and never changes His precepts. Any who stayed away from the Passover feast done in God's way, was cut off from His people. Unjudged sin has serious consequences, and willful neglect of what is the command of God or is important to God, is evidence of one who is away from God.

For the Christian today, the Lord's Supper is the time we remember that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast." To negate or relegate the Lord's Supper to something of little importance leads one to be cut off from fellowship with the Lord's people either by their own choosing or imposed upon them. At the Lord's Supper we remember Him and show His death until He comes. To treat that memorial of our redemption and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, as something of little importance is to devalue what God says is important. The feast of the Lord's Supper was initiated in the Gospel accounts, celebrated in the book of Acts and expounded for us in 1st Corinthians 11. The remembrance of Christ and the public proclamation of His death begins inwardly and is spiritual. Each participant prepares by reading

the scriptures and prayer as the Holy Spirit guides us. There is also the outward and literal expression of our redemption when we come together as a company of redeemed people on "first day of the week to break bread."

Love in the heart of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb is a natural response to the death of Christ and the love of Christ to us. Any who absent themselves from the Lord's Supper for trivial reasons probably have never understood, or at least appreciated, the value God places on the sacrifice Christ made when He suffered for us on the cross. "We are redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."

Whenever God in His sovereign will, guides us to make changes in our lives, it is an important event that should never be undertaken in a haphazard manner. Israel remained in their places and didn't move here or there at some whim of their own choosing. There was visible evidence of God's presence in their midst with the sheltering cloud by day and the light of the fire by night. There was visible evidence of God's guidance as to the starts and stops when the cloud rose up and moved, or came to a stop in a certain place. We need the guidance of God now right where we are, as well as in guiding us as to what is next. Waiting periods in life are not to be empty spaces. We need divine guidance in the unknown situations of everyday life as well as the unknown future. There was time for purification when it was needed and we should never overlook that need in our lives. On the other hand, laziness, negligence and disobedience had serious consequences that affected God's people for the rest of their life.

The brightness of the fire by night revealed God's sovereignty to the people of Israel. He was in control and He was guiding them. The cloud shadowing the Tabernacle concealed God's majesty so no one could approach Him without being aware they were coming to a holy place. We are dependent on the Lord to guide us whether in the place we live or where He leads us to make a move. It is important we submit to His guidance when we buy or sell; whether to engage to marry or not; how much we should give and how much we should save; whether to relocate or stay put. He knows what is right for us and we know He loves us. Therefore, we can trust Him to guide us. Our liberty in life and service depends on us looking up to Him for guidance. He will lead and guide us in every event. When there is no change that comes as an answer to prayer, wait and continue to live by faith.

When the time came for God's people to move, there was no question. The cloud rose and moved, and they obeyed. At the beginning of Israel's dealings with God there was no hesitation. They acted as one in faith and willingly obeyed the directions they had been given. The action they took was to do what God had said without questioning the outcome. We too can rely on God's divine guidance, as the Holy Spirit clarifies each situation we are found in by giving us "the peace of God" to guide us and direct our movements. When there is uncertainty and questioning, we need to be willing to wait and fill the waiting times with useful service where we are. We are to keep "the charge of the Lord" and can rest there until such times as change is unmistakably clear.

**Numbers 9:21-22.** *"And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by night or by day that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed."*

#### **CIRCUMSTANCES.**

*What to do when questions arise – how shall we act, what is the right?*

*Defiled by death of another – offer or not?*

*In a distant journey – shall we keep the Passover or not?*

*Circumstances can guide us – God says, "Keep the Passover."*

*What happens if I can but don't bother – because I am busy?*

*Are you clean, not tainted by externals?*

*Are you at home – near enough to be there?*

*Keep the Passover, or be cut off.*

*Life is busy - we are used to this place.*

*The garden we planted is growing well.*

*The cattle are getting fat and the sheep are ready to shear.*

*The cloud rises and you must move – in spite of circumstances.*

*We've traveled far – it is time to rest – the cloud stops and lowers.  
Ahh, finally some respite from the dust of animals and feet.  
Two days later – the cloud rises – “Get the cows and sheep,  
Move out. The cloud is moving forward.”*

*Another few miles toward home and we stop again;  
God knows the circumstances demand time to halt.  
Days and months of inactivity, except the daily routine.  
For whatever reason, circumstances dictate the stopping time.*

*The night is dark, and suddenly the light over the tabernacle rises.  
“Get the children up. Gather the stock, Drop the tent.  
Circumstances demand we move out now. Don't question God.”  
He knows what is best and uses circumstances.*

*We don't have to understand everything that God allows.  
We accept the fact that He knows what is right and what is best.  
He can, and does use circumstances – good or bad.  
His will is that when we finally get home, we are ready*

*Each step of the way is important to Him – but may seem so hard to me.  
The circumstances God allows may be questioned at length.  
But when the journey is over, and the goal has been reached;  
Each step on the road will seem nothing, when we get to the end of the way.*

*“Father in heaven: there are questions that arise from time to time that I cannot answer because I don't know the answer. When it comes to the offering of praise and worship, I am clear – it is my privilege and duty to worship God in spirit and in truth. I am ready, I think, to make any moves that are obviously God's will. Help me to keep my eye on the cloud of Thy leading. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”*

## **Numbers 10**

### **ORDER IN COMMUNICATION**

Uncertain sounds of information lead to misunderstanding and chaos among the Lord's people. God had a designated way to communicate to His people in the camp of Israel so there would be clarity and no confusion. He had two trumpets of silver made that would give a clear, sharp sound rather than the muted sounds that came from the ram's horns. Two trumpets sounding across the camp would call everyone together. One trumpet sound would call the leaders together at the Tabernacle. An alarm sound would mean those on the east would go forward and the second alarm would be the signal for those on the south to fall in line for the march - and so on. A clear trumpet sound was essential for giving directions either in warnings, instructions or for festive reasons.

The written word of God for us is for the same reasons the trumpets were used by Aaron's family for the children of Israel. The testimony of God is unmistakable when the Holy Spirit of God uses those "clear sounds of guidance" for us today through the truths taught in the scriptures. Those who herald out the Gospel and those who teach the Word of God to His people must be sure that what they say comes from God, not from their personal ideas or opinions. When the word of God is followed, the work of God is coordinated in such a way as to have things done orderly.

For the tribes of Israel to move ahead on their own initiative without the trumpet sound was wrong and it would only generate confusion. On the other hand, if the trumpet sounded and some refused to move, that also would be wrong and hinder the movement of all of God's people. To act in haste because we are tired of waiting for divine guidance, affects far more people than myself. And to procrastinate because of fear or a comfortable situation, or for any other reason for that matter, hinders the progress of many others.

We are to be submissive to divine testimony in all of our movements. There are times of waiting that may frustrate our ambitions, but are for our good. Paul, the apostle, was many years in preparation before he was moved out to fulfill the work to which he had been called. We need to wait for God's signal to move ahead. That will come when the Spirit and the Word of God give us positive assurance as to the action we must take. Those actions are not decided by us as to what we want or think, but of simply obeying God.

Many today resist divine authority and act without waiting on God's communication and seek to do the work of God in the energy of the flesh. Others do not act when they should go ahead because they are afraid of making a mistake. We are to walk with God and live for Him by faith. When we do this, we can expect unmistakable guidance even though we don't know the outcome of a matter or where it will lead us.

Christians often wonder what to do because they see a lot of activity going on around us that seems to be successful and a lot of people are involved in what seems like a joyful work. The trumpets did sound to call Israel to enjoy the festivals of the Lord and they came together with anticipation of a good time together. Those same silver trumpets sounded when there was an attack against God's people. They also sounded at unexpected times when God wanted them to leave what they were doing and move ahead to a different place to do a different work. When one is willing to do God's will, there will be no question as to waiting, nor will there be when it is time to make a change.

The time for Israel to move forward came on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year. There was no guessing as to what to do. Instructions had been clearly given previously. Now they had to act on what they had been taught. When the cloud lifted off the Tabernacle, all the tents in the camp were dropped and everything was packed up for the move. Of special interest this first time was the conversation Moses had with his brother-in-law, Hobab. For some reason Moses wanted Hobab's guidance in the wilderness. True Hobab lived there and would have known each valley where there was pasture for the animals. But Israel was being guided by God. It is not stated whether Moses doubted God's guidance or whether he was just showing family interest toward Hobab. In this march from Sinai the ark was carried out in front of the whole nation. The place where it would normally have been was in the middle of the moving tribes each in their own order and place. In grace, on this occasion God moved in front as the ark led the way. It is possible for us to know what is right and still look to men for further assurance beyond what God has already told us.

Order in the forward movement of the nation of Israel followed the set pattern as God had intended. Judah, Issachar and Zebulun went first at the sound of the trumpet. Following them came the families of Gershon and Merari carrying the Tabernacle that had been dismantled. When the cloud stopped, those families would quickly erect the Tabernacle so that after Reuben, Simeon and Gad swung off to the south, the Kohathites could immediately place the furniture of the service of God in place in the Tabernacle. Then the three following tribes turned to the north and the other three stopped on the west side of the Tabernacle in an orderly fashion. God's things done in God's way is a wonder to behold.

On this first march it was a wonderful act of God's grace that He went before them. The ark of the covenant was used on that occasion to search out a resting place of the nation. It wasn't Hobab who was used to the wilderness who found the right place for God's people. It was God Himself. God's ways and thoughts are not ours. We need to wait for the guidance of God's communication to us lest we act in haste and make a serious mistake by relying on the flesh or on the guidance of men only. Each movement God intends from us needs to have divine guidance from "the silver trumpets" of His Word guided by the wisdom and teaching of the Holy Spirit. "Cursed is man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm..."

What God may allow in His grace on one occasion because of our immaturity or lack of experience, may not be allowed on another occasion. The plans and purposes of God are given to us in His Word. It is not our prerogative to adapt them to what we feel is expedient. That first move of the camp of Israel after being in one place for eleven months would have stood out as a very special event, because now they had the Tabernacle in their midst. The things that happen at the beginning of a work leaves lasting impressions that stay with God's people for generations. We must commit ourselves to acting on the order of "the silver trumpets" of God's Word lest we step out of the path of God's will that leads to a "resting place" for God's people.

**Numbers 10:2.** *"Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps."*

#### **TWO SILVER TRUMPETS.**

*The two sons of Aaron with one trumpet per man,  
Had a very important task to perform in God's plan.  
Each trumpet would have a different sound than the other,  
So that when one or both would sound, God's people would gather.*

*Both blown together would call the nation to God.*

*One blown by itself would call the leaders to step forward.  
When both were blown loudly and long, they would know;  
That was an alarm, and it is time for all to rise up and go.*

*Those on the east would rise up at first blast;  
Then the south and the north, and the west would come last.  
The point of it all was coordination was required.  
Each message that sounded, was by God thus inspired.*

*In wartime or in peace, in solemn days or glad;  
When the silver trumpets sounded, they were reminded of God.  
He was watching over His own, they were under His protection;  
And when they heard the trumpets sounding, they sprang into action.*

*The trumpets we hear in our ears in these days,  
Is the sound of God's people when in praying or praise.  
In view of the message of the Gospel we preach,  
The silver trumpets of God's Gospel are that others we'll reach.*

*When the people are gathered to listen to truth,  
The silver strains of redemption come out from the mouth  
Of him who God uses at this moment to tell,  
To the whole congregation, how to be delivered from hell.*

*There is more to the message the Gospel trumpets do sound;  
God is calling all men everywhere to be found;  
To come unto Him who delivers from sin,  
And find, through the sound of the trumpets, the way to go in.*

*To go into heaven, where God wants them to be;  
To gather to Jesus, and their Savior to see.  
To ready themselves for their march through this life;  
To know how to defend when the enemy makes strife.*

*God has not left us without guidance for life.  
The silver trumpets of the Gospel and the Spirit of light,  
Makes it clear to the pilgrim going to the promised land;  
God has not left us to journey without His clear commands.*

*So, keep your ears open to the silvery sounds,  
Of the trumpets of truth, when we gather around  
The Person of Jesus, our Savior and Lord.  
The last trump will sound; that will be our reward.*

*For then we will see Jesus coming in the clouds of the air,  
And the Church will all gather to meet Him up there.  
His shout will be heard, and the millions will gather.  
Silver trumpets have sounded - with Him, we see Father.*

***"I am not one of Aaron's sons, Father, or one of the seven who blew for Joshua, or the 120 who blew for Solomon. But I am thankful to be one of the redeemed ones in this place to blow the Gospel trumpet, so I am asking for the fullness of the Spirit to be evident in the work in this place. I am asking that the words we speak will bring truth and give life. I am asking that we will be the Lord's messengers in the Lord's message. I am asking that the souls of those we are speaking to will respond in faith to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their own Savior and Lord. Amen."***

**Numbers 10: 21.** *"And the Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary: and the others did set up the tabernacle against they came."*

## **ORDER.**

When the time came for the people of God to move forward, there was a God-given order that they had to follow. There were 40 different stopping places they camped during the 40 years they were traveling to the land of Promise. At least 29 of their moves were made after the Tabernacle was built. When the time came to move, the cloud would rise up before them so that everyone could see. How their hearts must've raced to see the cloud of the presence of the Lord moving again. Moses, the priest and the Levites who lived in front of the Tabernacle gate, would hasten to their assigned tasks. The priests would quickly move to cover the "Holy things" before the Levites would come to carry them. The Gershonites would line up to load up the coverings, the hangings of the court and all the cords. Then the Merarites would take the Tabernacle itself and all its woodwork; silver sockets, the bars and all that kept the Tabernacle together. Right behind them would come the Kohathites to bear the "Holy things" that by this time were covered by the priests. All of those things were hidden under the outer layer of badger skins except for the Ark of the covenant with its solid blue outer covering. The gathering center of God's people demands holy people doing holy things in a holy way. As long as they did the work God's way, all would be well. If they did it some other way they would die. How impacting and impressive it must've been to see that Tabernacle seeming to melt down into obscure bundles.

Then out would swing the tribes in their order of march beginning with those on the east: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun each in order with Judah leading. Hundreds of thousands of people moving together as one moving mass, three tribes moved out followed by the Gershonites and Merarites bearing the Tabernacle and all its pieces in order in covered carts. Following them moving into line from the south side of the camp would come Reuben, then Simeon and then Gad. As they passed by the waiting Kohathites with the "Holy things" on their shoulders, there would be the curious stares as each would wonder at the awesome authority under that blue covering. Then out would step the Kohathites carrying some things by gold covered staves in their hands and the lampstand covered but being carried by an overhead beam. Following close behind and coming straight ahead from the west would come Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin walking right where the Tabernacle had stood. Following them from the north would come Dan, Asher and Naphtali as the six tribes formed the rear guard.

Six tribes ahead of the Ark and six tribes behind; the pillar cloud out front; the blue covered Ark in the middle: O how awesome and glorious is the movement of the God of glory as He moves in front of the pilgrim band and His dwelling place is in the midst of His people.

Because of the orderliness of God's people, when the cloud stopped; Judah, Issachar and Zebulun would move straight ahead to camp in their previously assigned location. As if by a miracle before the eyes of a distant beholder, the Tabernacle would seem to rise from nowhere, even as Reuben, Simeon and Gad swung to the south to set up their tents in orderly street fashion. Then coming straight ahead from behind them but in the middle of the column of march, would come the "Holy things" passing by the already hanging courtyard and through the gate, each piece of furniture stopping in its assigned place and the priests coming quickly up to uncover each piece as the Lord commanded. Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin would stop before they got to the Tabernacle and Dan, Asher and Naphtali would turn north to their designated location. In a very short time, a tent city of 2 or 3 million people would've settled in and the Cloud of the Lord's Presence would settle down over the Tabernacle – another march nearer home.

How important it is that the orderliness of God's people be maintained and understood. It is a reflection of God Himself even in His creation – how much more in His people.

*"O God of order, authority and dignity. Impress me with how important it is that all we do in our work, reflect the character, order, design and discipline that Thou dost desire to see in Thy people. Keep us from doing things our own way or thinking our own design would be better. We know we can only see things from down here, but perhaps there would be some way we could from time to time see things from Thy perspective. Then we might be more careful lest we bring disaster on the People of God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."*

## **Numbers 10:33**

### **A RESTING PLACE**

In my mind's eye I can see the order of God's people even as they are on the move across the wilderness to the place God promised them. That order provides for their safety and has been made for living in peace. Any contingency that arose had already been addressed as far as what they would do or could do for the benefit of God's people and the furtherance of their objective of reaching the promised land. We do not have to walk in spiritual blindness to discern what to do in God's service. The life of faith has already made plain

to us what God's intention is and how we can be at rest in the pressures and tensions of life that come on us or are around seeking to claim our interest and attention.

The people of God can rest where they are, knowing that God has not given indication to move ahead until the cloud rises to reveal to us God's desire for us to move forward and do something different. Israelites saw a literal cloud rise and move before them because they didn't have the written word of God like can hold in our hand. For the issues of life before us and the events that only God knows, we have biblical principles and doctrines to guide us as the Holy Spirit applies them to the situations in which we find ourselves.

Something unusual took place that was outside the pattern God had previously given. Instead of the ark moving in the middle of the moving tribes, on this occasion the ark went before them. What was the reason for the ark being out in front to search out a resting place for them? Moses' brother-in-law must have been with them for some time while the Tabernacle was being built. Now it was time to move on and Hobab decided to go no further. For some unknown reason Moses seemed to think he needed the wilderness skills of Hobab to guide them instead of faith in God alone. God, in grace, moved out in front with the ark as a visible testimony of God's guidance. There was no scolding accusation by God - only a visible reminder of who is in control and who knows the way best. We often need to be reminded that God is sufficient for all things. His grace is sufficient. His strength is made very evident in our limitations. When we are willing to admit to our weakness, we are giving affirmation to our awareness of God's strength. It is not God's intention for us to be weak and ineffective or passively wait for "whatever will be will be." When obstacles come, we need to realize we can depend on God in those times to either remove the obstacles or guide us through or around them.

The ways God reveals Himself surpasses anything man can do. The silver trumpets had their purpose. The cloud had its purpose and the ark had its purpose as well. An awareness of God in every aspect of life gives the strength that is needed and He will guide us to the resting place. Absolute guidance by God and dependence on Him personally are lessons to be learned in our walk with Him. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." To rely on the flesh of ourselves or any other person is an act of doubt in God's sufficiency and wisdom. In grace, God on that occasion took them three days journey to a place in the wilderness where they were removed from the influence of man's fleshly wisdom. Hobab may have been a good man, but whenever the flesh is relied upon, it is an act of God's grace to remove us from that influence.

"There is a rest for the people of God." There is a place in the wilderness where we are sheltered and protected, kept and fed by God. The wilderness can provide nothing for us. It is a blessing when God chooses to shut us up to trust Him alone. The cloud and the fire were there for their blessing. God had provided for them "a table in the wilderness" but the children of Israel, or more probably, those who had joined themselves to them of the mixed multitude were not satisfied. Moses learned the lesson that he had to keep his eyes and heart focused on the Lord for every need. May we today learn that same lesson and we will find that God has searched out a resting place for His people.

*How much can we depend on the natural skills  
Of those who have experienced much of life?  
They have learned from others or by trial and error  
What not to do, and what is wrong and right.  
But when it comes to guidance in spiritual things  
The wisdom of men is not sufficient.  
There is only One who knows all from beginning to end -  
God alone is eternally omniscient.*

*We may look from time to time for guidance  
To those who who've gone this way before.  
However, they are limited in what they know,  
Though comparatively they have experienced much more.  
When the way is unknown and we hesitate,  
Take time to consult carefully with the Lord.  
He used fire and cloud, and the ark in the past -  
Now His guidance comes by prayer and His Word.*

*Our God knows the way to the resting place  
Where God's people find rest and restoration.*

*If we wait for His leading, then follow in faith -  
We will get to the right destination.  
Enemies before and behind are held back,  
When the Lord seeks a resting place for His own.  
It may not at first seem the place we would've chosen -  
That's why we wait for His will and place to be made known.*

*"Gracious Father, for the ways you have guided and the resting places you have found for me during the course of this journey to the promised land, I give Thee my grateful thanks. I acknowledge Thee as the Source of every blessing whether it be provision for the body, a place of safety and/or a place of spiritual growth. Thanks, Father, for all of these acts of grace that have brought so much blessing, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 11:1-15**

### **COMPLAINTS**

Strange as it may seem, often following some of our highest spiritual experiences, we fall into our weakest and most fleshly moments. There seems to be something in us that takes spiritual blessings for granted and we start to complain about things in general that for some reason aren't what we anticipated or in our carnal desires, wanted. The Israelites may have been just tired after traveling across the wilderness for three days and man's character and fallen nature that has passed upon every man, took over common sense and spiritual interests. The first ten chapters of Numbers repeatedly reveal God's goodness and wisdom; His working and His will and now there comes page after page of scripture exposing man's ingratitude, failure, disobedience and the results of sin. When will we ever learn that God's ways are not ours and His thoughts are not ours? If we as believers look at things around us as a template for our joy and satisfaction, we will never cease to complain. When God gets angry, it is very serious business. How much more blessed and of greater value it is to us when we count our blessings and give thanks to God for His "goodness and His wonderful works to the children of men."

The only remedy when the judgment of God because of our sin comes upon us, is a true acknowledgement of sin; real repentance and turning in faith again to the Lord Jesus Christ and finding His intercession and mediation on our behalf is full and sufficient when we go in faith to Him. There is no easy way to escape the consequences of our actions, and to think the lack of faith is unimportant. That is to misunderstand completely the holiness and righteousness of God. God does not overlook sin in unbelievers or in believers. He is expecting us who follow Him through this wilderness, to live holy, righteously and godly lives in this present world.

The children of Israel had been long enough out of Egypt, and had been eating of the manna long enough to know the value of manna over fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. The problem they had was not with the food God had provided, but with the dryness of their souls. They are like so many other people who think the needs of one's soul can be met with "eat, drink and be merry." The souls of God's people will never be satisfied with the insatiable demands of the old nature. What claims the most attention and interest in a child of God? What is it that I really want most in my life? The Egyptian-pleasures and deceptive flavor of its unsatisfying food attracts those who forget who they are and who they are following through this wilderness. I expect the mixed multitude that blends in with God's true children have more influence then we realize. "What's wrong with this? Why can't we do that? Others do it so why shouldn't I?" These are the sounds of the voices of the mixed multitude who know about God but do not know God.

As I watched the scene and saw the fire die out, first I thought, "Finally, this complaining is over." But no, now all over the camp, started initially by the mixed multitude and then spreading to others comes the sound of weeping from people acting like spoiled children. The broken cisterns fail and none but Christ satisfies we sing, but why the resentment? Why the frustration? They had just come from a time of great blessing and great joy at Mount Sinai and now, three days journey farther on, the same people are complaining. What happened? The mixed multitude with mixed principles deceived the true children of God then, and they do the same today. Satan has used the mixed multitude that knows the words and ways of the people of God to deceive and undermine the Lord's people rather than openly attack them. False professors among us are like tares among the wheat; like wood, hay and stubble that appears larger than gold, silver and precious stones. False brethren may be among us and we may be totally unaware of the fact they are false.

The only way open to us to deal with the appetite people have for the world is to feed on the manna from heaven. When God's people are eating of that which satisfies, Christ Himself and all we have in Him, then we are spiritually healthy and strongly nourished to fulfill every desire God has of us. The food of Egypt leaves people unbalanced, under-nourished and sickly - even with bad breath! But what can we do about

the mixed multitude? Sometimes we have to leave them until the harvest, lest the wheat still growing and maturing is disturbed until it weakens and won't bear fruit.

It is possible for a mature leader like Moses to be almost overcome with the care of God's people to which he had been entrusted. Moses was "faithful in all his house," but he was not above feeling the weight of responsibility he had, and it was almost too much for him to bear. Even the strongest among us can feel the weight and faint when we look at the people and not at the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who gave us this care and allows us to assist Him in the work of shepherding the sheep. The wilderness journey of God's people is at times hardest on those who are responsible for their spiritual well-being. We need to remember the fact that God fits us for the responsibilities He gives us, and then He gives us the power to accomplish what He intends.

The big problem comes when we claim the work as our own work; the difficulties we have to face as ones we have to face alone. Even more serious is if, or when, we claim the victories are ours and the blessings that come are because of our efforts, our labors and our suffering. Never let us forget that it is God who calls us into His service. It is God who equips His servants to do His will. It is God who works through His servants to accomplish His will. It is God who enables the work to be performed through feeble hands and clay lips. It is God who deserves all the praise and glory. It is then our complaints stop and we can sing with truth, "To God be the glory, great things He hath done."

*What is behind the curled lips expressing one's dissatisfaction?  
Did I expect to claim some prize without the strain of taking action?  
Is it possible I am so immature that I think there is no cost;  
To gain the goal God set before me without some hurt or loss?*

*This is the wilderness I live in, for God's people, this is not home.  
The flashy treasures and pleasures of earth are past, world-claims for me are done.  
For now, I am passing through a barren desert where dangers and fears abound.  
But the promise is sure, I'm just passing through, and the manna is still on the ground.*

*Complaints of the weather, the heat and the cold only reveal a lack of faith.  
The needed supply of spiritual food is here, and God is leading me by His grace.  
Voices around me that rise to complain usually comes from those who are not real.  
They are not really content with anything they have; they live only for what they feel.*

*All of those who have tasted and seen that everything the Lord does is good,  
Don't need the pleasures and sins of the world, Christ Himself is our spiritual food.  
What things look like on the outside can appeal, our senses can be easily deceived.  
The life-giving word may seem very simple, but from it, real blessings we receive.*

*Our spiritual health and successes that count, do not come in a flash of light.  
What began as dim light and simple food, develops, and gives us spiritual sight  
We can see beyond what seems hard at the moment, to benefits that inevitably come.  
Each trial and pressure, each step taken by faith, matures us as we travel toward home.*

*Even in leadership we are not immune, from events that try to bring us down.  
Our preaching may seem to be in vain, and shepherding wasted, but ahead is a future crown  
To give to our Lord, He's the spiritual Ark, who guided us to this resting place.  
When this work is done and this journey is over, with joy we will this path retrace.*

***"Righteous Father; It has greatly and seriously impressed me today that any complaint I might have about things, can have very serious consequences. Give this servant the wisdom and will to look at the blessings I have received and the understanding to know that what seems cause to complain now may bring the greatest blessing in the end and the greatest glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

## **Numbers 11:16-35**

### **THE WEIGHT OF RESPONSIBILITY**

The defeats and failures of God's people in the Old Testament are not detailed in the New Testament but Moses wrote about them, and in his own writing he details the difficulties he had himself with accuracy. "Now

all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" [1Cor.10:11]. What was behind the uncharacteristic outburst of anger from Moses? In the very best of God's people, wilderness living and pressures from brethren can trip us up and bring out what is inside us. None of us are exempt from failure and our only source of strength and the needed wisdom to guide others properly, is God Himself. It may be when we least expect it that the world, flesh and/or the devil will attack us. We can never allow our fellowship with God to wane and cool.

When God in His sovereign plans for His people puts a person in a place of leadership or responsibility of any kind, He fits the person for the job. He gives the needed grace to occupy the position and make appropriate decisions that have to be made - sometimes quickly. But we are still creatures of the flesh and it is possible for us to get our eyes off of God's sufficiency and on our own natural insufficiency. "It is God who worketh in you, to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Even with an illustrious man like Moses, or Elijah, or David for that matter, there is still the human tendency to take upon ourselves the work that God intends to do through us as a channel of blessing from Him to others. If the time comes when we think too much is expected of us, we need to be reminded of the fact that God is going to accomplish His purposes, either through us or someone else. The seventy men chosen to assist Moses did not increase the spiritual power needed to lead the people of God, but divided it in seventy ways. Moses was no longer pressured with the weight of his responsibility of being God's only vessel for the needed leadership.

The best of men can lose the power and balance that robust faith provides when we lose sight of what God is doing in us and through us. When we try to limit God or to make Him fit in the small box of our expectations, our manipulative flesh deceives us. God knows far better than we do what we need. But if we are dissatisfied with God and His provision, He has ways of teaching us not only by what we get for our complaining, but by showing us in any necessary way who He is. All our resources are in God. Moses' unbelief and questioning of God, teaches us that we are never exempt from the consequences of the lack of faith. Faith has to be nurtured. That is why we have history to remind us of how God has worked in the past, and that He is in control of the present and the future. To recall in our memories what God has done, strengthens our faith in regards to what God is able and willing to do yet.

The Spirit that was on Moses and used him to fulfill the work God gave him, now came also on those seventy men who were called upon to minister to the needs of the people. The Holy Spirit still empowers and guides us today to fulfill our responsibility. He knows what people need and who can be trusted to meet those needs. Self-confidence can be a hindrance to the work of the Spirit of God. He is grieved when we assume our knowledge of an event or a need is equal to that of the omniscient God. He is quenched when we step in to do what God has reserved for Himself. There is great value when one has learned to lean in full confidence on God for the appropriate response to what God is doing and use our God-given ability to do what is God's will.

Other men now gave evidence of God's willingness to use them. The grace and humility of Moses to do God's will was now passed on to others. Moses was not filled with envy when he realized God was using others to do work he did himself previously. By God's grace we can rejoice with any person God chooses to use in His service, and can be thankful for who they are and what they do. What we are unable to do or unwilling to do, will not go undone because of our complaints of overwork. The spirit of grace and humility in one's heart has to be cultivated in order for our service to be acceptable. When the Spirit of God works in us, there is given grace to do what we are called to do, and rejoice without pretense for what others are doing in their service for God. Narrow-minded self-centeredness is a great barrier to finding our joy in God and His blessings.

The children of Israel got their meat alright! Their self-interest and complaining brought death, fulfilled their lust for meat and brought on the judgment of God. When we turn our hearts and eyes toward the world for our satisfaction, we may get what we want, and also the consequences that go with it. The warning lesson is for us to be grateful for what God has given us. Leanness in the soul comes from feeding on that for which the flesh craves. The Lord is our portion! What He chooses to provide is what we need. When the lust of the flesh seems to have satisfied us until we find ourselves gluttoned, the very thing that we wanted can bring us down in disgust, despair and perhaps even death. "Satisfied with Thee, Lord Jesus, I am blest!"

**Numbers 11:23.** *"And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.'"*

#### **COMPLAINTS.**

*How quickly they can come; how foolishly they start.*

*Hardships getting you down? Are you going to pray or complain?  
Where is God? Isn't He near? Why not go to Him instead of others?  
Do you always listen to the mixed multitude – the worldly for comfort?  
Dissatisfaction comes when our attention shifts from what we have to what we don't have.  
Be grateful for what you have.*

*Would you rather have smelly fish, gassy cucumbers, leeks and garlic breath?  
Melons taste good but you can't live on froth that has no value.  
What about freedom from slavery – doesn't that mean anything?  
Have you forgotten when you got the scars on your body from the whip?  
Don't you have enough manna to eat? It is there for the taking – and it's good for you.  
What are you weeping and wailing about anyway? It is serious business to make God angry.*

*Get up in the morning and see the miracle! Tons of edible food for the taking.  
Fluffy and white in the early morning – pick up all you need, no questions asked.  
You think it is your right to have more than you have? Why do you deserve it?  
You are overlooking what you have, in your demands for more.  
Watch out when you approach God with an attitude like that.  
You may get what you want but it may prove very costly in the end.*

*Are you trying to do everything yourself and you are complaining about it?  
Haven't you seen God work before in power? Are you questioning God's ability?  
Are you relying on your own assessment of the situation instead of God's?  
Never let it once happen that you doubt God and His strength to do what is right.  
Your view in the daily routine of life may be that His strength is diminishing.  
We change – He never changes, and His strength is always available.*

*Does the work you are called to do seem too hard? Are you losing sight of the Power-Source?  
There are others God is using beside you. There are others who are available to work,  
God will empower them to do what you used to do if it is too much for you.  
Quit complaining and pray for those coming up behind to take over the work,  
Stand with them and let them stand with you so the people will recognize their leadership.  
Stop complaining, and be thankful that there are others who can do the work.*

*Do you have a greedy desire for your team to win? For your influence to be the greatest?  
When you become preoccupied with anything – good or bad, then it becomes lust.  
When your perspective changes from joy in the small things, to complaints – it is lust.  
You may get what you lust for but be careful because it may make you sick,  
The sickness cause by lust can spread over everything your eye can see and it may stink!  
Resolve: no more complaints, but a deliberate choice to be thankful and give God thanks,  
IN EVERYTHING!*

*"O God of all provision: with a convicted mind I count my blessing here before Thee. I do not deserve the least of Thy mercies. I haven't even used all that I have been given in the right way. But I do want to. I have all and abound. I am full of blessings. In my inner heart and soul, I am very grateful and thankful. Sew my mouth shut if I start to complain. Amen."*

## **Numbers 12**

### **JEALOUSY IS SERIOUS**

In watching from my distant place as I trace the journeying of God's people from then until now, I learn that it is easy to get our attention off the goal before us and onto something that distracts us. Every day we live there are events and issues that arise to deflect our minds from God's will and what He has before us. When we start to focus our attention on people, God's people or the people of the world, we have our mind's eye in the wrong place. It is then the comparison of people and position can quickly deteriorate into the serious sin of jealousy.

Moses was God's chosen leader for God's people even though he was younger than both Miriam and Aaron. It is not uncommon for God to pick a person using a different criteria than men would normally use. He is

sovereign in all His ways, and does His will in a way that pleases Him. When Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses' wife, they were really avoiding the real issue. Their accusation, if not racial discrimination, certainly had that appearance. Grace still draws opposition from law-keepers. Jews in the New Testament days had obvious opposition against Gentiles, and Gentiles demean Jews even today. Moses and his Gentile bride were a type of Christ and His Church. Racial discrimination was a cause of jealousy then, even as it is today.

But behind the accusation against Moses' wife, of whatever nature it was, lay the real cause of Miriam's and Aaron's criticism. They were jealous of Moses' position and influence. The smoke-screen of their accusation did not hide the real issue of jealousy from God. Attacking a person's work and character is still often used as a deceptive to try to bring a person down from the work to which God has called them. Unjust criticism is used even though mature people know it is used because people are afraid to admit to the real reason behind the attack. Jealousy needs to be faced and dealt with while it is still a thought. When it becomes a real issue and takes a form, it is much harder to deal with. Like any sin persisted in, jealousy causes serious grief to those who entertain it as well as those to whom it is directed.

When those two brothers and their sister were called out by God to stand in front of the Tabernacle, the word would have spread like wild-fire all over the camp. When the cloud of God's presence came down right before those three and in front of the door, everyone would know something very serious had happened. God Himself stepped in to deal with this situation. I learned from this that it is not a light thing to criticize a servant of God or to speak against any of His children. Their work is different from mine. Their call may be entirely different from what I think it should be. But he or she is God's servant, the same as I am. He is using them to fulfill their responsibility in the commission He gave.

The Silent Listener to every conversation knows what is behind every word we say. I learned from watching this scene from ancient history, that I need to avoid the conversation of a backbiter. When God spoke to those three people, He used a poetic form indicating He was not just dealing with them in a legal way, but there was an emotional response on God's part toward Moses, the man He spoke to face to face. Moses displayed his meekness previously in his attitude toward Eldad and Medad when they prophesied off by themselves. With his critical sister and brother, he became the intercessor and gains the victory of acting in grace. There is a quiet, real dignity in meekness.

There are consequences that follow criticism and opposition toward God, but there is also mercy that reaches out to restore. The leprosy that left Miriam standing there in the stark whiteness of disease that ran its course, struck a deep fear into Aaron as well as her. Whatever kind of leprosy it was, there was no question that God had dealt in judgment. In meekness, Moses became the intercessor for his sister and brother, even though he had been the real object of their attack against his wife. Aaron's words acknowledged Moses' divinely appointed position and his own jealousy. There are times when we leave our own defense to God to accomplish in His way and His time.

As I considered the seriousness of jealousy, and the round-about way of its action, I was again reminded that God knows everything about the situation and what is behind it. Jealousy against a child of God and a servant of God is actually questioning God's own judgment and authority. It is God who places people where He wants them. In some things we need to keep our hands off the matter and let God deal with the problem. If disgrace and fear result, accept God's verdict without question if the jealousy is on one's own part. If one is the object of jealousy, remain silent and consistent. Let grace rule and love not be diminished - and move on to the next stop on our journey toward the goal.

**Numbers 12:2.** *"And they said, 'Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?' And the Lord heard it."*

#### **CRUEL AS THE GRAVE.**

*Trivial arguments like children would have –  
Why are you picking on your brother?  
Surely you are not that small that you don't like her color?  
Is that really the reason you are so upset with Moses?  
Or is there another reason, a darker side to this whole problem?  
You two sound like spoiled children.*

*No, there is something more that meets the eye here.  
This is not just sibling rivalry.  
This complaint you are laying on Moses is deeper.  
Open your eyes and see what God has been doing through him.*

*You know, well and good that he is a meek man.  
His power is kept under control, or a million + people would die.*

*No fault in his leadership of the people could be found.  
No fault in his transfer of God's mind and word.  
No fault in the carrying out of the building of the tabernacle.  
No fault in being an instrument in God's hand.  
No, there is something far more sinister.  
This is plain, unadulterated, black, dark jealousy.*

*Eaten out by jealousy, their criticism grows.  
They can't criticize Moses because their jealousy would be seen.  
They undermine his credibility by challenging his influence.  
Envy raises its ugly head and pride follows close behind.  
They create a diversion like subtle enemies do – but this is your brother.  
Stop and face the real issue – you want his place.*

*Smoke screens darken the vision in homes, countries and churches.  
Unjust criticisms become major problems though they start small.  
Jealousy over place, position, possessions and influence hinders the work.  
Attack on a person's character is a fundamental problem that angers God.  
Watch out when you attack God's appointed and God's anointed.  
When God steps in to make correction – serious things happen.*

*Don't take silly criticism personally – there is another reason behind it.  
Remember, "The Lord heard it," and He will act in His own time.  
When the Lord comes down to deal with people, this is not a small matter.  
To speak against one who God has used as a spokesperson is sin.  
God compares the act, to the unthinkable – a father spitting in his daughter's face.  
Repentance and true confession are the only way back to fellowship – there are consequences.*

*"As I read this, Father, I kind of got shivery because You are the same today as You were then. This same thing happens now on times. People say things and don't realize who they are talking about and what they are saying. The criticism of preachers is far too common and I fear for those who engage in such conversations. Please, O please: keep me from such a thing as putting a person down because I am jealous of them, their gift or their position. I ask this sincerely and humbly, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 13:1-25**

### **SEARCH - BROUGHT BACK WORD**

Comparing scriptures in one place with scripture in another, often gives us a more complete insight into the issues that surrounded an event. The first chapter of Deuteronomy gives the background to God telling Moses to send men to explore the land of Canaan. Instead of going forward in faith based on the promises of God, the Israelites wanted to search out the land first and take things into their own hands. God had told them, "Fear not, neither be discouraged." But that wasn't good enough for them. The moral condition of the people of God affects how they respond to God. Faith in God Himself lifts our eyes above the present circumstances of life and gives assurance that what He has promised will be fulfilled. What we perceive as obstacles are opportunities for God to reveal Himself as the One in whom we can place our unreserved trust. It is in the times we cannot see the outcome of a matter, that God is most glorified in us and through us. Many of God's people have their finest hour in the valley of pain and tears. In those times their faith shines as a light to guide those around to seek the Lord - not just information.

However, God, being the God of all grace, may allow the plans we have, to be carried out. He does not impose faith on us. The condition of soul we are in has far-reaching effects on the lives of other people as well as our own. God told Moses in effect, "All right, send men to search out the land which I have already promised to my people." God knew the moral state of His people, and that they were rejecting what He had promised. The futile journey of five hundred miles through Canaan and back did not prove a thing except that it revealed the state of mind and moral condition of those who should have been anxious to go in and possess the land they had been promised by the highest moral Authority - God Himself. How insulting it is

when God's people doubt Him. Human "common sense" can be an awful hindrance in the life of faith if we allow it the place of supremacy in our decision making.

When we allow our focus to be on things around us rather than the goal before us, we effectively stop the benefits of a life of faith. Why should we search for what has already been indentified and promised? What value is there in reconnoitering what is already ours by promise from God? For those men who went to "spy out the land," their legacy left to Israel was one of fear and doubt. Only Caleb and Joshua are ever named again. The other ten were forgotten men who are only known for their negative influence on the people of God that led to a whole generation of people dying and buried in unmarked graves in the wilderness.

It is important for us to learn that we are not able to journey through this life without affecting others for good or bad. Every one of us is going to be remembered in some way. Other people will make their decisions for themselves in response, or influenced by some decision I make. If I make a choice that is divisive, that one choice will be what I will be remembered for. Our reputation will influence the generations following that will either be blessed or cursed because of it. What God allows me to do may not be what He wants me to do. The moral condition of my mind and life does not leave the thoughts of other people with my decease. The on-going influence of one does not cease for a long time.

All the Lord had told them concerning the land of promise was affirmed as the twelve men spent a month traveling from place to place. If they had been willing to take action by faith on what God had already told them, the whole nation would have been able to experience the blessings that were obvious. To doubt God is sin. More than that, to not believe what He says, is to make Him a liar. What grief it must bring to the Holy Spirit when we, God's people, do not act in faith as He leads us in "paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

The doubts of the people of God was based on their response to the opinions of ten men who compared themselves with the people of the world. Even today when the people of God compare themselves with the rich, the famous and the mighty of the earth, we look very small. But when we remember God has chosen the weak, insignificant and despised people to confound the mighty, then we are able to confidently go forward in faith in God, knowing the outcome is sure to be what He wants. God has His objectives to be fulfilled in us. It is up to us to not hesitate to press forward to the goal of His high calling, and in our confidence in Him, He will perform His will in a way that far surpasses any small objectives we might have.

*What is behind the doubts of men who stop to look around,  
And form a plan of action on opinions, or what men found  
To be accepted practices in the world that has no faith  
In the One who rules the universe, and dwells not in time or space?*

*The motivation behind such choices made is men think they know what's best.  
What they conceive by sight and sound, is to them better than in faith to rest  
On what God has said and proven too, in this course of life.  
Yet still they choose to ignore God's promise, and only walk by sight.*

*In grace God does allow the will of man free rein.  
He knows the willful act will bring them only pain.  
When one's moral state is such that he thinks his way is right -  
He will suffer the consequences that follow sin's awful blight.*

*How much better we will find our life and work on earth to be -  
If we walk in humble trust in God than in the things we see.  
God knows what lies ahead and what to do in every situation.  
Yet leaves us the right to reap the results of our self-centered decision.*

*May I not hesitate to act in faith even though not knowing the final end  
Of the events in which I find myself, I know the One who sends  
Me to such a place and work, and there I will take my stand.  
By God's grace I'll trust Him still to guide me by His hand.*

*"O longsuffering Father, how often have I disappointed Thee by my willfulness. Yet Thou hast been so longsuffering and gracious to still keep me in this path of Thy leading. May my feet never stray from this divinely guided way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

### **Numbers 13:26-33**

#### **WE ARE ABLE**

Most of the life of a child of God will be spent going uphill when other people go down; will be going in while others are coming out; will be contrary to popular opinion. Is this the way it is supposed to be? Are we to be comfortable in the middle of those who have no place for God in their lives? Are those who blaspheme the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, welcome companions of those who have been "crucified with Christ" unto the world? Faith in God, and popularity with those who measure life by what they see, own or want, cannot get along well together. Living by faith begins with putting our confidence in God first, and then dealing with the difficulties that inevitably will arise. The flesh looks at difficulties first and then calls on God to take the difficulties away. Faith goes through the difficulties confidently following the leading of the Lord. Unbelief waits and waits for the difficulties to go away - and if they don't, blames God.

The ten men who said, "We are not able," did not have one word to say about God. They saw the bountiful land of promise, but what took their attention were the strong, walled cities, and the giants who lived there. They forgot the promises of God and the power of God. In fact, they forgot about God entirely. They measured themselves as grasshoppers and in their unbelieving minds, brought God Himself down to no more than a grasshopper like themselves. This attitude toward God still prevails today. To many people, God is only an idea or a word to use when threatening others.

To those who are the people of God and are committed to living by faith, they move ahead in spite of difficulties. If the road before us that takes us to the promises of God leads us into difficulties, people who live by faith move confidently through them following the Lord. This does not mean we are indifferent or ignorant of the problems we face, but our trust is in the living God who has led us this way. When one has to stand up against popular opinion or the crowd, and be effective, that person must know what God's intention is and be able to identify it. The right attitude toward God and toward the problems of life keeps one humble without any vestige of arrogance and pride. To be able to state clearly what we know, and what we believe, draws a line between a person of faith and persons of fear.

An evil report doesn't mean that which was said was necessarily wrong, but was making their own judgment of the situation without considering the power of God that was fully able to accomplish His purpose for them. They were taking God's things into their own hands and ignoring God Himself. To ever discount or in any way ignore and reject the counsel of God is evil of the worst kind. Actually, unbelief is a soul-damning sin. To shut God out of human affairs, whether it be in a nation, an assembly, a family or a person's personal life, will assure failure, loss and condemnation. To give voice to one's opinion, right or wrong, has serious and lasting consequences. The opinions of ten men brought death on a whole generation of people. There was no way they could escape it.

On the other hand, the voice of faith and confidence, brought blessing to Caleb and Joshua and their families. Out of a whole nation of millions of people, only "few there be that find it," entered the land of promise. Choices made, decisions and actions that accompany those choices have great benefit, and bring blessing to others when they are made in faith. To on-lookers, the people of God seem odd, and their opinions and actions, unrealistic. "That doesn't make sense." "Be real." "That isn't realistic," are comments made to those who live by faith. It is a wise person who has learned to trust God in spite of what others say, and act on what they know is right. Caleb was affected by the decision of the majority, so for thirty-eight more years, he had to attend funerals and wait until the reality of the report was made evident.

Even when there are great losses and the impact of other's choices affect us, we need to continue to live daily by faith in God knowing that faith pleases Him. We may not see the result of a matter in our lifetime. We need to continue on faithfully, assured that "God is able" to do whatever is His will, and through His power "we are able."

**Numbers 13:30.** *"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.'"*

#### **WE ARE ABLE.**

*Pomegranates, figs and a cluster of grapes large enough to be borne by two men.  
Surely this is the land where we want to be, that God had promised we'd own.*

*Why then not step up, and with faith in our God, make a move to claim what is ours.  
The problem is men, who can't trust in the Lord; they fall down captivated by fears.*

*One man steps up, and with voice full and clear, and stops those voices afraid.  
"Let us go up at once and possess it," everyone there heard what he said.  
But Caleb's lone voice could not stop other men, who brought such an evil report.  
From the edge of the land, they would have to turn back, from blessings they then did depart.*

*How sad to see what didn't have to be, if we God's people only believed.  
The promises of God are "Yea and Amen", when we act on what God already said.  
He has shown many times and in various ways, He is able to deliver His own.  
The enemies around are not able to stop what God has decreed from the throne.*

*The saints of this day, like those in the past, have experienced deliverance from sin.  
When we move forward in faith, and possess what is before, we are truly honoring Him.  
God likes to be trusted, He has never yet failed, and will never forsake those who are His.  
They may look like giants, those worldly foes, but in those who obey Him, He is pleased.*

*May I like Caleb, and Joshua too; not like those who only see what is bad.  
Get my eye on the prize, and look over foes; and go claim what God has prepared.  
There will always be giants, and cities with walls, but our God is greater than all.  
To possess our possessions; make what God promised my own, is acting on God's sovereign will.*

*"The land is before us here Father; there are souls who are listening, and some who are wanting salvation. May the two of us be able to bear a cluster of grapes back to Thee and present some precious souls to Thee as evidence that we believe Thy promises. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 14:1-10**

### **DISMAY**

There are lessons for life that we learn from the people of God of past years that are recorded in history as examples to us. When we begin to take things into our own hands, there are serious negative events that will follow. God had intended His people to right on into Canaan and claim His promised land. To send spies to bring a report was not an act of faith in Him. The report they brought back was true but the conclusion was wrong. To think that we can live in an ungodly world, among people who have no time for God without any difficulties arising, is unrealistic and a foolish assumption. All of us, when we were in our sins, walked according to our flesh in the darkness of unbelief. The god of this world blinds the minds of people to hide from them the light of God's grace. When we have been made alive in Christ, then we have the ability to see beyond obstacles to the goal God has in mind for us.

Ten spies added to their report their own opinion and Satan took advantage of their false judgment. Their evil report contradicted the confidence of Caleb who said, "We are able." Unbelief shuts God out of the picture. In the case of the children of Israel, it resulted in the whole camp spending the whole night weeping out loud. The words of unbelief of a few, can have far-reaching effects. Words spoken unadvisedly may not seem important at the moment by the one speaking, but we must remember that once something is said, it is almost impossible to stop the effect of it. When the word of God is spoken, it "will not return to God void." Our commission to herald the Gospel has divine sanction. To speak lies, or gossip against another person is condemned in scripture. To verbalize unbelief is to deceive others and bring dismay and defeat where there could have been victory to men and glory to God.

The children of Israel were occupied with themselves and their own opinions. Dismay and fear expressed, spreads like a wildfire and people around are affected by the unbelief of others. The Israelites said they were fearful for their children. Those same children would have what their parents forfeited by their unbelief. The confidence and optimism of Caleb and Joshua was overtaken by the pessimism and defeat of unbelief. When we start to look at circumstances around us, and take our eyes of faith off God, then we will experience defeat in our lives.

God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and His seed. Even though that promise was given over 400 years before, and had been repeated many times after, the people of God did not think they were able to claim those promises for themselves. We need to learn to possess our possessions. The things we grasp

with our hands and think are ours, are only temporary. They can be lost with a change of government, a fire or even the weakness of our own fleshly interests. What God has promised is sure. The promises of God are "Yea and Amen." They can be counted on no matter what happens around us. All the blessings we have in Christ, beginning with the gift of eternal life to the inheritance of things yet to come, are sure and we can live in the good of them now.

When people act in unbelief, the things seen have more power over the human will, than the unseen things that are eternal. We need to remember the promises of God never fail. We need to learn from the failures of those in the past so we won't have to go through those same experiences ourselves. The children of Israel had made a golden calf as an idol, and had to suffer the consequences. They did not learn from their own mistakes. Now they wanted to choose a captain for themselves and return to slavery. Whenever God's people lose sight of God and want to act independently, they fall into the traps of self-will and superstition and follow the advice of men who say what they think is right instead of the tried and proven truth of God.

Strangely, even today people get upset by the testimony of faith and truth. It happened in the camp of Israel, and it happens among people today. Caleb and Joshua gave a clear uncompromising testimony of their faith in the Lord and the people wanted to stone them. It is a sad but true testimony that the carnal man can act in a way that adapts to the natural man. There is a part of us that wants independence regardless of the truth. Adam and Eve acted in that way and it has "passed upon all men." But the people of God must stand for the truth no matter what pressures may be applied by those around us. Truth, faith and power go together when we know the Lord, and are willing to follow Him.

Some of God's people live in doubts, fears and unhappiness because they look at themselves and what is happening in their lives at the moment, and not at God. In the life of a believer, our strength, joy and praise come from God, not from the world. God has given to us the spirit of "power, and love and of a sound mind." Our minds control the actions of our lives and we must bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." God's grace is sufficient for every need that might arise. A spiritual person will experience the work of the Holy Spirit in life in spite of what appears to be adverse circumstances. We need to remember the words of a hymn, "Be not dismayed what're betide, God will take care of you."

*What an awful sound is coming out of the darkness -  
Grown men and women are weeping!  
That is the consequences when no one hearkens -  
And the promises of God are not seeking!  
God has not changed; it is our unbelief -  
Light is overhead, it is darkness underneath -  
When we don't act in faith, we experience grief -  
And we don't think God is His promises keeping!*

*What a terrible choice to ignore God's promises -  
The consequences will be hard to bear!  
To doubt Him who in grace set His love upon us -  
Should create in us an awful fear!  
He has brought us safely thus far -  
He has preserved us because His we are -  
He has made new what in sin once did mar -  
He intends us His image to wear!*

*What pressures come on us when others doubt -  
We must lift up our eyes in faith!  
When opinions of others and human will they flaunt -  
We must recall again the blessings of grace!  
God does not change; He is true to His name -  
He is yesterday, today, forever the same -  
Never from our lips should ever come blame -  
When I the ways of God with me do trace!*

***"Father, perhaps the winter of my life has come and there is a tendency to hibernate too early. May the fragrance of spring be in my heart, the warmth of summer be shared with others, and the harvest time of autumn still be experienced by Thy servant. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."***

## **Numbers 14:11-45**

### **INTERVENTION -- INTERCESSION**

When the congregation of the children of Israel became violent and were reaching for stones to kill Caleb and Joshua, Moses and Aaron; the visible presence of God was made known. Evidence of the presence of God is a welcome sight for the people of God when we are obedient to Him. It indicates fellowship with Him and the assurance that the covenant formed with Him is sure and lasting. However, when the people of God are rebellious and acting in the energy of the flesh, evidence of the presence of God strikes fear into the soul. Instead of the enjoyment of covenant blessings, there comes the reality of the covenant curses. The glory of the Lord does not only appear when there are causes for joy, but also when His people sin against Him.

God was righteously angry with His people for rejecting Him by not following His revealed will. Now they not only were forgetting His promises, but were rejecting Him personally and were looking for a "captain" to take them back into bondage in Egypt. After all he had done for them in spite of the ten times they had failed to trust and obey Him, they now repudiated Him and His authority. At the Red Sea, when they complained at Marah, in the wilderness of Sin, when they gathered manna to hoard it, when they collected manna on the Sabbath, complaining over the lack of water, making a gold calf, complaining about hardship at Taberah, complaining because of the lack of Egyptian food and now refusing to go into the promised land - these ten times of failing to fulfill their part of the covenant was too much for God to overlook. It is possible for the people of God to think God is obligated to meet our expectations and demands, without us fulfilling our responsibilities that are essential in a covenant. Some people think religious ceremony is all that is involved in our relationship with God. When difficulties arise in life, their supposed "faith in God" evaporates and they turn on those who trust God in spite of the hardships and challenges they face. Faith works in trials, not the times when everything is easy. "The just shall live by faith."

God was prepared to fulfill His promises to Abraham through the seed of Moses. The threat of extinction on the spot of all of those rebellious people was real. What an act of true meekness was the intercession of Moses on behalf of the people of God! The nations around would have quickly known about the disaster if they were destroyed. The reputation of God Himself was well known by this time throughout the whole area, and would have been diminished to something like human action. Moses wanted God's glory and the good of the people of God - not a nation for himself, and the Lord responded to Moses' faith. No matter what others may say or do, we must continue to be faithful to God and beseech Him to continue to show His power and greatness through whatever means He chooses. When a person is willing to live for God and be an intercessor for others, he has gone up to higher ground. It is there we can see things more clearly and see beyond the apparent failures of the moment. It is on that higher ground we have fellowship with God and we are able to glorify Him personally.

Moses knew God's greatness, glory and grace the same as he knew other attributes of God that are displayed such as justice, holiness and righteousness. He knew enough of the divine nature of God that he could make an appeal on behalf of the rebellious people. God must punish the guilty or He is unjust. The consequences of sin must be faced and sin must be dealt with. The longsuffering of God and the essence of God's love allows sinful people to live, but there are consequences that cannot be avoided. The words, "I have pardoned" are a wonderful testimony of God's grace, but God's government is not ignored by His grace.

Judgment was going to be carried out because God "can by no means clear the guilty." So those who rejected God's guidance and promises had to turn back and die - the result of unbelief, murmuring and hardness of heart. Yet because of His grace, the next generation would claim the promises the previous faithless generation rejected. The nation survived but instead of going up and getting what could have been theirs, they died because they listened to explanations instead of obeying God's word. That principle still holds true. If we take hold by faith on what God has promised, we will enjoy those blessings. If we do not because of listening to the "learn'ed words" of some man, what could have been ours will pass to others. In the midst of all of this unbelief and violence, Caleb and Joshua stood firm and "followed Me (God) fully." In their strength at mid-life they had to wait because of the failure of others. When they were old, that strength had not abated. There are times when we have to stand against the temptations of the world, the deception of the flesh, and the "wiles of the devil." The devil will seek to stop God's people from claiming all we have in Christ.

To have not only witnessed, but experienced the miracles of God's grace and power, and still have responded the way they did to the evil report of the ten men, reveals the fact that the Israelites never trusted the Lord consistently. We may have had demonstrations of God's mercy, grace and power on our behalf, but

without faith it is impossible to please Him. True faith doesn't pick and choose when it is going to be exercised. To scorn what God has provided is a fateful act that will lead to a fateful sentence. Some of God's own people "for this cause are weak and sickly, and many sleep." The spirit of unbelief is like a plague that spreads and affects many. Faith when it claims promises and acts upon them, is strengthened and increased. God plants faith in us and the Word of God builds and strengthens that faith.

The death of the spies led to a second act of disobedience on the part of the Israelites. They had learned nothing from their failure to obey, so again in stubbornness and arrogance they took matters again into their own hands. And again, they failed when they tried to go up into the land of promise by self-will. They didn't believe Moses when he told them God had forsaken them and left them to their own ways until they died. The Lord was not with them so the enemies defeated them and chased them away. How grievous it is to the Lord when the people of God act as if He is not the guiding Person in our lives. How sad to see disobedient people trying to do God's work in the energy of the flesh and failing to produce what God had intended for them. How bad is the loss when a whole generation of those who professed to belong to the Lord, turn back and go into the wilderness for the rest of their lives. May the new believers among us learn the lessons from the failures of the older people, and more ahead in faith to claim what God has promised.

**Numbers 14:34.** *"After the number of days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise (altering of purpose)."*

### **BREACH OF PROMISE.**

*Negative voices giving negative opinions influence actions whether we like it or not.*

*Trust in men of negative advice leads to despair – sounds of defeat.*

*Sounds of fearful people are voiced everywhere.*

*Perspective is lost – emotions of the moment take over.*

*Forgetting the character of God – all the way by which He led.*

*Energy wasted in going backward – going forward, it could have led to joy.*

*A cry of despair – then ten – then millions – how sad – how defeating.*

*After all this way – why, O why stop short of the goal!*

*Turning away – stopping their trust in God – fear has such power over weak men.*

*The sounds of sorrow – tearing of clothes – men who could see by faith;*

*They tried to turn the tide of negative voices – of complaints – of fear.*

*"The Lord... He will bring us in... He will give..." but no, people reached for stones.*

*Negative voices, fear, despair, leads to murder in the hearts of many.*

*Two respected men with confidence in God – give advice – remember the promise.*

*Rather than evaluate the advice – compare it to what God had promised – to His Word.*

*They rejected it – quickly – without consideration – they did not enter, said "No" to God.*

*God is powerful – creating all things by the word of His power.*

*God is longsuffering – immensely patient – suffering their manners in the wilderness.*

*God is of great mercy – His love is a promise we can always rely on.*

*God is forgiving – again and again He forgives iniquity and transgression.*

*God is just – there is no way sin can be overlooked as if it didn't matter.*

*God is a pardoning God – His grace extends to the darkest recesses of human experience.*

*God is unchanging – His character and actions are consistent in every age.*

*God knows the spirit of man that is in each person – and judges accordingly.*

*Ten times His people had failed to trust and obey Him – at the Red Sea: fear took over.*

*At Marah – complaining over bitter water; complaining in the wilderness of Sin;*

*Not satisfied with the quota of manna, but collecting more than enough in their greed.*

*Going out on the Sabbath to collect manna when they had plenty to gather the day before.*

*Complaining over the lack of water at Rephidim;*

*Engaging in idolatry in making and bowing down to the golden calf.*

*Complaining at Taberah; complaining about manna and over the lack of Egyptian food.*

*Listening to an evil report and failing to enter the promised land.*

*The promise to the nation is altered – the children will go in but not the complainers.*

*The next generation – but not those who failed to trust and obey.  
Forty years – a year for a day – they would wander about in the wilderness.  
Close but not in – they tried in the flesh, and lost to Amalek – the flesh wins.  
Failure to trust God, leads to greater problems than we originally imagined.  
We are destined to wander without aim if we do not trust and obey.  
God's "breach of promise" doesn't mean He goes back on what He said.  
It means if we do not "trust and obey"; He will find someone else who will.*

*"I am enjoying this land of Beulah, O God of longsuffering and great kindness. It is in this land of promise I find great delight on every bush and under every tree. Each place I go and each job I do, gives a sense of God at work - and fulfilling all the promises You have made. I worship sitting here at this desk as I think on the way You have lead me – from Egypt, and the promise of the blood, to this place and the promise of the Word. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 15**

### **WHEN YE COME**

From the dark chapter in Israel's history because of disobedience that would leave a whole generation to live thirty-eight years in the wilderness as punishment, comes a word of hope and promise. The failure of those who rejected God's word and will is contrasted with the faith of those who would enter the land of promise. God's promise was going to be fulfilled - "when ye come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you." The future of Israel was assured in a few words spoken by the Lord. The sovereign grace of God brings the blessing of salvation and all its accompanying blessings because our God is full of mercy. If it wasn't for that, how lost we all would be.

The expected response to the Lord's blessings was that there would be the sacrifices of praise and gratitude in the free-will offerings. Their vows would be kept and sacrifices of righteousness and the wine of the kingdom blessings and joy, would be forth-coming. There would not only be the response of a thankful nation of Jews, but also of the strangers who lived among them who were of different nationalities. The citizens would be as one people in the sight of God. There are to be no schisms or divisions among God's people. When there are, it is because of willful acts of men, or in some cases, simply ignorance on the part of men regarding the mind and will of God.

The sins of ignorance would normally come from those who have just come into the family of God. In grace, God has made a way of acceptance when there was the act of the sin of genuine ignorance. Even then, such a thing was not overlooked. There was a price to be paid - a sacrifice that had to be made even though a person did not know what they did was wrong. We really don't learn anything if there is not a cost to be paid for ignorance. Often ignorance is overlooked and the person who sinned is excused. When one has to pay a price for their ignorance, not only do they, but others around them will learn a lesson that hopefully will not have to be repeated. Grace provides a way for the sin of ignorance to be dealt with, and holiness demands that sin be judged and confessed. Making excuses for ignorance is not the same as not knowing an act was wrong. An excuse is not excusable.

Why is there ignorance in the first place? What is the reason behind a person not knowing what is right or wrong? There are not many reasons to be found for ignorance. Childhood or mental incompetence are two reasons that are understandable. Willful ignorance in order to avoid what is uncomfortable or to not do what is right, is not an acceptable excuse for misbehavior. We are obligated, when some practice is observed that is unknown to us, to find out what is the reason for that and to acquaint ourselves with it by testing it with the word of God. Then we are to act upon the facts with sound judgment. Self-interest and indifference to the truth and righteousness, are often connected. The Holy Spirit in a believer guides us and seeks to control the activities in which we are involved. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine..."

Disobedience and independence go together and result in what is called "presumptuous" sins. Such sins are a reproach to the Lord personally and is evidence that one who does them, despises the word of God. Rebellion and stubbornness are in direct contrast to dependence and obedience. Such characteristics are not consistent with the divine life of a child of God. The man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath while everyone else was resting, is an example of sinning presumptuously. He was challenging the clearly stated law of God. In his arrogance he walked out to where he could find the sticks he wanted and then brought them back. That example was carried out to the full extent of the law. The phrase, "that soul shall be utterly cut off," meant that he was to be executed. It wasn't the sticks he gathered that caused him to lose his life; it was the presumptuous attitude against God and His word. The whole nation would have learned from that example to not defy the Lord.

In contrast to such arrogance was the reminder the blue tassel on the fringes of their garments would give the people that they were the people of God. They represented the God of heaven. Even though they were wanderers in the wilderness, this wilderness scene was a temporary place for them. They belonged to the kingdom of heaven. They were to obey God and act upon His revealed will through His word to them in every situation in which they were found. Even such reminders can be misused. In the time the Lord Jesus Christ was here on earth, the religious Jews made big bands of blue on their garments so they would appear to be superior in holiness compared to the common people. It is possible for us to take the teaching of the word of God, and add to it until it appeals to the religious vanity of self-righteous people. We are not to add, or take away from the things God has said, and that are written. It is possible to act presumptuously by man-made religious actions. The tassels on the garments were a simple reminder of who people of God are and what it means to be associated with a heavenly God.

**Numbers 15:39.** *“And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring.”*

#### **RIBBAND OF BLUE.**

*Look beyond the color, look beyond the band and seek –  
Seek the meaning behind the fringe –  
What did God have in His mind to bring to your mind?  
The clothes you put on in the morning mark you.*

*A God-given reminder is there in front of you as you look in the mirror.  
You are not your own. You have been brought out of Egyptian bondage,  
Remember who you are and to whom you now belong.  
The ribbon of blue; that fringe is to remind you of the commandments of God.*

*Others may wear their tattoos, their rings and their badges to identify themselves.  
That band of blue across the heart of God's redeemed ones testifies.  
The others wish for long life, prosperity, good luck and success in battle from their gods.  
The blue ribbon reminds you to worship in spirit and in truth – and worship God only.*

*The “tzilzith” – those tassels that look like an ornament – it resembles flowers.  
Those are to remind you not to go after all your sinful heart desires.  
It is to focus your mind on the Lord - to be seeking after Him.  
Do not compromise yourself by going after what the natural eye and heart lusts for.*

*Idol worship is self-centered and self-seeking; what can I get from serving an idol.  
Spiritual worship of God is the opposite: selfless rather than self-serving.  
We serve Him expecting nothing for we serve Him for who He is.  
Let the ribbon of blue and the tassels we wear unseen on the heart, remind us of His commands.*

*“We often try to blend into the woodwork, Father, but the reality is – the fringe and the tassels mark us. May I never try to cut them off so no one can guess who I am. The blue stripes on the shoulders remind me of my work; on the bottom remind me of my walk; across the breast remind me of my worship. May I wear the blue with honor. Amen.”*

#### **Numbers 16**

#### **"GAINSAYING"**

There are times in life when things happen which are very hard to understand. The motives behind divisive acts are usually hidden at first from human understanding, but God knows. When the discontent of Korah, a first cousin of Moses and Aaron, became obvious, it had already spread to many others. One person's discontent and/or jealousy has the terrible ability to affect all of God's people if allowed to go unchecked. The "gainsaying of Core" was an act of apostasy from which there was no recovery. That disaffection, unsanctified influence and deception ultimately led to thousands losing their lives. How careful we must be when we verbalize our criticisms of others. The end of such a matter may be far more serious than we could ever imagine.

God calls His servants and, by His sovereign will, gifts and fits them for service under His guidance and control. Gifts and appointments from God given to His people are like members in a body. Each physical member of a body has a role to fill and when the body is coordinated by the Head, it is well able to do

exactly what God wants. Assemblies of God's people work in that same way. Each person has their work to do for God. The divine appointment of each part working with each other part, brings blessing to those outside the body as well as to the assembly itself. When there is discontent and division, the work of God is hindered. We should never abandon the work that God has revealed to us to do for His glory.

Korah, a Levite who had service in the Tabernacle, was not content with that. He wanted the priesthood. He wanted the leadership. He wanted control. Moses and Aaron did their service for God and were leaders of God's people because God had given them that work to do and the responsibility to do it under His guidance. Some contrasts that affect a person's life and work are: do we want to control others or serve God? Is our motivation to be a servant or to claim the power of "the priesthood?" When a person exaggerates the problems, usually they look in the wrong place for answers. In Korah's case, he found a similar attitude in Dathan, Abiram and On who were from the tribe of Reuben. They probably were disaffected because they thought, as descendants from the firstborn son of Jacob, they should be in the place of leadership. From that group of men there were another two hundred and fifty men who joined in the rebellion against Moses' and Aaron's leadership. The influence of one can bring about the ruin of many.

The difficulties in life do not give us the direction for life. It is not uncommon for those who think promises made but not fulfilled in the way they want, to find someone else to blame for their own sins. Complaining quickly erodes faith. Lack of faith leads to dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction leads to skepticism. Skepticism leads to grumbling. Grumbling leads to bitterness and resentment. Rebellion follows that and then hostility, rebellion, separation and death. God is not the one who causes division and disobedience. Blessing comes from God, not discouragement and doubt. But when people become disaffected with the way things are and what God has done, it is useless to argue or try to persuade such people to change. Some things only God can do. Moses knew this. He knew this was a problem God had to deal with Himself. His supplication was to refer the whole matter to God. That principle still applies today in matters such as rebellion against divinely given authority or a designated and established work. Korah wanted the priesthood, not to continue to serve God in the Tabernacle.

We should never abandon what God has revealed to us as His will for us. To offer incense was a priestly work. Today that has been turned into a perversion of the divine intent by people who claim a man-given priesthood and offer incense from a man-formed religion. The appointment of Moses and Aaron came from God, as was the gift to do what God said. When Moses replied from his humbled place on the ground, he turned the whole matter over to the Lord. "The Lord will show... He hath chosen... before the Lord... the man the Lord doth choose." The divine presence is the only way to get the right conclusion to such a matter. Contentment with God's sovereign choice is a principle of Christian service. He designates the ministry to be carried out, and by whom. By Korah wanting the position of high priest is the same challenge as one who wants to be our High Priest. We have our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to set a man up to take that position is apostasy.

Dathan and Abiram had their own agenda and refused Moses' instruction and repudiated his leadership when they refused to come to the Tabernacle. They complained about his leadership by sarcastically challenging him of wanting to be a "prince" over them as he had been a prince previously in Egypt. Their view of Egypt was not what they had experienced as slaves. But in their dissent, they defied Moses' leadership. It is always wise to stay away as far as possible from dissenters. Defiance against God and His appointed servants has serious consequences. Pride and destruction go together. Divine judgment came in the trial by fire and the opening up of the earth beneath those who challenged God's anointed ones. Man, by nature is an enemy of God and is incurable. And man will always lose when he challenges God.

The very next day judgment fell on the congregation who sympathized with those who rebelled against God. The residual effect of that rebellious apostate group was felt by "all the congregation." Fire from the Lord had consumed two hundred and fifty leaders the day before who had been influenced by Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On. But the people had not learned a thing from that. In sentimental attachment to the apostasy committed right before their eyes, they identified themselves with the evil sinners and opposed the ones chosen of God. If it hadn't been that Moses knew his God, they all would have died that day. Moses knew the role of the priest was to stand with God and the people, so he quickly told Aaron what to do to stop the plague God had sent as judgment upon the ungrateful people. By standing between the living and the dead with the incense that spoke of the fragrance of Christ, Aaron was used by God to stop the death of the nation. Justice would have killed them all. Grace was shown again even though 14,700 more died because of that resistance against God and His servants. We should never think for a moment that sin does not have serious consequences. The role God has given me to fill should be done heartily and consistently. When we as brothers and sisters in Christ, each do what God has given us to do, we will live in harmonious fellowship.

*"Holy God, my Father: I know what I have been called by Thee to do. Give me the sense to do that heartily and skillfully, and leave my brothers and sisters to fulfill their calling. May we all live in peace and fellowship knowing that we need each other to fulfill the purposes for which we have been placed here. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

**Numbers 16:9.** *"Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?"*

#### **NEAR TO HIMSELF.**

*Called by God, called out from others to serve,  
In a special way, in the holy house of God;  
Whoever you are, when you are chosen to do  
Some task given to you by the Lord;  
Put all else aside, give this work your best,  
Do not covet or claim another's load.*

*When we look at others and think of them,  
"They have it better and are more highly thought of than me."  
We have made a bad mistake, and consequences then,  
May come down that I would never want to see;  
For it is important to God that I serve Him, not just men,  
A true servant of His I'm called to be.*

*To challenge another, and the work that he does  
Is like saying he is not God's chosen man.  
Turn away from such thinking, don't allow thoughts like those,  
Flee to the Lord in your mind while you can.  
Others who did not in the past - all did lose  
Family, influence, life, possessions - all that they hoped to gain.*

*It really is no different for us living today,  
When we covet another man's role;  
If we want his influence, his prestige or his pay,  
And allow darkness to come into our soul;  
We are in danger of losing all God has done in His way,  
And sin hastens to claim its' terrible toll.*

*What God really wanted when He called us to serve,  
Was our love, and a desire to be near to Himself.  
Out of a longing to be what God wants, and to love  
Him - supremely - and in His service to help;  
I need to keep before me, and daily to prove;  
It is the Master I want to please - not myself.*

*"To be near to Thee, O Father, at times like this, is a genuine desire of mine. I am so thankful when Thy strength is made perfect in weakness, and when Thy saving power in the Gospel is evident. I do not covet another person's role or work, I am content to be here today, rejoicing in Thy salvation, Thyself, Thy work and the blessing of eternal life Thou art giving to others. Please keep me humble, prayerful, watching, waiting and ready for what Thou art going to do next. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

#### **Numbers 17**

#### **BUDS, BLOSSOMS AND ALMONDS**

There are times when the minds of people are opened to receive what previously they had ignored or rejected. When such times come, they are often called "teaching moments." For some reason there is a ray of light of understanding that comes into a dark mind. When that happens to an individual, it is an important time to learn a lesson that will not be easily forgotten. The children of Israel as a congregation of people were reeling from the events that had just taken place. The light of the Lord's presence had appeared and

they had not feared Him. They had gotten used to the fact that God was in their midst. Their complaints and fears had cost them lives at the hands of the Amalekites. Rebellion against authority had cost the lives of 250 leaders in a trial by fire. Jealousy and rebellion had been dealt with by God when the earth opened up and three whole family units vanished into the ground. The complaints of the whole congregation caused a plague in which thousands died and only the acts of Moses and Aaron preserved the lives of any of them.

Now there came the command from God to each tribe to bring a rod, a symbol of authority, in order to establish once for all who God had designated as the high priest and the priesthood. Probably every tribe picked what they thought was the most symbolic of authority and carefully had carved the name of a tribal leader on their chosen rod. As they watched Moses go into the Tabernacle with those twelve rods, they might have thought, "This is more serious than we thought." It wasn't just what stick was the most attractive or what name was carved in the wood. The issue was, what does God have to say about the spiritual leadership of His people. We do not have the authority to pick and choose what God wants us to believe or how we are to carry out His will and word. That is reserved for God Himself. No congress of men can make the decision as to what is right and wrong, and what is moral or immoral. God has the sole authority to establish the terms of righteousness and justice. If we could get that into our minds, we would be saved from the terrible consequences of acting on our own choices by our own volition.

God was establishing a visible testimony in an unforgettable way, the position of Aaron as the high priest chosen by the Lord. He had made that clear before, but the independent attitude of the people wanted to make a choice to suit themselves. To settle the matter, it is God alone who can determine who is a priest or not, the rods were placed before the Lord overnight. Humans do not have the right to establish a priesthood to stand before God. God does that personally by Himself. He has given our Lord Jesus Christ the spiritual authority of our Great High Priest. In His sovereign electing grace, He has made those who believe on Him a kingdom of priests. That was what He wanted Israel to be, but they wanted to do things their own way by making a gold calf to represent God. The result was the Levites who stood out for God, became the priestly tribe. Again, that had to be clarified.

Each tribal name was clearly visible on the rods. When Moses brought the rods out in the morning, eleven were the same dry sticks as before. One had buds on it, beautiful white flowers blossoming on it and almonds formed on it. That happened overnight in the dark. In a time period of twelve hours or less, the whole history to produce almonds into developing fruitfulness, took place on a dead stick. The Lord had imparted life and moved through the whole cycle of a normal year, and produced evidence of His life-giving authority in a rod that wasn't even planted in the ground and had no roots. This was not Moses' rod that was a symbol of power, authority and justice. This was Aaron's rod, a symbol of grace and mercy. Eleven dead rods of man's choice remained dead. Only that one brought forth life. Moses' rod of authority would have taken away the sinful, murmuring, complaining people themselves. Aaron's rod was to take away the problem - the murmurings, as he interceded for the people as their high priest chosen by God.

The whole matter of who is the rightful priest was taken out of man's hands. The Lord made His selection unmistakable in the dark of night and silenced the complainers. Those who are unbelievers will try to find some human explanation for this action. From the limitations of human experience, they will say that it was impossible for this to happen, and they refuse to believe that God made it happen miraculously. Such unbelief leads people to doubt everything, believe nothing and have an "if," "how," or "but" to everything, even though there is evidence of God all around us. Infidelity wants some rationale that is lowered down to human understanding before it will repent and believe. Faith believes that God is, and is a "rewarder of them what diligently seeks Him." Faith believes that God speaks to us in ways of His choosing. Faith thinks like God and trusts the solutions God gives when difficulties arise. "It is written" are words of faith one lives by who knows God does what He wants and it will be righteous, no matter what human experience might say.

Unbelievers think they are the ones who define who God is and what He does. To them, God is who they say He is. We need to remember a fact is far different than a scientific conclusion. Such conclusions that have been made in the past as dogmatic statements have since been exposed as wrong. When it comes to understanding the Lord and who He is, we learn from what is written and the evidence He chooses to give us in creation, conscience and good and perfect gifts - that the Lord is in control of everything. "In Him we live and move, and have our being." He gifts us to do the work He intends for us to accomplish. Our calling as a "kingdom of priests" is to represent Him to the world, and to worship and serve the Lord as citizens of His kingdom. We do this by faith in the Lord. Then there isn't the fear that the people of Israel had when the Lord displayed His authority and grace in Aaron's rod before their astonished eyes. The whole history of seasons was displayed on what was a dry stick the day before. Now it had evidence of new life in the buds, the promise of future blessings in the blossoms that were white and showy, and also in the almonds that were ready to pick. How great is the fullness of God and His sovereign grace!

**Numbers 17:10.** *“And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Bring Aaron’s rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from Me, that they die not.’”*

### **REPEATED AGAIN, AND AGAIN...**

Spectacular miracles in Egypt and along the way had testified to the Lord’s people that God was with them, but were they satisfied? No! They had experienced the plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, miracle food and water and many other proofs of God’s power and presence, and they still murmured against Him.

Korah and his accomplices had just perished for their rebellion and deliberate resistance to God’s revealed leadership, but the people had not learned. They still murmured against God. 14,700 had just died and more would have died had not Aaron stood with a censer between the living and the dead. And they still murmured against God.

How could they be so blind and ignorant after experiencing God with them so often and in so many ways? Remember the mountain and the law. Remember the golden calf and the results of that bad choice. Now, look at these twelve rods with names on them. Aaron’s name is on the rod of Levi. They took all twelve in last night and lay them in the tabernacle. Now this morning, there are buds on Aaron’s rod, and blossoms, and almonds – all at the same time. This defies all the normal patterns of nature – buds, beautiful almond blossoms and ripe almonds at the same time. It could only happen if the Original Creator adjusted the normal course of life – which He did; and they had murmured against Him.

When each leader took back his rod, and all the people saw Aaron’s rod before them in its’ unique glory, they thought they would die on the spot. The One who holds the key of life also holds the key of death. But He didn’t use it in spite of their murmuring.

I have centuries of evidence that God is truly the only true God. The Bible in many translations, archaeological evidence and historical studies prove that God is the same. Yet there is often a tendency to do things my own way. It is easy to get more concerned about physical conditions than spiritual conditions. It is easy to pay attention to the wrong things.

Have we seen evidence of God’s presence? Yes! Has God answered prayers? Yes! Have I experienced remarkable blessings? Yes! Has God answered and healed the sick? Yes! Have there been experiences passed on as to how God has worked with others in remarkable ways? Yes! When I think of what God has done – doubting and rebellion are unthinkable!

*“In reverence I bow my head and heart before Thee this morning, O Almighty God, and remember all the ways Thou hast revealed Thyself to me. It shames me to think that there are times when I have tried to do things my way – and for the wrong reason. I am very grateful that Thou art a longsuffering God, plenteous in mercy and have put up with my manners, or lack of them, in this wilderness I walk through. Thanks! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”*

### **Numbers 18**

#### **KEEP THE CHARGE**

There was no doubt in the minds of the children of Israel by now as to who was God’s chosen high priest. Recognition of Aaron as that person chosen to serve as their representative to God, and God’s representative to them, was unmistakable. No further interference in his work would be tolerated. The family of the high priest under his authority was responsible to keep the charge of the Tabernacle, the priest’s office, and the holy things that were set apart for God. We have one Great High Priest seated in the heaven who has accomplished eternal redemption for us. He has designated Spirit-filled believers to carry on the work of God in an orderly way. Priests in Israel were responsible for the order of the offerings and the way offerings were presented. It wasn’t left up to their own discretion as to how things were to be offered to God. They were to make sure all was done according to the instructions from God. When things are given to God, it is the responsibility of the leadership among us to make sure the things that are given and how it is given has a biblical basis. No matter how valuable a thing may appear in the eyes of men, if it doesn’t have the sanction of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, it is valueless. Far too much in Christendom is done with the objective of making what is supposed to be for God, “seeker friendly,” and will make those who come to “worship” feel “comfortable” as they are.

Some of the offerings that were brought, the sin and trespass offerings, could be shared by male priests only. Other offerings, the heave (raised) and wave offerings were given as gifts of appreciation and could be shared by the whole priestly family including daughters. The roles of the people of God differ, even though

every believer is a priest. The priesthood of all believers is a biblical fact even though in many places it is not practiced in a public way. Not everyone does the same thing now, nor did they in the camp of Israel. By each fulfilling their God-given role in the way the Lord intended, the whole nation of Israel was protected from judgment. Chapter 18 of Numbers is the most comprehensive statement of the work of the Israelite priests and the work of the Levites. We do not need the designations of men to identify the work of those who lead God's people today. We have clearly stated qualifications and responsibilities given in the scriptures for our learning and clarification.

Those who served the Lord in the Tabernacle were separated to that work as representatives of those who were in a relationship with God. The work they were involved in symbolized the holiness and purity of divine things as they pertained to the life of the people of God on earth. We are responsible to Christ in all of our work. It is our Great High Priest who makes all we do acceptable to a Righteous and Just God. None of us are to be "free-lancers" doing our work for God on our own and in a way that suits us. We are to work in fellowship with other "believer-priests" and our role should coordinate with that of others and be in fellowship with what they do. When the people of God work together under the authority of the Lord, even though the work of each person is different, it can be done in harmonious fellowship. The priesthood of all believers involves both work and worship. As workers, God gifts each member to accomplish what He intends. As worshipers, the Holy Spirit of God guides each one so that priestly worship encompasses all the different aspects of divine things. Praise to God and good works to men, are both priestly service.

The sin and trespass offerings were made when there was guilt that had to be faced. The priest who presided over those offerings, took part of the offering for himself. In that way the priest identified himself with the guilty person. There are times in the lives of the people of God when a sinning person has to be dealt with. The charge to those who deal with such matters is, "Ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Identification with our brothers who have fallen in some way, is an important part of seeing such a one recovered. In those times it is well for us to remember we are priests before God. Our Great High Priest has obtained eternal redemption for us and His work is mediating the case before the holiness of God's throne. We do our part as the scriptures teach, and the result is up to the Mediator.

Levites also had no inheritance among the nation of Israel. They were encamped around the Tabernacle to guard the holy things of God. The Kohathites, Gershonites and Merarites were on three sides of the Tabernacle, and the priests and Moses were on the east side in front of the beautiful east gate. The commission of the Levites was to protect the Tabernacle and accept the privilege of serving God as all they needed as an inheritance. Their support for living came from a tithe paid by the other tribes of Israel. A tenth of what each family earned from their business, of whatever kind it was, belonged to God and was given as a tithe. The Levites themselves also gave a tenth of what they received. That was given to the priests to be used in the service of God. Levites were not farmers or enterprising businessmen, but their income from the service they did for God was considered the same as income from any other of God's people. Actually, they had been given the best, and now they were to give the best of the best.

To not give to the Lord our best is to rob God. Our giving, whether it be by proportion of what we received by our labor or enterprise, along with our offerings of thanksgiving, is to be given with joy. It is a great privilege to share with others what God has given us. The results of such "hilarious giving" is glory for God as an act of worship, and blessing to those the Lord has appointed to service for Him. We do not look to the world for support. Nor should we copy the world's way to solicit support for the work of the Lord. Rather we should count it a privilege to "keep the charge" God has given us and by that means, the work and service of God will be well maintained. To act in faith in financial things brings blessing to men and is an act of worship when it is given to God. When we keep the charge of the things the Lord has entrusted to us, He will keep us out of the abundance of His storehouses so we will not lack what he intends us to have.

**Numbers 18:7.** *"Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for everything of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve; I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death."*

#### **PRIESTHOOD IS A GIFT.**

*Holy things are not a trifle; ever let the priest be careful; those who offer must be prayerful – lest they come and die. Those who serve the Lord are truly grateful; that in coming to God with their hands full; God accepts what comes from hearts full – when they give to Him.*

*When from all the congregation; God Himself makes a selection; of those people who will serve Him – it is His own choice.*

*Those who form that priestly nation; lead God's people in adoration; and tell the world of full salvation – found in Christ alone.*

*The same are gifts given to the body; they are to serve in things most holy; and must always offer truly – that which God accepts.*

*Truth must be held absolutely; the priest must maintain resolutely; those truths and practices God has clearly – made known to us.*

*From God to priest He did hand; fundamental doctrines that He did plan; to be carried out for Him by man – when we come together.*

*What we bring and what we give; we pass on to the priest what we have; and from these same things the priest must live – that is God's way.*

*Levites were to the priests a gift; their occupation was to carry and lift; the tabernacle and its part when a shift – is led by God.*

*We now today each have a share; we give to God and others' burdens bear; for each of God people we have a care – like the Father cares.*

*We have been called to serve the Lord we love; we give ourselves and all we have; our calling is clear when what we do will prove – we are truly priests.*

*The fact remains we are not our own; all we are and have we owe to Him alone; it is His by right for He did atone – to bring us to God.*

*As a kingdom of priests, we can offer to God; all that He gives us from His Word; when we speak to Him of our precious Lord – my Savior.*

*What God gives us we give back to Him; when we offer a prayer or sing a spiritual hymn; our sacrifices to our Lord is given – for we are priests.*

***"I Thank Thee O Lord of heaven and earth, for not withholding from us the privilege of service. Our priesthood is a blessed service. When in a remembrance meeting, prayer meeting or Gospel meeting – we offer our sacrifices to Thee and honor Thee in front of the people. They have a right to see that we respect and honor Thee and speak for Thee to them. Help me this night to speak appropriately for Thee. Amen."***

## **Numbers 19**

### **FOR SIN AND UNCLEANNESS**

After instructions concerning the priests and Levites had been given, and the things pertaining to the roles they were to fill and the provision made for their welfare, the Spirit of God gave the procedures to follow to cleanse the common people. Uncleanness and defilement are common to working in the world and in public situations. The defilement that comes from living in the world cannot be allowed in the holy things of God. Intentionally or unintentionally, we are all going to have experiences in life that pollute us in one way or another. The symbolic cleansing by the offering of the red heifer teaches us about the actual cleansing by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ that meets our needs as we travel through this defiling world on our way to heaven.

That uniquely colored heifer speaks to us of the moral purity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was spotless in His Person having never borne the yoke of sin. There were no scars of laboring because of sin on His shoulders because of being in the service of the world's system. No trace of sin was on Him. The type of the red heifer also indicates the moral purities in Him. There was no sin on Him, and "in Him was no sin." "He did no sin" even though He passed this sinful world. There was nothing in the world that attracted Him to be like it. The world was not attracted to Him because internally and externally He was perfect and that condemned those who were of the world. His perfections revealed the sinfulness of all around Him.

The text of scripture in this account is very precise. That defies the criticism of those who try to adapt biblical truth and spiritual principles to their own human point of view. The doctrine of complete redemption through the sacrifice of Christ only, is carefully explained, even in this type, so that we do not lower the value of Christ in any way. In the ritual sacrifice of the red heifer that was killed personally by Eleazar the priest, both the priest and the victim are types of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It was not the priestly work of our Lord Jesus Christ when He died on the cross on earth. That was His sacrificial work on our behalf when "He suffered without the gate." We have been sanctified by His precious blood. The blood of Christ that washed our sins away once and forever, is greater than any of the types that point to that work He accomplished. In the same way Christ suffered without the gate of Judaism, it is applicable to those who "go forth" to Him today, outside the man-made religious systems of the world to identify with the rejected Jesus. The world didn't tolerate Him when He was here, and there is no reason to think the world will tolerate those who obey Him today. To "go forth unto Him" means our heart is separated from the world and its systems. We will find ourselves in an outside, despised place. "Without the camp" involves separation of life. Those who go to where he is, have no acceptance by those who love the world and the things that are in the world.

The red heifer being led outside the camp by the priest is a type of Christ when He was led "to the place which is called Calvary." What happened to the heifer typifies the complete putting away of sin and separation from the sinful world and the judgment that will come. Now the shadows have passed. Sin has been purged once for all. It never has to be repeated to meet any individual's need. Because of that finished work, our conscience has been purged. There is no need to go back over the sins of life and wonder if what Christ did enough. Life is changed when the sin question is settled. His death put away our sin. He died that He "might deliver us from this present evil world." Changed people are made pure in the sight of the holy God because of the perfections of the sacrifice. We have been "cleansed from all sin."

Eleazar, the priest, sprinkled the blood of the red heifer seven times (completion) before God. The earthly priest put cedar, hyssop and red wool into the same fire that burned the red heifer completely. Cedar can speak to us of the deity of Christ as the Son of God. Hyssop reminds us of His humanity as the Son of Man. The scarlet speaks of His royalty as the King. When we look at the sacrifice of the red heifer, many things about the Lord are given in type. Those same things that were burned with the red heifer remind us that the world of our nature, big or small things, along with the glory of man, has been done away with when we were "crucified with Christ." The cross separates us from all that is in the world.

The earthly priest had to be cleansed, but our divine Priest has finished the work of redemption forever, and has "sat down" in perpetuity at the right hand of God. The blood of the atonement had been presented to God, and has been accepted by God. The power of the blood and the sacrifice of Christ has satisfied God because of the Person and work of the Lord. The value of the sacrifice is not up to us to establish by what we feel, think, understand or appreciate. My grasp of what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross doesn't affect its value for me. We simply rest on that finished work that "cleanseth us from all sin."

The ashes of the red heifer were kept and when needed by people for cleansing from defilement by man's last enemy - death, it was there for a person to claim for himself. In a practical sense that applies to us today, the finished work of Christ makes our prayers and praises accepted when we are cleansed by the washing of the water by the Word. When we are committed to holiness and we refuse to do what we know is not the mind and will of God, the value of His work and Person means a lot to us. The cleansing effect of the work of Christ makes us face our sin first. Then it brings to our memory that which has met the need defilement has caused - the death of Christ. "The blood of Jesus Christ" has made this provision.

Those ashes of the red heifer were kept that the children of Israel would remember the goodness of God and the hatefulness of sin. Before I can come along side to help another failing believer, I must have enjoyed the cleansing power of Christ myself. That cleanses me from every defilement that contact with sin brings.

**Numbers 19: 2.** *"This the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, 'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke.'"*

#### **WITHOUT SPOT.**

A general offering is to be made. An unclean person could not approach God because he had touched a dead body. This was the strongest of all defilements because death is the final result of sin. A special sacrifice was required – a red heifer – offered by one who was not defiled.

The animal was unique. It was to be a *heifer* in contrast to the bulls that were used in Egypt. It was to be a *red* heifer in contrast to the red bulls used in Egypt that were sacrificed to appease the evil demon god. It was to be a red heifer *without spot*. There was to be no mixture of any other color. Every hair was to be red. It was to be a red heifer, *without spot* and *without blemish*. There was to be no imperfection on or in this animal. It was to be a red heifer, without spot, without blemish and which had *never borne a yoke*. It had never been used for any other common purpose.

The animal was killed outside the camp; some of its blood was sprinkled toward the front of the tabernacle and it was completely burned in the sight of the priest. Into the burning animal was thrown cedar wood, hyssop and the scarlet dye made from the scarlet worm. The ashes were gathered up and kept in a special, clean place to be mixed with water for ceremonial cleansing of one who had touched a dead body.

This is symbolic teaching foreshadowing Him who calls us to Himself "without the gate (camp)." This illustration of Christ is what He is in Himself, in contrast to the heifer in Genesis 15 that symbolizes what Christ is to the Father. The only other place in scripture where "blemish" and "spot" are found together, is in 1Peter 1:19 concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter the subject is His Person. Here in Numbers the subject is His Purity. The whole animal is to be burned – a type of Jesus who is the "whole burnt offering."

Cedar wood that is added, a long lasting, naturally scented wood, is a type of the Deity of Christ – Jesus is the Son of God. The hyssop that was added, a common plant found growing nearby, is a type of the Humanity of Christ – Jesus is the Son of Man. The scarlet that was added to the fire, a scarlet worm that was used to dye garments, is a type of the Royalty of Christ – Jesus is the "King of the Jews"; "the "King of Glory."

The "water of separation" is a reference to the cleansing of believers by the Word of God [Ps.119:9; Ep.5:26; Ti.3:5]. The ashes refer to the finished work of Christ; there is nothing able to cleanse us from our sin except the Person and work of Christ that has been revealed to us through the Word of God. There is a daily cleansing from defilement all around us (dead bodies) and we need to apply this personally. There is the cleansing once for all (statute for ever) and the ashes indicates one has been cleansed and is accepted by God [Heb.9:12; 10:12].

*"I know, O Righteous God, that the One whose blood cleanses from all sin, is the full and sufficient Sacrifice. I thank Thee for the One who suffered without the gate, and I have gone forth to Him gladly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

### **Numbers 20:1-13**

#### **NOT AGAIN?!!**

Forty years had passed since Israel left Egypt. Thirty-seven or eight years had passed since they had turned away from the promised land in weakness and fear. Now they were back at Kadesh again. Miriam died there so the voice that once had led in singing was silent. But this was almost entirely a whole new group of people. 600,000 had died and those who were under twenty years old when they were at Kadesh before, were nearly sixty years old. But strange enough, some things never seem to change. They seemed to fondly remember living in Egypt long ago. There was a shortage of food and water it seemed although they had been, and still were, abundantly supplied. But they had gotten used to heavenly food and now wanted the taste of exotic foods for their pleasure and self-satisfaction, not for strength and the sustaining of life. This is not an uncommon complaint in our days. People are still attracted to the teaching and "spiritual music" that appeals to the natural and carnal man. The words to songs sung today can hardly be heard or understood because of the loud accompaniment. The teaching is usually brief sermons that are adapted to "meet our needs," rather than an exposition of the Word of God or a message from God. What God has to say is always much more important than what we want to hear.

Water had been supplied to them years before from the smitten rock. That spoke of Christ who once for all suffered on the cross for our sins, so the blessings that followed because of that, came from Him, and still do. "The Rock that followed them is Christ." The experiences of wilderness living had not yet weaned the children of Israel from wanting what others around them had. The voice of Miriam was gone and most of the past had been cut off - yet they seemed to not have forgotten the stories they had heard of those who died in the wilderness. In many places today spiritual songs of redemption may have been forgotten like hymns with "the blood" in them. The congregation must have heard stories from the older people as they lay dying in the wilderness. Sometimes older people tell of their past history in ways that almost make appealing the sins of the world. We need to keep the historical accounts of our lives honest. The place to start is the first day of the first month of our new life in Christ. The complaints rose from what they had heard about Egypt, rather than the slavery they had experienced in Egypt. It is not right for the sins of the past or isolated experiences out of the context of real living, be told as a means of instructing our young.

By this time Moses was getting weary of the burden of guiding a fickle congregation of people through the wilderness. He lived by faith and knew his Lord in an intimate way and likely was getting frustrated because of the lack of faith on the part of most of the people of God. Not everyone has the same spiritual interests or have the same life-changing spiritual experiences others have. Patience and meekness are required in

those who lead the people of God. At the same time, those who God called to lead others in some capacity must remember we are in danger of failure. "To whom much is given, much is required." The expectation of faith demonstrated is higher in those gifted to minister to others than in those who serve God in other ways. Even Aaron was guilty by association and could not enter the promised land. It is a wonderful privilege to serve God by serving His people, but we need to be reminded that when God gives us that kind of responsibility, His glory is at stake.

The people of God, in spite of their failures, complaints and mistakes, are still His people. It is not our right to criticize or admonish them without divine sanction. The rod the two men took with them when they went to speak to the rock before the eyes of all the people, was Aaron's rod of grace, not Moses' rod of power and authority. When he smote the rock previously, it was a type of the Shepherd giving His life for the sheep. The testimony of the rod this time was intended to be to the keeping grace of Christ for the welfare of His people. In one act of willful anger, Moses undid what could have been his in the promised land. The people of God were feeble, mortal men, and now Moses himself is shown to be a failing mortal man even though his faith was strong. By hitting the rock twice, he demonstrated false doctrine concerning the Person and work of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Anything real or symbolic that denigrates that work is serious sin - especially when it comes from one who knows better. How important it is that we do not do the work of God carelessly, impetuously or imperially taking the credit of that which belongs to God. Poor Moses even claimed that he and Aaron would produce the water from the rock. We dare not take credit ourselves for what God does. There are consequences for willfulness no matter who the person is.

In grace God produced the water that flowed from the rock to satisfy His people. And in grace God privately spoke to Moses and Aaron as to the outcome of their action in this event. It was an act of grace when God when God took Moses up to Mount Nebo, and showed him the whole promised land the people he led for forty years would possess. We learn from this experience of God's people from another time that in grace God does bless us and makes provision for our sinfulness in spite of our sin. But God's government is not set aside because of His grace. Righteousness has its demands that must be met. Careless disregard of the Lord's revealed will is not ignored by our righteous God.

The water that gave refreshment to the people of God was an act of God's grace. The indictment against Moses and Aaron had to be carried out in spite of their years of faithful service. We are never immune from failure, and the righteousness of God is never compromised no matter who a person is. God can and does forgive on the basis of the finished work of Christ. Anything that takes away from the value of that accomplished redemption must be dealt with. That one act of Moses typifies the doctrines often taught by some today that the work of Christ was important but we "have to do the best we can." That is an insult to the effectiveness of divine grace.

*Stop, pay attention, before you foolishly act,  
In an emotional outburst given without grace or tact,  
Lest the outcome will be this solemn fact -  
In this you have sinned against God.*

*Look, and make sure you have divine approval  
Unmistakably given lest there be the removal  
Of you from God's service that leads to disapproval -  
Because you have sinned against God.*

*Listen to the instructions that are divinely given.  
The rock bringing water will by God Himself be riven -  
To try to do God's work your way is like a little leaven -  
That condemns because of sin against God.*

*Act only in ways you know in which God is pleased.  
Opportunities of good testimony are times to be seized,  
And people are blessed because of what faith first sees -  
When one refuses to sin against God.*

***"Holy Father, when I am called by Thee to perform some act of service for Thy people or unbelievers, may I be committed to act only by the guidance of the Spirit and the Word. Preserve Thy servant from self-will or "playing to the grandstand" in***

*any way. Give Thy servant the wisdom to hear what Thou dost say and do exactly that. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

**Numbers 20:1.** *"Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode at Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there."*

#### **BACK AGAIN.**

*This place is familiar, we camped over there.  
It was from this place we saw the land so fair  
That God had promised, and we could've had,  
But instead we let fearful influence keep us out of the land.*

*Thirty-seven years have passed since we were here before.  
Thirty-seven years with nothing really to show  
For the years that have passed, except a trail of graves.  
Thirty-seven years, we have learned God really saves.*

*Thirty-seven years of miraculous living.  
Thirty-seven years and God has kept on giving.  
We are the next generation; you would think we have learned;  
But the truth of the matter is – God's grace again is spurned.*

*Instead of faith, and lasting spiritual growth,  
Complaints and murmurings come out of our mouth.  
Back here at Kadesh, where we could have gone in,  
We are putting blame on others and repeating our sin.*

*Even leaders are suffering the consequences when  
Our complaining and grumbling will keep them from going in.  
Why can't we learn, what is the matter with us?  
Haven't we learned that in God is our trust?*

*It seems, far too often that we have to repeat,  
What we learned at first when we came to Him in faith.  
To have to come back, and start over again,  
Where we were years ago is a terrible shame.*

*We will not stay here any longer complaining to God.  
We will drop our tents down, and go - trusting the Lord.  
We know there will be battles because this is enemy land.  
But in faith we move on, led by God's gracious hand.*

*We won't come back again to Kadesh; we'll move on by faith.  
We will claim what God has promised and given us in grace.  
Even generations will pass and new ones will come on;  
No, don't come back to Kadesh again, claim the promised land.*

*"Father, back in 1969, it seemed the work was going to slow down and stop because Mr. Harris had just died. But I am thankful that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. I remember the meetings when Peter Ramsay and others were saved. Linda was sick, but God used that and worked. Other blessings followed and we were able to move on without going back to start over again. I praise Thee for this. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

#### **Numbers 20:14-20**

#### **GRUDGES AND GRACE**

There are some times when we have to live with the bad decisions and sins of those who lived long before we did. Such was the case with the children of Israel and the kingdom of Edom. Many generations before, Isaac's second son, Jacob, stole the birthright from Esau, the firstborn. Esau was an unruly and belligerent

man and Jacob was deceitful and wily. Both were ancestors of two nations by the time the Israelites were going to enter the promised land. Esau was the father of Edom, and Jacob the father of Israel. In nations like in families, the character of the first leaders is often felt for many generations. Character isn't some accidental act over which we have no control. What I habitually do, the way I speak, what I read or listen to - every thing that takes my attention enters my mind and from that, human character is formed. The seeds of character are genetic but what I feed my soul with develops my character for good or bad.

Of interest is the fact that Israel did not attempt to enter Canaan from the south. Whether this was the fear of having the same defeat as happened after the spies gave their evil report, or for some other reason, is not recorded. But there is no mention of the Lord's guidance in relation to wanting Israel to pass through Edom. The work of God does not follow the pattern or choices made by the world and its systems. The highway led through Edom but this pathway was closed to Israel. Esau was not allowed to touch Jacob generations before. Now Israel was not allowed to touch Edom. There are consequences to our choices that may not seem serious to us now, but the generations following us may have to bear the negative results of my choices. When grudges are formed against another person or people, they very seldom go away. That is why if I have something against another person, I am to go to him and make it right between the two of us.

There are enough difficulties in life that we will face that it is foolish if we leave something unsettled. That can be dealt with and forsaken so normal relations can be restored and life go on normally. But when there are barriers that are in front of us and we can avoid conflict by going another route, take that way. Some conflicts are unavoidable and some we can deal with ourselves by backing away from them. Open conflict is seldom worth the consequences that come from it. It may seem cowardly to turn and walk away, and it may be even harder to do, but "the servant of the Lord must not strive."

The other two brothers, Moses and Aaron, also were a family unit in which the younger took the lead over the older. At the beginning of the work to which Moses was called, he couldn't do without Aaron. Moses took the lead and made the decisions based on the information God gave him, and Aaron became the spokesman. There were times when Moses could not work with Aaron. Aaron was easily influenced by the pressures put on him by those around. Under pressure he made the gold calf as an idol to be worshiped even when Moses was getting the law from God on Mount Sinai. On another occasion Aaron and Miriam were open in their opposition to Moses leadership. Not all family matters are easy to deal with and there will doubtless be differences of opinions at times. This is inevitable. How we deal with such times calls for grace on our part.

Aaron was a gifted orator who could support Moses with eloquent speech. He was also weaker when it came to opposition, pressure and trouble. There is no way to avoid the necessity of grace in family life. Moses became the intercessor of Aaron on occasions but he never rejected his brother. Aaron seemed to have qualities of grace that God saw and so was appointed by God to be the high priest for the nation. He was the representative of the people to God, and for God to the people. Normally when Moses gave directions to Aaron, he carried them out. One has said, "It takes more grace that I can tell, to play the second fiddle well."

Before Israel entered the promised land, Aaron died, probably because of his sin of rebellion and because he was with Moses when he smote the rock twice. His association with Moses was normally one of honor, but in this case neither honored God before the people. No matter what great things one might do in life, if God is not honored, there are serious consequences. Aaron was a type of grace but when the flesh claims that which belongs to God, grace is not evident. The grace of God is what people should see in those who serve and represent Him.

The public transfer of the high priesthood was seen when Moses took the priestly garments from Aaron and put them on Eleazar. This was likely done on a high place so that all the congregation could see and recognize that Eleazar was the new high priest. It would not have been right to wait until after Aaron died to take the high priestly garments off of him. They would have been defiled and had to be burned. The transfer of leadership is not a hidden matter. Some things need to be made perfectly clear in public so there is no question as to who is leading the Lord's people. After Eleazar was publicly given the robes of the high priest and took that office, Aaron died. It is a hard thing to officiate at the death of one in the family, but it does give honor where honor is due. The passing of one who has led the people of God deserves the respect of the people of God as they commemorating his passing on.

*The social structure of a family  
Began in the mind of God.  
This unit of related people*

*Is introduced early in His written Word.  
It is never something to lightly consider  
That similar characteristics family members bear.  
God established this lasting social unit  
And with Him we His life can share.*

*Two brothers seemed to be so different;  
Their life-styles were very diverse.  
One was unruly and wild -  
The other one subtle and perverse.  
Though twins they didn't like each other -  
Their interests were wide apart.  
They even divided their father and mother -  
Conflict was there from the start.*

*Two other brothers had a different life,  
They were separated right from their youth.  
They didn't have the problem of strife,  
It was more in their commitment to truth.  
God in His grace used each one in the way  
He chose to fulfill His divine plan.  
Each did a work for God in their day -  
And each one was an honored man.*

*We all are different though our family is the same -  
God takes what is able to be used for His glory.  
Some of us have different interests but have the same name.  
Each one's life is a very different story.  
But if we commit ourselves to the Lord -  
To faithfully do the best in what He does choose,  
We will use what He gives us and never hoard  
These abilities and gifts - for His glory we will them use.*

*"Father, I know there are difficulties in families as to ability, gifts, and personalities. But it seems to me that Thou art able to use whatever a person has or is when we re surrendered to Thee. I yield myself to Thee for whatever will be to Thy greatest glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 21**

### **SET FORWARD**

For many years the Israelites had been waiting and dying. Finally, the next generation was ready to gain and possess the land of promise. This time the first event following the refusal of Edom to allow them to cross their territory was that the same people who had defeated them thirty-seven years earlier, came against them again. This time however Israel had made their vows, their commitment to keep the pledges and obligations to the Lord, ahead of time. The same people at the same place who had defeated the first generation, were defeated by the second generation of Israelites. The thoughtless attitude of the first generation was the result of them not being faithful to God in their spirits, not willing to obey God, and they forgot the blessings of God. The 78th Psalm had been learned by then perhaps. At least the next generation had their first victory at Hormah. This beginning of a series of victories should have cheered them on the long road around Edom, but instead they became "much discouraged because of the way."

Our expectations are often very different than God's plans. If all we had were miraculous victories, we would learn nothing of the faithfulness of God. It wouldn't be long before we began to think we were entitled to a road of ease and easy victories through life. We probably learn more about ourselves and God during the times of long journeying through a dry wilderness, then in the quick flush of victory. During the times of dryness and tedium we learn who we really are and what is really important. Do we ever get to the place where "our soul loatheth this light bread" of the Word of God? Do we turn to other sources that seem much more exciting and active? Do we find ourselves spending more time getting our thoughts from the writing of

men than meditating by ourselves on what God has written? That is when God's people fail and speak against God and those God has chosen to lead them. When that happens, the consequences are severe.

The long journey around Edom led the children of Israel to the Gulf of Aqaba where their complaint, and dissatisfaction with God's provision resulted in the plague of venomous snakes. God had acted on behalf of His people, but now they again were moved by the temptation of the world, the source of their dissatisfaction - the devil, and their own discontented nature - the flesh. When these three enemies of the people of God unite, there is a great loss and grave consequences that lead to death. The awakening of conscience and the confession of sin opens the way for God to act in mercy and grace. In mercy He had Moses make a serpent of brass and put it on a pole so it was able to be seen by all who would obey the word of grace - "look and be healed." The metal form of a serpent was not a healing potion. Healing came by obeying the word of the Lord and "by grace ye are saved, through faith." That is still the way the sin-sick soul today is healed. The murmuring led to the bite of the serpents. Confession, "We have sinned for we have spoken against the Lord," led to God's revealed grace.

The Lord Jesus Christ when He was here used this same incident to illustrate the new birth. When a person admits to their guilt and inability to save themselves from sin and its consequences, they are to look by faith to Christ on the cross. The sacrifice He made was evidence of the love of God that was demonstrated when "Christ died for us." The cross doesn't save a soul. The Savior saves us when we look to Him by faith and accept Him. What He has done for us, is what saves us by the grace of God. New life and peace come through a look at Jesus by each individual person. Each one has the privilege to look and live.

Many Israelites died because of the venom of the snakes, but many lived because they looked at the brazen serpent. For some reason the Israelites kept the metal image of a serpent and it became a stumbling block to them in later years. They actually used it as an object of worship when Israel turned to paganism. In the time of revival under Hezekiah the king, it was finally destroyed. Strangely the cross itself has been duplicated in many forms and people venerate the symbol of Christ's death for sin. The Lamb of God who bore away the sin of the world is how life is imparted to people today. Yet most people ignore the work the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished by His death. He died that we might live. By looking to Him in faith, "Look and live," becomes a reality. The new birth begins a new life. That new life is characterized by faithful living for God in difficult times as well as victories.

The Israelites moved east of Edom toward Moab where the descendants of Lot lived. Both the Moabites and Ammonites, though descendants of Abraham's nephew, became enemies of the seed of Abraham. There were fertile fields in Moab as well as high hills of which Mount Nebo, where Moses saw the land, was the highest peak. The book of wars recorded in songs and poems, the battles of Israel and the victories God gave them. The practice of remembering the ways of God with us including the spiritual victories is still important in the lives of the people of God. To go back over the life of an assembly is a benefit to those who have been added to the number in the recent past. Going back over a life of living by faith will be a benefit to our children and grandchildren. Seemingly small incidents in life such as the digging of a well and finding water were important to the Israelites. They even wrote a song about it. We never know what might resonate in the life of one of our descendants and be used by God to bring them to faith in Him, or increase their faith. The gift of water from a well would be highly prized in a dry wilderness. God working with us in spite of the pressures of an ungodly world can be a blessing that is remembered for a long time.

The Amorites had taken over the kingdom of Moab before the Israelites got there. Perhaps Sihon, the king, thought he would be able to intimidate the Israelites or defeat them in battle, but by this time the people of God had begun to realize God was for them and with them. For any of us to think we are strong enough in ourselves to defeat the enemies arrayed against the kingdom of God, is not only foolish, but arrogant. One wrote, "He that is down need fear no fall. He that is low no pride. He that is humble shall ever have God to be his guide."

Not only were the Amorites defeated and their land taken over by the children of Israel, but also Og, king of Bashan and that kingdom. The property claimed on the east of the Jordan River went north to the east side of the Sea of Galilee. Even though Og was a giant of a man, and the forces against Israel were great, God working for His people is greater than anything, or people who oppose divine purposes. We may not always know why adverse things happen to us, and we live for years in a dry wilderness. God is able to change everything in a very short time. When all seems lost, God is able to bring a surprising victory. Even though the opposition to our faith seems strong, our faith, though feeble, trusts in the One who can do what we cannot do and bring victory out of seeming defeat.

**Numbers 21:4.** *“And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.”*

#### **BECAUSE OF THE WAY.**

*It is the same place; it is the same people –  
The first generation was defeated here.  
The second generation, calls for God help –  
The enemy is defeated and finally – victory.*

*Hard fast behind this on the journey toward home –  
Discontent with manna that tasted like honey and full of life –  
Now they “loath this light bread” and miracle water;  
The second-generation fades and many die.*

*The road is made clear but it is not easy going.  
There is opposition ahead and the tension grows.  
Now there are armies coming against us, and we wonder –  
And the second generation rises to the challenge.*

*They turn to the north and God is with them.  
One city after another is taken and advances are made.  
The ancient brother-enemy is bypassed and left to languish  
The second generation moves forward – orderly and in rank,*

*We may not have experienced the 400 years in Egypt.  
We may not clearly remember by experience, the crossing of the Red Sea.  
We may not remember the Mt. Sinai visit from God.  
But the second generation has a work to do.*

*The way may seem difficult as we press forward to meet the foe.  
The work may seem hard and unproductive in many places.  
The walk may be tense and hard when we are misunderstood.  
“But the toils of the road will seem nothing when we get to the end of the way.”*

*“I know discouragement is wrong Father, for those of us who have experienced Your works in so many powerful and meaningful ways. Yet we sometimes are looking in the wrong places and get sidetracked. Help me to maintain a sense of vision and purpose that can be passed on to those of the next generation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”*

## **Numbers 22**

### **THE ERROR OF BALAAM**

The word "covetous" sometimes seems not much more than a fairly inconspicuous and unused way of expressing greed. In the apostate prophet, Balaam, it is personified. This Mesopotamian diviner must have been notable in the Middle East for his prognostications. His name means "confuser" and he certainly lived up to that designation. His heart was focused on money, "the wages of unrighteousness," and he was Satan's man for the moment. Those fabricators of lies followed "the father of lies," even to using speaking in unknown tongues and ecstatic speech. He did have a knowledge of God and knew Him to be the God of Israel. There were people in the days of the early church who followed "the way of Balaam," and there are those today who do the same. "The wages of unrighteousness" have great appeal to those who measure success in financial terms. There are those who preach a "prosperity gospel." They say God does not want anyone to be poor. This teaching is false. We do not find any scripture that teaches God exalts the rich. The scriptures do give warnings along that line. "Set not they heart upon them (riches)." Earthly riches are described in the Bible as: spiritually valueless, inferior, fleeting, unsatisfying, hurtful, deceitful, choking, uncertain and corrupted.

Balak, whose name means "empty," feared the nation of Israel that had passed around his country, Moab, to the east and then went north and defeated Sihon and Og. Moab was not a Canaanite nation and God had not planned for it to be attacked. But Balak feared what he saw and seemed to know there was more

involved than just a skillful army. When God's people are living in fellowship with Him and obediently following His word, there is something unique and special about their demeanor and practice. People of the world wonder how a scripturally gathered company can function without a worldly form of organization. God uses whatever is suitable to a called out group of His own people to work His will in a given place. Scripturally gathered assemblies are not like franchises that make one assembly identical to another. Each has a "personality" that God suits to the location.

In God's dealings with Balaam, He was never addressed as Lord, nor does He speak of Himself as Lord. When He is Lord, there is obedience, faith, love, appreciation and gratitude that is evident. Any person that uses the work of God or the things of God as a deliberate means of financial gain, knows nothing about the Lordship of Christ. Balaam's first refusal of Balak's request and the riches that would be his, was not because of a conviction on his part to obey God. He was plainly told to refuse what Balak wanted even though the wages of unrighteousness appealed to him. At the second time when a delegation came from Balak, Balaam used the words, "my God," but it was only as a courtesy and a way to avoid personal responsibility for rejecting Balak's offer. By dodging his personal responsibility he made a fatal mistake and the "error of Balaam" for a reward took place on the third time the offer was made. If we are not convinced that a thing is wrong, even though God clearly says it is, then He may allow our desire to take place - but we must suffer the consequences.

Apostasy is deliberately rejecting or going against revealed truth. From such action there is no recovery. Balaam's greed was not satisfied. God may allow what He does not want one to have or do. Balaam was reminded three times on the way to see Balak, when the Angel of God used the donkey to tell him he was out of the way of righteousness. God is never limited as to how He chooses to convey His message. We may even see something take place before our eyes that we know is supernatural but the spiritual realities escape our consideration. An awakening to the reality of the living God who communicates with men is not the new birth. Sometimes changes in behavior takes place because one fears the consequences of punishment that would follow.

Against his will, Balaam had to only speak the words God had put in his mouth. Looking down from a high position on some peak where they could see the people of God encamped, Balak with Balaam beside him, sacrificed animals as the pagan religions of that area practiced. The organs of sacrificed animals were often inspected as some portent relating to the future. The liver was the one they looked at most to be considered when they made their offerings and decisions. For us as the people of God to follow the ways and practices of religions around us must be very offensive to God. When one takes the place of a seer or fortune-teller who has some magic powers that people believe in, that person is under the control of Satan.

There is a real difference between what is of God and what is of man. The first and fundamental difference is that God has given us His word to guide our teaching and conduct. What is convenient, comfortable or friendly doesn't really matter. It is what God says that is important. Anything that exalts and enriches man by men, is of the world. If God chooses to do that, then that is His prerogative, but it will be done with a spiritual reason in view. The insignificance of man compared with God is obvious when God is working His will. The faith of men in Him is the best way people can please God. For us to overlook or curse what God has chosen to bless, puts us on the side of the enemy. The opposite is true as well. When God makes His will known, then accept that verdict as final and do not try to avoid the responsibility of refusing what God refuses.

*When something has been made plain - accept it.  
Don't try to avoid the consequences that come.  
Avoidance of responsibility can become a bad habit -  
That divides both nations and people's homes.  
There are costs to be paid when one does right.  
That should be expected, and we should be willing to pay  
For the misunderstanding of those who live only by sight -  
And make a mockery of what God does do and say.*

*Attractions will always be in this world -  
That appeal to pleasure and our flesh.  
When we see them, then the flag of faith unfurl -  
So those things will be put to the test  
Of real value, not just what is appealing  
But what is real and what is able to last.*

*The dark side someone may be concealing -  
That will be known only when this life is past.*

*When God speaks, may I have faith to listen -  
For I know what He says is the truth.  
Worldly things may look bright and glisten -  
But the outside doesn't show real worth.  
I need to hear and see what God sees -  
And take action on what I know pleases Him.  
He alone is the One I want to serve and please -  
Not to be known as one who pleases men.*

**"I know, Father, that a person can talk to Thee and be heard. But if there is no faith and no willingness to be led by Thee in paths of righteousness, then the final consequences of such an attitude is eternal loss, not gain. Amen."**

**Numbers 22:12.** "And God said unto Balaam, 'Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.'"

### **PRESSURED.**

*Popularity is always attractive.  
I am noticed – people know I am here.  
They think I am special – even the king does – Wow!  
He has called for – ME! Maybe I am important after all.  
They know my reputation – divination is my game.  
Fakery is not a nice way to put it.  
I know there is a God and He is the All-powerful One.  
But I have power too – and a choice in the matter.*

*Money has never lost its appeal.  
"The rewards of divination" are one of the tactics of pressure.  
Let him see the money – let him see it right in your hand.  
He won't be able to resist if he can see the money.  
They are all alike – if the price is right they will bite.  
Don't worry, right and wrong are not important if the money is there.  
Balaam knows there is an unseen God who knows everything.  
But that is money there and it is yours if you go with them.*

*Importance, everyone wants to feel important.  
Tell him we can't do without him – we must have him, not another.  
He has spoken to God and God said, "No", but make him think he is #1.  
He is going back to God and is arguing with Him.  
Questioning God is always the way of the self-important ones.  
Apply a bit of pressure and he'll come, you'll see.  
God is still letting him make his own choice.  
He fell under pressure, even though he knew it was wrong.*

*Deception - guile, trickery, craftiness, cheating, cunning;  
Whatever you might want to call it, flourishes under pressure.  
After all, what they don't know won't hurt them.  
I'll do it my way no matter what is right and wrong because it is my business.  
Pretending to serve God and pretending to serve man at the same time  
That is deception – disobedience for profit when under pressure.  
What difference does it make if no one gets hurt by me.  
Who will know the difference? I will – the apostate – and God!!*

*Whatever means are used to pressure you to go your own way – without God;  
Resist, turn away from, walk away, say "No."  
The "error of Balaam" is a lesson to us all – the reward of greed is wrong.*

*"Others do it, why can't I" is not an option – God says "No."  
If it is the pressure of popularity and acceptance but wrong, say "No."  
If the money seems so attractive and the opportunity to good to pass up –  
If there seems to be personal importance attached to it and it's a chance of a lifetime –  
Say "No," because you are under a Higher Authority – do not yield to pressure.*

*"O God, I know it is not uncommon to be put under pressure to acquiesce to someone else's desire. It has happened a lot. But give me the courage and wisdom to say "No" when it must be said. I do not want to go where I should not be. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 23**

### **THE PEOPLE SHALL DWELL ALONE**

There are those who have wondered how the prophecies of Balaam have found their way into the Hebrew scriptures of the Pentateuch. In the Middle East it was a common practice to commit events and important things that were taught, into both the oral and written form of communication. This was an on-going practice long before written communication was used in Europe. The Israelites knew the taunt-song of the Amorites when they moved against them. So there were oral and written communications among the people who lived in that area. Yet more importantly, the Holy Spirit of God gave the information about the conversations between Balaam and Balak to Moses so that they would be read by God's people. They knew in this way how the idolaters would look upon them. From that high place where Balaam, Balak and those with them stood: the orderliness of the encampment, the Tabernacle in the center of the camp and the cloud and pillar of fire would impress the on-lookers they were up against more than they had known before. This was no mere group of nomads just passing through. How to deal with such a God who had designated each tribe to a certain place with a special banner identifying it, and the visible evidence of God over the Tabernacle, was more than a leader could deal with.

Of interest, is that now God is referred to as the Lord. Balaam is under divine authority even though he was spiritually dead to God. In his first experience of speaking to Balak he learned what God thinks about His people, their standing before Him, and that God has answers to give to those who accuse His people for some reason. We know there are shortcomings and failings in and among the people of God, but as far as the unbelieving world is concerned, God sees them perfect and complete in Christ. God can open the eyes of men to see what the natural man does not see. We "are justified freely by His grace" and are "accepted in the Beloved."

The first parable or prophetic oracle Balaam spoke after he returned to Balak, who was going through the religious forms they were used to, defined the negative position of Israel. They were a separate people who would dwell alone. Their identity was unique and would be kept. As a nation the people of God are separated unto Him. God makes them what He wants them to be. It wasn't so much what they were separated from, that was important, but rather who they were separated to. This same principle holds true for us today. We "go forth unto Him without the camp." The rituals men perform today are of no more value to God as the religious rituals that were common to men in the ancient past. People often sought the tops of mountains for religious activities because they thought they would be closer to their gods. Where there were no high peaks of land, they built towers or ziggurats for the same purpose. In Christendom, high steeples have been built to follow the same man-made religious practices.

Prophetic oracles were not only passed on in the Middle East during those days, but anything of significance was written down. Israel was the only nation linked to a living God by a covenant. All others worshiped idols formed by men to characterize their own ideas of the so-called deity they appealed to. So Israel was an isolated people that dwelt alone and were not numbered with the nations of idol worshipers. They were isolated by the moral law and commands of God that were given to them at Mount Sinai. Balaam was like so many today; they want their "last end" to be one with the same blessings as the people of God, but they want to be well accepted by the world and its ways now. There is a cost of separation that requires the people of God to be unique in the way they live as well as how they worship God. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."

The second parable God gave Balaam took a positive position where God's people are seen on safe ground. God had blessed them and His blessings are not reversed. In God's sight they were separated and justified because God is with them as a "King among them." Balak had taken Balaam to where he would not see so much of the camp of Israel hoping from that position Balaam would put a curse on the Israelites. Apparently Balak was curious as to how God communicated His word to Balaam, and so God addresses Balak. How frightened he must have been when he realized God was reading his thoughts! It is important

that we realize nothing is hid from God. "He knoweth our thoughts afar off." The second prophetic pronouncement was longer as Balaam affirmed that God was morally consistent and does not lie. What God says is absolute truth. Balaam had no choice but to obey what God said and pass on God's decisions in relation to His people. Men may change and think that God is blessing them because of their decisions. But the spiritual standards God has given remain unchanged. Loyalty to Him and His revealed truth is all that preserves us from spiritual disaster.

Balaam's prophecy portrayed Israel as an unstoppable wild bull that in its strength defeated all who opposed it. It was also like a lioness on the hunt who tracks and kills its prey while the lion distracts all but the hunter by its loud roaring. Balaam knew magic had no place in the nation of Israel. God was the Source of all power and authority. Any divination made by men is useless when God is in control. The people of God may have been unaware of all that was going on in those peaks where Balak and Balaam and those with them watched. We may not have a clue as to what is being taught by God to those who watch us from a distance and wonder how God is able to preserve His own people. It is enough that we realize there is a King among us and we are to obey Him and submit to His control. The outcome of a matter is up to God, not to us. Neither Balak or Balaam were willing to change their position and beliefs in spite of what God said. Balak persuaded Balaam to try again in a different location, and Balaam was still willing to go along with him for the sake of "the wages of unrighteousness."

*What he said was right, but he still was wrong -  
His motive was to get what he could.*

*It was easy to see, the people of God are strong -  
They were conscious that in their midst was the Lord.  
So even though the words seemed ever so right -  
And they were, for they came right from God -  
The apostate prophet still trusted only by sight.  
Even though God used him to pass on His word.*

*God is consistent, no man changes His mind -  
Though He can be appealed to by faith, in prayer.  
When one seeks His will, that will he will find -  
But the question is, does he really sincerely care?  
Or does one say right words when it is convenient -  
With an ulterior motive laying behind them -  
Hoping God who knows all, will with deception be lenient -  
And will not consider the true motive to be sin.*

*The pressure will come, from it we cannot escape -  
To curse what God blesses, and what He blesses to curse -  
There are consequences waiting behind the decisions we make -  
And what we thought was trivial was very much worse  
Than if we had stood faithful and had taken a stand -  
That to our Lord and His word more loyal we'd be.  
With God there is no subterfuge, no slight of hand -  
I wonder what He can truthfully say about me.*

**"O Righteous Father, there seems to be a desire on the part of some to blend what Thou dost give as truth, with what men say is more convenient. Grant to Thy servant the will, discernment and courage to know when to stand firm in loyalty and allegiance to Thee in spite of what others may say and do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**Numbers 23: 9.** *"For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: Lo this people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations."*

#### **DWELL ALONE.**

*There is a difference when we are faced by God: what seemed tidy, clean and unsoiled -  
Doesn't seem the same.  
Instead of pureness and untainted to men; it is dirty, stained - unclean before God;  
And my head is bowed in shame.  
The people who seem so fine, and I compare my life and works with theirs -  
Are just like me.*

*And fame and self-glory, contentment and all the works and pleasures we share –  
Before God's holiness flee.  
"I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." [Isa. 6:5]*

*There is a difference when we are faced by men: what seems right and acceptable to them  
Is not right.  
The people who have no name, who worship and praise and preach simply, they seem –  
To be so "tight."  
Their camp is orderly, their Book is the same; they meet so often and can't be blamed –  
But they want separation.  
Why don't they mix with others and join; if we were all together then we'd be the same –  
One big congregation.  
"Lo, the people shall dwell alone."  
[Num. 23:9]*

*There is a difference when life is done: the past is past and we reach the heavenly home –  
And we see Jesus.  
We will be glad we faced up to our sin and claimed; the cross-death was for me alone –  
And the Savior I face.  
Not in pride but in humility, not trusting myself but by faith I am free, to walk with God,  
And with His people.  
We walked in the light with God and His people, we lived and followed His holy Word –  
And we are at home with the faithful.  
"Surely goodness and mercy has followed me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."*

*"Father, I am contented when I know I am where You want me to be. Even though I know I am not a perfect man, and do not dwell with perfect men; I know the place for me to dwell is with those separated unto You and Your Word alone. Let me live with them until I reach heaven. Amen."*

## **Numbers 24**

### **VISION OF THE ALMIGHTY**

Not very often are unbelievers able to see things as God sees them. Occasionally God removes the blinds of the mind that the god of this world has put on those that hear His Word. When such a thing happens, that person is extremely accountable to act in faith in God. But in the case of Balaam it did not make him a man of faith, only one who was compelled by the Holy Spirit of God to speak the truth. This time Balaam didn't use the pretense of looking for some power of divination on his own. He just looked to where the people of God had been, and presently were, and the Spirit of God led him to see things about the people of God in the way God sees them. God doesn't just look back at the failures and shortcomings of His people. He sees them from the vantage point of looking at the glory of His people and accepts them in Christ. The potential is there. The power is there. And there are glimpses of the glory that will be seen in His chosen ones in the future. When they are obedient to His Word, God's truth is there to be seen. The grace of God is on display when Christ-likeness is seen in their fellowship, obedience to God's commission and their unity of purpose.

The first parable of Balaam pointed out to Balak the value of the separation of God's people. This still is an important truth to be practiced among God's people if we are going to avoid the counterfeit Christianity that is so appealing to the natural man and carnal believers. The second parable established the fact that God's people are justified by God's grace and "what God hath wrought" is all of God, as it relates to the standing of His people. In the third parable, Balaam speaks of the view of the moral beauty God sees in His people who are "in Christ." A number of images are used to describe how God sees us, and in particular, His view of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Looking at the order and design of the encampment of the Israelites was very impressive to the natural eye. The Spirit of God gave Balaam further insight that went beyond the visible to the spiritual. The Spirit came upon him for that reason. In our favor, we those who have been born again by the Spirit of God, can see beyond the visible, to those things God describes. Faith has its own eyesight. The valleys speak of the fertile areas of fruitfulness, that with the application of the water of the word of God, and the sweet empowerment of the Holy Spirit, brings forth abundant moral produce for the glory of God and the blessing of His people.

When from the fullness of God, there springs forth obviously spiritual blessings to nurture God's people, and through them people around are blessed, then praise ascends to our gracious Lord.

A variety of trees were mentioned in Balaam's prophecy. Ling aloes are noted for the fragrance contained in them, and perhaps in them are healing properties. Those costly trees brought from far away places would indicate the people of God have a source of wealth far superior to that which people of the world can draw from to satisfy them in a way similar to those who have the wealth of the world at their disposal. The moral wealth of the people of God comes from the abundant provisions of God Himself. The cedar tree is noted for its usefulness, its fragrance and its long-lasting strength. It doesn't deteriorate and rot quickly like so many other trees. The lasting effect of the people of God who obey Him and love Him may not be obvious at first. As time goes by, people say, "Are you still there?" and wonder at the moral courage and strength of purpose the people of God have. Israel's future glory in referred to in this parable as Israel is again referred to as the wild bull in strength and the great lion that will be revealed when the Lion of the tribe of Judah shall be seated on the throne of David. God's people will endure forever because of the commitment God made to them when He adopted them as His own.

The anger of Balak is mentioned when he clapped his hands in a gesture that often meant death to the offending party in the culture of the Middle East. Balaam's greed for money was not met, nor was Balak's anger appeased, but when God is in control of a situation, neither the immoral designs of men, nor the hatred and anger against God's revealed will, can prevail or stop what God has decreed will happen.

The final prophetic parable of Balaam opens up to a view of Israel's glory in the future. There will come from Israel, the Root and Offspring of David to rule in authority and righteousness over all the nations. Out of Jacob will rise a Star that we know to be the Bright and Morning Star which is one of the titles of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no question as to who will reign when the Scepter arises out of Israel. His rule will be one of all-wise authority, absolute justice and judgment dealt out in a way that cannot be accused as unfair. The nations such as Moab (Balak's kingdom) will be crushed because of their unrighteousness and idolatry. Even Edom, spared previously because of ties to Israel, will be brought in as servants when Christ comes in His power and glory. The Amalakites, Israel's original enemy, and all other nations will be subdued.

The world, the flesh and the devil have always plagued the people of God, but the day is coming when even these ancient enemies of God's people, who have opposed us throughout our lives, will be brought under sovereign rule with when Christ comes. Balaam's doctrine was to mix the people of God with the people of the immoral world around, and some religious leaders today follow, and promote that practice. Even such a greedy person as Balaam, when overpowered by the force of the Spirit of God, had to prophesy what was the truth. He had sought to make great gain out of his deception, but "in vain doth earth and hell oppose, for God is greater than His foes." Balaam was probably a polytheist who God used for His greater purposes. The false prophet perished with the Midianites at a later time. One may say a lot of good things that are right, but that does not make a person of faith, nor one a child of God. We will be increasingly challenged as to our position and commitment to God as the days pass. It is incumbent upon us to not allow the deceptions of our enemies to turn us aside from our "high calling of God." We owe Him our lives, our faith and our earnest endeavor to carry out His work and word in ways that are given by Him, not in ways that appeal to those who want to curse the people of God.

Numbers 24:17. *"I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."*

#### **VISION OF THE ALMIGHTY.**

*The time was yet distant, when back in the past,  
A man stood and prophesied thus.  
Even though he was fallen, God used him to cast  
Light on things that will happen - for us.*

*He told of a Person, in his message from God,  
Who would come in great wisdom and strength.  
His coming would bring great light to the world,  
When Messiah would bring to earth peace.*

*The prophesy made, happened just as he said,  
Though nearly fifteen hundred years had passed.  
The Star rose up high as some wise men prayed;*

*And realized the Messiah had come at last.*

*The apostate prophet standing there on the hill,  
Really didn't understand what he was saying.  
But God used the man to accomplish His will,  
To fulfill all the promises He was making.*

*The formidable One who will finally reign,  
And wield His Scepter of office with power.  
When He rises to take the throne belonging to Him,  
The Kingdom-authority that He rules lasts forever.*

*The foes He overcomes, and the enemies defeated,  
Will not be able against Him to stand.  
When the plans and purposes of God are completed,  
The Almighty will hold the scepter in His hand.*

*Some of the prophecies refer to David and some to David's "Son."  
Some of the predictions were fulfilled in the past,  
And some will be in days yet to come.  
We know the King once promised will be coming at last.*

*"O Father God, in Thy plan of the ages, there have been those who spoke about things they didn't personally experience. You were able to have the ass speak, as You directed, and an apostate speak, as You told him what to say. I am asking that You will take these lips of mine and this mind to speak the Words of truth and salvation today. Surely there are some of those young people who want to be saved. Please save them today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 25**

### **THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM**

If we only read the previous chapters of Numbers, we would think Balaam was a pretty good fellow even though he was like a lot of other people - he liked money. But in reading on through the book and in other parts of the scripture, we learn what the man was really like. First impressions are not always sufficient to make wise decisions. A person can appear godly, personable and agreeable when we first meet them. However, when we hear how a person reads and explains the scripture, and can discern their attitude toward the word of God, it helps us to form a clearer opinion of a person's sincerity. When we read what people write in a book, we need to make sure we have a true understanding of who they are and what they believe before we pay attention to the message they convey. We are not able to get a clear picture of who a person is by facial expressions and the first or second conversation. What have been the results of their teaching? How have others been helped or hindered by their influence? Are the things they teach and advice they give, producing lasting and positive effects? Has their influence strengthened or weakened the people of God? "Lay hands suddenly on no man" means don't jump to conclusions too quickly. Not every person who has very clearly articulated a sermon or passed on information, can be trusted.

The spirit of apostasy can begin when one is discontented with what they hear or what is taught, even though it is scripturally sound. Usually ulterior motives are involved in the undermining of the truth that has been taught. When that happens there is often an attempt on the part of the one who turns deliberately away from the truth, to try to get others to agree with, and go along with the new course of action the discontented person advocates. It can happen in any place where the truth of God is taught and practiced. Often it comes from those who move into an area from some other place where they were discontented. With smooth words and friendly attitude, they attract people to themselves. Before long they will have formed friendships and a following, especially if they have a position of some importance in the secular world.

It is important that leaders among God's people keep in mind it is their responsibility to "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock." When rumblings of discontent and demands to make changes arise, then seek out the causes or the ones from whom this comes, and see if there is any justification for planting these seeds of apostasy. When people deliberately turn away from what they have known to be the truth, and even held it, then there needs to be action taken to stop this movement away from revealed truth. If the leaders fail to act biblically in such a situation, they are held responsible, and there is a serious price to be paid. Blatant defiance and disregard for those who have proven by their life of consistency and faithful

service, by those who raise the challenge against the practices of an assembly, is evidence of the spirit of apostasy. It is impossible for us to determine who is an apostate because only God knows the heart of people. But extreme disregard of those who are godly and a depreciating of any kind of the biblical practices of the decrees of God's word, is evidence of the danger of apostasy among God's people.

This whole chapter in Numbers gives an illustration of the danger that can come to any assembly. First Corinthians chapter ten verses six through eight, tells us specifically that this happened to the people of God in the past for examples to us, and it can happen today. Self-centered confidence, the appeal of the world's religions, popular opinion and discontent with the way things are among the people of God, led them to idolatry. Idolatry led them beyond eating and drinking in the religious practices of the world, to immoral "play" and the moral and spiritual downfall of men who became morally weak when they should have been spiritually strong. Moral standards given by God have not changed, either by the laws passed by governments, or by the passing of time. God's standards have been plainly stated as well as the consequences that follow when those standards are ignored. A covenant has been formed with the people of God and when that is ignored and the consequences are not faced, death comes. There is no other way to deal with apostates than death.

Those who lead God's people need to be able to interpret the mind of God lest the doctrine of Balaam, the mixing of the people of God with the idolatry of the world, becomes an actual fact. When the doctrine of Balaam leads the Lord's people to discontent and a desire to accommodate to the idolatry that is practiced in the name of God, we must act precisely on what God says, and quickly lest the wrong teaching and practice spreads. Twenty-four thousand people died as a result of the practice of a few. The whole congregation was brought to its knees before God. There is no substitutional sacrifice for apostasy.

When one Israelite acted in blatant disregard for the commands of God, all the weeping of the people meant nothing. There are times when action must be taken. To put off what must be done for fear of offending people is actually disregarding God's will. Phinehas knew what had to be done, and did it, even though it must have been very hard to do. His anger was justified and when anger is against sin, it should not be delayed. When a principle of God is being violated or the rights of God's people need to be defended, we need to act in controlled and holy anger. Peevish or petty anger is not the same as righteous anger against sin. The result of the doctrine of Balaam led to the death of many people and it also began the challenges of Israel against the Midianites and the Moabites who had promoted this apostasy. We are wise to learn and remember the outcome of the temptation to compromise with the ways and religious practices of the world.

**Numbers 25:12.** *"Wherefore say, 'Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace:'"*

#### **COVENANT OF PEACE.**

*Righteous anger – after all this way, you will stoop to this.*

*The doctrine of Balaam raises its ugly head.*

*People fall for it – and because of it.*

*And they go farther than ever.*

*They are eating the sacrifices to false gods.*

*They are bowing low to images.*

*They are succumbing to wiles – of women.*

*The Lord's anger is fierce.*

*A young man – a third generation pilgrim;*

*Rises to the occasion – does what needs to be done.*

*No hesitation – no other way to stop it.*

*Righteous anger comes through a man.*

*This must be stopped – right here.*

*This has been going on right in the open.*

*Right in front of the weeping people – the sin.*

*Right in front of the weeping people the solution.*

*A well-placed javelin and the dying stops.*

*Twenty four thousand paid the consequences of sin.*

*One young man steps out from amidst the crowd.*

*One young man does what has to be done.*

*One young man turns away the wrath of a just and holy God.*

*One young man acts for God zealously.  
And God makes an agreement of peace for ever.  
A covenant is formed, and peace is made.*

*For peace to be made it must be sought.  
Peace isn't an accident, it is made – it is formed.  
There is a bond of peace – an accord – an agreement.  
The God of peace is with those who think His way.  
We follow peace; we pursue it when it seems to flee.  
We preserve peace when we walk with God  
Peace has been made at the highest possible cost – the blood of His cross.  
We have great peace when we love what God loves – the covenant is formed.*

*"I am at peace tonight Father, although I may have seemed to complain earlier. I am just concerned that we haven't overlooked something of vital importance that should have been addressed tonight. I am sorry I got agitated over the lack of interest on the part of those precious souls. Please let me know what else should be done, or else continue to give me peace even though no more have been saved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 26**

### **A NEW GENERATION**

The passing of time often leads to a deterioration of spiritual interest with the effect of the people of God being less interested in the life of faith. In the new generation in Israel, those people twenty years old and upward seemed to have kept the laws and spiritual character God had intended for the nation, even though they had failed in the events of chapter 25. To maintain interest in the things of God from one generation to the next is not easy to do. The first generation of believers realizes what they have been saved from and what they have been saved for. Their appreciation for the One who saved them, the Lord Jesus Christ, is still the motivating factor in their life. The second generation is usually only vaguely aware of what life was like before the light of God's truth changed their parents to live by faith. They are used to the Christian life and know the benefits of grace because the first generation believers speak of it often and are usually quite profuse in giving God thanks for what He has done for them.

The census of the new generation of the Israelites revealed that in some tribes there was growth and in others a decrease of numbers. There is no explanation given for that which indicates neither an increase or decrease of spiritual life. We can't measure the spiritual growth of a company of God's people by the numerical growth. Sometimes growth occurs because of the demographics of society. The same holds true when numbers decrease. The remarkable things revealed by this census is that God was able to preserve a whole nation intact and move them from one land to another, even though the entire adult population died except for three people. Not only did God move them through a barren, hostile wilderness, but He kept intact the spiritual direction of the nation. This was obviously a work of God alone.

Israel's growth had stopped, and actually decreased, but their identity was maintained, and among the nations around their reputation was still maintained. There has been, and probably still is, a variety of sizes and degrees of commitment in the gathered companies of God's people. What makes an assembly of Christians gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, a significant entity, is the Person to whom we are gathered. Every assembly has a unique personality that took much of its character from those who were there in the beginning. As the years pass and leadership changes, there are some differences because of the new generation. Yet it is remarkable that the Lord does maintain the fundamental character of the assembly.

Unbelief kept a whole generation from entering the land of Canaan which God had promised Abraham. But their deaths didn't keep the promises God made from being fulfilled. A whole generation may be missing from among God's people, but how encouraging it is to see a new generation arise after them who are ready and willing to go ahead for God in spite of the failures of their parents or the generation before them. We are told in Hebrews chapter three to "take heed" to the consequences of unbelief in those people. The same thing can happen to us as happened to them. God was grieved for forty years but He had not changed. The deceitfulness of sin, hardened God's people, but has in no way changed the determination of God to bless His people.

The number of people in a tribe determined the size of land they were allocated. The location of the tribe was determined by lot when Israel moved into Canaan. Some places the Lord works in the Gospel, are very

fruitful and there is "land to be possessed" as a biblical testimony is established and the people of God become known in an area. It may be assembly activity in the outreach of the Gospel in that area will mean there are further evangelizing responsibilities from that group of God's people. Other testimonies to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ need to be established. This may continue for a generation or two - or even more. In another area of the country there will be only a few who, under scorn and opposition because they gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ without any other ties, are separated from those around. They have followed the teaching of the word of God and as an autonomous group of God's people, carry out His revealed word. The number of people in the group doesn't determine if it is right or wrong. That is determined by the Lord alone. The "lot" established the location where any particular group was placed by God. The number of people in the group determined the size of land they were to conquer and settle.

The key to success in the Christian life is determined when the word of God is mixed with faith. Spiritual success and power depends on the measure the word of God is mixed with faith. Faith lays hold on what God has given. The lot in Israel was determined by God. Where God places us today is up to Him. My response should be to act in faith no matter what the size of the place is. Faith gives us the view of what is going on through God's eyes. We are allowed to see eternal, invisible things that are spiritual not just temporal through faith. The value of the worship of an assembly when it meets together is not in the size, the sounds or the amount of participation. It is when we by faith, lay hold of the eternal things that our worship is positive and real. That in turn affects our service and keeps us walking in the light and in the liberty we have in Christ. None of this depends on the number of people who are in the fellowship of the assembly of God's people.

Faith keeps the people of God moving forward in joy and strength; not depression, gloom and weakness toward the goal of bringing glory to God. Faith gives to us the hope of glory ourselves, not the fear of judgment. How important it is to the new generation that we practice living by faith that keeps us trusting in the living God, and not doubting in ourselves. By faith we can enjoy now, much of what we will be enjoying in the future. Fellowship with God and fellowship with His people is a real experience that we will share forever. Faith enables us to live presently in the fullness of God's truth and not the emptiness of the world, the disappointments of the flesh, and defeat of the devil.

God may work out His purposes for His people in the quiet, undramatic events of daily living. When He chooses to use miraculous means, we rejoice with great relief over a crisis that has passed. Whether in a dramatic way or the "line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, there a little" way, whenever a new generation learns the value of living by faith, God's people are blessed, and God's name, His honor and His Person are glorified.

**Numbers 26:2.** *"Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel."*

#### **THE CENSUS.**

*The numbers mount as the numbers are taken,  
The men each now are accounted for.  
And as each man's name is added, there is no mistaking;  
This nation is readying for war.*

*The days of wandering in the wilderness are past;  
The time for moving forward is here.  
But before we are able to claim the promise at last;  
There is the need for God's armor to bear.*

*From twenty years and up, responsibility is given,  
You are a man now, there is work to do.  
There are sacrifices to make for the privilege of living  
In the place God has promised to you.*

*It never is right to expect others the burdens to bear,  
That you might all the blessings enjoy.  
The benefits received, mean the costs we must share,  
And use the strengths God gave us to employ.*

*All across the nation, the number of strong men was high:  
Six hundred and one thousand, seven hundred and thirty.  
The same thing is true for us if the truth we will buy,  
Each man must rise and do heartily his duty.*

*To expect a small few to pay the ultimate price,  
Is not right – for my freedom to have.  
It is the work of each man to lay down his life,  
For the souls all around us to save.*

*May we rise to the occasion, to stand up and be counted;  
May the message we have been called upon to tell;  
May the unity of saints and all we have been blessed with;  
Stir our hearts, to save others from hell.*

*“O Heavenly Father, I am numbered with those of a very small nation compared to all that is around. But I am thankful for the participation of so many faithful brethren and sisters who have risen to the occasion and shared in the burdens of the Gospel. Those that have been reached here is evidence that a unified company of saints with a common goal, are able to be trusted with new converts. I give thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”*

## **Numbers 27**

### **HIS INHERITANCE**

An inheritance by its very nature, belonged to someone else before it can be passed on. The inheritance of property in the land of Canaan was passed on to the children of Israel by God Himself who promised the land to Abraham . He has the right to do this because "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." All that God allows us to have and use for ourselves, comes from His gracious hand. He has transferred to us what He knows we can use effectively as "the stewards of the manifold grace of God." The heritage I have, has come from God and to be used to bless the people of God. The family I am a part of has given me a spiritual heritage I need to cherish, guard and pass on to others.

The transfer of ownership or inheritance in Israel was arranged for ahead of time, so there would be no strife when one died. In that way possessions could be kept intact within the family to whom God had designated specific property. The five daughters of Zelophehad wanted the portion of land that would have been given to their father who had died of natural causes, not because of the rebellion of Korah. They knew the promises of God and believed what God had said. Because of the position of women in a patriarchal society, and the fact that they had no brothers, they wanted to keep their family name intact. But they also realize they were in need of a special act of grace in order to have what would have been their father's property. Everything we are and have we owe to God. His grace has supplied what we could never claim for ourselves. He has given abundantly to supply our every need. But it is up to us to lay claim to all the spiritual blessings God has freely provided for us.

These five women made inquiry as to what was freely given by God to those who would enter the land of promise. This all happened even before the Israelites moved forward into their inheritance. They were not careless or indifferent in this matter because by faith they were boldly expressing their confidence in God to bring them in to their reward. Faith in God honors God, and God in turn honors simple faith. To claim all that God has promised before receiving it, is not presumption but an expression of absolute trust. Faith takes hold of all that God has given. Faith does not surrender because of obstacles that might seem to be in the way or problems that arise. The words and actions of faith are rewarded by God. Faith that expresses trust in God enables us to love Him, praise Him, and serve Him acceptably. Faith realizes that our inheritance in Christ is sure and steps forward to claim it without doubt or embarrassment. There is never a reason why we should doubt God's grace. We may not know all the path of faith involves, and we may not know all the actions of divine grace. But in spite of our limitations we will trust Him to do what will bring Him the greatest glory.

Faith brings blessings that would never be experienced otherwise. The daughters of Zelophehad did not remain silent nor acquiescent to the social mores of that day. They knew the promises of God could be counted on and knew what was at stake if they waited to act on what they believed belonged to them. To be so cautious as to not offend anyone will keep us from doing anything of spiritual worth. There will always be people who will criticize. There will always be those who won't act because they don't want to make a mistake. However, when acting in faith even when based on very plain promises from God, we must not

exalt ourselves or let ourselves be exalted by others. The claims and rights of others must be considered and we need to guard with integrity the testimony of God's people.

Zelophehad's daughters were probably strong-willed women which in itself was not wrong. The qualifications that accompanied their request were clarified at a later time. Consideration for the rights of others will keep us from allowing a strong will to act with a high-handed attitude toward others or from disregarding what they deserve. Faith has its limitations. We are only allowed what God chooses to give. There should be no covetous claims because we think we deserve special treatment from God. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

The faith of these five women limited them to marry only those from the same tribe in Israel in order to maintain their inheritance. This would make sure the designated and granted land would remain in the tribe of Manasseh. For us to maintain public testimony on a scriptural basis, believers are not to marry unbelievers, nor should just any religious affiliation be entered into because a person wants to be married. It may be that a Christian would marry another Christian, but that does not mean the yoke is equal. Different opinions in regard to biblical doctrine can seriously affect the testimony of a couple who are married but not "in the Lord."

As far as the inheritance of Moses was concerned, he was a Levite and the Levites had no part of the physical inheritance of the promised land. Because Moses "spoke unadvisedly with his lips" and hit the rock instead of speaking to it to get water, God, in His government, forbade him to enter Canaan. However, God, in His grace, allowed Moses to see the promised land even though he could not go into it. Moses was not grieved by this decision God made. His concern was for the people of God. He earnestly cared for them and knew a designated successor was needed. Designated leadership was given to one who was doing the work and knew what had to be done. That change of leadership had to be publicly acknowledged before the present leader passed on. Those who are suited for leadership care for the people and are able to set goals and do the work that is needed to reach them and respond to their needs.

Moses asked God for the right replacement and the replacement was identified. The replacement was given public tasks to accomplish so the people of God would know who he was. Then a public announcement regarding his authority and ability was made. Confidence in the man who was to be the new leader was expressed when Moses stepped aside and let Joshua lead. These principles still apply in the succession of leadership. Under God's guidance, identify the successor. Holy surrender on the part of one to let go, and the other to take hold, is necessary for the on-going good of the people of God. Unselfishly identify the new leadership and step back. Moses was told to lay his hand on Joshua. Actually he put both hands on him as if he were blessing him to the fullest extent he could. That practice of giving assurance to those who follow, indicates that an older leader has full confidence in the new leadership. This makes it possible to avoid a lot of potential problems that can arise when the next generation inherits the responsibility of guiding and guarding the flock of God.

**Numbers 27:16-17.** *"Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd."*

### **TRANSFER OF LEADERSHIP.**

God is the God of all men. He is the Searcher of the spirits of all men. There is no part of a human's life that isn't scanned thoroughly by God. He is the "God of the spirits of all flesh." All things are openly exposed to Him who judges, recognizes, reveals and rewards as He sees fit.

God knows who is capable, available and willing for the highest employment a man can have – that of leading God's people. He can raise the spirits of men to be suitable for the highest and hardest work. To go before the Lord's people and wisely lead them in war and in peace is not a matter for the novice or the uninitiated. The compound of human flesh and the spirit of a man can only properly work when the divine nature that has been imparted is functioning under the control of Divine Persons.

To feed God's people, one must be fed himself. To guide God's people properly, one must have experienced guidance. To be able to direct others in appropriate ways to appropriate places, one must have been directed himself. To control the actions and work of others, one must have been himself, controlled in the way that only a focused person, committed to his Lord has been in the past. To help others make wise choices that will keep the Lord's people from following every enticement, means that his goals are defined and he is not easily swayed by popular opinion.

One who is called by God to lead, has been associated generally with those who are older and can appreciate the weight of leadership that is on the shoulders and heart of those whom God has called. His spiritual life will have an order to it that he has practiced enough to affect the decisions he makes. Those who have been leaders before him, will have found him to be a person who can be, and has been, entrusted with a work they appointed for him to carry out. His faithfulness to assigned tasks has been tried and proven in smaller things and now he is ready to take on more important things.

The one who is going to go out before the people of God to defend them, has been proven in the area of his courage. He will not boast of his exploits but will have sensed the presence of God with him and is willing to give God all the glory for any accomplishment. His fidelity is without question. Even though he has made mistakes, he has learned from them and is willing to make the necessary changes in his life so that it doesn't happen again. When he accepts responsibility, it is with a spirit of humility and yet confidence in the God he has learned, and is learning more and more, to trust. The transfer of leadership over a period of time will be obviously divinely inspired and will be done in the presence of God's people so that none will be taken by surprise when it happens. The consistent testimony and actions of one who will lead and feed as a shepherd, will encourage the flock to follow without a whole lot of questions. He is not leading as a conquering king, but as a shepherd over sheep that need a leader. He will know where the green pastures are and where to find the still waters for those in his care. When such a man as "Joshua" is found, commit yourself to him and engage him in the work that he may make the transition from servant to shepherd with the least amount of difficulty.

*"O Father of the people of God, Lord of the flock over which Thou hast given shepherds the care: give those who lead among us, a sense of the necessity of preparing others to take their place. May they be prepared enough that if some emergency rises or if a place is permanently vacated, they are ready to lead without fear. May their own spiritual life be so intact that they will be able to smoothly assume the role Thou dost give them, and the Lord's people will find them easy to follow. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 28**

### **DUE SEASON**

There were appointed times when God wanted His people to share with Him that which was of greatest importance to Him. Our Lord Jesus Christ has always been, and always will be the delight of His heart. In this chapter and the next one the Lord described the priestly responsibility and privilege associated with fellowship with Him. In Leviticus the same offerings are described and the reasons for them as it applied to the children of Israel as a whole. Here in the priestly context God describes the way the offerings are to be done in the appropriate times. This is very important to us because He speaks of these offerings as "My offering... My bread... My sacrifice... a sweet savor unto Me." God is bringing us to the time and place when we share with Him what the Lord Jesus Christ is to the Holy and Righteous God. In the life of a Christian, ceremonies and ceremonial cleansing is not sufficient in our relationship with Him. We are to go much farther than that. But sadly, many are satisfied with the forms and symbols rather than with the Lord Himself.

In order that the children of Israel understand what was important to God, the priests offered two burnt offerings every day - one in the morning and one in the evening. In this way there would be the evidence of a sweet-savor offering going up to God continually - day and night. Every twelve hours a perfect lamb, around two quarts of grain mixed with one quart of olive oil, and one quart of wine were offered to the Lord. This was a continual prophetic reminder to the people of God of what our Lord Jesus Christ is to God. As the very first ray of light showed up in the east, the sweet-savor offering was made. It is important for the people of God today to begin each day focusing their attention on the value of the Person and work of Christ to God. "In Him we live and move and have our being." "Our life is hid with Christ in God." "Christ who is our life..." At the end of each day's activities we need to be reminded of the value of the One who is our Mediator, our Advocate with the Father, and why it is that we have a life with God. By daily being reminded of what Christ is to God, it gives us an appreciation of what He is to us and how we are to conduct ourselves on holy ground.

The significance of what Christ has done for us takes on real meaning when we understand what God sees in Him and His accomplishments. True, the sin offering is mentioned thirteen times in Numbers 28 and 29, but the sweet-savor offerings are the main theme as evidenced by the fact they are mentioned fifty-eight times. The burnt offering reminds us of what makes it possible for God to show mercy and grace to us in the first place. He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." God's delight in the Perfect Man, Christ Jesus, is not only something we should consider each day, but this priestly exercise went further to a weekly, monthly and yearly observation of the value God places on our Savior.

The weekly burnt offering was made on the Sabbath, probably around mid-day. There would give visible evidence of it in the additional smoke to the daily burnt offering. The weekly offering was double the amount of the daily burnt offering. We need to enter into God's thoughts about His Son on a daily basis, but there is something special about the weekly remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ that leaves even greater impact on our soul and spirit. Moral, ethical and spiritual cleanness is demanded of us when we worship our God in "the beauty of holiness." The Sabbath was a reminder of the Creator and His creation and of the Redeemer and His redemption.

In the Middle East at the time Israel was about to enter the promised land, the monthly cycle of the moon attracted people to worship not only the moon and sun, but soon stars such as Jupiter, Mars, Saturn and other planets. These were made objects of veneration because of the monthly cycle of nature. The monthly burnt offering would be made on the first day of every month and included two bullocks, a ram, seven lambs and larger portions of grain, oil and wine. This would remind the people of God as they saw the great amounts of smoke arising, of the superiority of their God and what delighted Him, above all the ideas and figments of imagination people had about themselves and their gods. In every one of the offerings made, there was never allowance made for shortages or imperfections. They had to meet God's standards. In plenty or in famine, there is no change in the Lord. God is eternal in every part of His being. The superiority of our Lord Jesus Christ is far greater than any forms of worship and praise people may produce themselves when they meet together weekly, monthly or yearly. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."

There were also unusual days of remembrance. They were days of convocations, when God's people came together to remind themselves in fellowship with others from different places, of what God saw in the sweet-savor sacrifices. We have our daily personal thoughts of our Savior as we worship the Lord. When we come together weekly with those who know us well, the sharing in common of our worship, further opens our minds and hearts to the effects of God's grace toward us. As months and seasons change, we see how much we have compared to those around who try in their own way to connect meaningfully with God. Our access to Him is on the basis of solid faith in what delights Him - not on anything we or others might do. There are times when God's people meet annually and we listen to His word ministered, sing our hymns of praise and worship, pray together - and that fellowship is because of our common interest - our Lord Jesus Christ.

When God gives us the privilege to share with Him the delight He has in His Son, our joy increases and more and more, our Lord becomes the center and theme of our lives. In times of discouragement He is the Lifter-up of our head. When we find ourselves in despair because of failure, He is the Life-Restorer who sustains us and gives us a new start. In dullness because of the weariness of the way, He is the Light to guide us. When we are restless, He is our Peace. When we are aimless, He is our Goal. When we are weak, He is our Strength. When we are in trials, He is our Victory. When we are in spiritual warfare, He is the Captain of our Salvation. When we are hungry, He is our Bread. When we thirst, He is our Life-saving Refreshment. When we are burdened, He is our Burden-Bearer. When we are distracted, He is our Occupation.

The Passover was the first and greatest day of the Feasts of Jehovah. An understanding of what the sacrifice meant to God would change a form, to an act of worship and fellowship with God. Fifty days later the Feast of First-fruits took place and the Lord received from His own people evidence to what He meant to them. The offering of our worship is our greatest participation with God in the holy things that delight His heart.

**Numbers 28:2.** *"Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, 'My offering, and My bread for My sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savor unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in their due season.'"*

#### **PREPARE THE HEART.**

*True worship of God doesn't happen by chance.  
There is preparation that needs to be made.  
You can't speak from the heart with a casual glance  
Toward the cross where true worship does start.  
Because in order to bring what is acceptable to God,  
I must think and prepare what is right.  
To bring what is wrong, or of the flesh to the Lord,  
Is not a true sacrifice in His sight.*

*Two lambs were offered, one at morning and night*

*Of each day of the years as they passed,  
They were prepared in advance, the right age and right type,  
Lest the sacrifice itself be a trespass.  
So as the smoke of the offering ascended on high,  
The people of God could all see;  
First thing in the morning God is worthy to be praised,  
And at twilight too our worship will be.*

*On special days too, our offerings of thanksgivings,  
And adoration and praise we will bring.  
On the first of the month, we should remember His blessings,  
And offer spiritual songs and our hymns.  
The key to all this is the preparations we make,  
As we review all God gives by the way.  
When we come prepared, our baskets we take;  
And offer the contents on that day.*

*Over and over, the process is repeated,  
It is marked by God's indelible grace.  
The worship of God is never fully completed,  
Not even when we meet face to face.  
For the God who as led us; has fed us and loved us  
Is worthy of all glory and praise.  
So each day, week and month, the saints in the chorus,  
Even in heaven, will praise Him for endless days.*

*"O Blessed God; I honor Thee here as I remember Thy grace to me and to others who do not deserve all Thou hast given. Thanks for visiting again with Thy salvation. Thanks for worship and praising saints who glorify Thee here in this place. Thanks for the ones who are listening carefully to Thy Gospel message. I offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving here, along with the incense of joy, and the meal offering of Thy perfect Son, my Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 29**

### **IMPORTANT DAYS**

In the course of our living from day to day we can get very used to our own habits and ways of doing things until life becomes so routine it can get boring. The infinite wisdom of our gracious Father provided a way that we would know ahead of time that special days were set aside to meet together with others of God's people. Two weeks after each year began was the first of the festivals God designated for His people to attend. The Passover was a reminder that God brought them out of bondage into freedom because of the sacrifice of an innocent, sinless victim. In the specified protocol they were to follow, the objective was to focus the minds and hearts of God's people on what satisfied and brought delight to God. We are able to share in that holy joy today when we come together and are occupied with the virtues and work of our Savior. This lifts us above mere New year's resolutions to focusing our attention on what God wants from us in the year ahead.

For the whole week this gathering in fellowship and for fellowship, continued. The fourteenth day of the first month was the first feast, the Passover, speaking to us of redemption. Israel was redeemed by the blood of the Pascal lamb and that was not to be forgotten by the children of Israel. The next day, the fifteenth, was the second of seven feasts, the feast of Unleavened bread, that speaks to us of righteousness imparted to us because of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ that paid for our sins. Then came the feast of First fruits when they presented the first reaping of the harvest to the Lord in grateful appreciation for the provision God made for them when the seed that went into the ground and died, brought forth the fullness of the harvest. That teaches us of the value of the resurrection. That "corn of wheat" has brought forth "much fruit." Fifty days later at the beginning of the harvest of wheat, they came together for the feast of Weeks with the first of the wheat harvest to give to God. This is a type of the Holy Spirit coming and the two loaves remind us that Jews and Gentiles are made into "one new man" in our Lord Jesus Christ.

After four months of busy hard labor, another time of festival was designated by God for His people to come together. Six months of the year had passed, and it is easy to settle into a spiritually lethargic state of mind if

we are not careful. Six months after the Passover had been celebrated, the sound of the trumpets over the land signaled the beginning of the fall festivals with the feast of Trumpets when God's people came together again in holy convocation. Three important celebrations took place as the people of God came together to be revived in their spiritual lives. Now there would be time for looking back with grateful hearts, but also of looking ahead into the future. The ceremony of the blowing trumpets was a solemn one in which the first day of the seventh month was one of worship and participation in the ceremony of offering the sacrifices. When God's people come together on special days, our first attention should be on the One to whom we are gathered, our Lord Jesus Christ.

One that first day of the seventh month, there would be added to the daily sacrifice and the monthly sacrifice, one bull, one ram, seven lambs, one goat and the additional grain and drink offerings. In each of the sacrifices made on the festival days, there was one goat offered. That sin offering was to protect the people of God from sins of ignorance and ritual uncleanness. This is contrasted with the large burnt offering that was made and directed the attention of everyone to that which God was getting from them. It is important for us to appreciate and share in fellowship with others what Christ did for us when He saved us from our sins. But more important is what God sees in Christ and His finished work. We too share in that center of attention by bringing our offerings of appreciation for our Lord and all He is, has done, is doing, and will yet do to bring glory to God and blessing to men.

Ten days later was a very solemn day, the Day of Atonement. On that day the sweet-savor offerings were made. But on that day sin had to be faced and atonement for sin made. There would be sorrow for sin, repentance, and cleansing all in view as the people of God faced the fact that God intended them to be a holy people separated to Himself. That day when the extra sacrifices increased the volume of smoke and incense rising to God, they were pointed to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. There would be an understanding again of the value of reconciliation made by blood. The high priest entering into the holiest of all, and all of the activities of that day remind us of ourselves. First we had to face our sin. The Lamb of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, bore "our sins in His own body on the tree." We have been reconciled and justified by the blood of Christ. He is our Great High Priest who has entered into the presence of God for us with His own blood. The atoning blood of Christ redeems [1Pet.1:18-19]; cleanses [1Jn.1:9]; pardons [Eph.1:17]; justifies [Rom.5:9]; sanctifies [Heb.13:12] and brings peace [Col.1:20].

The feast of Tabernacles started five days later with a solemn ceremony when thirteen bulls, two rams, fourteen lambs, one goat and the meal offering and drink offerings were made. What a volume of praise this cloud of smoke would indicate was ascending to God that first day. Before the feast of Tabernacles (booths where the people camped out for a week) was finished, seventy young bulls were offered in the sweet-savor offering, beside the two rams and fourteen lambs each day. The number of the bulls decreased by one each day. The united worship of all of God's people on that first day would have set a spiritual tone for the whole week that followed. Those feasts provide a legitimate opportunity for enjoyment for God's people within the context of a moral and spiritual environment. Holidays then were true holy days.

When the people of God come together, it is a time of spiritual refreshment to focus our attention on our spiritual life and well-being in which the Holy Spirit guides us. There are both short terms and long terms benefits when we unite together with those from other places for worship and fellowship. There is rest from the normal daily labor of our occupation; there is a change of mind as our attention is directed toward spiritual things. There often comes a change of attitude in relation to who we are and why we are here when we meet in conferences. The conference gatherings of God's people often leads us to reflect on the past as we share the ways of God with us since we last met. It is also a time when we show our commitment to God, His word and His people. At those times we are challenged to give something of value to Him. It may be the cost of one or more "bulls" that we think are worth a lot to us, but as a sacrifice to God they are worth far more. It may be that someone or more might "present their bodies, a living sacrifice."

It is a valuable and important time when Christians come together to rejoice in the Lord [Phil.4:4] and to give thanks to God continuously [1Thes.5:18] for all His blessings and gifts, and to marvel at His on-going grace and love to us.

**Numbers 29: 1.** *"And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing of the trumpets unto you."*

#### **AN ANNUAL CONFERENCE.**

*Come together – celebrate – September has come and the great gatherings!  
Routines are suspended – work is stopped – people come from everywhere.  
It is time for refreshment – of body and mind.*

*Renewal happens when God's people gather.  
The body has a time to rest from daily labor.  
Commitments are reviewed and renewed.  
The Trumpets blow – music is in the air!*

*It takes time to get ready to worship.  
Attitude adjustments are made.  
We get a proper perspective again – of who we are.  
We are reminded as we fellowship with others – of our God.  
We share our thoughts, our hymns, our songs of praise.  
God is in our thoughts – continuously – all day.  
The Trumpets blow – we gather unto Him!*

*The time comes for holy mourning – the sacrifice is offered.  
The priest goes into the tabernacle – and inside the veil,  
Our breath is caught – anxiety – tension mounts.  
Then the priest returns – the offering is accepted.  
God is satisfied and our commitment shows.  
Quiet reflection as we talk with those of like precious faith.  
The Day of Atonement – has come!*

*Joy breaks out on every side – tabernacles – booths are erected.  
Happy people call one to the other through the night air.  
For eight days we bring our sacrifices.  
Commitment shows when we give something of value.  
Bullocks – the best we have – come led to the altar.  
The countdown begins – thirteen on day one – one less each day.  
The Feast of Tabernacles – a time of great joy!*

*The gifts are exchanged – people dress in their finest.  
Open house is everywhere – processions – music.  
Fellowship is expressed in as many ways as possible.  
We have come – we have brought our best – we have given.  
But now comes the real test of this convocation:  
Have I given myself – given without reservation – no holding back?  
“I am the Lord's – O joy beyond expression!”*

*“Father God, when I go to this conference, may I go in a spirit of expectancy, not complacency or apathy. Not with criticism or comparison, but with joy in the Holy Ghost, with faith unfeigned, with contagious enthusiasm. May God be honored in every conversation. May the Word of Christ dwell in me richly. May I be willing to give as well as to receive. May what I give be given in the spirit of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Amen.”*

## **Numbers 30**

### **VOWS ARE PROMISES**

It is not uncommon today to hear people make promises to each other and usually the intention is to keep them. But many time promises made are not kept and sometimes the person making that promise never planned to keep it. The concept of one's word being one's bond is not taken seriously. It happens even in courts of law these days. Guilty people are instructed by lawyers to plead "not guilty" in spite of the facts of the matter. An honest admission of guilt is unusual. In ancient times this was not the case. There was quick judgment passed on those who did not fulfill the vows and promises they made.

There were no written contracts in the nation of Israel in the early years of nationhood. The exchange of a shoe, some salt, a handshake or one's personal word given was considered binding. When one gave their word, a vow, it was a legal obligation. No one was forced to make a vow, but when it was made it had to be fulfilled. A vow made by a man could not be ignored nor its consequences avoided. Breaking a vow meant a broken trust, and a broken trust meant a broken relationship. The vow made by a man was actually a type of our Lord Jesus Christ who came "to do the Father's will," and could not turn aside from all that meant including the death of the cross.

Every man needs to understand there are consequences that follow every promise we make. We jeopardize our integrity and our reputation every time we neglect to fulfill a promise. Even in these days when deception and lack of honest communication are quite common, people still expect us to do what we say even if they don't intend to do what they say. Vows are really binding obligations that cannot be deviated from.

Among the children of Israel, when a single person still in the family, made a rash vow without knowing the consequences that could follow, the father of the family had the right to negate that vow. His experience and knowledge of the law, gave him authority to override a vow that was unreasonable or unattainable. When foolish promises are made by children or immature people, we need to step in and assert mature thinking into a matter that has not been clearly thought through. To make costly commitments that are impossible to meet, often will require someone with authority to step in and correct such a situation. The authority of a father needs to be used with caution lest it be misunderstood as an act of anger instead of love. Caution and love go together when corrections have to be made. We need to protect our loved ones from disaster, and yet allow them to learn from their mistakes.

The vow a married woman might make could also be overridden by her husband . As far as types relating to vows are concerned, the married woman is a type of Israel. If he knew of bad consequences that would follow some thoughtless words that might bind her in a way she had not thought of, he could make that vow void. If he never said anything at the time he heard of the vow, but later tries to make it null and void, he was responsible for the results. That is what the Lord Jesus Christ did when on the cross of Calvary. We are not really at liberty to do or say anything we want as husband and wife. I must consider the effect it has or maybe will have in the future on my spouse. If I take time to consider what is right and best for my spouse, the negative results of taking independent action can be avoided.

Single persons, men or women, are solely responsible for the promises they make. In a practical sense a single person should remember what they have learned from parental guidance in decision making, and act accordingly. The same holds true in binding promises. In the scripture we read of some who made vows of support of some kind, and apparently did not pay. It is better not to make a promise of financial support, or even moral support, than to indicate you are supportive and not follow through with it. Paul made a vow of some kind that affected others and he carried it through on it to completion.

Hannah's vow to give Samuel back to the Lord was fully supported by Elkanah her husband. Choices and promises we make often affect many others beside ourselves. In the case of Hannah's vow, it brought blessing to the whole nation of Israel through Samuel her son. The use of our tongue needs to be very guarded. God demands from us absolute honesty and expects us to carry out our commitments. To ignore vows may bring divine judgment on us.

When a family is begun by marriage vows, this represents, and establishes, a strong basis for a stable society. A family bound together by the vows of commitment between a husband and wife, is able to demonstrate stability that hopefully will be carried on by their children. A wise father oversees the wide variety of issues a family has to face and guides them with discernment from foolish or rash statements of commitment that cannot be met. The design of a family comes from God. A well-guided family promotes the strength of that social unit God designed, and establishes the order needed for the well-being of all who are in it. Strong families make strong assemblies of Christians, and strong families make strong nations.

We are now experiencing in this nation the result of family break-downs, and increasingly the value of human life is being diminished. Corresponding directly with that is increasing discontent among the people, and increasing chaos in society as people become less afraid of the consequences of deceit and dishonesty. Vows are a part of the ceremony civil servants and members of the military make when they step into the role intended for them. How much more the people of God should commit themselves to "the vows of God" that are on us.

**Numbers 30:2.** *"If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his souls with a bond: he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."*

#### **YOUR WORD.**

*"Clothes don't make the man," nor the kind of car that he drives.  
Neither does the job he has, nor the address of the home where he lives.  
What really counts on the bottom line is, can this man be trusted;  
Do his deeds and the actions match the promises he has openly quoted.*

*When a vow is made to men, this is no frivolous matter.  
God Himself has heard the words, so this is not just idle chatter.  
To make a vow and keep it, is proof of a person's worth.  
When it comes to the word of a Christian, it is evidence of his faith.*

*To voluntarily promise to God, that which you are free to give;  
Can be a gift most precious, evidence that the life you live  
Is for God, and so you promise, that which estimates the price;  
And the freewill offering you bring expresses your evaluation of Christ.*

*Whether it is the vows to God of thanksgiving or of prayer;  
Or the oaths forming a legal bond with one whose life you share.  
These vows are to be kept completely, as the words of a solemn pledge.  
It is sin to avoid the promise made, or from the words of the vows to hedge.*

*The words of a vows are binding, the same as the signature of the man.  
It is not a matter of keeping the vow, only if you can.  
Breaking a vow is a broken trust and a broken relationship too.  
When I make the vow I have stated, the terms of all that I do.*

*A broken promise today, is as serious as in days in the past.  
The handshake, the words, and the promises are always expected to last.  
So whether the vows of God are on you, as you daily serve your Lord;  
Or your vows are made to people, you are expected to keep your word.*

*"O Holy God, I recognize the seriousness of making promises and not keeping them. There is this weakness within that sometimes tries to back away from the vows of God that are on me. Give me the moral strength to fulfill all the commitments I have made to Thee and to others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

**Numbers 31:1-2.** *"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward thou shalt be gathered unto thy people.'"*

#### **MIDIAN.**

The fourth son of Abraham and Keturah was the progenitor of an Arabian tribe that lived mainly on the north part of the Arabian Peninsula. The area around Sinai was where they pastured their flocks. They dominated the area as they were the largest tribe and were heavily engaged in commercial trade. Joseph was sold to them and in turn they sold him in Egypt.

When Moses fled Egypt around 400 years later, he went to Midian and became a servant, and later, a son-in-law to the priest of Midian, Jethro. The Midianites were friendly to Israelites as they journeyed from Egypt, only as long as they stayed on the fringes of their land. But when they passed the southern end of Edom and turned north into the land of Midian, they joined with Balak the king of Moab to conspire against Israel.

Balaam had been sent for to curse Israel, but was forbidden by God to do so. However, he stayed among the Midianites and enticed them into mixing with the Israelites in sexual orgies connected with the worship of Baal. This was "The doctrine of Balaam." This counsel of Balaam worked and the apostate, Balaam, initiated the apostasy of Israel resulting in 24,000 of them perishing.

1000 men from each tribe of Israel were called to military service. Under the leadership of Phinehas, the Midianites were routed, their cities burned, five kings destroyed and the nation completely defeated. Balaam also was killed in this war receiving the "wages of his unrighteousness." The whole country of Midian was divided between Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh.

250 years passed before Midian regained power and formed an alliance with the Amalekites and warred against Israel in the time of the Judges. There is now no evidence of the Midianites in the Middle East although some Arabian groups may have stemmed from that group.

When a nation or group of people, set out to destroy God's people, they are fighting against God. To leave vestiges of them out of pity is to save that which is set on destroying that which is of God. To try to not offend

a doctrine or a people that is anti-Christ and anti-God and anti-Bible, in order to maintain a friendship, is not right. It is sin. God wanted a people for His name. He wanted Israel to be a kingdom of priests. He wanted them to dwell alone. He wanted Israel to choose to love and serve Him. But Balaam and the Midianites promoted both moral and spiritual compromise. Israel fell under that influence and was attracted to the immoral ways of that nation. They had to be stopped or the whole work of God would have suffered. May we too, never allow any group or doctrine to undermine what God has clearly given us in His Word.

*"O Righteous God: I believe there are those that want to promote the doctrine of Balaam in our day. Give me the clearness of thought and a listening ear, to be able to detect when that subtlety arises. May we be preserved from anything that undermines the work and purposes of God. Amen."*

## **Numbers 31**

### **TO THE WAR**

The last official act of Moses before his death was to lead, along with Eleazar and Phinehas, the army of Israel in a holy war against the Midianites. Joshua was not leading this campaign because it was the holy things of God that were at stake, not the conquering of the promised land of Canaan. The doctrine of Balaam had made inroads into the people of God, and the infection of sexual immorality in the name of false gods had been received. Those descendants of Abraham through Keturah, his second wife, had calculated by Balaam's influence, that they could not defeat Israel from without so had taken steps through their women to defeat them from within. Midianite women were the subtle warriors used to try to bring Israel down. The false gods of the Middle East in ancient times were inventions of Satan and used by men to control the people using their base instincts. Women were used as prostitutes to infect enemies morally and physically, and in the case of Israel, spiritually, in order to bring about defeat.

It is possible for the people of God to be defeated by the subtlety of immorality today, even more than by opposition or persecution. God's people historically have thrived under opposition and persecution. Now the inroads of immorality have invaded so-called Christendom until what the scriptures soundly condemns is now practiced, even by spiritual leaders. On the internet, on television programs, in literature and even by suggestions from unbelievers, there has been introduced into the minds of God's people things that will defeat them. The world has designed ways to attract the basest instincts of men to be consumed with that which will ultimately destroy them morally and spiritually. The doctrine of Balaam is still alive and flourishing to the extent that many will reject biblical principles and say they do not apply to us. Satan is using this to bring Christians back again into the bondage of sin.

Moses' wife and her family were from Midian, but this did not detract him from carrying out the purpose of God. How quickly a generation or two can turn to evil and accept it as normal living. By sexual immorality, Israelites got into the worship of Baal led astray by immoral people - and it happened almost instantly. How careful we must be to not allow even the visual temptation of a person or thing to dwell in our minds. To yield to temptation means I have ignored the provision of God who has provided a way of escape from the object of temptation. So much appeals to our flesh that we need to keep a constant watch on ourselves. The way we deal with sin and temptation is to avoid situations we know will lead us into places of temptation; to "flee youthful lusts;" to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Our human nature will deceive us in the things of everyday life, and it will deceive us in our spiritual activity if we are not careful. Obedience to Christ will make us stand out against that which is popular and acceptable to most people. We must separate ourselves from that which the scriptures condemn.

The battle with the Midianites was an actual holy war between the One True God and the false gods of the Midianites. People did the actual fighting but this was not just an encounter between two nations over power and property. This was a battle between right and wrong; between darkness and light; between the power of Satan and the power of God. Some people express outrage against God for exterminating an immoral nation of people whose beliefs and practices will ruin not just their own nation, but every nation that associates with it. The virgins were kept alive that they might be cleansed and preserved from the tragedy that befalls people sold out to sin. The reason for such serious judgment was the seriousness of their sin and the consequences that would result if it was left to flourish. The punishment of adultery was death. The damage cause by overlooking this sin and its spiritual connotations was the whole nation was being polluted. The very existence of wholesale adultery bring chaos to any nation and will someday bring its demise. Unchecked sin will bring people down, whether it be a family, a church or a society. Indifference to sin and its seriousness will ruin us as the people of God. We will lose our spiritual power because the Holy Spirit is grieved. We will lose out testimony in a community because people around us will see no difference between us and them.

Even though fascination with the world ensnares God's people, God in His goodness, can bring blessing from evil. The people of Israel were enriched by the conquest against Midian. In every thing we might claim or gain from in our life here in the world, God has His portion we must make sure He receives. All we have, comes from God and He has allowed us to use it in ways that are legitimate. The soldiers of Israel got their portion, the nation as a whole got its portion, and they made sure God got His portion. We need to learn from this principle lest we claim for ourselves what does not belong to us and thus become condemned because of covetousness. The soldiers of Israel and their "booty" had to be purified before it could come into the camp of God's people. It is incumbent on us to make sure anything and everything we allow among God's people is purified and does not bear the fleshly stamp of the world system on it.

Previous immoral activity of men with the Moabite and Midianite women was stopped by Eleazar with the incense and Phinehas with a spear thrust through an arrogant man and defiant woman who were engaged in sexual activity right in the camp. But still the men hadn't learned the lesson and brought back women for themselves. Moses last act of authority was to demand them to do what was right and eliminate the source of the problem. Balaam was dead but the effects of his doctrine continued on. God does not allow impurity to be ignored among His people. We may think something is alright because society around us accepts it, but that is not the criteria for the rightness or wrongness of a matter. There are absolutes that do not change and we must commit ourselves to maintaining holiness among God's people in spite of what others may say or do. When steps are taken to carry out God's revealed will, then God gives us ample reason to rejoice. Not one warrior died in the battle with the Midianites. God does not abandon us to our own devices when we commit ourselves to obedience to Him.

The work of God may not be understood by some people who think in worldly terms. But when we know what God wants from us or what work He wants to accomplish through us, our responsibility is to do it. We may not know the end result of an matter or event, but that is okay - God does. God takes care of that Himself. Any success we might think we have made is really a work of God through His servants who He has chosen as His tools to use. Our responsibility is to do it with our might and to give God all the glory, "for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure." The benefits that follow any enterprise we are engaged in can be given to God and kept for a memorial for us at the same time. How wonderful a divine paradox is!!

*It may not seem like much at first -  
After all, it is common-place.  
But man has by nature an inner thirst  
For something to fill each empty space.  
The problem comes when people yearn  
For what satisfies the natural man.  
From God's word is where we can learn  
God gives us what no man can.*

*The spiritual man knows when he faces a test  
That the Lord is his only recourse.  
When in body and soul, he finds himself pressed  
He knows where to find the resource  
To give him strength and motivation  
To leave ahead of time.  
His safety is in his separation  
Where he is delivered from ties that bind.*

*We dare not give an inch to temptation  
Because it will take a mile.  
It is up to us to avoid any situation  
Where the world looks on with a smile.  
Grace will bring us divine blessings -  
The world uses velvet chains.  
Faith will lead us to the Lord's name confessing  
Sin's results will bring us pain.*

*"O God of all grace, my heavenly Father: may this day be one in which I do not yield to temptation. May no compromise befall me; no worldly display attract me. May i by Thy grace be consistent in words and deeds. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 32**

### **EAST OF JORDAN**

When a goal has been clearly defined, to fall short of that goal is really a form of defeat. Not every defeat comes as a result of opposition or persecution, or even from the subtle undermining of the people of God by an implacable enemy. It is possible to be defeated, to fall short of a stated goal, because of our own doing. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half of Manasseh made a decision without considering God in any way. The consideration that brought about the decision to stay east of Jordan was their cattle and the grasslands they could see where they were. Their own interests governed their actions without any reference to God and His will at all.

When a child of God allows education, training, personal skills and financial considerations to be the source of decision making, that person has made a great mistake. There have been, and always will be, worldly attractions that call us to follow them and settle in a place short of where God intends. When we allow the circumstances around us to be the guide of our decision making, there will be all sorts of issues and questions that can be raised. True, we consider circumstances along with a number of other guidelines when we make decisions, but the will and promises of God are what should decide our actions, not circumstances.

The attractive pastures for their cattle kept the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh from entering the promised land and getting the inheritance God had intended for them. Only some of the men, the warriors, ever saw what God had promised. The wives, the children, those who were not among the warriors were all affected by the decision to let their possessions dictate their actions. It is possible that a person's occupation, their investments in the world, the promise of material goods to keep them from ever getting what God has promised. It is also important for us to remember that every decision I make has an effect on others besides me. Some have moved to places where wages are high and morals are low. In that place their children and the generations following them, become like those around them. Very seldom does someone ever escape the clutches of the ungodly world who have been brought there by parents who "want to get ahead so my children don't have to work as hard as I did."

When we make decisions and base our conduct on God's revealed will, that takes care of the complications that arise when the pressure is applied by the attractions of society around us and the opportunities of advancement in the ways and work of the world. Those things that appeal to our nature are overridden by our commitment to God and His promises. Both Reuben and Gad had mixed principles in the past. Their history was that of living on the border of right and wrong depending on what was happening or what they thought was advantageous at the moment. Without a commitment to scriptural guidelines, and a real desire for God, questionable things are looked at with favor in spite of the consequences the future may bring.

Moses condemned the request of those who wanted to stay east of Jordan. For years his heart had been fixed on, and longed for the promised land. But because of a wrong attitude and action on his own part, the judgment of God was that he could not enter. Now here were thousands of people who could enter the promised land but did not want to. The spiritual perspective of a child of God is based on what God wants from them and for them. How different that is from those who look at life from mere natural eyes. Moses' heart was in Canaan even though he could not enter. The hearts of those people east of Jordan were not in Canaan nor on God, but on their material possessions. That same attraction among God's people today weakens us and makes us vulnerable to the world and, as in the case of those east of Jordan, the first to fall when attacked by enemies.

Representatives of those who stayed east of Jordan were in the vanguard of the Israelites when they entered the promised land, and with that commitment Moses was satisfied. Bit the serious warning he gave them, "Be sure your sin will find you out," has been a commonly used phrase ever since for those who make promises but don't carry them out. Commitment to the terms of a covenant is demanded of us living in New Testament times as well as those who lived in Old Testament times. The promise of those men to Moses was in the form of a covenant. That seems honorable, and it was, but it still meant that many who could have lived in the land God promised, never would.

Moses rightly feared what would happen to the whole nation if those tribes rebelled and seceded from the nation of Israel. He had been at the borderland before and knew the consequences that would fall on every

one of the people of God if these people disobeyed God's instructions. All of Christendom has been negatively affected by the man-made, man-inspired, man-centered decisions of a few people that has negatively affected true Christians all over the world. For those who seek to be faithful to the word of God and know the goal of a glorious church, complete, clean and composed of only true believers - and is God's intention, this counterfeit Christianity without true faith, has hindered the work of God immensely. The defeat of a few can negatively affect the whole family of God.

There were unfortunate results from making a decision based on the comfort of cows. It led to the building of an altar and strained relations between those east of Jordan and those in the promised land. God has given us the promise of His presence with us when we gather to our Lord Jesus Christ alone and in His name alone. Those who are content east of Jordan will never really enter into, nor understand the difference of living in the promised land today contrasted with living where it is most convenient to us, and where we can profit most materially. It is of utmost importance to the people of God to not stop short of where God wants us to be. We need to claim for ourselves the inheritance that those who live by faith can experience each day.

**Numbers 32:23.** *“But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.”*

### **EXPECTATIONS.**

*God is a God who has given great blessings.  
The land that He promised is for our possessing.  
Just rise up and follow Him, the land occupying;  
Claim that which God has given to you.*

*But remember before you jump to conclusions;  
There are those who need help to reach their possessions;  
And you promised to join in their great expectations;  
So don't walk away from your vow.*

*God has led you for years and has fed from His coffers;  
You and others have enjoyed what His grace always proffers;  
You have in your hand and your heart what He offers;  
But what about the rest of the nation?*

*It is not right for me to have possessed for myself,  
All that I want and need and leave on the shelf;  
The expectations of others who now need for themselves;  
All that is promised to them.*

*We are not like an island as we walk through this life;  
There are brothers and sisters who have hopes that the strife  
They are going through will end, and that there really is light;  
Down at the end of the tunnel.*

*I may be enjoying all God wants me to have,  
And am contented in heart with all that He gave;  
And the expectations I had, I am possessing each day;  
But others are still in the struggle.*

*For me not to help or come alongside  
Those who are sorrowing over someone who died;  
Or have lost some great hope or joy that they had;  
Would for me be a terrible sin.*

*The mercy God showed me and the grace that He gives;  
Enables me to share loads where others want to live  
With possessions of their own God wants them to have;  
Expectations fulfilled in God's time.*

*Lest I sin against the Lord, by me holding back,  
I want to help provide the hopes and things that they lack;  
Then together we praise God who placed us on this track;  
We will rest and will worship together.*

*"O God of all grace, this morning is the beginning of a day of great expectations. We will worship together, we will praise together, we will hear God's Word together and our fellowship will be sweet. We will serve together, we will pray together, we will hope for the salvation of others together. We want to walk in the light with Thee. And our expectation at the end of the day is that there will be more glory for Thee, warmth in our souls, and salvation for the lost. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."*

## **Numbers 33**

### **MOSES WROTE THEIR GOING-OUT**

A written record of the journey of the children of Israel was a good way for them to keep track of all the blessings of God they had received on their travels from Egypt to Canaan. Lessons learned on the way through life may be forgotten if we have no account of them. To measure our spiritual growth in the ways of God, and keep a journal of His dealings with us, hopefully will keep us from making the same mistakes over again and having to relearn what should have been learned the first time we encountered the issue. The Lord led the children of Israel all the way during their 40 year journey. He was with them in the more than 40 stopping places on the way. He knew what they needed and heard all their complaints. He provided for them and never abandoned them in spite of their failings.

The number 40, often signifies a time of testing as the 40 days of the Lord Jesus Christ in the wilderness. 40 years was spent by Moses learning what was wrong about Egypt and right about faith in God. 40 years was considered the length of time of a generation and occasionally a number of favor as in the cases of David and Solomon. 40 was the weight of a load for a camel; shekels and measurement were used in terms of 40. The 40 years of Israel in the wilderness is a reminder to us that God allows both good things and bad things to happen to us in this life. In our life in the world, He is with us so we can cast our cares upon Him and He will sustain us. The experiences we go through are ways and times of spiritual growth in the things of the Lord so we can measure ourselves. The Lord knows what is ahead of us in this wilderness and He is there in every incident that befalls us. In danger and need; in despair and discouragement He is there. In the glorious times when we are consciously walking by faith and in times of victory He is there. In times of revival and restoration He is there. He is fully aware of every circumstance in every place. "He knows the way that I take." He knows the goal and the best way to reach it.

The names of the places where Israel stopped are kept as testimonies to God's power and man's weakness on the Israelites journey to the promised land. In our lives we can often identify special places and times that were more than just physical stopping places. At those times our spiritual life and effectiveness was tested and we were challenged to make necessary changes for godly living and service. It may have been a time and place where we were able to evaluate the past, and look ahead to what was our obligation in the kingdom of God. At those times we looked ahead with eyes anointed by heavenly eye-salve and saw more clearly why we are here, where we are going and what we are to be doing. In those times with the people of God today, the same as with the people of God in the past, God demonstrates His love, mercy, justice and grace to His self-willed people.

God gave to His people Israel as a gift, the land He had promised Abraham many generations before. Now they had to possess that gift and make it their own. The idols and idolatrous people had to be dispossessed before the land could be possessed. The Canaanite ways of life and worship were completely incompatible in every way with what expected of His chosen people. The wickedness of lifestyle including the evil of their worship of idols, made coexistence between the children of Israel and the Canaanites impossible. The very ungodly society of the people of Canaan, the immoral and sinful practices that were common among them would spread like an infectious disease among God's people so there could be no mixing possible. Such a contagious spiritual disease would lead Israelites to the rejection of the holy God and acceptance of the immoral lifestyle that would lead then to the divine judgment of God upon sinful people.

We have to get rid of the old manner of life we once practiced and move ahead in our new life deliberately by faith and obedience to God. We cannot allow the wickedness the world practices, coexist with our new life in Christ that God has given us. Like the people of God in the past, the pagan practices and unbelief of those in the world around us have to be removed completely from our lives in order for us to flourish.

Corruption and compromise have to be dispossessed from our lives before we can be free from the tension of the world and be able to be "unspotted by the world."

It is not easy to remove sin completely from our lives because often sin seems harmless and we are attracted to it. It may be we are afraid to act against those things we know are unacceptable because we fear disapproval from the people we associate with who are not believers. A habit from the past life that we continue in will cause us serious problems the farther on we go in life. If an evil habit or favorite sin has been dealt with in a half-hearted fashion, the next time it comes up it will be much harder to deal with. The actions God expected from His people in the past was to totally clear the promised land of idols, idolatry and those who worshipped them. Otherwise, after they had possessed the land and distributed it by lot, the ungodly who were still there would influence them to do evil. If that happened, then God would reverse the process and do to Israel what He wanted done to the ungodly inhabitants of the land of Canaan.

There is really no way light and darkness can coexist. All you would have is a dim twilight. There is no way for right and wrong to coexist. All that can be done would be ineffective compromise. The power of Satan cannot coexist with the power of God because one is completely evil and the other is the epitome of goodness, righteousness and holiness. For those who are the people of God, we cannot serve two masters. Those who try will fail no matter who they are or what they try. We must commit ourselves to righteousness and godliness, even though those around us may criticize, compromise, complain about us and charge us with being unreasonable for not allowing sin to have even a little slack.

**Numbers 33:1-2.** *"These are the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. And Moses wrote of their goings out according to the journeys by the commandment of the Lord: and these are their journeys according to their goings out."*

#### **KEEP A RECORD.**

*The way I have come and where I am going, is important for me to consider;  
Each day there has been evidence plain to be seen, as the end of the journey draws nearer;  
God has been working on me in each circumstance, to prepare me for things up ahead.  
And the record I keep will help me remember, all the things I did and He said.*

*Sometimes what I did was not what God wanted, but what was pleasing to me.  
Later on when I learned the mistakes I had made, I found out what was supposed to be.  
God keeps a record, and it is helpful if I did not let things go by unattended.  
If I kept one too, it would keep me on track and my work would not be so upended.*

*The walk of my life from one place to the next is a chronicle of God's work of grace.  
Incidents here and some folks I met there, as a pilgrim I move on place to place –  
Give perspective that is needed and lessons to be heeded in the work to which I am called  
And at the same time, it may be in words that will rhyme, a record is there when I failed.*

*Spiritual progress is not easy to measure because usually our records are biased.  
But over the long haul when we live our lives knowing our works will all be appraised;  
It gives incentive to be faithful in all parts of our life in order to honor our Lord.  
He has led us each day every mile of the way, we will be thankful at the end of the road.*

*Miracles happened that astounded my mind and mundane things that don't seem so great.  
Often my walk with the Lord in the dark, made the good things that happened so bright;  
And the record in my mind as the years all unwind like a story that needs to be written;  
Is really a mental account of the way that He led – a record of grace He has given.*

*The thoughts and the words about the journey of life, at times don't seem so important.  
To review the past road and how God has worked, seems to truly affect my deportment.  
In the record of life I wonder how much has really been for God's glory alone.  
I will be glad to compare God's record and mine, when finally I reach heaven and home.*

*"I am happy today Father, not in an unusual way, but just with a quiet contentment. The evidence of worship is still in my heart, the food from the scripture is warming my soul. The fellowship I have had with other saints is refreshing. The privilege of witnessing is before me. Thank You for this sweet joy. Amen."*

## **Numbers 34**

### **LOOKING ACROSS JORDAN**

The theme of the book of Numbers is how God's people came to enter the promised land. The promise of this land was given long before Israel came as a nation to where they could look across the Jordan River and finally see the place that was theirs, given to them by God. This promise was first given by God to Abraham, then Isaac and then to Jacob. On their journey through the wilderness, God gave this promise to the children of Israel when He told them He would send horns ahead of them to drive out the people of Canaan. No promise of God has failed, will fail nor can fail. God is truth and His word is truth. No promise He makes will remain unfulfilled. We can rest assuredly on all the promises of God in this life and as we look into the future. The promises of God are "Yea and Amen."

Boundaries of the land God promised were established by Him. These borders were not left to chance or dispute by those who would possess the land. There was enough for all to have everything they needed to sustain their lives and meet the needs of their families. God established boundaries for us that are clearly stated in the scriptures. Separation unto God is not narrow-minded or insufficient to meet our spiritual, emotional and physical needs. When we follow His instructions and obey with gladness the directives He had defined, then He promises to be a Father to us, and we will be His sons and daughters "saith the Lord Almighty." There is no need for us to go beyond what He has plainly stated in the Bible.

Of great interest and importance is how God arranged the land to be divided into properties that would be identifiable and distributed. First, God explained what had to be done; then He communicated this to others through Moses. He designated specific people from each tribe to oversee the work of dividing the land. By doing this in advance, problems between people were avoided. The plan of distribution came from the Highest Source so that jealousy, tension and friction between the tribes and people in the tribes would not be directed at individuals. "This is what the Lord said" should silence every voice of opposition people have when we carry out the commission we have been given. There is no need for us to argue over the things of God or even over our spiritual inheritance when we stay within the boundaries of scriptural teaching, principles and practice.

Our God is a God of order, and what He has planned will come to pass, of that we can be sure. His plans for our redemption were made before the foundation of the world. A finished work that God has planned, comes with the same pattern of operation as we use in our lives. An idea is followed by a decision to go ahead and develop the idea. Plans are then made as to how to accomplish the task. Designation of responsibility is made and a job description is given to those who have been previously proven as trustworthy. Clear instructions as to what needs to be done are given, and the charge to carry out the action leads to an accomplished work. God has given special things to us to accomplish as He is building His church. He has given us the privilege to engage in this work with Him. It is our responsibility to carry this out with faithfulness to Him, and grace towards other people.

The key to any work is faithful men who can be trusted to do the work to which they have been designated. In Israel those men were plainly identified, and their area of responsibility. One man was from each tribe so he knew the limits of his designated authority. We are well-advised to give our best efforts to the work we have been called to where we should, and leave the work of others to them without any interference from us, even though we might not see or do things exactly as they do. The situation in one part of the country may be different from that in other parts. The objective is for me to carry out what God intended for to do where He has placed me. When each does his part in the place he is, God can put the whole work together in the pattern of His choosing. The people in Israel knew the name of the man they were to turn to for understanding as to what was their designated property. Not many of those men are mentioned again in the scriptures and we might think they were not very important. A person's importance is only able to be measured by God. We know them by their faithfulness to God in carrying out the work He has entrusted to them.

When we do what God wants, we may not be recognized for very long as far as history is concerned. Obscurity does not mean one's work is not important. To obey God from the heart emotionally, and with the mind intellectually, and with the will practically is what is important. The reward of being allowed to participate with God in kingdom work, and for God trusting us with some part in His great plan, is reward enough for any true servant. That divine approbation far exceeds any praise or honor men might give us.

Unfortunately, the Israelites did not take for themselves all God promised them. There was more than they claimed that could have been theirs. God has abundant provision for His children and we will not lack any good thing. For some reason they were satisfied with less than they could have possessed. Sadly, even that

was their only temporarily because those people they left in the land had influence that led them away from the God of their fathers who wanted to be their Lord. Israel will someday possess all the land of promise when the Lord Jesus Christ is their King. Even today many of God's people are satisfied with only a little bit of what could be theirs in Christ. Some are satisfied with the fact of their redemption and that is the extent of their interest. Others step forward a little more in partial obedience when they are baptized as believers and then they stop there. There are great spiritual blessings waiting God's people now if they would only follow on with the Lord Jesus Christ to the higher ground of Beulah-land and "observe all things" the Lord has commanded us to do. We can enjoy many of the blessings of heaven here and now when we hear and heed the instructions concerning our inheritance in Christ.

**Numbers 34:2.** *“Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, ‘When ye come into the land of Canaan; (‘this is the land that shall fall unto you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan with the coasts thereof:’)”*

### **THIS IS THE LAND.**

My inheritance started on father's side when Emma Caroline Brown was saved as a girl. At 16 when she was at Plymouth, England listening to Robert Chapman preach the Gospel, she came to Christ. Then the man she married, Henry Goff from near Stratford was saved. On mother's side David Scott was saved at 13 in Ireland when James Campbell was preaching. Nellie Rouse was saved as a young woman near Barrie, Ontario.

My father, Ralph Barnes Goff, was saved at the age of 21 under the preaching of Fred Elliott of Portland, Oregon at the Thatcher hall. My mother, Margaret Esther Hope Scott was saved at 17 after listening to Mr. Chowner preach the Gospel in Vancouver, BC.

I was saved under the preaching of L.K. McIlwaine and Sydney Maxwell at Hillsboro, Oregon at the age of 13. Linda was saved at the age of 7, in St. John's, Newfoundland while speaking to her father, Albert Barbour who had not long been saved under the preaching of Herb Harris and Douglas Howard.

Lael Campbell, our oldest daughter, wife of David Campbell now living in Calgary, Alberta, was saved at St. John's Newfoundland when she was 9 after attending meetings during the summer. She was talking with her mother, Linda, when she accepted Christ. Alison VandeKraak, our youngest daughter, wife of Wayne VandeKraak, was saved at the age of 8, after a Gospel meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland, when she was talking to me.

Douglas George Campbell, our oldest grandson, was saved in Calgary, Alberta at the age of 10, while talking to his father, David. Our oldest granddaughter, Hilary Margaret Campbell, was saved when she was 8 years old after a Sunday School class in Calgary, Alberta. Gabriella Louise Ortiz VandeKraak was saved at the age of 10, while talking to her father, Wayne in Sherwood, Oregon. Two young grandsons, Gregory Campbell was saved as young boy in Calgary and Campbell VandeKraak recognizes the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way to heaven. I believe he will be truly assured of salvation when he is old enough to understand the Gospel.

All of this family line has been saved as a result of being given the inheritance of a clear Gospel presentation. We have inherited the land of promise and look to a bright future because of our God bringing us into this path of blessing. This land of spiritual plenty has been given to us for an inheritance and I pray that right through the generations yet to come, if the Lord tarries, we will continue to appreciate, claim and live in this land of God's grace and favor. We do not deserve it but we are very grateful for it and give God all the thanks and glory.

*“O God of all grace, and Father of all that believe in Jesus: this land of blessing I live in with my family is full of all pleasant fruits. The joy brought because of dutiful grandparents, faithful loving parents, of a wife who is a woman of grace and vital spiritual life, of thankful children who respect their parents, of grandchildren who will take time to talk to grandpa – is so much more than I deserve. I give Thee thanks, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”*

### **Numbers 35**

#### **PROVISION AND PROTECTION**

Before the Israelites crossed the Jordan River into the promised land, there were two specific things that had to be made clear to them all. Moses was responsible to give these instructions as one of his final acts after long years of faithfulness to God and to the people of God. There are often some matters that can best be dealt with by those who are older who will not likely be affected by those decisions. One is the Lord's servants are to be cared for, not as a chore or a burden on God's people, but as a privilege of participation in

their work for the Lord. The Levites were to be scattered through the whole nation of Israel in forty-eight "cities." We would probably call them small villages today. About one square mile was granted to each village. This property gave them a place to live and a place to keep their livestock and grow some of their food. The manna would cease and provision had to be made for their livelihood. God does not intend those who serve Him to be a burden to His people, but to be able to share of the bounty He has given them. God took care of dependant servants by giving the whole congregation of Israel the privilege and responsibility of providing for their needs. That principle still works for the servants of the Lord who spend all their time in ministering the Gospel and ministering to God's people.

The other matter that had to be clarified was how to deal fairly with violent death when it occurs. Any violent death was assumed to be murder, so in order to have a fair hearing, there were six "cities of refuge" identified through the whole country to which a man-slayer could flee and be safe from those who would avenge the death of a relative or friend. The suspect was not automatically assumed to be guilty of murder without judgment being passed by "the congregation," probably local authorities in the community, who heard the case. Those six cities represented God's concern for justice in a society that did not always protect those who were innocent. It was not fair to overlook wrongdoing, nor was it right to jump to unsubstantiated conclusions as to one's guilt. Far too often decisions are made without due consideration as to the right or wrong of a matter. Hearsay is not a basis for judging someone we have heard a bad report about. It is only right to wait for facts to be substantiated before passing our judgment upon a person or a matter. Too many people have been unfairly condemned ahead of time as a result of listening to gossip passed on by those who may have had a personal dislike for another person, and because of jealousy have found a way to bring that person down.

In Israel, when a person was involved in an event where a life was taken, either deliberately by a planned act of murder, or accidentally, which is manslaughter, that person could run to the nearest city of refuge and be safe. God also had declared limits on the amount of damage that could be extracted from an offense. Exorbitant fines or suits were not permitted. The covetousness of injured parties today has led to excessive suing, which has made it very difficult to determine the true reason for charges made. In ancient Israel, local community authorities were responsible to be both judge and jury. More than one judge was involved in hearing and deciding the matter so that an impartial decision could be made even though the person and his habits may have been known by the judges. There was hope for one who had killed another because justice was carried out under the authority of an unbending law. Partiality is hard to avoid when wrongdoing arises among the people of God. The plurality of elders in an assembly is a safeguard against bias that may have been toward or against a person who has been accused of some matter. All wrongdoing is sin and needs to be carefully investigated and judged by those responsible for the wellbeing of God's people.

As long as a "manslayer" remained in the city of refuge, that person was safe from the avenger. If the one who killed another was found guilty of deliberate murder, the accuser was to be the executioner. To make an accusation of murder, meant that if it was found to be true, the accuser was responsible to execute the law of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." A life for a life was a very daunting challenge to make carelessly. Careless accusation were probably eliminated for the most part. Unfounded and careless talk or accusations can lead to serious consequences if one is not aware that consequences affect both the accuser and the accused. We need to be sure any accusation we make against another is true, because we are responsible to God for what we do and say. If we pass judgment on another for any reason other than for righteousness sake, we ourselves have sinned - "Be sure your sin will find you out."

One found innocent of murder but guilty of manslaughter had consequences he had to endure. For the rest of the life of the high priest, that person had to remain inside the walls of that city in order to be safe. Fines or bribes could not buy his freedom. No out of court settlements could be made with money. A person was not set free for good behavior, neither the murderer or the one who accidentally took the life of another. That would be only determined by man who "looks on the outward appearance." The only way a manslayer could leave the city of refuge was when God concluded the life of the high priest. God was in complete control of that situation. This would have been a great incentive for people laboring in construction or any dangerous occupation, to be very careful in their work. The deterrent by that law was probably very effective in making sure carelessness was not allowed.

One has compared this whole matter to the nation of Israel that is treated as a manslayer because of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ when they rejected Him and called for Him to be crucified. Even though He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," they are still being held, as it were, in a city of refuge until the Lord comes in power and gives them release. A lesson for us is that there are long-lasting consequences to anything that lays an accusation on another of God's children. We need to be conscious of the fact that words and deeds have an effect that can damage another person for the rest of their life.

Unfounded charges made against another, may give us a perverted sense of satisfaction, but the damage done may never be repaired.

**Numbers 35:11-12.** *“Then ye shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you; that the slayer may flee thither, which killeth any person at unawares. And they shall be unto you cities of refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.”*

### **LAW AND MERCY.**

*A hand is raised in a careless fashion to see how far he can throw.  
A young man is showing off his strength with unconcern.  
A large ornament is placed on a window sill two stories up.  
A workman is trying to get his men to finish the job before dark.*

*A man is walking by behind the bushes, hidden from sight.  
The heavy log on the shoulder is too heavy and it drops.  
Cleaning the upstairs room, a brush against the stone flower pot pushes it out.  
The boss pushes the slow worker aside to finish the job and the worker falls.*

*The cry is raised, “You killed him with that stone you threw.”  
“When you dropped that log, the end hit my brother on the chest.”  
“You waited until he was passing by and dropped it on his head.”  
“You deliberately pushed him off the roof because you didn’t like him.”*

*We must be intolerant to sin and yet impartial to people.  
The law says death for the guilty, pardon for the innocent – there is a place of mercy.  
The tempers of the moment must be cooled and the flame dampened.  
A place of safety is provided and a run to the city of refuge is made.*

*The deed cannot be overlooked; it must be faced because it affects all.  
The passions of quick temper; the careless attitude; the deep hate must be considered.  
Life cannot go on as usual; whether you meant it or not - the deed was done.  
Stay in the city; cease all normal activity; the issue will be dealt with.*

*The man who threw the rock died, because he didn’t flee for refuge.  
He could’ve lived, but didn’t because he didn’t avail himself of the mercy in the city.  
The avenger was nearby and slew him while he tried to defend himself.  
He didn’t realize the seriousness of being careless and died without mercy.*

*The game of making a show of personal strength is a foolish game – its’ end is pride.  
Pride left the moment he saw the friend fall to the ground with the log on his chest.  
He runs to reach a place of refuge – the place God chose to be safe – a place of mercy.  
The judgment is made – an accident – but he must stay in the city till the priest dies.*

*A fast run from the house to the city of refuge happens after the stone pot falls.  
The avenger is far behind - cannot catch the one who made the pot land on the neighbor.  
The heat of the moment is passed and the congregation gathers to hear witnesses.  
It was a planned plot; a murder was intended; the avenger must be the executioner.*

*The worker’s family comes after the hard boss who runs ahead to the city.  
He is able to stay there until the “day of judgment” when all gather to hear the verdict.  
It is decided the push that caused the fall was accidental, but greed put a stop to his work.  
He must stay in the city until the priest dies – and this priest is a young man. . .*

*The law has its’ claims and it rights over me and it is good and right and just.  
But the law needs to be tempered with mercy because God has a concern for justice.  
It is of God’s mercies I am not consumed; it is because of His mercies I give myself.  
The “city of refuge” where I live is where I will stay - Content to enjoy the results of mercy.*

*"How glad I am, O Righteous God, to be in a place where mercy is shown. Even though foolish things have happened; inadvertent mistakes have been made; deliberate wrong choices have affected me and others – still I am at rest and am in peace in this city where I dwell. Amen."*

## **Numbers 36**

### **SPIRITUAL INTUITION**

In every person's life there is an order of some kind they live by, whether that person is a believer in Christ or not. However, quite often there are issues that arise that don't fit our pattern of living. How are we to adapt to events or some things that happen in life that don't quite "fit the mold" we normally conduct our life by? The very last chapter of Numbers addresses this matter. The children of Israel were east of Jordan and could look across the river and see the land that would soon be theirs. Whose land? Who will own what? The head of families were going to get a designated portion within the designated tribal lands. By tradition the oldest son would inherit the father's property. The influence of parents on children will often determine the actions and convictions of the children. What is important to parents is what is important to children in most cases. So as parents we need to realize the value of what we pass on to our family. Not everything of value is physical or tangible. Attitude toward God and other people, the worth of integrity in life and of one's reputation, the passing on of life-principles is more important than the possessions we might give to our children.

Tribal heritage in Israel superseded the family claim when it came to property rights. To maintain the integrity of those tribal rights was important so there would be no mixing up of property rights in the future and consequent controversy over bits and pieces of land when a daughter's claim in a family would be passed on to her husband of a different tribe. To avoid this confusion, Moses was to pass on from God to the people the edict that if a daughter owned property she had to marry a man in her own tribe. Similar instructions are given to believers today when we are charged to "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Confusion, chaos and imbalance happens in families, and among God's people in an assembly, when those who have been gathered by God to the Person and Name of the Lord Jesus Christ seek to "cross-pollinate" with those who do not have the same convictions as to the truth of God.

God understands the needs of His people whether they are widows, orphans or people who need help. Spiritual intuition and God-given wisdom are needed by those who lead the people of God so that reasonable and scriptural solutions can be given to out-of-the-ordinary situations that arise among us. Not every matter can be answered with a "snap judgment." To define a problem concisely and understandably is often the way the solution is found. Vague and ambiguous dialogue usually only confuses the matter and leads to dealing only with the symptoms and not the real problem.

The rights of individual are important, but how actions of one in the family affects others in a family unit has to be considered. Of even more importance is the consideration of a family in regards to its effect on all of God's people who gather together in assembly fellowship. For a family to arbitrarily move away from a place that depends a lot on their participation, can bring serious and lasting problems on many people. Confusion is caused when a person or family moves away from one place where they have had on-going fellowship, and then at some later date move back for their own interests without consideration as to what it does to those who remained in the local fellowship. In Israel if there was no son, it was possible for the rights of inheritance to go to a wider scope of people. However, the inheritance had to remain in the tribe.

To act independently on our own choice and not to consider the effect on others is inconsiderate and reveals a lack of spiritual intuition. The inheritance we have received from God is very valuable whether we realize it or not. The confusion and heart-break caused by breaking up an inheritance we have received from God, is known by God. Our heritage came from Him in the beginning and has been passed on to us by those who followed His divine guidance. We should never treat such a charge as something of insignificance.

At the conclusion of the book of Numbers there is a final statement concerning all things written in the book. These are commandments and judgments. Commandments are laws given to guide us to truth and to be acted upon. These laws govern our lives in way that please God. But we may have the commandments and for some reason, not act upon them. That is a serious mistake because these are also judgments. Judgments are what is decided upon, based on the commandments and how these are to be carried out. A commandment needs to be acted upon, and the judgments determine the application of the command.

In the service and walk of God's people, it is important that we do not make up our own laws and our own mode of carrying out the will of God. Principles taught in Numbers gave God's people in the past and present, principles to guide us as we travel through this wilderness world. These things were written for our

learning and admonition. It is wise for us to use God-given spiritual intuition in carrying out His will. The Holy Spirit is always present to lead us and guide us through the difficult parts of the journey, and to keep us from straying or settling down to soon when the way is easy.

**Numbers 36:5.** *“And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, ‘The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well.’”*

#### **WELL SAID.**

*Far too often in statements we hear, the words hadn't made things clear at all.  
“What did he say” or “what did he mean”, “did he mean in spring or in fall?”  
Questions unanswered or not clarified, can complicate the actions we take.  
So when I say something I want folks to know, be clear in the statements I make.*

*When I am uncertain as to what is God's will, or even the will of my brother.  
The best thing to do is go back to the source, rather than to complain to another.  
Find out what God meant when He says in His word, “Be content with all that you have.”  
Does that mean it's wrong to go back on the job, or the money we have we're to save?*

*The Bible is clear when the thoughts we compare with the issues that are here at hand.  
And a “Thus saith the Lord,” when the question comes up, brings the issue now to end.  
In my walk with the Lord, I find the answers are near, it's my choice to open the pages  
Of God's word to me, and then I will see, how doing His will affects my decisions.*

*With people it is different, sometimes what is said, is said and can be taken two ways.  
It may be deliberate, so if he changes his mind, he can still sort of mean what he says.  
Clarification needs to be made when you don't really know what he meant saying those words.  
Speak up and make clear that you are still in the dark about all the things you have heard.*

*I can't really change anyone but myself, I must take time to think before speaking.  
Do those listening to me really know what I mean – it is God's Gospel I am preaching.  
To say it well, when the truth must be told in a way that listeners must know;  
Is required of me, because an account I must give, of each word I spoke here below.*

*Heaven or hell is the future of all who come nightly to hear what we say.  
How can I expect them to act on the truth, if they are not sure Christ's the only Way.  
A sentence well said has more power in it, than an hour of talk that's just words.  
To repeat over and over a thought to be made, is more effective than words by the load.*

*To say a truth well in a way understood is how I would like to be known.  
With words and expressions, facial and hands; are used that love can be shown.  
When my work is completed, my journey is over; I hope someone will be able to tell;  
“I understood what God meant, from sin I am saved; he was able to “say it well.”*

***“Father, I am still humbled by the fact that I have been allowed to be “put in trust with the Gospel.” I will be speaking those holy truths again tonight and I still am a man who needs help to say it well. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”***