

Commentary & Notes on Numbers

The commentary and notes below are adapted from the teaching materials of Annie Kartoian (1906-1989). In 1934 Annie became a missionary in China with OMS. During World War II she spent 21 months in a Japanese concentration camp as a prisoner. She was repatriated in 1943 and sailed on the famous vessel Gripsholm. In 1949 she made a miraculous last-minute escape from Beijing before it fell to Mao's Communists. When she could no longer enter China, Annie went to Taiwan. Annie and her family have been life-long friends of our family. In 1989, while pastoring with the United Armenian Congregational Church of Hollywood I had the honor of participating in her funeral. It was during those years in Los Angeles that Annie gave me her teaching notes (the commentary below) - laboriously typed on what is now yellowed paper with hand written marginal notes, many of which are in Chinese. - Pastor Steve

INTRODUCTION

Name Of The Book

This book is called Numbers because it contains the account of the numbering and marshalling of the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness to the promised land. This title however does not properly apply to more than the first three chapters and the 26th. The book is also called "in the wilderness" (Hebrew "b'midbar") on account of the wilderness journeyings from Sinai to Moab.

Author Of The Book

The author of the book is Moses (1:1).

Brief Outline Of The Book

1. Organization and preparation for the march - chapters 1:1-9:14
 - a. Numbering the tribes - chapter 1
 - b. The organization of the tribes - chapter 2
 - c. The Levites and their service - chapters 3,4
 - d. Special laws and regulations - chapters 5:1-9:14
2. The journeyings through the wilderness - chapters 9:15-36:13
 - a. From Mount Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea - chapters 9:15-19:22
 - b. From Kadesh-Barnea to Moab - chapters 20-36

Brief Outline Of The Book (alternate)

1. At Sinai - chapters 1-10
 - 2.(see Exodus 19:1; Numbers 33:15)
2. From Sinai to Kadesh - chapters 11-19
3. From Kadesh to Moab - chapters 20-36

Central Lesson Of The Book

Unbelief bars the entrance to the abundant life (see Hebrews 3:7-19).

Messianic Types

1. The red heifer - 19:1-10; Hebrews 9:11-14
2. The smitten rock - 20:7-11; 1 Corinthians 10:4
3. The brazen serpent - 21:6-9; John 3:14,15
4. The cities of refuge - 35:6,9-32; Hebrews 6:18

The Murmurings Of Israel

1. Concerning the lack of water - Exodus 15:22-25
2. Concerning the way - Numbers 11:1-3
3. Concerning the manna - Numbers 11:4-9

4. Concerning the Ethiopian wife of Moses - Numbers 12:1-3
5. Concerning the giants and because of their fear - Numbers 14:2-5
6. Concerning the authority of their leaders - Numbers 16:1-5
7. Concerning God's judgments - Numbers 16:41,42
8. Concerning the lack of water in the desert and their fear - Numbers 20:15-
9. Concerning the lack of water and food; concerning the manna - Numbers 21:4-6

I. ORGANIZATION AND PREPARATION FOR THE MARCH Chapters 1:1-9:14

Chapter 1 - Numbering The Tribes

Verse 1: At the tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month in the second year after their coming out of Egypt (Exodus 40:17) and, as this muster of the people was made on the first day of the second month, in the same year, it is evident that the transaction related in the preceding book (Leviticus) must all have taken place in the space of one month during the time the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai before they had begun their journey to the promised land.

Verse 2: God had already given Israel the laws by which she was to be governed, He had given instructions relative to their worship, the tabernacle had been erected and consecrated and God had taken up His abode among His people. God now orders His subjects to be mustered:

1. That they may see that He had not forgotten His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1,2; 15:5,6).
2. That they might observe due order in their march toward the promised land.
3. That the tribes and the families might be properly distinguished so that property and inheritance might be clearly given to each.
4. That they might know that the promise of the Messiah who was to be sent from the seed of Abraham through the house of David was to have its fulfillment in the fulness of God's time.

Verse 3: In this census the following were not reckoned: women, children, strangers, Levites, old men. True born Israelites only were reckoned (1:47-51); such as were able to carry arms and were expert at war.

Verses 4-18: There were helpers appointed from each tribe. They declared their "pedigrees" after their families (cf. Ezra 2:62. New Testament pedigree: Romans 8:14,16; Galatians 3:26,29; 1 John 3:2,14; 5:19).

Verse 46: This was an astonishing increase from the seventy souls that went down into Egypt (Genesis 46:27). God's promise had not failed (Genesis 15:5,6). Probably there had been four generations from the going down to Egypt to the exodus. The first of these two generations had died in Egypt. The multiplication had taken place particularly in the last two generations. Including the Levites, women, children, and old men the multitude must have been about two and one half million.

Judah was the most populous tribe and Manasseh the least. In the second census mentioned in chapter 26 Judah still had the larger number and Simeon, the third in number at the earlier count, had become the least in number.

Chapter 2 - The Organization Of The Tribes

Verses 1,2,17: The tabernacle was in the center and the Levites were encamped about it - including Moses.

Verses 3-9: Judah was placed on the east side with Issachar and Zebulun. They were first in the rank of march.

Verses 10-16: Ruben was on the south, with Simeon and Gad.

Verses 18-24: Ephraim was on the west with Manasseh and Benjamin.

Verses 25-31: Dan was on the north with Asher and Naphtali.

The throne of God (the tabernacle) was in the center. The Levites and priests surrounded it. Farthest from the center were the camps of the other tribes of Israel, some probably at least a mile from the tabernacle. These three divisions of the camp in the wilderness corresponded with the holy of holies, the holy place and the outward court of the temple at Jerusalem.

Chapters 3,4 - The Levites And Their Service

Verses 1-4: Though Moses and Aaron are mentioned here yet the family of Aaron alone appears in the list. Probably the family of Aaron alone is mentioned because these belonged to the priesthood. Moses gave no rank or privilege to his own family or his immediate descendants during his life and left nothing to them at his death. They became incorporated among the Levites from or amongst whom they are never distinguished. In his administration among the Israelites, Moses never gratified a desire or ambition for his family (cf. 14:11,12,15-20).

Verse 6: Bring the tribe of Levi near - that is, present them to the Lord as an offering. The word signifies the presenting of an offering or sacrifice to the Lord. The tribe of Levi was given up entirely to the service of the sanctuary to be no longer their own but the Lord's property.

Verses 7,8: They represented the whole congregation of Israel and acted in their behalf. This is shown in the fact that the children of Israel laid their hands on the heads of the Levites just as the Levites laid their hands on the heads of the sacrifices (8:10,11).

The service of the Levites had exclusively to do with the tabernacle and its belongings. They had nothing else to do. They were divinely appointed to this work. They performed the common and laborious offices. It was their business to take down, put up and carry the tabernacle and its utensils for it was the object of their peculiar care. In a word, they were the servants of the priests (3:9).

Verse 10: It was the business of the priests to offer the different sacrifices to God; to consecrate the showbread, to pour out the libations, to burn the incense, to sprinkle the blood of the victims, and bless the people. They were the servants of God alone.

Chapters 5:1-9:14 focus on special laws and regulations

Chapter 5 - Special Laws And Regulations

Verses 1-10: Previous commands restated.

Verses 11-31: The trial of jealousy.

In this trial the woman in question was forced to drink bitter water before the Lord. The drink consisted of (1) holy water (5:17), (2) dust from the floor to show the baseness of the crime (5:17), and (3) the words of the curse (5:23): the curses were probably written down with a specially prepared ink which was later washed off the parchment into the water which the woman was to drink, so she drank the very words of the oath.

“*Amen, Amen*” in verse 22 is the first place where this word occurs in the common form of a concluding wish in prayer: “Let it be so!”

Verse 29 is the most singular law in the Pentateuch. To work effectively, the Lord must have interposed His hand. Some say that this was not used very often because the guilty one usually confessed when the curse was read.

Chapter 6 - Special Laws And Regulations (continued)

Verses 1-21: The law of the Nazarite

The vow of the Nazarite consisted in the following particulars:

1. He consecrated himself in a very special and extraordinary manner to God (6:2)
2. This was to continue for a certain season, probably never less than a whole year.
3. During the time of his separation he drank no wine or strong drink, no used any vinegar formed from the inebriating liquor nor tasted anything that had grown upon the vine (6:3,4).
4. He never shaved his head but let his hair grow as the proof of his being in this separated state and under vows (6:5).
5. He never touched any dead body nor did any of the last offices even to the nearest of kin, but was considered as the priests who were wholly taken up with the service of God (6:6,7).
6. During all the days of his separation he was holy and was employed in religious acts (6:7).

Verses 9-11: Even accidental defilement was serious and had to be atoned for.

Verses 13-20: The hair of the Nazarite was permitted was permitted to grow for this purpose and, as the Nazarite was kind of a sacrifice offered to God through the whole term of his separation, he offered his hair at the conclusion of his separation as a sacrifice. The hair thus offered was the token of his complete subjection to the Lord.

Verse 21: We learn from a Jewish treatise on the Nazarite that a man might become a Nazarite in behalf of another. He might assist him in bearing the expenses of the sacrifice or a son might fulfill the vow his deceased father had made but did not live to accomplish. That is probably the explanation of Acts 21:23-26. Paul had not made the vow himself but contributed with them (cf. Judges 13:5,7; 1 Samuel 1:11; Amos 2:11; Luke 1:15).

Verses 22-27: The Aaronic benediction

Verse 23: The prayers which God makes for His followers and puts into their mouth, we are sure must be right; and to it when sincerely and fervently offered, we may

confidently expect an answer. If He gave us a form of blessing or a form of prayer, we may rest assured that He will accept what He Himself has made. This consideration may produce great confidence in those who come with either prayer or praise to the throne of grace.

Verses 24-26: This is a very comprehensive and excellent prayer and may be paraphrased thus:

1. May God speak good unto thee by giving to thee by giving to thee His excellent promises. May He preserve thee in the possession of all the good thou hast and from all the evil with which thou art threatened. God the Father (the Source) blesses and keeps His followers (Psalm 121:7,8; Jeremiah 17:11).
2. May the Holy Trinity illuminate thy heart, giving thee the true knowledge of thyself and of thy Maker; and may He show thee His graciousness in pardoning thy sins and supporting thy soul. God the son (the Channel) is gracious unto sinners in remitting their offences which He died to blot out (Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 4:6).
3. May God give thee communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit with a constant sense of His approbation; and grant thee prosperity in thy soul and in all secular affairs. God the Holy Spirit (Himself creating the experience) takes of the things which are Christ's and shows them unto Christians and diffuses the peace of God in their hearts (John 14:26,27; Galatians 5:22; 2 Thessalonians 3:16).

Chapter 7 - Special Laws And Regulations (continued)

Offerings of the princes of the twelve tribes at the dedication of the tabernacle.

Verse 1: The transactions mentioned in this chapter took place on the second day of the second month of the second year after their departure from Egypt; and the proper place of this account is immediately after the tenth chapter of Leviticus (Leviticus 8:10,11).

Verse 2: cf. 1:4ff

Verse 3: The wagons were given for the more convenient exporting of the heavier parts of the tabernacle which could not conveniently be carried on men's shoulders.

Verse 5: That is, distribute them among the Levites as they may need them, giving most to those who have the heaviest burdens to bear.

Verse 7: The Gershonites carried only the curtains, coverings, and hangings (4:25); although these were cumbersome, yet they were not as heavy as the other parts.

Verse 8: The sons of Merari had the boards, bars, pillars, and sockets to carry (4:31,32). Therefore, they had twice as many wagons as the Gershonites.

Verse 9: The sons of Kohath had charge of the ark, table, candlestick, altars, etc. (4:5-15) which were to be carried upon their shoulders; for those sacred things must not be drawn by beasts (2 Samuel 6:1-3,6,7,9,13).

Verses 10,11: Every prince and chief offered in behalf and at the expense of the tribe. The offerings were made in the order in which the tribes encamped about the tabernacle. Every tribe, regardless of size, offered the same kind of offering and in the same quantity to show that each tribe was equally indebted to god and each had the same obligation. The vessels were all sacrificial vessels and the animals were all clean animals such as

were proper for sacrifices; the people were to be a holy people, fully dedicated to God and God was to dwell among them. As the priests, altars, etc. were anointed and the tabernacle dedicated to God, so by this offering the people were consecrated to God too. Each prince had his appointed day (7:11) for the presenting of his offering.

Verse 84: This refers to the twelfth of last day in which this dedication was completed.

Verse 89: Moses saw no form but only heard a voice, yet he had the fullest proof of the presence of the Almighty. In this way God chose to manifest Himself in that dispensation until the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14,18).

Chapter 8 - Special Laws And Regulations (continued)

Verse 2: See Exodus 25:31,37. The tabernacle had no windows and depended upon this light. The candlestick typifies Christ. The seven lamps express the light of the Revelation 3:1 Spirit in us. They were connected with the candlestick for Christ is the foundation and the source of the Spirit's work in us, the Church. The lamps give light "over against the candlestick" (Matthew 5:14,16; John 1:4; 8:12; Revelation 1:12,13).

Verses 6-26: The purifying of the Levites is as follows:

Verse 7: They were to be purified for their service.

Verse 10: The people gave up this whole tribe to God in the place of the first-born; by this act they bound themselves to provide for them because the Levites could follow no secular work.

Verse 17: The first born are God's.

Verse 21: Though the Levites had been most solemnly consecrated to the Lord's service and though all legal washings and purifications had been performed, yet they could not approach God until an atonement had been made for them. The only atonement is the blood of Christ Jesus (Hebrews 9:19,20).

Verse 26: After they were fifty years of age they were to act as directors and counselors.

If it required so much legal purity to fit the Levites for their work in the tabernacle, can we suppose that it requires less spiritual purity to fit us to proclaim the righteousness of God through Christ?

Chapter 9:1-14 - Special Laws And Regulations (continued)

Commandments concerning the Passover.

There are three distinct positions in which we find the great Passover redemption-feast celebrated: 1) in Egypt (Exodus 12); 2) in the wilderness (Numbers 9); 3) in the land of Canaan (Joshua 5). When delivered from the bondage, death and darkness of Egypt it was on the basis of the redemption; when traveling through the dangers and difficulties of the desert, it was on the basis of the redemption; when conquering Canaan it was also on the basis of redemption. It is through the blood of the Lamb that deliverance comes from sin; it is through the same blood that we are carried through the desert; and it is because of the blood that we enter into Canaan and are established in it.

This section presents the Passover entirely from the wilderness standpoint.

Verses 1-3: The Israelites were reminded of the law that required them to keep the Passover at the proper time and with all its rites.

Verse 5: They kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month according to the laws in Exodus 12.

Verse 7: Here was a practical difficulty which had not been anticipated by the law. It is possible that the defilement mentioned here was occasioned by assisting at the burial of some person - a work of necessity and mercy. The question was submitted to Moses and Aaron.

Verse 8: Moses had no answer of his own to give. He showed true knowledge in his readiness to say that he did not know what to do.

Verses 10-14: The circumstance above gave rise to this ordinance. So important was it for every member to celebrate this feast that a special provision was made for those who were unavoidably defiled or were at a distance at the time. This was a provision of grace. And so it was that on particular occasions the Passover might be celebrated twice in a year - at its regular time, the fourteenth of the first month; or on the fourteenth of the second month. But the man who had no legal hinderance and did not celebrate it at one or the other of these times was to be cut off from the people of God.

Hezekiah and his people availed themselves of this provision in 2 Chronicles 30:1-5,13-16. In 1 Kings 12:26-33 Jeroboam followed the devices of his own heart and invented a time of his own choosing.

On the authority of the apostle Paul we know that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7). Those who do not sooner or later eat the true Passover and obtain salvation by the sprinkling of His blood are to be cut off from the people of God for the same reason as an Israelite was (9:13).

II. THE JOURNEYINGS THROUGH THE WILDERNESS Chapters 9:15-36:13

Chapters 9:15-19:22 focus on the journey from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea

Chapter 9:15-23 - The Pillar of Cloud

Verse 15: The whole account of this supernatural cloud is explained in Exodus 13:21; 40:34-38.

Verse 21: As the heat of the day was very severe in the wilderness, they sometimes journeyed during the night.

Verse 22: It was by God's direction alone that they were directed. Their times of tarrying at different stations were very different.

Verses 23: God chose to keep His people so dependent upon Himself and so submissive to the decisions of His own will that He would not even give them regular times of marching or resting; they were to do both when and where God saw best. Thus they were ever kept ready for their march, though perfectly ignorant of the time when they should

commence it. They could form no plans for tomorrow. When in camp, they knew not when they were to march or where they were to halt. Theirs was a life of daily and hourly dependence. They had to look up for guidance.

There was not a footprint or a landmark throughout the wilderness. It was therefore useless to look for guidance to those who had gone before. They were in a position of constant waiting upon God. This dependence was a delight when they obeyed and loved Him; but it was intolerable when they disobeyed.

Chapter 10:1-10 - The silver trumpets for calling the assembly

Verse 2: The necessity of such instruments will at once appear, when the amazing extent of this numerous army is considered. Since the trumpets were to be blown by the priests (10:8) there were only two of them. In the time of Joshua there were seven trumpets used made of rams' horns (Joshua 6:4). In the time of Solomon, when the priests had greatly increased, there were 120 priests sounding with trumpets (2 Chronicles 5:12). Josephus intimates that one of these trumpets was always used to call the nobles together, the other to assemble the people (10:4). It is possible that these trumpets were made of differing lengths and wideness and consequently would emit different tones. Thus the sound would show which was the summons for the princes and which for the assembly.

Verses 4-7,9,10: The different calls are explained. The divisions of the camp were on the east, south, west, north and calls were probably given in this order.

Chapter 10:11-36 - The journey begun

Verse 11: The Israelites had been encamped in the wilderness of Sinai about eleven months and twenty days (cf. Exodus 19:1). They now received the order of God to move forward toward the promised land.

Verse 12: This was three days' journey from the wilderness of Sinai (10:33) and the people had three stations; the first at Kibrothhattaavah, the second at Hazaroth (11:35) and the third in the wilderness of Paran (12:16).

Verses 14-28: The order of marching is explained.

Verses 29-32: Moses' father-in-law was invited to go with them. Whether he accepted it or not is a question but from Judges 1:16 and 1 Samuel 15:6 we judge that he did.

Verses 35,36: Moses prayed that God would rise and scatter their enemies before them. It was necessary for God to go first if Israel was to follow in safety.

Chapter 11 - The first murmurings of the people

Verse 1: We do not know what the cause of this complaining was. Some believe they complained because of the length of the way. Their ingratitude and rebellion displeased the Lord, and fire carried death to all the murmurers.

Verse 2: When Moses prayed the fire was quenched.

Verse 3: "Taberah" - "a burning"

Verses 4-6: The mixed multitude long for flesh to eat and murmur. The "mixed multitude"

refers to those who came out of Egypt with the Israelites (Exodus 12:38). Probably some who had comparatively little knowledge of God, feeling the difficulties and fatigues of the journey, were the first to complain. Then the rest of the group joined in the complainings. They remembered the fish and melons and vegetables of Egypt and longed for them. The things enumerated are the commonly attainable delicacies in those countries and things which could not be found in the wilderness. They loathed the manna as they complained.

Verses 7,8: The manna was plentiful and desirable.

Verses 10-15: The burden of their complaining was too much for Moses and led him to discouragement. He took his eyes from God and saw the enormity of his responsibility. Looking at the people he forgot that when God places a man in a certain position He plans to endow him with the wisdom and strength necessary to fill that place (Psalm 106:32,33; James 5:17. Cf. 1 Kings 19:4; Jonah 4:3).

Verses 16,17: On this occasion some compare Moses to a lamp, at which seventy others were lighted without losing any of its brightness. To convince Moses that God had sufficiently qualified him for the work which he had given him to do, He tells him that of the gifts and graces which he has given him he will qualify seventy persons to bear the charge with him. This was probably intended as a reproof. Did Moses lose a measure of his gifts in this incident? Is it not right that he whom God has called to and qualified for some particular office should lose those gifts which he either undervalues or refuses to employ for God in the way appointed? Probably there are instances where the spiritual endowments of particular persons have been taken away and given to others who made a better use of them (Matthew 25:24-28; Revelation 3:11). God never called a man to perform a work without furnishing him with adequate strength; and to refuse to do it on the pretense of inability is little short of rebellion against God. The Jews consider this institution of the seventy persons the origin of the grand council called the Sanhedrin. However a council of seventy men had existed before this time (Exodus 24:9).

Verses 21-23: There is a considerable measure of unbelief and weakness manifested in the complaints and questions of Moses on this occasion. God reminded him of the miracles which had already been performed. He asks, "*Can my power be decreased?*" Power that is unlimited can never be diminished.

Verses 24-29: By "prophesying" here we are to understand their performing those civil and sacred functions for which they were qualified; exhorting the people to submission and confidence in God was probably part of their work. Eldad and Medad must have been prevented by some legal hindrance from going to the tabernacle, but they were in the camp exhorting the people. Joshua was afraid that the power and authority of Moses might be lessened by the work of these two men. In his reply Moses showed himself to be the humble servant of God (12:3).

Verses 31-33: This wind was not an ordinary one; it was sent by God. The quails visit Egypt about this time of year in great companies, so God sent the people that which reminded them of Egypt. The quails flew within two cubits of the ground so that the Israelites could easily catch them. They probably caught them, plucked them and buried them in the sand for a few minutes. The people got what they longed for but found death in it. "*He gave them their request but sent leanness into their souls*" (Psalm 106:15). The place was named "the graves of lust" - Kirbroth-hattavah.

Chapter 12 - The second murmuring

Verses 1,2: It appears that jealousy of the power and influence of Moses was the real cause of their complaint though his having married an Ethiopian woman was the ostensible cause. This woman is probably Zipporah, an Arab born in the land of Midian (Exodus 2:15-21). Both Aaron and Miriam had received a portion of the prophetic spirit (Exodus 4:14-16; 15:20,21). Apparently they felt that they should share in the government. This love of power is natural to the human mind.

Verse 3: This is God's testimony to the character of Moses. It is not self-praise. The word translated "meek" is translated "afflicted" or "depressed" in other parts of the Old Testament. "*Moses was depressed or afflicted more than any other man*" - because of the great burden he had to bear in the care and government of this people, and because of their ingratitude and rebellion both against God and himself. The preceding chapter is proof of this. The very power Aaron and Miriam envied was oppressive to its possessor and was more than either of their shoulders could sustain.

Verse 4: The sudden interference of God in this business shows at once the importance of the case and His displeasure.

Verses 6-8: Here are mentioned the different ways in which God usually made Himself known to the prophets. But to Moses God had communicated Himself in a different way - He spoke to him face to face. As Moses was chosen of God to be the lawgiver, so was he chosen to see these laws duly enforced for the benefit of the people among whom he presided. Moses was a faithful, well-tried servant in the house of God.

Verse 10: It is likely Miriam was chief in this mutiny and it is probably that it was on this ground that she is mentioned first in verse 1. Note also Exodus 32:22-25 where it is recorded that Aaron was influenced by the people.

Verses 11,12: Aaron immediately acknowledges his wrong and asks Moses to intercede for her.

Verse 13: Here as in 11:29 Moses shows his true spirit. He prayed earnestly for those who had spoken against him.

Verse 14: Spitting in the face was the sign of deepest contempt and was done only in the cases of great provocation (Job 30:10; Isaiah 50:6; Mark 14:65). Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days and then permitted to return.

Note: It is a most serious thing for anyone to speak against the Lord's servant. We may rest assured that God will deal with it sooner or later. It was rebellion to speak against the one whom God had raised up and placed over them. It is a fatal mistake to speak against feeblest and humblest of God's servants. If the servant goes wrong the Lord Himself will deal with him but let fellow-servants beware how they attempt to take the matter into their own hands. God's solemn words are "*Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?*" (12:8) (cf. Hebrews 13:7,17).

Note: Here Moses points out the choice which Jesus Christ has made of the Gentiles for His spouse and Church. The jealousy of Miriam and Aaron signifies hatred and envy of the Jews against Christ and His followers. The mysteries of the kingdom were opened to the Gentiles when the Jews rendered themselves unworthy.

Chapter 13 - The crisis at Kadesh

Verses 1-3: It appears that God commanded the sending of the spies because of the desire of the people and their desire came from their lack of faith (Deuteronomy 1:19-24). God had given them a report of the land (Exodus 3:8; Deuteronomy 8:7-9). He had actually spied out the land for them, but because they lacked the faith to accept His report they desired the spies to be sent out (cf. 1 Samuel 8:4-7). Again there is the warning of Psalm 106:15: *“He gave them what they asked, but sent a wasting disease among them.”*

Verses 4-16: The names of the spies.

Verses 17-20: Their report was to be comprehensive. It is possible that the spies received their orders about the beginning of August and returned about the middle of September.

Verse 22: From the witness of others it is easy to prove that grapes in that part of the world grow to a large size. The Egyptian grape is small, hence the clusters are small, but the grapes that grow in warm climates are very large in comparison. A bunch weighing twenty pounds is not uncommon. The spies' carrying a bunch of grapes on a staff between two men was probably not rendered necessary by the size of the bunch or cluster but to preserve it from being bruised that the Israelites might see a fair specimen of the fruit of Canaan. As Joshua and Caleb were the only persons who gave a favorable account of the land, it is most likely that they were the persons who gathered these fruits and who brought them to the Israelitish camp. And it is likely that they were gathered as short a time as possible before their return that they might not be injured by the length of the time they had been separated from the vines.

Verses 26-29,31-33: This was the evil report which lacked faith in God.

Verse 30: The report of one with faith. Faith reasons from God to the difficulties - it begins with Him; unbelief reasons from the difficulties to God - it begins with them. Faith is not insensible to the difficulties nor is it reckless. Faith looks the difficulties straight in the face - it is not ignorant nor indifferent nor reckless - but it brings God into the scene.

Chapter 14 - The crisis at Kadesh (continued)

Verse 1: This was the first step toward unbelief as they listened to the reports of the unbelieving spies.

Verse 2: The second step was that of murmuring against their leaders.

Verse 3a: They questioned God's wisdom in leading out of their life of slavery and bondage.

Verses 3b,4: Their next step was to try to go back to the old life because of their fears concerning the new life. They rebelled against the leader appointed by God and renounced his authority. From Nehemiah 9:17 we gather that they had actually appointed another leader under whose direction they were about to return to Egypt. The fifth step is in verse 10.

Verse 5: Instead of chiding the people, Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the Lord.

Verses 6-9: Joshua and Caleb begged them to turn their eyes toward God. *“If the Lord delights in us”* (14:8); *“the Lord is with us; do not fear them”* (14:9). The people did not

receive the truth. There were six hundred thousand voices raised against the two men who simply told the truth and trusted in God. They spoke out of experience (John 3:11) but truth was rejected and error accepted.

Verse 10: This was the fifth step downward in the life of unbelief - trying to get rid of those who exercised faith. The appearance of the glory of the Lord prevented these faithful servants of the Lord from being stoned to death. Every man is immortal till his work is done while in simplicity of heart he is following his God.

Verses 11,12: Here was Moses' opportunity to grasp at personal fame. God offered to make him the head and founder of a great and mighty nation. Never did another man have such an offer presented to him by God.

Verses 13-19: These are the words of Moses' intercession. They need no explanation for they are very simply stated. Moses shows his true self in these verses (cf. 11:29; 12:13). He was not a self-seeker. He was truly humble. He had two objectives - the glory of God and the deepest and highest concern for the people (Exodus 34:6,7). First and chiefest of all he was jealous for the Lord's glory. The in order to maintain God's glory he seeks pardon for the people. The two are linked together in a divine way. Moses was in harmony with the heart and mind of God.

Verses 20-25: Here God replies to Moses' words of intercession. Through intercession Moses obtained both his objectives - *"I have pardoned, according to your word"* (14:20) and *"all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"* (14:21). The pardon is secured and the glory was yet to shine forth. While grace pardons, yet God's justice demands punishment; so punishment is pronounced upon the unbelieving. Those who believed and wanted to follow God were to see the land; the others were to be cut off. They were sent back into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea.

Verses 26-35: The spies were forty days in searching the land and the people who rebelled on their evil report were condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness. The principle of *"According to your faith be it done to you"* (Matthew 9:29) was carried out in this punishment.

Verses 36,37: Those who brought the evil report died on the spot as proof that all would die.

Verses 39-45: The children of Israel were now on the very borders of the land and they heard God say they should not enter it but should be consumed by forty years' wandering in the wilderness. Notwithstanding, they were determined to go up, probably supposing that the temporary sorrow they felt for their late rebellion would be accepted as atonement for their sins. Accordingly they went into the land but were cut down by their enemies. At Kadesh they refused to go when told to go; and they persisted in going at Hormah when told not to go. After failure or sin we must learn to submit to God's dealings with us. The children of Israel should have walked with God in meekness, humbleness and brokenness of spirit. If we refuse to enter a position or path of special privilege and are therefore thrown back to a lower place, we must learn to submit to the hand of God in meekness, not trying to force ourselves into the place which we have closed for ourselves.

Note: The wilderness proves what man is, what God is, and what faith is. Caleb and Joshua had to return with the unbelieving congregation into the wilderness. They had to remain for forty years out of their inheritance though they were ready to receive it. This seems to be unfair to them. Nature might judge it unreasonable of God. But faith can

afford to wait patiently. They were prepared to wait God's time for faith is never in a hurry.

Chapter 15 - The wilderness wanderings

Special laws and regulations. Though most of this group was to die in the wilderness, God's plan for entering the land was not defeated. Man had failed, but God remained faithful. There is not a single thing in which the first man has failed that the second Man will not make good (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). Israel had forfeited all title to the land. They deserved nothing better than that they should die in the wilderness. Yet the grace of God again speaks of coming into the land.

Verses 1-21: The laws of the offering are renewed. It is interesting to note the place of the "stranger" among the people (15:14-16,29).

Verses 22-29: Regarding sins of ignorance. Sins committed through ignorance required an atonement and God in His mercy had provided one for them. We might feel disposed to say that such sins ought to be passed over, but God's holiness must not be reduced to the standard of our intelligence. Grace has made provision for sins of ignorance but holiness demands that such sins should be judged and confessed.

Verses 30-36: Regarding sins of presumption. There was forgiveness for the sin of ignorance but willful sin was to be punished by death. The presumption mentioned here implied contempt of the word and authority of God. For such there was not opportunity of repentance (1 Samuel 15:23). Apparently the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath was a case of this kind. The man despised the word of the Lord; on this ground he was punished by death.

Verses 37-41: The constant reminder of God's commands. The blue fringe was appointed by God to represent and bring to mind the commandments of God. This was attached to the borders of their garments so that the word of God might ever be in their minds. Whenever an Israelite saw the blue fringe he was to think of Jehovah and yield obedience to His commands. All the Jews wore these and so probably did our Lord (Matthew 9:20,21). To some this very thing became of source of religious pride (Matthew 23:5).

Chapter 16 - The wilderness wanderings (continued)

The rebellion against Moses. Here we see again the two great lessons of the wilderness - the patience and boundless grace of God and the disobedience, unbelief, pride and willfulness of man. In chapter 14 we read of man and his ways; in chapter 15 we see God and His ways; in this chapter we come back to man and his ways again.

Verse 1-3: These verse list the group who rebelled and the cause of the rebellion. This was a very serious rebellion and is referred to in Jude 11. Korah, a Levite, was the leader of the group. Usually leaders in all rebellious movements are men of leadership and power. Korah must have been this kind of man. He and his followers tried to make it appear that Moses and Aaron were lording it over their brethren because of their high positions. *"You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"* (16:3). Since Moses and Aaron were appointed by God, Korah and his company were quarrelling with God and not with Moses and Aaron. They had been called of God to occupy a certain position and to do a certain work. God's appointment ought to have settled the matter for these rebellious ones. Although

promoters of sedition talk of the common rights and privileges of the people, usually they themselves are aiming at a position. Their object is to make themselves somebody. Korah had his work and Moses had his; it was senseless for one to wish to occupy the place of another (see 1 Corinthians 12:14-18). It is not a question of taking upon us much or little, but of doing our appointed work and filling our appointed place.

Verses 4-11: Moses met the rebels as he should have - *“he fell on his face”* (16:4). There is never much use in dealing with rebels; Moses did the best and safest thing he could. It was better to leave them in the Lord’s hands. The matter was placed in proper hands - *“the Lord will show”* (16:5), *“whom the Lord chooses shall be the one”* (16:7). There was not a word about Moses and Aaron deciding the matter. The two hundred and fifty rebels were brought into God’s presence. Korah was a Levite and as such he was entitled to minister and teach (Deuteronomy 33:10; Numbers 3:7,8). This was the work of Korah. But at what did he aim? *“And would you seek the priesthood also?”* (16:10). Moses, by the spirit of God, saw that this man was seeking the priesthood for himself. He aimed at that which he could not be because of God’s appointment. The priesthood was to remain in Aaron’s family.

Verses 12-15: Apparently they wished to set up a priesthood and sacrificial system of their own, and God could never accept or bless such schemes.

Verses 16-35: God’s punishment was inflicted on the rebels (Hebrews 10:31). Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and all their families and belongings went down into the earth (16:32,33), and fire from the Lord consumed the two hundred and fifty men that bore censers (16:35).

Verses 36-40: The next day the congregation began to murmur against Moses and Aaron because of the severity of God’s punishment. Again Moses and Aaron fell on their faces, as the whole congregation was threatened with immediate destruction (16:45). Again Moses had an opportunity to let God deal with this people as He said, but Moses knew one way of salvation - through the priesthood. The very priesthood which the rebels had despised offered the only hope. The men whom the people charged with having killed the Lord’s people, were God’s instruments in saving their lives. Nothing but the priesthood could avail. Apparently the plague began at one part of the camp and moved on to other parts from there; Aaron went to the place where the plague had started, standing there with his atonement, and the plague was stayed.

Chapter 17 - The wilderness wanderings (continued)

The rebellion against Moses and Aaron. *“And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was”* (Hebrews 5:4). This chapter vindicates Aaron in his position as priest.

Verses 1-6: It was necessary that something further be done to quiet the minds of the people and to settle forever the dispute regarding the tribe from which the priesthood was to spring. God took the method described in this chapter and the priesthood of the family of Aaron was never again disputed. The matter was thus completely out of the hands of men and in the hands of God. It was not to be a man appointing himself or a man appointing his fellow; it was God appointing the man of His own choice. The twelve rods, all in like condition, were laid up before the Lord; man retired, and left God to act. There was no room or opportunity for human management.

Verses 7,8: On the same staff were found buds, blossoms, and fruit. This was so far

beyond the power of nature that there could be no doubt as to the One who caused the miracle. It is thought by some that these rods were made of the common almond tree.

Verses 9-11: God proved that the priesthood was founded upon that grace of God which brings life out of death. In the eleven rods there was no sign of life; the life was in the rod of Aaron. That was the channel of god's choice for the ministry of the priesthood.

Verses 12,13: In the preceding chapter we saw bold presumption in the very presence of Jehovah; here we see fear and distrust. In 16:3 there was a claim that all were sufficiently holy to come near to God and that all were qualified to minister in holy things. In 17:13 no one dared come near for fear of being consumed. Human nature neither understands holiness nor grace. In both cases they were wrong; some there were who might approach and others who might not approach. The sinful mind easily presumes where it ought to retire; it distrusts where it ought to confide.

Chapter 18 - The wilderness wanderings (continued)

Regarding the priesthood.

Verses 1-7: Aaron and his sons had a high and important office confirmed to them by a miracle of God but they were to realize that it was the place of highest responsibility. They could not be high minded but were to fear. 18:5 stated the greatness of their responsibility. The Levites were to be joined or associated with the priests. Together they performed the whole of the sacred office, but the priests were the principal ones and the Levites the associates (18:2).

Verses 8-10: *"In a most holy place shall you eat it. Every male may eat it; it is holy to you."* (18:10).

Verse 11: The daughters of Aaron were not to eat of the sin offerings or the trespass offerings but they were provided for.

Verses 12,13: The priests were to have the best and the first which the Lord's land produced.

Verses 14-19: Here we have instructions as the first-born of man and beast - both are placed on the same level. Redemption of the first-born is one of the rites still practiced among the Jews. "Covenant of salt" - and incorruptible, everlasting covenant.

Verse 20: *"I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel."* The principal part of what was offered to God was the portion of the priests, therefore they had no inheritance of land in Israel; but they were amply provided for. According to the Jewish historians, twenty-four gifts were given to the priests.

Eight of those gifts the priests ate nowhere but in the sanctuary:

1. The flesh of the sin offering, whether of beasts or fowls (Leviticus 6:25,26).
2. The flesh of the trespass offering (Leviticus 7:1,6).
3. The peace offerings of the congregation (Leviticus 23:19,20).
4. The remainder of the omer or sheaf (Leviticus 23:10,13,14).
5. The remnants of the meat offerings of the Israelites (Leviticus 6:14-16).
6. The two loaves (Leviticus 23:17).
7. The shew bread (Leviticus 24:9).
8. The log of oil offered by the leper (Leviticus 14:10-13).

Five of those gifts they ate only in Jerusalem:

1. The breast and shoulder of the peace offering (Leviticus 7:31,34).
2. The heave offering of the sacrifice of confession (Leviticus 7:12-14).
3. The heave offering of the Nazarite lamb (Leviticus 6:17-20).
4. The firstlings of the clean beast (Numbers 18:15; Deuteronomy 15:19,20).
5. The first-fruits (Numbers 18:13).

Five gifts were not due unto them by the law, but in the land of Israel only:

1. The heave offering or first-fruits (Numbers 18:12).
2. The heave offering of the tithe (Numbers 18:28).
3. The cake (Numbers 15:20). These three were holy (#'s 1-3).
4. The first-fruits of the fleece (Deuteronomy 18:4).
5. The field of possession (Numbers 35). These two were common (#'s 4,5).

Five gifts were due unto them both within and without the land:

1. The gifts of the beasts slain (Deuteronomy 18:3).
2. The redemption of the first-born son (Numbers 18:15).
3. The lamb for the firstlings of an ass (Exodus 4:20; Numbers 18:15).
4. The restitution of that taken by violence from a stranger (Numbers 5:8).
5. All devoted things (Numbers 18:14).

One gift was due unto them from the sanctuary:

1. The skins of the burnt offering and all the skins of the other most holy things (Leviticus 7:8).

In all there were twenty-four gifts.

The gifts which the females of the priests' families had part in where these:

1. The heave offering or first-fruits.
2. The heave offering of the tithe.
3. The gift of the beasts (Deuteronomy 8:3).
4. The first of the fleece.

Besides all this the priests had the tribute money mentioned in Numbers 31:26-29.

Verses 21-32: First, the Levites had a tenth of all the production of the land. Second, they had forty-eight cities, each forming a square of 4,000 cubits. Third, they had 2,000 cubits of ground around each city. Fourth, they had the first-fruits and certain parts of all the animals killed in the land. What they received was small in comparison to any other tribe, yet they possessed the best of the land. They were able, therefore to wait on the Lord without distraction. As the Levites had the tithe of the whole land, they themselves were obliged to give the tithe of this tithe to the priests (18:28). This tithe or tenth they were obliged to select from the best part of the substance they had received (18:29). Even a portion of what they had was to be given to God as an evidence of His goodness and their dependence upon Him.

Chapter 19 - The wilderness wanderings (continued)

The ordinance of the red heifer. So many dead bodies from the recent plague might have necessitated this ordinance at this time (16:49).

Verse 2: The ordinance of the red heifer was a sacrifice of general application. All the people were to have an interest in it therefore the people at large were to provide the

sacrifice. This Jewish rite certainly had a reference to things done under the Gospel as the author of Hebrews has remarked (Hebrews 9:13,14). As the principal stress of the allusion here is the ordinance of the red heifer, we may certainly conclude that it was designed to typify the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus.

“Without defect, in which there is no blemish” (19:2) - Jesus was without sin and as such was perfectly fitted to do the great and glorious work of expiation (2 Corinthians 5:21).

“On which a yoke has ever come” (19:2) - Jesus never bore the yoke of sin. The only yoke He wore (Matthew 11:29) was the yoke of subjection to the Father’s will; and this yoke was never off once during the entire of His career - from the manger to the cross.

Verse 3: *“Outside the camp”* (Hebrews 13:12,13). Jesus suffered without the gate. He did this that He might accomplish two things - to put away our sins and to deliver us from this world (Galatians 1:4). The same work that has forever put away our sins has delivered us from this present evil world. So we separate ourselves from this world.

Verse 4: The blood of Christ has been shed and presented to a holy God as a perfect atonement for sin. The number “seven” is expressive of perfection. The blood is the perfect atonement for sin and is accepted as such by God (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Verses 5,6,9: It is the purpose of God that His children should be purified from all iniquity and that they should walk in separation from this present evil world where all is death and defilement. This purification of our walk is effected through the Lord Jesus Christ. *“And fresh water shall be added in a vessel”* (19:17) - The ashes were to be kept in order to be mixed with water and sprinkled on those who had contracted any legal defilement.

Verses 11-22: Sources of defilement. It is a solemn thing to walk with God from day to day in the midst of a defiling world. He cannot tolerate any uncleanness upon those with whom He deigns to walk in in whom He dwells. He can pardon and cleanse, but He cannot sanction evil.

There was only one way to get rid of defilement. God has only one Way in this dispensation too (19:17-19).

A clean person was needed to sprinkle the unclean, but he act of the clean person in sprinkling another defile the clean person. Contact with evil defiles (19:18-21).

The one who did not avail himself of the provision made for his cleansing was to be cut off from the people of the Lord (19:20).

Chapters 20-36 focus on the journey from Kadesh-Barnea to Moab

Chapter 20:1-21 - At Kadesh the second time

Verse 1: This was the first month of the fortieth year after their departure from Egypt (33:38). The transactions of thirty-seven years Moses passes by. The year now spoken of was the last year of their journeyings; for from the going out of the spies (13:26) unto this time was about thirty-eight years (Deuteronomy 1:22,23; 2:14).

Miriam was older than Moses for, when he was an infant exposed on the Nile River, she was instructed to watch over him. She was very wise in the way in which she managed the business of the baby with Pharaoh’s daughter. It is supposed that she was one

hundred and thirty years of age at the time of her death, having been at least ten years old at the time of her brother's birth. She appears to have died about four months before her brother Aaron (33:38), and eleven months before her brother Moses; so that these three died in the space of one year.

Verse 2: In Exodus 17:1 we find that the fathers of the present children of Israel complained in the same way. As the father's murmured, so also did the children.

Verse 6: They did not attempt any reply to the people; they went to the Lord. They could not possibly have done better.

Verses 7,8,11: The Rock was Christ - Christ smitten for us (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Verse 12: What was the offense for which Moses was excluded from the promised land? It appears to have consisted in some or all of the following particulars:

1. God had commanded him (20:8) to take the rod in his hand and go and speak to the rock and it should (20:24) give forth water. It seems Moses did not think speaking would be sufficient, therefore he smote the rock without any command to do so.
2. He did this twice (20:11) which certainly in this case indicated a great perturbation of spirit and want of attention to the presence of God.
3. He permitted his spirit to be carried away by a sense of the people's disobedience and thus being provoked, he was let to speak unadvisedly with his lips; "*Hear now, you rebels...*" (20:10) (cf. Psalm 106:32,33).
4. He did not acknowledge God in the miracle which was about to be wrought, but took the honor to himself and Aaron: "*Shall we bring water for you out of this rock?*" (20:10). Thus it plainly appears that they did not properly believe in God and did not honor Him in the sight of the people; for in their presence they seem to express a doubt whether the thing could be possibly done. As Aaron appears to have been consenting to the above particulars, therefore he is also excluded from the promised land.

Verses 14-21: The Edomites were the descendants of Edom or Esau (Genesis 36:1,8). Esau was the brother of Jacob from whom the Israelites were descended. "*The King's Highway*" (20:17) - This is the first time this phrase occurs; it appears to have been a public road made by the king's authority at the expense of the state. It is supposed that the king now reigning in Edom was Hadar mentioned in Genesis 36:39. Though every king has a right to refuse passage through his territories to any strangers; yet in this case in a time of migration it was both cruelty and oppression in Edom to refuse a passage to a comparatively unarmed and inoffensive multitude who were their own kinsmen. It appears however that it was only the Edomites of Kadesh that were thus unfriendly and cruel; for from Deuteronomy 2:29 we learn that the Edomites who dwelt in Mount Seir treated them in a hospitable manner. This cruelty in the Edomites of Kadesh is strongly reprehended and threatened by the prophet Obadiah (Obadiah 10).

Chapter 20:22-29 - The death of Aaron

Verses 26,28: Stripping Aaron of his garments was depriving him of his office. Putting the clothes on his son Eleazar implied a transfer of that office to him. Moses - representative of the law; Miriam - representative of the prophets; Aaron - representative of the priesthood - they could not bring Israel into the possession of the promised land (Hebrews 7:23-28). This was the work of Joshua who in name and conduct was the type of the Savior Jesus Christ. He brings us to Canaan.

Chapter 21:1-3 - Israel's first victory over the Canaanites

Verse 1: “*Coming by way of Atharim*” - the original word here is to be understood as the name of the place.

Verse 3: “*They devoted them and their cities to destruction.*” If God gave them victory, they promised to utterly destroy the inhabitants as He had commanded them (Genesis 15:18-21; Numbers 14:8).

Chapter 21:4-9 - Israel’s seventh murmuring and its consequences

Verses 4,5: As their parents murmured in Numbers 11:4-9, so the children murmured here. They referred to the manna as if it were unsubstantial and not sufficient to nourish and strengthen them.

Verse 6: The animals mentioned here by Moses were called fiery because of the heat, violent inflammation and thirst occasioned by their bite. The animal to which reference is made is not clear; but it was a God-sent agent for punishment of the people. As the cure was certainly from God, so the agent that inflicted the disease also was.

Verse 7: The serpent’s bite brought Israel to a sense of their sin. When Israel murmured, the serpents’ bite was the answer; when Israel confessed, God’s grace was the answer.

Verses 8,9: On the subject of the cure of the serpent-bitten Israelites, by looking at the brazen serpent. To the circumstance of looking at the brazen serpent in order to be healed, our Lord refers in John 3;14,15. The brazen serpent itself was certainly no type of Jesus Christ; but from our Lord’s words we may learn: 1) As the serpent was lifted up on a pole, so Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross; 2) As Israelites were to look at the brazen serpent so sinners must look to Christ for salvation; 3) As God provided no other remedy than this looking for the wounded Israelites so He has provided no other way of salvation than faith in the blood of His Son; 4) As he who looked at the brazen serpent was cured and did live so he that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life; 5) As each Israelite had to look at the serpent himself, so each person must look to the Lord Jesus Christ himself. No one can look for another; and 6) As neither the serpent nor looking at it healed the people, so neither the cross of Christ nor His being crucified heals us, but the invisible power of God heals us - the pardon He has brought by His blood communicated by the energy of His Spirit saves the souls of men.

Chapter 21:10-35 - Journeying towards Moab

Verses 10-20: This gives a general statement of their progress toward Moab. Some of the places mentioned are not easily located.

Verses 21-32: The conquest of the land of the Amorites.

Verses 33-35: The conquest of Bashan.

Chapters 22-25 - Balaam and his prophecies

Chapter 22

See 2 Peter 2:15,16; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14

Verse 6: Balaam, once a prophet of the true God appears to have been one of those mentioned in 21:27. It was supposed that prophets and sorcerers had a power to curse

person and place.

Verses 7,8: Whoever went to consult a prophet took with him a present as it was on such offerings the prophets lived. Here more than a mere present is intended, perhaps every thing necessary to provide materials for the incantation. It appears that Balaam was very covetous and that he loved the wages of unrighteousness and probably lived by it. It appears that he knew the true God and had been in the habit of consulting Him and receiving oracles from His mouth.

Verses 9-12: God told him that he should not go with them to curse them. With them he might go, as we find he afterwards did by God's own command (22:20) but not to curse the people; this was wholly forbidden.

Verse 13,14: Balaam told the princes less than God told him and the princes told Balak less than Balaam told the; so that when the answer came to Balak it was not the word of God but the word of man. It was simply, "*Balaam refuses to come.*"

Verses 15-18: Balaam knew that he could not reverse any of God's purposes; and he respected Him too much to do anything without His permission. Though he was covetous yet he dared not go contrary to the command of God.

Verses 19-22: Balaam's going was marked with divine displeasure because he wished for the sake of honor and reward to fulfill as far as possible the will of the king of Moab (2 Peter 2:15).

Verses 23-30: The Lord opened the mouth of the ass and Balaam must have sensed this because he showed no surprise.

Verses 31-35: Verse 34 shows that though he loved the wages of unrighteousness yet he still feared God.

Verses 36-41: Balak offered sacrifices to gain the favor of his gods, and perhaps to propitiate Jehovah that the end for which he had sent Balaam might be accomplished. He took Balaam up into the high places of Baal so that he could see all those on whom the curse was to be pronounced. He feared the curse might not extend to those who were not in sight.

Chapter 23

Verses 1-6: The oxen and the rams were such as the Mosaic law had ordered to be offered to God in sacrifice. Balaam probably chose to build seven altars because he intended to offer a grand sacrifice, offering a bullock and a ram upon each of the altars; the whole to be a burnt offering at the same time. Blessing and cursing were considered as religious rites and therefore had to be preceded by sacrifice (Genesis 27:3,4). The venison that was brought to Jacob by Esau was probably the preparatory sacrifice.

Verses 7-10: In the original the speech of Balaam is highly dignified and may be considered as immediate poetic productions of the Spirit of God (23:5; 24:2). Balaam saw that God was determined to bless Israel and that all endeavors to injure him must be in vain. God may have to deal with His children Himself about their sins, their failures, etc; but another cannot move his tongue against them successfully. The question is not what the enemy may think about God's people or what they may think about themselves; what does God think of them? The moment any enemy or accuser enters the scene, Jehovah

places Himself in front to receive and answer the accusation; and His answer is always founded, not upon what His people are in themselves, but upon what He has made them through the perfection of His own work. His glory is linked with them and in vindicating them He maintains His own glory. He places Himself between them and every accusing tongue.

"A people dwelling alone" (23:9) - they shall ever be preserved as a distinct nation. This prophecy has been literally fulfilled through a period of 3,300 years to the present day.

Verses 11-17: Balak thought that the sight of such an immense camp had intimidated Balaam (23:13) and this we might gather from what he said in 23:10, *"Who can count the dust of Jacob?"* Balak therefore thought that he might get Balaam to curse them in detached parties, till the whole camp should be devoted to destruction.

Verses 18-24: Balak understood that Balaam would not say anything but what God told him, but he hoped that God would be induced to change His mind. Verse 23 shows that no enchantment can prevail against those who God had determined to bless.

Verses 25-30: Balak leads Balaam to another place.

Chapter 24

Verses 1-9: When Balaam saw that it pleased God to bless Israel, he thought it unnecessary to apply for any further prophetic declarations of God's will. God had not declared the whole of His will and His Spirit came upon Balaam again. *"A lion"* (24:9) - this is a prophecy of the victories which Israel shall gain over her enemies and of their possession of the promised land. It may also refer to the victories of Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, over sin, death, and Satan (Numbers 23:24; Revelation 5:5).

Verses 10-14: Balak was bitter against him.

Verses 15-19: Verse 17 is a prophecy of Christ (Genesis 49:10; Revelation 22:16). The star may refer to one with kingly power. All the kings who came out of Judah are "pointers" pointing to the Messiah. Some say this refers to the star which guided the wise men of the east to Bethlehem.

Verses 20-25: Israel's enemies were to be destroyed from before them. Amalek (24:20) was the most ancient and most powerful of all the nations or states then within the view of Balaam. This oracle began to be fulfilled by Saul (1 Samuel 15:7,8).

Chapter 25

Verses 1-5: Verse 1 expressly states that Israel's committing whoredom with the daughters of Moab was brought about by the evil counsel given by Balaam to cast a stumbling block in their way (cf. Revelation 2:14). The counsel given by Balaam to Balak might have been to form alliances with the people, especially through matrimonial connections; seeing they could not conquer them, to try to make them their friends. This counsel might not have been designed to bring the people into a snare, but it was bad. It is provable that this does not refer to married people leaving their wives and taking Moabitish women; but it constituted fornication because it was contrary to the command of God: no intermarriage was permitted.

Verses 6-9: One was a prince, the other a princess. It was a matrimonial alliance

(25:14,15).

Verses 10-13: *“My covenant of peace...of an perpetual priesthood”* (25:12,13) - the former referred to the blessings, both temporal and spiritual, which were to be granted to his family; the later refers properly to the priesthood of Christ which was shadowed out by the priesthood under the law. The Jews reckon twelve high priests of the race of Phineas from this time to the days of Solomon, nine more from that time to the captivity (1 Chronicles 6:4,15), and fifteen from their return to the last priest who was slain by Lysias. Ezra was of this line (Ezra 7:1,5). The family of Ithamar, uncle of Phineas, had the priesthood for about 150 years; but it was restored to the family of Phineas in the person of Zadok the priest (1 Chronicles 6:50) in which it continued in the whole about 950 years.

Verses 16-18: This order was fulfilled in 31:1-20.

Chapter 26 - The second numbering of the people

Verse 2: After thirty-eight years God commands a second census of Israel. This was necessary to preserve the distinction in families and to regulate the tribes previous to their entry into the promised land, and to ascertain the proportion of land which should be allowed to each tribe. The whole was divided by lot, yet the portions were so disposed that a numerous tribe did not draw where the lots assigned small inheritances (26:53-56).

Verse 51: The census figures are given.

1. Among these there was not a man of the former census except Joshua and Caleb (26:64,65).
2. Notwithstanding the increase in some tribes and the decrease in the other tribes, the same sort of proportion was preserve in the east, west, north, and south divisions as before; in this way the division of Judah which was always in the front was the largest and the division of Dan which was always in the rear was the next in number.

Verse 55: God was never supposed to be the whole disposer in such matters. The promised land was divided by lot to the believing Israelites, God determining the lot as He saw best. None of the people had any claim on or right to it.

Chapter 27:1-11 - The case of the daughters of Zelophehad

The singular case of these women caused and additional law to be made to the civil code of Israel permitting women to inherit property. The law is reasonable and just.

1. On the death of the father the estate goes to the son.
2. If there be no son, the daughters succeed.
3. If there be no daughters of the father inherit; etc. etc.

Beyond the fifth degree the law does not proceed, because as the families of the Israelites were kept distinct int heir respective tribes, there must always be some who could be called kinsmen.

Chapter 27:12-23 - Moses' death announced and his successor appointed

Verse 12: This was certainly Mt. Nebo (Deuteronomy 32:49), which was the same as Pisgah (Deuteronomy 34:1).

Verses 15-17: This is a beautiful expression and shows us in what light Moses viewed himself among his people. He was their shepherd; he sought no higher place; he fed and

guided the flock of God under the direction of the Holy Spirit and was faithful in all His Master's house (Numbers 12:7; Hebrews 3:2,5).

Verses 18-23: Joshua was chosen because he was endued with the Spirit of God and was, therefore, capable of leading the people. God never chooses a man to accomplish His designs but that He qualifies Him for the work. Moses was to show the whole congregation that Joshua was associated with himself in the government of the people. Eleazer, the High Priest, was to ask counsel of God for him. Here was a remarkable difference between him and Moses. God talked with Moses face to face; but to Joshua only through the medium of the High Priest. Moses laid his hands on Joshua as proof of his being appointed to and qualified for the work.

Chapters 28,29 - Repetition of laws of offerings, feasts, and vows

The precept introduced here were delivered before in different parts of Exodus and Leviticus. It is possible that daily, weekly, and yearly services had been considerably interrupted for several years, owing to the unsettling state of the people in the wilderness (cf. 28:2 - "*at its appointed time*"). It was necessary to repeat these laws for two reasons:

1. Because they were now about to enter into the promised land where these services must be established and constant.
2. Because the former generation being all dead, multitudes of the present might be ignorant of these ordinances.

Chapter 30 - Repetition of laws of offerings, feasts, and vows (continued)

Young persons under the authority of their parents had no power to vow away the property of another - a married woman was in the same circumstance because she was under the authority of her husband; if however, the parents or the husband heard the vow or heard of the vow and objected to it in the same day in which they heard of it (30:5) then the vow was annulled. If having heard the vow, they held their peace, this was considered a ratification of the vow.

Chapter 31 - Judgment of the Midianites

This give us the closing scene of Moses' official life.

Verse 3: It was God's quarrel that they were to take up - not their own. These people were idolaters and the time for their punishment had come. Private revenge, extension of territory, love of plunder, were to have no place in this war; the Lord was to be avenged.

Verse 6: Twelve thousand men were sent. Phineas went, not as general, but probably to accompany the ark since his father Eleazar was probably old. Without doubt Joshua was the leader, though he is not mentioned. God was really in command.

Verse 8: Balaam was slain.

Verses 21-24: The water referred to here was that in which the ashes of the red heifer were mingled (19:2).

Verses 25-31: The booty was divided into two equal parts, one for the soldiers employed in the expedition, and the other for those who were ordered to stay in the camp. The soldiers were to give one out of every five hundred items to the Lord. The people who stayed at home, risking nothing, were to give one out of fifty items.

Verses 49-54: That not one man should have been slain was a most extraordinary circumstance. God had already punished those in Israel who had participated in sin with Midian (25:9). The battle was the Lord's. The men of war brought an offering of their own free will in acknowledgment to God for the preservation of their lives.

Chapter 32 - Reuben and Gad's choice

Verses 1-5: The request of the tribes of Reuben and Gad that they be permitted to settle in the land east of the Jordan River. They had a great multitude of cattle and the place was a place for cattle (32:1).

Verses 6-15: Moses was displeased with their request. He was not allowed to go over because of his personal conduct, but his heart was in the promised land and he longed to enter it. So he could not approve of this request.

Verses 16-19: They promised to cross the Jordan, armed to help their brethren to enter the portion on the west side of the Jordan River.

Verses 20-24: Moses consented to their plan.

Verses 29-30: Moses proposed the matter to Joshua, Eleazar and the elders.

Verse 32: The tribes of Gad and of Reuben, also the half tribe of Manasseh, were assigned portions on the eastern side of the Jordan.

This request seems to have been a mistake, a failure, a stopping short of the divine plan. These two and a half tribes were the first of all Israel that were carried captive out of their own land because of their sins (1 Chronicles 5:25,26).

Chapter 33 - Review of the journey

Verses 1,2: This gives us a minute description of the desert wanderings of the children of Israel. Forty-two stations are enumerated. The record covers the journeyings from the moment they marched out of Egypt until they crossed the Jordan. God knows every single step and station along the way (Deuteronomy 2:7).

Verses 3-49: The forty-two stations of the journey.

Verses 50-56: A former command is renewed and a warning given (Exodus 23:23,33; 34:13; Judges 1:19,21,27-35; 2 Chronicles 36:11-21).

Chapter 34 - The boundaries of the land

Verses 1-13: These verses give the boundaries of the land of their inheritance as drawn on the hand of God. The hand which had guided their wanderings, here fixes the border of their habitation. He gave them the whole land and gave it forever; but they took but a part, and that for a time. Even under David and Solomon, all the land was not occupied. During the millennium Israel will possess the land completely and forever.

Verses 14,15: Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh were on the east side of the Jordan.

Verses 16-29: Here the princes are chosen to divide the land. God nominated the princes that we to divide the land.

Chapter 35 - The cities of the Levites and the cities of refuge

Verses 1-8: Out of the twelve tribes of Israel forty-eight cities and their suburbs were to be given to the Levites. God took care of His servants and permitted the whole congregation of Israel the privilege of being co-workers with Him in providing for those who were devoted to His work. Six of these cities were to be cities of refuge.

Verse 9-29: The cities of refuge were situated three on the eastern and three on the western side of the Jordan. The cities were situated so that wherever there was a need of a shelter that shelter might be near at hand.

These cities were not perpetual refuges. They were only pro tempore refuges until the case could be fairly examined by the magistrates in the presence of the people; and this was done in the city or place where the murder had been committed (Joshua 20:4,6). If the murderer was found worthy of death, he was delivered to the avenger that he might be slain (Deuteronomy 19:12). If he was not guilty he was sent back to the city of refuge where he remained until the death of the High Priest (Leviticus 24:17,21). Before the cities of refuge were appointed, the altar seems to have been a sanctuary for those who had killed a person unwittingly (Exodus 21:13,14; 1 Kings 2:29).

Verse 30: This was a just and necessary provision. One witness may be mistaken or prejudiced or wicked; but it is not likely that two or more would be of this kind.

Verses 31-34: No atonement could be made for the murderer nor could he be saved from death. This law was stated in Genesis 9:6 and none was judged so proper to execute the law as the one who was nearest of kin to the slain one.

Note: The cities of refuge are a type of Christ. Our city of refuge is the Christ of the shed blood (Hebrews 6:17,18).

Chapter 36 - Heiresses were not to marry out of their tribes

Chapter 27:1-11 is related with this chapter. They are both parts of the same subject. Here Moses determines that heiresses should marry in their own tribe that no part of the ancient inheritance might be alienated from the original family. This law affected none but heiresses; all others were at liberty to marry into any of the other tribes. The priests and Levites, who could have no inheritance, were exempt from the operation of the law.