

Bible Study # 17
April 27, 1988
Mr. John Ogwyn

Old Testament Series—Numbers
(Chart at end)

This evening we **are covering the book of Numbers**. The book of Numbers, as with Leviticus, has a great deal of significance to us as Christians. I think it is important for us to understand how the book of Numbers applies to us today. We want to go beyond simply the historical record. We want **to focus on the historical and to understand the specifics that did occur, but we also want to understand the lessons that God would have us derive from this book**.

In I Corinthians 10:1-2, the Apostle Paul writes, “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” Paul is drawing an analogy of ancient Israel who came out of Egypt, and he says that figuratively they were baptized. Now what does that mean? They were immersed in water—water all around them—they just didn’t get wet. This is the only case of baptism without being wet; they had water of the Red Sea on each side of them, taller than they were, and the cloud that was water vapor was over the top. So they were totally surrounded by water, totally enveloped in water, yet they were dry. That was a remarkable situation, and Paul draws it as an analogy that symbolically they were baptized.

Verses 3-4, “all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” The physical rock that was in the wilderness out of which came rivers of living water that they drank was symbolic of the spiritual Rock which is Jesus Christ, the source of living waters (John 7:38-39).

Verse 5, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.” He says God was not well pleased with most of them.

Notice here, the analogy that Paul is drawing is Israel coming through the wilderness, the story that is contained in the book of Numbers. The book of Numbers covers a thirty-nine-year period. Exodus covers the first year of the wandering, and that takes you up to the dedication of the tabernacle (Exodus 40), basically a year after the Exodus. Leviticus is the

detailed instruction that the Levites received around the time that the tabernacle was dedicated. They had to know all this information in Leviticus in order to dedicate the tabernacle that you read of in the end of Exodus. Numbers picks up the story about a year after the Exodus and takes you all the way forward through the period of wandering in the wilderness. It takes you all the way forward until just prior to the entrance into the Promised Land. Deuteronomy deals with the final instructions just before they crossed over the Jordan. So the book of Numbers covers the period between the time Israel came out of Egypt and the time they entered into the Promised Land. It covers the time of wandering in the wilderness.

Brethren, where do we find ourselves today? We have left spiritual Egypt and have turned our backs on this society, but we have not yet reached the Promised Land, have we? We are on a journey through the wilderness, through a spiritual wilderness. We are in a process of traveling from Egypt to the Promised Land. We are in circumstances that Israel of old was. We are in the spiritual circumstances that compares with their physical circumstances because they were on a journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. We are on a journey from spiritual Egypt to the Promised Land.

God records the details of what Israel went through.

Paul says in I Corinthians 10:5-6, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now *these things were our example*, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”

Verses 7-11, “And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.’ Nor let us commit sexual immorality [KJV, “fornication”], as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now *all these things happened to them as examples*, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come.”

Paul enumerates several things that we are going to read about in the book of Numbers. He says, ‘This is what messed up the people.’ These are the pitfalls in the Christian life. These are the things that can keep you from entering into the Promised Land. Why didn’t they?

Well, some of them began to lust after evil things. They began to lust and covet that which they didn't have, which of course, led them into idolatry and the kind of attitude it describes. They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. It is not talking about drinking a glass of milk and having a hamburger and going out to play volleyball. That really was not the problem. It is talking about a lifestyle of just a drunken debauch—a worldly lifestyle, that involved the drinking to excess, that involved the kind of things that you often see around.

So, here were the things that got to them. 'Nor let us commit fornication'; immorality was a problem. 'Nor let us tempt Christ...Nor murmur, gripe,'—complain, fault find. These things that happened to them were for examples or for types. They are to represent certain things and to make us aware of the type of things that can befall us and interfere with our successful completion of our spiritual journey.

So I think it is important that we study the book of Numbers from that standpoint. We will notice as we go through, that there are certain types of problems, certain things that tripped them up. Things that we today can interfere with us, things that have tripped up many of God's people in this age.

Certainly, *one of the basic themes of the book of Numbers is that God's people can only move forward so long as they trust in God's promises and lean upon His strength.* The older generation of Israel did not enter into the Promised Land (Numbers 14:22-23). Why? Israel quit following where God led. They got sidetracked with other things. Their own fears came in the way; they were afraid to go where God led. God was leading them into the Promised Land; they focused on how big the giants were and were scared to go in (Numbers 13:25-33).

Romans 1:17, "...The just shall live by faith."

Numbers is the record of Israel's lack of faith. Because of unbelief, they were unable to enter the Promised Land. Hebrews 3 and 4 also provide an analogy between the lesson of Numbers and the Christian life.

The book of Numbers takes its meaning from the prominence of two censuses. One was taken at the beginning of the wandering; the other was taken at the end of the wandering. So there are numbers that are recorded in this particular book. Yet interestingly enough, the Jews sometimes referred to it as the Book of Murmurings because that is what it was—the story of Israel's murmurings in the wilderness.

We start out in Numbers 1 with the census that is taken. At the beginning when the census was first taken, we note that Judah was the largest tribe, almost seventy-five thousand men from twenty years old and upward—seventy-four thousand six hundred of the tribe of Judah. That stood out as quite large. You go through the census, but we won't take time to go through each one.

We note that there is organization. We note that, for instance, beginning in vv. 4-5, there was a leader, a prince (leader) for each tribe.

Numbers 1:7 we note of Judah, "...Nahshon, the son of Amminadab" was the prince. Now if you were to go back to the book of Ruth, you would find that Nahshon, the son of Amminadab was the grandfather of Boaz. Remember Boaz married Ruth. Nahshon that is mentioned here in v. 7 is the prince of the tribe of Judah and the grandfather of Boaz. Now Boaz himself was the great grandfather of King David. You remember that Boaz and Ruth had a son Obed who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David (Ruth 4:17-22). It gives you a little "tie-in" in terms of generations and shows that it was a prominent family, a leading family in Judah. Numbers goes through the tribes, and we find that there were just over six hundred thousand men in Israel. This is not counting the Levites (v. 46).

Numbers 2 has the detailed instructions of the way the camp was organized. We note there is organization.

Notice Numbers 2:2, "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard [ensign, banner, flag], beside the emblems of his father's house...." One of the things that we note is organization. God is very organized, and the camp of Israel was very organized. You did not have a mob of two or three million people out here in the desert just kind of wandering around, one giant mob scene. They were organized by tribes; when they pitched their camp, you had the tabernacle in the midst.

Verses 3-7, on the east side toward the rising of the sun there were three tribes: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. They had the ensign (banner, standard, flag) of the camp of Judah.

Verses 10-14 tell us Reuben, Simeon and Gad were on the south side.

Verses 18-22, on the west side, were Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin.

Verses 25-29, on the north side, were Dan, Asher and Naphtali.

Verse 17, "...everyone in his place, by their standard."

There were four flags. There is not a particular description of the flags in the Bible, but there are references in the book of Deuteronomy to the things that were described as having relevance to each of these tribes. In Jewish tradition, there has been preserved the pictures of the ensigns of Israel. One of the interesting things to note is that most of the materials, most of the things that made up the ensigns, have been preserved in the royal coat of arms of Great Britain and portions of it also in that of the United States, France and some of the other nations of Israel.

The statement in Deuteronomy 33:17 describes Joseph, “His glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns are like the horns of a wild ox [KJV, “unicorns”]; together with them he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim and they are the thousands of Manasseh.”

It is interesting that if you were to look on the royal coat of arms of Great Britain, you would see pictured on it the unicorn and the bullock. In terms of Judah, it is described in Genesis 49:9 as a lion’s whelp. The lion was the symbol of Judah. Christ was called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The lion, of course, was symbolic of Judah and is descriptive because from Judah was to come the kingly line. That’s why the lion is also there in the royal coat of arms of Great Britain—Queen Elizabeth is a direct descendant of King David and occupies the throne of David. You have united there in the royal coat of arms the insignias that represent Ephraim and Judah because the royal family that is in Britain is the descendant of the kingly line of Judah, ruling over the tribe of Ephraim, the chief of the tribes of Israel. You would actually find pictured much of the insignias and the things that are identified with the British Isles. If you looked at these insignias, much of the material of the coats of arms actually dates back to the particular time that is described here and the flags that are described.

There were flags held up that they could see, and there was a captain over each tribe. We saw earlier that God had given Moses instruction through his father-in-law that he should appoint captains of ten, captains of fifty, captains of one hundred and captains of one thousand (Exodus 18). We find these are tribal captains that are above the captains of a thousand. There were captains over each tribe, twelve princes—one for each tribe. There was organizational structure.

If you have ever been to Big Sandy, Texas for the Feast of Tabernacles, you have a glimmer on a very small scale of how it works. We take it for

granted, but people in the world are amazed that you can come up at the Feast of Tabernacles with a city of four or five thousand people overnight with no paid or permanent staff. You have people that are coming in from all over, and in a day’s time you have an organized city of four or five thousand people. You have sanitation and hygiene, police and fire, and everything you would have in any city of four or five thousand people. It functions and it functions smoothly. With that, we get a flavor, if you have ever been there, of what it was like.

I look back and appreciate the opportunity that I had for quite a number of years to be involved there with the camp in Big Sandy and to have a part in organizing it because this was our model. This was what we looked to. Why did we organize it the way that we did? Because this was the way God had Moses do it. If it was good enough for God and Moses, I don’t think there was any point in our trying to improve upon it. So we never tried to improve upon it. We didn’t experiment with captains of twelve or captains of five or captains of fifteen. We just stuck to ten, fifty, one hundred and one thousand, just like God told Moses to do it, and it worked.

In Numbers 2, you had this organization: three tribes on the east (vv. 3-7), Judah, Issachar and Zebulun; on the south (vv. 10-14), Reuben, Simeon and Gad; on the west (vv. 18-22), Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin; and on the north (vv. 25-29), Dan, Asher and Naphtali. The Levites were camped on the inside, right around the tabernacle. There was order; there was organization to it.

You had the flags on every side, and each tribe was outlined. First were the tribes; then the tribes were subdivided into the basic clans in the tribe, family groupings in the clans, the extended family groupings and finally the families themselves. There was an organized structure going from groups of ten families, groups of fifty families, groups of one hundred families and groups of one thousand families. We get a little bit of the flavor of this type of thing.

One of the things that you might note, it does not go into detail here, but elsewhere we are told of the seventy elders who were basically, in structure, between the captains of one thousand and the princes over the tribes. If you would look, for instance, at Judah where there were seventy-four thousand families, you would wind up with seventy-four captains of one thousand. Let’s say ten captains of one thousand reported to each elder; then you would wind up with seven or eight elders from Judah. If you were to

take that number and go through, you would see that it would come out to about seventy in terms of the overall number that they would have. That would mean about seven or eight elders then reported to each prince. So you had that structure where everybody had a manageable number that reported to him, coming up to the twelve princes that reported to Moses. You had a highly structured, organized situation through which you could handle all of this.

The other thing to note in comparison is that when you go back to the New Jerusalem at the end of the book of Revelation, you know what you find? You find a city that is laid out in square with three gates on each side of the city. And guess what—each gate is meant for one of the tribes. Here, you find the organization that God is later going to use on out into eternity with the New Jerusalem.

It is headquarters of the universe. This structure is going to get back to the twelve tribes. Everybody who comes into the New Jerusalem relates to one of the tribes of Israel, and that ties in with the one hundred forty-four thousand where you have twelve thousand of the firstfruits assigned for each tribe (Revelation 7:4). The word “of” in this verse is Greek and can just as easily be translated “for” as well as “of.” In that sense, it is not that each one of the twelve thousand will necessarily be physical descendants *of* that tribe, but *for* that tribe—they are appointed for that tribe, at least spiritually in the context of the New Jerusalem.

Then you have the physical descendants who report in, who come in through those gates, as well as the various Gentile nations that flow in because all must ultimately become spiritually the children of Abraham. You know, if you are Christ’s, you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.

We are told in the book of Isaiah (46:10) that God declares the end from the beginning. God had an organized structure in mind. He started out in the beginning with a pattern that He is going to follow out into eternity. Sometimes I think we don’t realize some of those things, but you know what? You are going to have God right in the center in the New Jerusalem; then from there flows out that organization of each tribe, three tribes on every side.

Numbers 3:12, “Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine.” God says He has taken the Levites. We find they did a census and

it turned out the number of the sons of Levi (Levites) were twenty-two thousand: Gershon, seven thousand five hundred (v. 22); Kohath, eight thousand six hundred (v. 28); and Merari, six thousand two hundred (v. 34).

Verse 39, “All who were numbered of the Levites...all the males from a month old and above, were twenty-two thousand.” Now if you actually add up the numbers, you come out to twenty-two thousand three hundred. There was a difference of three hundred. Of the twenty-two thousand three hundred, three hundred were themselves firstborns, and they couldn’t redeem themselves. That is where there is one apparent discrepancy that is really not.

If you take the numbers given here in Numbers 3, the seven thousand five hundred of Gershon, eight thousand six hundred of Kohath and the six thousand two hundred of Merari, and you add them all together, you will find that the numbers come out to be twenty-two thousand three hundred. Yet in v. 39, it refers to the number as being twenty-two thousand. The difference is that there were three hundred of these that were themselves firstborn; they could not be counted toward the redemption of the other firstborn because they could only redeem themselves, they could only take their own place.

Verse 43, “And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.” From a month old and upward there were twenty-two thousand two hundred seventy-three firstborn sons in Israel. God said all the firstborn belong to Me, but I am going to take the Levites instead.

God took all of the Levites; it left two hundred seventy-three extra. They were redeemed with a monetary value.

Verse 47, “You shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take them in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs.” They took up five shekels apiece.

Verse 50, “From the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.” If two hundred seventy-three firstborns were redeemed, then one thousand three hundred sixty-five shekels (divided by five, v. 47) was taken.

A shekel was equivalent to about a four-day average wage for a laborer. Five shekels was about twenty days or approximately a three-week wage of the average laboring man. That is

what this would work out to in terms of equivalence.

The point that God wanted to make was that when He came through Egypt and spared the firstborn, He said they belonged to Him because He struck all the firstborn of Egypt dead and spared yours. God said, ‘All the firstborn belong to Me. In exchange for them, I am going to take one tribe, but everybody has to be accounted for. Numbers 4 details the Levites entering into full responsibility.

Numbers 4:3, “‘from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.’” They worked in the tabernacle in full responsibility from age thirty to age fifty. We note elsewhere that they performed certain jobs in the temple from age twenty-five. Up to age twenty-five was basically set aside for their education; from ages twenty-five to thirty was more of an apprentice. From ages thirty to fifty, they were in full responsibility. From ages fifty and older, they were in the category of elders—elders in the sense of those who were older. It was basically from the age of fifty and up that the Levites were no longer performing the physical rituals in the temple, but they are of whom you read that sat as judges in the gates in the various cities of Israel.

You read of what they did in the temple, and there was a lot of hard strenuous physical work. When you start slaughtering a bunch of bulls and goats, you begin to realize you are talking about some work, and that is what they spent a lot of time doing. There were many physical rituals in the physical ceremonies, and those from ages fifty and up were simply not burdened with that type of responsibility.

It describes the specific coverings; the materials of the articles of the tabernacle had to be transported through the wilderness, so there were special coverings for them. They were given instructions as to how to carry them (vv. 4-14).

Verse 15, “‘And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.’” They were not to touch any of the holy things lest they die.

It goes through and describes the specifics of the numbers that were involved in each of these. We find there were eight thousand five hundred

eighty Levites between the age of thirty and the age of fifty (vv. 47-48).

Numbers 5:2, “‘Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a dead body.’” It defines those who were put out of the camp because of uncleanness. The symbolism was that God dwells in the tabernacle in the midst of the camp, and anyone who became defiled had to go outside the camp and become clean in order to come back into the presence of God. Obviously, there were physical aspects of quarantine that were involved, but more importantly was the spiritual symbolism—that we have to be clean to be in the presence of God. This past Sabbath we noticed one of the scriptures that Jesus said in Matthew 5.

Matthew 5:8, “‘Blessed [and happy] are the pure in heart for they shall see God.’” To be pure in heart is to be spiritually clean, to be sincere. If we want to be in the presence of God, we have to be spiritually clean. How do we become spiritually clean? We are washed by the water and the word (Ephesians 5:26). They went through a physical washing; we go through a spiritual washing.

There were symbolisms that were to be impressed upon the people; God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. If God would not dwell in the midst of physical uncleanness, how much less is God going to dwell in the midst of spiritual uncleanness?

We are told in II Corinthians 6:16, “‘...For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’” God dwells in us through His Spirit.

I Corinthians 3:16, “‘Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?’”

I Corinthians 6:19-20, “‘Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.’” We belong to God. The emphasis is there that if they became physically or ceremonially defiled, they had to go outside the camp—even though there were certain physical reasons in terms of quarantine and in certain matters of contagious disease. But it went beyond that because it was to impress upon them the point that God will not dwell in the midst of uncleanness.

Numbers 6:2-6, "...When either a man or a woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazarite to separate himself to the Lord, he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. All the days of his vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled...he shall not go near a dead body." The Nazarite vow is recorded.

There were three conditions of the Nazarite vow: (1) He was not to eat fruit of the vine or the grape, nor to touch any derivative of it such as wine, strong drink and vinegar. He was not to eat liquor of grapes or moist or dry grapes. Nor could he eat anything that comes from the vine.

Realize that other than at the grape harvest time in the fall, the only products you would have from the vine would be wine or vinegar or raisins because what happens within a week or two after it has been harvested? If you don't have refrigeration or are unable to pasteurize the grape juice, what do you think would happen if you took fresh grape juice and squeezed it out in the fall and stored it? Do you think you would come back in the spring or summer and find grape juice? It wouldn't happen! There are natural yeast spores. That's what that white is. If you ever see a concord grape and see all the white, that's natural yeast spores out of the air.

People ask the question, 'How do you know that Christ and the disciples didn't drink grape juice, rather than wine?' It's very simple; there was no such thing as grape juice in the spring. It would have been impossible. It was not a question of what they drank. The grapes are harvested in the fall. That's the only time that grapes are harvested. Within a couple of weeks, there wasn't any more grape juice. It was either on its way to wine or vinegar, but it wasn't grape juice. I don't think Christ sat there and drank vinegar, so that didn't leave a whole lot of alternatives. It was just simply a matter of that's what you had.

Grape juice, as we know, it did not exist until the advent of pasteurization, other than at harvest time. At harvest time, you would press it out and have fresh grape juice, but you couldn't preserve it that way unless you could freeze or pasteurize, bottle and store it. Those are recent innovations.

Same thing with the grapes, you had to make raisins out of them. You ate what you could fresh at the time you harvested; the rest of it you made

raisins or wine out of it or it went bad. This is just to make a point.

The Nazarites were to separate themselves. They didn't partake of wine or strong drink, or for that matter, anything else that came from the vine—though that was primarily what came from the vine most of the year.

(2) They were not to shave or cut their hair.

(3) They were not to touch a dead body.

This was the case throughout the time of their Nazarite vow, which was for a limited duration. It was something that set them aside. It was a vow of humility; it set them aside for special service to God and marked them out from the congregation. One apparent thing is that people normally shaved and cut their hair. If they didn't, the Nazarites wouldn't have stood out from anybody else. They stood out and looked pretty different. They were not allowed to shave or cut their hair for the period of the vow, which generally would run for a period of a few months. Just from that statement alone, you can derive that normally the Israelites did cut their hair and didn't just go some other way.

In Numbers 8, we find the Levites set aside and consecrated. They were in the training period.

We see in vv. 24-25 a kind of five-year on-the-job training from ages twenty-five to thirty; then from age fifty, they were to cease waiting on the service. They were to serve with their brethren in the tabernacle, but they were not to actually perform the service in terms of slaughtering the animals and that sort of thing.

Numbers 9 explains what is termed as the second Passover. The situation came up when there were individuals who were defiled and unable to keep the first Passover. They were not in a state of purity or cleanness and were unable to keep the Passover. What was to happen?

In Numbers 9:10, the statement was made that, "...if anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a dead body, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord's Passover. On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it...." He is to observe the Passover.

There are times that individuals are unable to be present at the Passover—primarily in this age, it would be because of sickness, shut-ins, etc. So in their case, they would observe the second Passover as it is prescribed here, which is on the fourteenth day of the second month. If you, for a valid reason, are unable to attend the first Passover, then there is a second that is prescribed. That emphasizes the importance of observing the Passover. God made provision,

recognizing that there could be circumstances that would arise that would be beyond the control of an individual that would keep him from being present at the Passover. And if that were the case, there was a second chance. This is not for an individual because of an attitude of unwillingness to obey God, but rather circumstances beyond that individual's control.

In Numbers 10, we note instruction that they were to make two trumpets of silver. They had a coded system that made communication easy among all these people. God is not the author of confusion. If you have all of these people out there, hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people, how do you communicate? If you go out and holler, you are not going to go very far. Well, they had these trumpets made up, and the blast of these trumpets could be heard in a wide area. Through these loud blasts, they were able to blow an alarm. It was coded as to what the people in different sections of the camp were to do when they heard it because, again, God is not the author of confusion.

Numbers 11:1, "Now when the people complained, it displeased the Lord; for Lord heard it and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts [KJV, "uttermost parts"] of the camp." There are various times you read of where God consumed those who were in the uttermost part of the camp. Those were the "fringers."

There's always a certain element that wants to hang around the uttermost fringe of the camp. On the one hand, they identify with it, but they didn't want to be right there in the center of things. In the center was where God was. They wanted to be as far away from God as they could be and yet still kind of be identified with the people of God. Unfortunately, there are a few of those that kind of tag along on our journey through the wilderness; they are the "spiritual fringers."

We used to see in Big Sandy, at the camp, there was a certain element of people that liked to show up a day late for the Feast and wanted to go down and pitch a camp on a corner down there on 32nd Street. Now why in the world would anyone want to do anything like that? – Because they wanted to be on the uttermost fringe of the camp. We always knew when we organized the camp in Big Sandy it was crucial to protect the fringers. You were very careful as to whom you camped on the farthest back street because they had to secure the back of the camp. You knew if you had trouble, it was going

to be down on the uttermost fringe of the camp. It never failed. I saw it from 1974 to 1986, and I don't know of any exception. If you had trouble, it was down on the uttermost fringe of the camp. That's where you could always depend on there being problems because it was hard to get to. If people are going to get in trouble, they kind of gravitate toward the edges, kind of get off where there's nobody looking, and, sure enough, there is trouble. When there was trouble and God got ready to "zap" somebody, He generally zapped somebody on the uttermost fringes of the camp because that way you would catch most of the ones that needed "zapping."

Then we find the people began to gripe and complain.

Verse 5, "'We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.'" 'Woe is me; all we have is this manna.' They began to gripe and complain; they didn't like what God had given to them. This attitude of griping and complaining—God wasn't doing things the way they wanted Him to do it.

Earlier they were complaining they didn't have anything to eat; so God sent them manna. They were glad to get the manna, but after a little while they said, 'Why isn't God raining down watermelons? Why isn't He raining down some fish and some really good seasoning?' Evidently manna didn't have spicy seasonings or something on it. They began to complain because it was too bland.

Earlier they had complained because they didn't have anything to eat, and they were glad to get the manna, bland or not—they were hungry. But notice when their need began to be filled, there were their wants! God says He will provide our needs, but sometimes we confuse our needs with our wants. Instead of being appreciative to God for what He was giving, they began to gripe and complain and murmur and fault-find. They said, 'Things were not so bad back in Egypt.'

Of course, that can happen to all of us; we have memories of coming out of the world while beginning our journey. We begin to look back and remember, and say, 'God's way of life is really kind of bland. There's not all of the spice and excitement. Boy, I remember some of the things that we use to do. I don't know; it just seems like it is kind of dull. I'd kind of like to just kind of spice things up. Why can't we do some of the things we use to do?' We begin to get in that kind of attitude. Do you want to know what God thinks of that kind of attitude? Read chapter 11. There were those who did not come

out too well on that deal. The people were smitten because of their lust. This is made plain in Numbers 11.

In Numbers 12, we find another problem. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had married. He had married—past tense—an Ethiopian woman. If you read the account, when did he marry the Ethiopian woman? Well, Josephus makes it plain that he married a princess of Ethiopia back when he was a prince of Egypt over forty years earlier. Acts 7:22 mentions that Moses was a man mighty in words and deeds among the Egyptians. Josephus records the account of some of Moses' exploits as an Egyptian general—how he besieged and laid siege to the Ethiopian city of Maro, and the city surrendered. They made a deal that he would marry the princess and the city would surrender. We don't read of the woman during the period of time Moses left Egypt. We don't know exactly the situation. We know that he later married a Midianite woman that we read about in Exodus 2.

But notice the point here. Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses. They began to criticize and put Moses down in the midst of the congregation because of this marriage, which they recognized as not being proper. It was something that they knew, in effect, created disrespect for Moses. They wanted to criticize or condemn Moses because of a marriage he had entered into that was not really in accordance with the way that things should be. Notice their attitude.

Numbers 12:2, "And they said, 'Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?' And the Lord heard it." 'Who does Moses think he is? He's not perfect; look at this situation with the Ethiopian wife.' They brought this up because this served to be an emotional issue that kind of stirred up people, and they were going to use that to just kind of criticize Moses and put him down.

Verse 3, "(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)" Moses did not flare up and take matters into his own hands. They began to criticize and put down Moses, began to stir things up and to use this as something to criticize Moses. They were jealous of Moses. What happened? Moses didn't fight his own battle here; God did.

Numbers 12:4-10, "Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!' So the three came out. Then the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle,

and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward. Then he said, 'Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make Myself known to him in a vision, and I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?' So the anger of the Lord was aroused against them, and He departed. And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow...."

What was the point? They began to criticize and condemn Moses. There were individuals years ago that evidently had not read Numbers 12; if they had read it, they hadn't gotten the point.

I remember a time when Mr. Herbert Armstrong made a marriage and that there were those who were not afraid to speak evil, condemn, criticize and seek to incite people. They obviously had not gotten the point of Numbers 12.

God said, 'Look, Moses is My servant. You have nothing to say about him to the people to put him down. If anybody tells Moses anything, I will tell Moses what he needs to know. I will deal with Moses. You are putting yourself up in a way that you do not belong.' However, Moses beseeched God to heal Miriam (v. 13) and He did. God wanted to make a point.

One of the things you find throughout the book of Numbers is rebellion. People found fault with Moses. They found fault with the leadership.

Paul said in I Corinthians 10:6, 11, 'Look, these things happened to them as examples for us so that we can read an account and know what happens to people who try to follow God and know the kind of adversities, the kind of temptations that effect them.'

If you are going to try and follow God, leave Egypt behind and head for the Promised Land. There are different types of difficulties that you will encounter. How should you conduct yourself when you meet these difficulties? Here's the Book; it tells you the kind of problems God's people encountered. Paul tells us these things were written down as examples for us, so that when we read the account, we might know how we ought to conduct ourselves if we ever find ourselves in a similar circumstance. That's one of the ways to read the Bible. Read it has from the standpoint of what happened to God's people in the past. What difficulties, what adversities, what temptations beset them? How did they handle it? What was

the right way, the wrong way? Learn from it so that when we encounter something similar, we don't have to make the same mistake.

Here was a problem that came from people at the top. You see they were familiar, he was their brother—'Who does he think he is?' And they began to find fault and cut him down in the eyes of the people because they wanted to put themselves up. And God intervened in that. The problem was not a matter of God approving Moses' marriage one way or the other. The greatest sin involved was in speaking against Moses, an attitude of rebellion. They were trying to exalt themselves and to demean Moses in the eyes of the people.

Numbers 13 gives the instructions to send out spies into the Promised Land, a land that flowed with milk and honey. They sent them out, and when they came back to report, they told them that, Numbers 13:33, "There we saw giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Verse 30, now Caleb and Joshua told the people, "Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.'"

Numbers 14 shows that they complained and murmured and griped and bellyached and wept and wailed and lamented because of all of this. God, of course, was not pleased with their attitude. It was a total lack of faith. They were unwilling to follow God. So God said, 'You are going to wander.'

Numbers 14:34, "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection." Each day for a year; we find that a principle in prophecy. They bore that for forty years. All of that generation, except Joshua and Caleb, died. God brought the children over.

Numbers 15:30, "But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from his people."

Verse 32, "Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day."

Verse 30 presents a presumptuous sin.

In v. 32, an individual was going about his work on the Sabbath. He was out chopping firewood and gathering that up. He was put to death (v.

35). It comes right after the statement in v. 30 about the presumptuous sin.

A presumptuous sin is when you know better and do it anyway. We are looking at an attitude, an attitude of rebellion—rebelliousness. This is not a case of where a man made a mistake or didn't understand or didn't realize. We are not looking at the need of someone to be instructed. We are looking at the need of someone to be corrected. It served as an example for the people that you don't just have this kind of self-rule attitude. Here God is governing the nation directly, and He tells you what to do. The man says, 'I don't care, I am going to go out and do what I want to do.' God says, 'No, you are not; I am not going to tolerate that.' God was governing in a very direct way and making plain how He viewed things that we might read it and understand God's perspective and how seriously God takes these matters.

Numbers 16:1-3, "Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men; and they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?'"

Here is Korah; he is a cousin of Moses, one of the Levites. In a sense, he is one of the leading ministers, but he is not the priesthood. He got together with some who were the sons of Reuben (v. 1). They were leading ministers in the congregation, men of renown. They said, 'You take too much upon yourself. Since all the congregation is holy, everyone, we are all God's people, every one of us.'

Verse 3, 'Who do you think you are; why are you lifting yourself above the congregation of the Lord?'

Verse 10, "...are you seeking the priesthood also?'"

Verses 11-14 show an attitude of rebellion, murmuring and complaining because God isn't doing things the way they want. So they begin to take things into their own hands. People who begin to focus in on the difficulties and adversities become so overwhelmed and discouraged, they give up and quit and won't be going forward. You saw what happened. God

gave the instructions. ‘You think you are so great? We are going to find out who is God’s servant.’

Verses 31-32, “Then it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods.” God opened up the earth and swallowed up Korah, Dathan and Abriam and everything that pertained to them. He sent fire out and consumed the two hundred fifty men who offered incense (v. 35).

Verse 41, “On the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, ‘you have killed the people of the Lord.’” You know what, the next day everybody was complaining about Moses and Aaron. ‘You have killed God’s people.’ The people were all mad and upset with what God had done. So God struck them with a plague, and fourteen thousand seven hundred of them died (v. 49).

In Numbers 17:1-9, they were all told to bring in their staff and plant it in the sand. They came out the next day, and Aaron’s rod had budded. It was made out of almond wood; it had grown leaves and had almonds on it. That’s not normally what is going to happen when you stick your walking stick in the sand overnight. You are not going to come out and find all of a sudden you have oak leaves growing out the thing and little acorns hanging off of it, almonds or whatever. That’s not what is going to happen. It didn’t happen to any of theirs, but it happened to Aaron’s. God was going to get the point across—‘this is the one through whom I am working.’ God selects those through whom He works. God may not be working through perfect human instruments, but God knows that. The basis of God’s government is faith that God will do what He says He will do. We look to God in faith.

Verse 10 indicates Aaron’s rod was kept for a token. They kept it in the tabernacle.

In Numbers 18, we find God’s instruction about tithing. The tithes belong to God. All the way back to the beginning, Abraham understood that. That is something that has always been done. You find, way back at the beginning, righteous Abel brought the firstlings of his flock (Genesis 4:4). He was tithing. You find Abraham tithe to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). You find that Jacob understood that tithing was something converted people did (Genesis 28:22). Now he was still unconverted and tried to cut a deal. You remember he told God, ‘Let’s make a deal—if

you will take care of me and bring me back safely, then I’ll worship You and start tithing’ (Genesis 28:20-22). Jacob hadn’t entirely gotten the point, but he did understand—from the example of his father and grandfather—that one of the things converted people did was that they tithed. Jacob wasn’t quite ready, he was still kind of “wheeling and dealing,” trying to cut a deal with God—‘You take care of me and I’ll come back and make it up to you. I’ll pay up.’ But God also had ways of dealing with Jacob and getting the point across to him.

Numbers 18:20-21, “Then the Lord said to Aaron: ‘You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel. Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.’”

God instructs Israel what they’re to do. He says, ‘I am paying the Levites. They are working for Me; they’re My employees. They’re going to do the service of the tabernacle; they’re going to take care of My work. So I am going to pay them. I am giving them all the tenth in Israel.’ Then the Levites were told that they were to present a tithe to the priest (v. 26). The people tithed to the Levites; the Levites in turn tithed to the priests.

It is interesting if you think about it. God ensured that the Levites would be well paid; they had a crucial job, the most important job. And they would have been amply rewarded for it. They didn’t have an inheritance. They did not have a tribal inheritance. What they had was the tithe that came in. They had a tenth of everything that came in from the other twelve tribes.

Now if the wealth of the land were divided up, you would figure that if it evened out, every tribe would have the equivalent of about a twelfth because there were twelve tribes when they divided the land. Each of the twelve tribes tithed; so the Levites in that sense would have had the highest standard of living in all of Israel.

They had the most crucial job; they were responsible for the health and well being of the nation—spiritually, physically and in every way. But understand this, God ensured that if the Levites didn’t do their job, they would be the most destitute people in the nation—they didn’t have farmland given to them; they didn’t have a tribal inheritance.

What would happen if the Levites didn’t do their job, really be faithful to God and teach the

people God's way? Well, the people would begin to fall away from the truth. What do you think was the first thing the people would stop doing when they began to fall away from the truth? The same thing people stop doing today when they fall away from the truth. They'll quit tithing. Guess who was going to be in trouble when the people quit tithing? The Levites were because they didn't have any other source of income. They didn't have an area that they could go back to. So what God said, in effect was, 'If you are faithful to Me and you really do the job I have given you, you will be greatly blessed. But if you don't, you are going to be greatly cursed. You're going to starve to death because you're not even going to have a farm you can go and work. You're going to be "up a creek" without a paddle if you don't do the job I am giving you to do. You do it, and you will be well and amply rewarded because God says the servant is worthy of his hire' (Luke 10:7). That was appropriate.

The Levites were the judges and the teachers; they had that responsibility. If the Levites did their job, the whole nation was going to be blessed because they were all going to be obeying God. And if they all were obeying God, the Levites were going to be blessed. In other words, the principle is: when you obey God, everybody all up and down the line is blessed. But when you're not, the nation is going to bring trouble upon itself, and the Levites are going to have trouble, too. They're going to be "out of things."

It's interesting when you go through and read in the book of Kings the various times of revival. One of the things that you find is the Levites were destitute and scattered; then they gathered together and started tithing again and keeping the Sabbath. It's an interesting principle how God built that in. I guess you could say in that sense the Levites were on commission instead of salary. You could kind of look at it that way. They were literally rewarded according to their work. If they didn't work very much, then they didn't get very much reward, at least after a while because things have a tendency to fall apart.

When we come to Numbers 20, there is basically a forty-year period or the best part of a forty-year period. Let's say a thirty-seven-year period elapses because when you come to chapter 20, you come towards the end of the forty years and Miriam dies. We find that Aaron dies (v. 28) and God also tells Moses that he was not going to enter into the Promised Land (v. 12).

Numbers 21:5, "And the people spoke against God and against Moses: 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.'" We find, again, the people spoke against God and Moses. And again, they were dealt with. God sent fiery serpents this time among them (v. 6).

In Numbers 22, we come to an interesting individual—and that is Balaam. As the children of Israel were coming into the plains of Moab, the king of Moab was afraid; he saw what happened to everybody else—that no one could stand in Israel's way. He sent a messenger to Balaam.

Numbers 22:5, "Then he sent the messengers to Balaam, the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying, 'Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me!'" This is an area that is near the area of the Chaldeans. It was a long, long, long way away.

Balaam was, in reality, the chief religious leader. He was literally the Pontifex Maximus of the ancient world. There is an interesting progression to that title because there is a man today that has that title "Pontifex Maximus" and that is, of course, one of the titles of the Pope.

It is interesting where the Pope got that title. He has a claim to it, a legal claim to the title. The first pope to have the title "Pontifex Maximus" was Pope Damasus in 378 A.D. It was a title that had been the title of the Roman Emperors. They had possessed it.

It was the title that gave authority over the calendar, among other things. Julius Caesar established the Julian calendar. He did so in his role as Pontifex Maximus. Pope Gregory established the Gregorian calendar, which we use today. He did so in his role as Pontifex Maximus.

The Roman Emperors had the title going back through the Pontifex Maximus of Rome. They received that title in 133 B.C. The Romans got it from Atalys, III, who was the king of Pergamum. When he died, he willed his kingdom and the title "Pontifex Maximus", which he possessed, to the Roman rulers, and it came down through the Roman rulers until in 378 A.D. Emperor Gratian (full name Flavius Gratianus) bestowed the title on the Pope and they use it today.

The kings of Pergamum had received the title from the Babylonians through Alexander the Great. The Babylonian priesthood had it, and it goes all the way back to Balaam and all the way

back to Nimrod. It can literally be traced down through the pagan hierarchy of the Chaldean Mystery Religion, down through Balaam, down through Pergamum, down through Rome and down to today. Interestingly, they use the same old titles.

This was a big deal and they sent hundreds of miles back to find the chief leader of the religious world. Balaam was the king back there. They said, 'We have a job for you. We want you to come and curse this people' (v. 6).

Verse 7, "So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak." They came to Balaam and they told Balaam what they had in mind. They came to pay Balaam. Notice that you see Balaam charged for what he did.

One of the differences between God's work and the work of Satan is that God's work says, Matthew 10:8, "freely you have received, freely you give." Ever see someone go up and pay Jesus? They wanted Balaam to heal them. So they came up, and they had to pay him. Ever find where Jesus told them they had to pay Him for Him to pray for them?

There are people that claim they have the power to pray someone out of purgatory, but they only do it for a price. You have to "pay up." Inflation sets in. Maybe it used to be \$5, but now, maybe it is \$10 or \$20. Different places, different priests charge different amounts—kind of whatever the market will bear. In some of the poorer parishes around, it's fairly cheap; they can pray you out for a discount. You go into some of the prosperous parishes, and you find that inflation has set in. They charge a little more. Maybe their prayers are worth more somehow.

Well, Balaam was charging. They had a big job for Balaam. Instead of wanting him to pray somebody out of purgatory, they wanted him to pray somebody in. So they came back with a pretty good reward.

When they explained the situation to Balaam, he said in Numbers 22:18, "...though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." 'I cannot go beyond the word of the Eternal. I cannot do more than God will allow me to do.' He wanted them to stay (v. 19). Balaam kept trying to deal with them; Balaam really wanted to do what they wanted and kept trying to figure a way to do it.

Verse 20, "And God said to Balaam at night and said to him, 'If the men come to call you, rise and go with them; but only the word which I

speak to you—that you shall do.'" God said, 'Okay, if you want to go, you can go.'

Verse 21, "So Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab." Balaam was anxious.

Verse 23, "Then God's anger was aroused because he went, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. And he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. Now the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, and the donkey turned aside out of the way, and went into the field. So Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road."

This angel manifested himself where Balaam's donkey saw it. Now this donkey had enough sense to know that you don't go that way; here is a big angel. So the donkey just turned aside and went out into the field. Balaam was all upset. You can just see Balaam beating on that donkey. If you have ever ridden a donkey, you understand that they can be stubborn animals; you can beat on them quite a bit before you get things done.

So Balaam got the donkey turned back and the angel of the Lord stood in the path of the vineyard. A wall was on his side, and when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot. He smote her again (vv. 24-25). He was mad by that time. You can just see him there.

Verses 26-28, "Then the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam's anger was aroused, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you, that you have stuck me these three times?'"

Now you know this must have been quite an event. All of a sudden this donkey turned around and said, 'What are you hitting me for?' Balaam was so frustrated by this time, he said, 'Because you are making fun of me. Three times you kept running out of the way.' Balaam was talking to the donkey. He said, 'I'd do more than hit you, you stupid donkey. If I had a sword in my hand I would kill you' (v. 29).

Verse 30, "So the donkey said to Balaam, 'Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden, ever since I became yours, to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you?' And he said, 'No.'" Balaam said, 'No, you never have.'

Verse 31, “Then the Lord opened Balaam’s eyes and he saw the angel standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.” It scared him to death.

Verse 32, “And the angel said to Balaam, ‘why have you hit your donkey three times? Behold, I have come out to stand against you, because your way is perverse before Me.’”

‘Look, the donkey is smarter than you are Balaam. I stood in the donkey’s way and the donkey had enough sense to stop. I stood in your way and you were just bound and determined to find a way around. This donkey is smarter than you are because the donkey at least had enough sense to stop when he saw that God was blocking the way.’ Balaam didn’t have enough sense to stop when he saw God was blocking the way. He just tried to figure a way to get around.

God was basically making a point. God could have made it in some other way; you know God has a sense of humor and sometimes chooses to make a point in a humorous way. In effect, God says, ‘When you try to get around doing what God wants you to do, you don’t have as much sense as a jackass.’ That’s basically the point. Even a stupid jackass can figure out that when God says stop, you ought to stop. And you ought to be at least as smart as a donkey. This was the point made to Balaam, and it is recorded for us that, hopefully, we can learn and all be as smart as donkeys.

We come down and obviously Balaam had not gotten the point because he continued to go on trying to curse Israel. You go through all of these shenanigans where they kept trying to get to Balaam and he kept trying to do it.

Numbers 24:13, “‘Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord to do either good or bad or of my own will; but what the Lord says, that I must speak.’” In other words, it’s not a matter of ‘I wouldn’t,’ but ‘I can’t. I can’t work my magic; I can’t do my sorcery. I can’t do these things. I can’t go beyond what God will allow. It’s not a matter of you paying me more. I’m not just trying to hold out for a higher price; I simply can’t do it. I can’t go beyond that.’

Go back to the book of Job. Remember God set boundaries to Satan, and He wouldn’t let him go beyond a certain point. Satan went as far as God would let him, but he couldn’t go beyond that.

Job 1:12, the first thing God said, ‘I will let you destroy anything he has, but you can’t touch him.’ Job had hardly turned around before there

was a guy riding in saying all your camel, donkeys, cattle and sheep were taken and all your kids were killed (vv. 13-19). Wham—he turned around from one and another would ride in. You get the idea; when Satan gets to do something bad, he gets really excited about it and is in a big hurry to do it all. But he couldn’t go beyond what God allowed. Then God said, ‘I’ll let you do anything you want to do to him, but you can’t kill him.’ So Satan went as far as God would allow. Well, here was Balaam. We find what eventually happened.

Numbers 25:1-2, “Then Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.” Let’s notice the message to one of the Churches in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 2:14, “‘But I have a few things against you, because you have those there who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.’” Here the doctrine of Balaam is defined. Who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication?

What you find in Numbers 25 is Israel began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab and began to go to the sacrifices of their gods. To see what Balaam eventually came up with, you have to put what it says in Numbers together with Revelation.

Balaam eventually came up with a plan. God wouldn’t let Balaam curse Israel, but there was a way that could get them to curse themselves—get them involved in immorality, get them involved in fornication and idolatry. God would get so disgusted with them, He would wipe them out. So Balaam is the one who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block. Balaam is the one who came up with a plan. He eventually devised a way that he thought would bring a curse upon Israel. All this was going on, and things went from bad to worse.

Numbers 25:3, “So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.” They got involved in immorality and idolatry.

Notice the kinds of things that have gotten in Israel’s way: lust, a craving for the things they left behind, murmuring, griping and complaining about leadership. We notice Israel going after a worldly approach to immorality and idolatry,

going into the world. We notice the kind of things that interfered. They just really got off the track, and the anger of the Eternal was kindled against Israel.

Verses 5-6, “So Moses said to the judges of Israel, ‘Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.’ And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.” It was just so open and blatant in sin, challenging Moses.

Verses 7-8, “Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel.” Phinehas was a Levite of quick temper, and boy, when he saw this, he had had it. He went in there and put a stop to it. And the plague stopped. There were twenty-four thousand people that died in the plague (v. 9).

Verses 10-13, “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. Therefore say, “Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God and made atonement for the children of Israel.”’” God made a covenant with Phinehas that the line of the high priesthood would come down through him.

In Numbers 26, again the census was taken.

Numbers 27:18, “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him.’” The laying on of hands—Moses was ordaining Joshua.

Numbers 29 reviews some of the festivals.

Numbers 30 deals with vows. Vows are not to be made lightly by men or women. But if a woman is single and living at home, then her father has the right to annul the vow. If she is married, then the husband has the same right because there are those to whom she is responsible. This is the principle that if a minor runs off and get married, the parents can have the marriage, the vow, annulled. That is where the law is derived from,

from right here. There is a point: you can make a vow, but there are those who have the right to disallow that vow because you are not considered in the position to do that.

Numbers 31:8 records the end of Balaam. Balaam was slain with a sword.

Numbers 31:16, “Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.” It is apparent when you read this verse with Revelation that Balaam is the one who actually came up with the idea that resulted in this plague coming upon Israel.

Numbers 32:23, “But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out.” This is a very important scripture that I think ought to be a memory verse, one that I made a point to try and teach my children. One thing to realize: if you are God’s people, you are not going to get by with it. Your sin will find you out; it will catch up with you. That’s really because God loves you. God doesn’t want you to do something that is bad for you, and so your sin will find you out. You are going to find, and I think it’s important and good for our kids to realize, they are not going to get by with things that kids in the world get by with. There are going to be things that the world does and seemingly gets by with and don’t get caught because God is not chastening them right now. They are not His. But God chastens every son whom He loves, and be sure your sin will find you out. You do it and you are going to get caught. God will make sure of it. It just works that way. After you are converted you will appreciate it.

Numbers 33:1-3, “These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. Now Moses wrote down the starting point of the journeys at the command of the Lord. And these are their journeys according to their starting points: They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.” So they departed on the fifteenth day of the month on the day after the Passover.

In Numbers 34, you will notice Manasseh, the tribe that couldn’t get along with itself, is the only tribe that had two halves. Half the tribe of Manasseh stayed on one side of the Jordan and half of them stayed on the other side. The

dichotomy between North and South goes back a long way. It really does.

You find that Manasseh had two wives (Deuteronomy 3:13-15), or rather, he had a wife and a concubine. The descendants of the concubine dwelt in Gilead (v. 15, "Machir"); they were more the agricultural branch with cattle and sheep. The others from his wife (v. 14, "Jair") traveled over the Jordan. Manasseh didn't get along with itself.

You go back to the very earliest part of the history of this country and you find two centers—one in Virginia and one in Massachusetts. Historically, the migration in this country has been from east to west. North/south migration was extremely limited until the aftermath of World War II. It's interesting that you can actually track it back, and they are the two half-tribes of Manasseh. They couldn't get along with each other then, and they've had their difficulties all the way down—one people, but with certain difficulties.

Numbers 35:2-7, "Command the children of Israel that they give the Levites cities to dwell in from the inheritance of their possession, and you shall also give the Levites common-land around the cities. They shall have the cities to dwell in; and their common land shall be for their cattle, for their herds, and for all their animals. The common land of the cities, which you shall give the Levites, shall extend from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. And you shall measure outside the city on the east side two thousand cubits, on the south side two thousand cubits, on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits. The city shall be in the middle. This shall belong to them as common land for the cities. Now among the cities, which you will give to the Levites, you shall appoint six cities of refuge, to which a manslayer may flee. And to these you shall add forty-two cities. So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight; these you shall give with their common land."

We find the Levites were given cities. They were ultimately given forty-eight cities along with the suburbs for their habitations. These cities were the administrative centers of Israel. They were to serve as cities of refuge for people who were guilty of manslaughter or accidental homicide. It was where people came to be judged. There were forty-eight cities, forty-eight administrative districts. Interestingly, this country was divided into forty-eight states for many years in terms of actually the continental United States. Alaska and Hawaii are kind of tagged on, but they are

not really part of the continental overspread that God gave us. Ancient Israel was divided into those forty-eight districts, and the Levites were there and had responsibility.

Numbers 1:1, "Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt...."

Deuteronomy 1:3, "Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him as commandments to them."

If you compare Numbers 1:1 and Deuteronomy 1:3, it is apparent that thirty-nine years are covered in the book of Numbers. I think from this we have somewhat of an overview of the book. A lot of material we could not, of course, cover in detail, but hopefully we hit the high points.

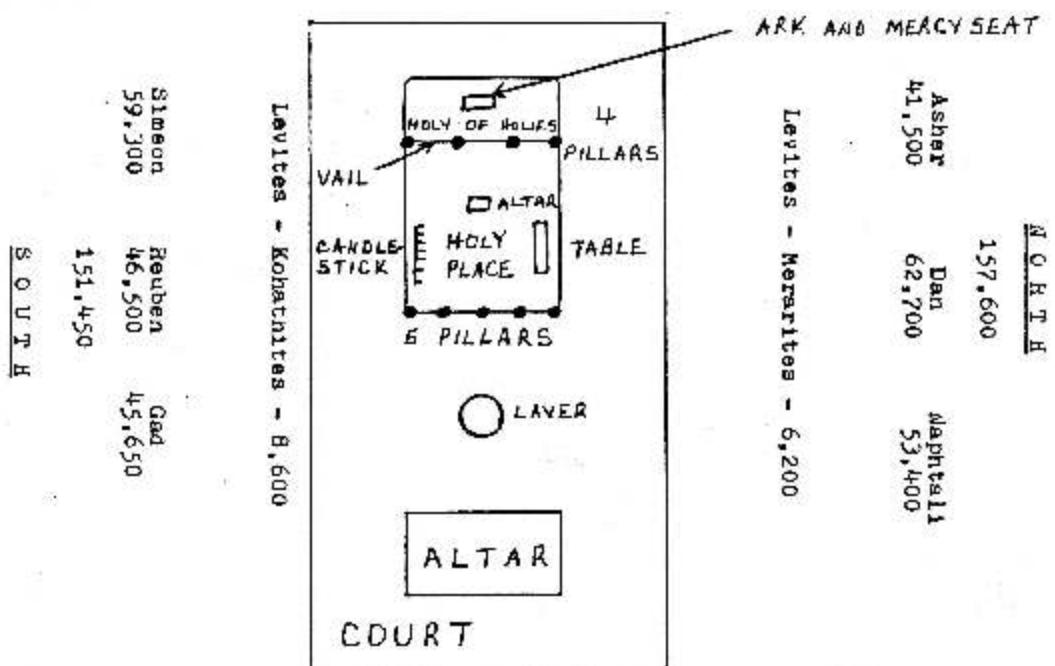
GOD'S ORGANIZATION OF ISRAEL'S CAMP

WEST
 108,100
 Manasseh 32,200 Ephraim 40,500 Benjamin 35,400

DIMENSIONS OF COURT
 EX. 27: 9-19

DIMENSIONS OF TABERNACLE
 EX. 26: 1-30

Levites - Gershonites - 7,500



Moses Aaron Priests

Issachar 54,400 Judah 74,600 Zebulun 57,400
 186,400
EAST