

## Lesson 5 – Numbers 32-36

Text: Numbers 32-36

Main Characters: God, Moses, Reubenites, Gadites, Israelites

Key Passages:

- Numbers 33:50-56 – God commanded that the Canaanites should be completely driven out.
- Numbers 35:9-11 – God gives instructions regarding the cities of refuge.

Main Storyline:

When the children of Reuben and Gad saw the land that had been freshly cleared of its idolatrous inhabitants, they noticed how perfect it was for their livestock. They asked if they could stay on the east side of the Jordan and have that land for themselves instead of going over with the other Israelites and fighting in Canaan. Moses became furious with them, rebuking them for desiring to live in peace while the rest of Israel fought the idolatrous nations as God had commanded. He reminded them of what God had done to the last generation of Israelites who did not want to go into the land God had promised them and warned that God would once again force them to wander if they did not obey.

Upon hearing these warnings, the men of Reuben and Gad came to Moses and explained that they intended to build cities for their families in the land east of the Jordan. However, they planned to fight alongside the rest of their brethren until all of the land had been taken and the inheritance divided, and only then would they return to their homes, wives, and children. Moses explained that this arrangement was acceptable, but that if they did not follow through, their sins would find them out and they would be punished by God. The children of Reuben and Gad agreed, and they, along with some of the tribe of Manasseh, were given the land east of the Jordan River where Sihon, Og, and the surrounding kingdoms had previously been established. There were some Amorites still remaining in that land, so those children of Manasseh went and drove them out before taking the land.

In Numbers 33, Moses reviewed the journey of the Israelites beginning at their exodus from Egypt and ending at their current station at the Jordan River, ready to enter Canaan. At this point, God spoke to Moses and gave him commandments to relay back to the Israelites regarding what they ought to do when they invaded Canaan. God instructed that they were to drive out all of the inhabitants, destroy all of their idolatrous creations, and take the land that He had given to them. He warned that if they did not follow this commandment, any remaining Canaanites would trouble them; in addition, God promised to do to the Israelites what He had planned to do to the Canaanites (destruction).

God continued by describing the geographic boundaries of their inheritance. He also gave commandments for the provisions needed for the Levites, specifically that they should have 48 cities scattered around the land. Of these cities, 6 were to be designated “cities of refuge” which people could run to if they accidentally killed someone in order to be safe from vengeance. God gave numerous commands regarding these cities as well as judgment for murder/manslaughter.

The final commandments in Numbers were regarding another situation with Zelophehad’s daughters, namely that once they married, their inheritance would be transferred to another tribe in the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25). This would cause their tribe to lose part of their inheritance. God said that in any case where a man’s daughters received the inheritance, they could only marry within their tribe.

Lessons/Applications:

- 1.) Selfishness will not be tolerated by God; we must be looking out for others (Philippians 2:1-11).
- 2.) When we make promises to God (or others), we must ensure that we keep them.
- 3.) Partial obedience is not enough. Sin that remains in our life will plague us (James 1:13-21).