

MARCH 18

Numbers 26:52-28:15

Everything we are reading is preparation for the new generation to enter the land. God is getting them ready. Some of these instructions are new and some are a restating of what had been given 38 years earlier. Although we may have a hard time reading some of this, for these people there was a growing excitement and energy. They had just won some battles and survived the trial at Baal-Peor. Now they were being counted and equipped to follow God into the land promised to their fathers.

Numbers 26:52-65

Vs. 52-56 God is giving instructions how each tribe is to be given its land. Joshua and Eleazar will do this in the book of Joshua. The lots were probably the Urim and Thummim. It is possible that the initial decisions were made during this time before Moses died, and it was confirmed after the main military opposition in Canaan had been removed.

Vs. 57-62 This is the renumbering of the Levites. Notice that Moses' mother is a daughter of Levi. Too bad Levi died 400 years earlier. The way to understand this is that she was probably descended from him in some direct way. A couple of days ago in Luke 1:5, we read that Elizabeth was a daughter of Aaron, meaning that she descended from the line of Aaron. Tribes could intermarry, but saying it like this means that the woman was a descendant through Levites of that tribe. We already noted that Aaron's wife was from Judah.

I don't see any indication that the tribe of Levi was included in God's punishment of the people for the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea. Also, note that they gained 1000 people in the previous 38 years.

Vs. 63-65 This is confirming that none of the men who were part of the first census was alive for this census. Only Caleb and Joshua were alive from that generation. I think that Caleb, from Judah, and Joshua, from Joseph (Ephraim), both being godly leaders is somehow a fulfillment of Jacob's blessings on both Ephraim and Judah in Genesis 49.

Numbers 27

Vs. 1-11 As the word was circulating through the camp, how the land would be divided and how the inheritance would be disbursed, these women came forward and God honored them in their request. This created a new law. Who says God isn't for women's rights? Actually, it also shows that the laws that God gave were to become the basis of the people coming to Him in specific situations where He had not given a clear word. The laws didn't give guidance for every possible contingency, but they were general enough to show the people what to do in normal circumstances. These women showed what would happen when godly people came to inquire when a general law didn't address a specific situation. This is no little event. We will hear about it at least two more times.

Vs. 12-23 God's words to Moses are absolute. We can invest this with all the human emotion we want to, but really, Moses needed a rest. I still cringe when I visualize Charlton Heston falling on his knees and saying, "You are a hard God." Moses definitely blew it, and God was using the situation as a lesson to all of us lesser men that if He didn't cut Moses any slack, we should be a little afraid to overstep the boundaries of our stupidity. I get that. And now, Moses was going into retirement. First, Moses would ease Joshua into his position as the new leader, and then later Moses would enter into heaven. Into heaven!! Sitting in a lounge chair, sipping something cool, watching the mountains or sea or universe, chilling, eating a Maria's Pizza from Milwaukee (the best in the universe if you eat it hot). I understand the human pathos of not achieving a goal, but really, I can't feel too sorry for Moses. And remember, God has already used Moses (Numbers 21, 31-32) to lead Israel in its initial battles and in obtaining the inheritance of 2.5 tribes.

Vs. 15-17 Moses asks God to appoint a leader. This plea was passionate. Notice that Moses asks that God appoint a shepherd for the people.

Vs. 18-23 The selection of Joshua was evident. Moses had been mentoring Joshua for 40 years. Again, this is interesting because of Jacob's blessing on Ephraim. As a young man, Joshua was visibly a man of faith. Now, as one of the oldest men in the community, and a hero of faith, God is elevating Joshua in the sight of Israel while Moses is still alive. What a great idea. Now Israel has a new leader who, still for a while, is being mentored by Moses. Also, just as God chose to use Moses when he was eighty years old, Joshua is very likely about eighty years young too. It is interesting that God would use men this old, seasoned and mature, to lead 6-10 million people.

That certainly doesn't fit our church growth thinking today. Apparently God looks for something different in choosing a disciple who will act as a shepherd.

Notice too, that God has also brought Eleazar to the forefront. I find it interesting in v. 21 that Eleazar and Joshua are to be a team. If Joshua has any questions of the Lord, he is to go to Eleazar who will use the Urim and Thummim to find out God's will. God is putting all the pieces into place.

Numbers 28:1-15

This chapter is an old instruction for a new generation. When the people walked into the land, their daily sacrifices, their seeking of forgiveness and renewal before God would be important. I would guess that is why God says this now. Notice also that with the restating of these sacrifices, the grain and wine offerings are also mentioned. The emphasis is not only on forgiveness, but on how God gives them every day "all things richly to enjoy."

I got something completely different out of this chapter. On March 16 I mentioned something about people who make a big deal of saying that the time of Jesus' birth might not have been in December. One of the "proofs" of this is that flocks shouldn't have been out around Bethlehem and Jerusalem in winter. Anyway, it's really not a big deal either way. But when I read this chapter, for the daily offering, the monthly offering and the offering on each Sabbath, I began adding. I came up with needing 90 lambs a month, plus, when people came to Jerusalem from a long distance, they would have bought a lamb locally to sacrifice. They always would have had flocks around Jerusalem, even in the winter.

As disciples in the harvest one of the things the Lord does with us is to simplify our needs and desires. The less we desire of anything else than Him, the more we have of Him, and in that simplicity, we realize more and more the wonder of what He gives us to enjoy.

Luke 3:1-22

Vs. 1-2 John the Baptist appears and Luke pinpoints the date.

Vs. 3-6 Notice that John's message had to do with preparation for the Messiah and focusing the people on their need for forgiveness. Notice too in Isaiah's prophecy, that *all flesh* would see the salvation of God. We are now a part of that.

Vs. 7-9 In Mark, this "rant" was because the Pharisees and Sadducees showed up for baptism. John was testing the sincerity of their hearts and also said this to the people. The people responded with open hearts. Even tax collectors and soldiers (Romans) wanted to know what to do to escape the wrath to come. The Pharisees and Sadducees probably immediately stopped listening, since they considered themselves righteous.

Vs. 10-14 Notice that everyone wanted to understand what they needed to do. The assumed answer might have been to perform some religious duty or sacrifice at the temple. Instead, God pointed them to loving God by loving their neighbor.

Vs. 15-16 John didn't have a self-serving bone in his body. He was a total servant and took no glory. John was not only unworthy to carry or untie Jesus' sandals, but his baptism didn't bring life or the cleansing of judgment. Jesus would baptize *with the Holy Spirit*. Think of that. When we trust Christ as our Savior, it is as if He is standing beside us. Instead of some "unseen" act, we are told that the Spirit comes as Jesus personally baptizes us. That is pretty cool. The baptism of fire is the sense of judging the world, casting fire upon the earth.

Vs. 17-18 I love the contrast of these two verses. John was authentic and passionate and truthful, and the people responded.

Vs. 19-20 are a summary of John's active ministry. John wasn't thrown into jail until after Jesus' temptation and after he overturned the tables in the temple at the next Passover. According to the

Bible Knowledge Commentary, John's ministry was less than a year and he was in jail about two years.

Vs. 21-22 This is the purpose that John came for, to baptize and give testimony to the Christ. Luke is the only writer who tells us that Jesus was praying after His baptism, and then the Spirit came upon Him. This is also where Luke eases us into the ministry of Jesus, beginning here with His baptism/anointing, followed by His genealogy and then His showdown with Satan.

Psalm 61

I never noticed how often David talks in his psalms about dwelling with the Lord. For a man like David, who ran for his life and lived in caves and then among the Philistines, to be absolutely secure meant to live with the Lord.

Vs. 1-3 David did rock climbing (running from Saul) for about ten years. He knew how to climb and how to defend himself. But David was seeking a Rock higher than he could climb and a defense more secure than what he could provide for himself. He wanted to be safe on God's rock, in His refuge and under His wings. It takes being driven in fear to appreciate how much we need the Lord. At this point in his life, God had "simplified" David's heart through suffering.

Vs. 5-8 Whether David was the king now isn't known, but David had been anointed as king years earlier as a young teen. I'm sure David spoke of this when he prayed and made vows and held on to faith in God's faithfulness.

In so many of David's prayers, he expresses that what God wants from us is not sacrifice, but public praise for His love and salvation. That is what we are to be doing in the harvest.

As disciples reading Romans 8 you see Paul talking about our security as believers, but this security is in the love of Christ. The love of Christ, in the context of Romans 8, means a lot. In Christ, we have the Spirit; we are adopted, foreknown, predestined, called, justified and glorified. There is nothing that can condemn us or separate us from Christ. There is nothing that can make God not love us, and because of Christ, death just becomes a dark little line on the sidewalk. You step over it and there's a lounge chair waiting. That gives us, as disciples, the confidence to go for it here and share our praise for God. We are already abiding in the Rock who is higher than we are.

Proverbs 11:16-17

Great words.