

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

NUMBERS 31-36

Did you know that baseball hero Babe Ruth's **last hurrah** occurred while playing for *our Braves*? At the time the team was based in Boston, not Atlanta...

On May 25th, 1935, in a game versus Pittsburgh the Babe came to bat in the first inning and hit a home run... In the third inning he hit another homer... In the fifth he singled... And in the seventh Babe hit his third home run of the day. The ball sailed out of Forbes Field and landed on an adjacent street... The aging slugger had displayed one final flash of his former greatness.

A few days later in Philadelphia, the Babe injured his knee, and took himself out of the game in the first inning. *It was the last game Babe Ruth ever played.*

Well, Numbers 31 is *Moses' last hurrah*. And he too has a banner day. God allows him a final opportunity to lead the nation of Israel to a resounding victory. A few days later Moses is forced into heavenly retirement...

Verse 1, "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Take vengeance for the children of Israel on the Midianites." *And this battle will be Moses swan song...*

"Afterward you shall be gathered to your people. So Moses spoke to the people, saying, "Arm some of yourselves for the war, and let them go against the Midianites to take vengeance for the LORD on Midian. A thousand from each tribe of all the tribes of Israel you shall send to the war." So there were recruited from the divisions of Israel one thousand from each tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from each tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest..."

Phinehas was the zealous priest who was into body piercing! In Numbers 25 he performed a two for one.

Remember, a Hebrew man, Zimri, and his Midianite mistress, Cozbi, had flaunted their rebellion. Zimri had embraced Cozbi's idolatry. They had an illicit sexual fling - *perhaps in the Tabernacle* - an X-rated episode of the Cozbi show. And that's when Phinehas became aware of their sin, and said "*enough is enough.*"

He grabbed a javelin, chased down Zimri, and thrust it into both he and the girl. He wanted them both to get the point! *You don't run roughshod over God's law!* Phinehas' bold and decisive action stopped the plague God had brought on Israel. Now God sends Phinehas to lead Israel in taking vengeance on the Midianites...

And notice what Phinehas takes with him into battle. Rather than a javelin, or bow,

or battle-axe. He wars “with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand.” This is unusual. Phineas takes the Ark, the menorah, and the silver trumpets into battle. He fights with Tabernacle items, things normally associated with worship, for it was the sacred space that Zimri defiled with his lewd act. Now the Tabernacle strikes back! *In the spiritual battle worship is a weapon!* Call this, “Revenge of the Tabernacle.” Holiness wins this battle.

Verse 7, “And they warred against the Midianites, just as the LORD commanded Moses, and they killed all the males. They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed - Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.”

As it turns out, *ole Harry Potter*, that sorcerer named Balaam, who schemed against God’s people for a bag of money gets judged. He was hired by the Moabite king, Balak, to curse Israel. Instead, God gave Balaam four blessings to utter. Balaam never **cursed** Israel, but he still cashed in on the **purse**, for He told Balak what he could do so God would curse Israel Himself... Send the flirtatious Moabite women, the temple prostitutes of their false gods, into the camp to seduce the Israeli men. They committed adultery and eventually idolatry. And this prompted God to judge His own people. Balaam’s plan succeeded, and he got his payday.

But there is one problem with sin’s payday - it’s **the next day**. *Payday is eventually followed by Judgment Day*. Balaam’s wealth was short-lived. It never pays to sell out your integrity to do evil - not at any price.

Balaam is a sad story. In his first prophecy, Numbers 23:10, Balaam had declared, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!” But that’s not how it ended for Balaam. He was judged with the unrighteous and was executed by an Israeli sword.

In the next few verses Israel returns to Moses with the spoils of victory. They burn Moab’s cities and forts; then bring back their cattle, and goods, and prisoners - even the Moabite women who had seduced them.

Verse 14, “But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle. And Moses said to them: “Have you kept all the women alive?” Usually, in ancient times a winning army killed the men and let the women live. Men were a threat to retaliate. Women were usually no danger. But this was just the opposite. The Midianite women were the direct cause of the plague on Israel - *now here come the men of Israel strutting back to camp with their girlfriends*.

And Moses tells them, “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.” How quickly the Hebrews had forgotten God’s judgment. The Midianite women proved to be a greater threat to Israel than either sorcerer or soldiers.

Sometimes our most lethal threat isn’t the most apparent. The greatest enemy to your Christianity isn’t the ACLU, or the liberal media, or a left-wing politician, or an atheistic school board member - *it’s the link that pops up on your computer that leads you astray... or the remote control in your hand... or a wink from the girl in the office... or the friend who just wants to have fun...* The obvious enemy isn’t always the most lethal.

In verse 17 God tells Israel, “Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones...” Granted, this sounds harsh and cruel to our modern, western ears, but realize Middle Eastern males were terminally bound by two duties: **first, avenge their father’s death** - and **second, preserve their cultural heritage.**

This is why God sent Israel to battle in the first place. Canaanite culture was depraved, wicked, idolatrous. God wanted it *obliterated*, not *propagated* by future generations. If allowed, the Moabite males would grow up to repeat their *father’s sin* and *society’s wickedness*.

Realize, **Israel had a unique role in OT times.** The Hebrews were God’s instrument of judgment against the nations in and around Canaan. Back in Genesis when God told Abraham that his descendants would remain in Egypt for 400 years God used as His reason, “**for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.**”

In other words, Israel’s conquest of Canaan was ordained by God as a means of wiping out one of the most perverse and demonized cultures the world had seen. The nations Israel battled in Canaan had sold their soul to evil, brutal, satanic practices. *When God orders their children slaughtered He’s literally doing them a favor.* He’s rescuing them from a culture that’ll yoke them to Satan and send them to hell. Think of the Israel’s army as the fire that fell on Sodom - or Noah’s flood that destroyed the earth. Israel was God’s tool of vengeance on pagan cultures irredeemable at the time.

And according to Genesis 15 this judgment was 400 years in the making. God had given plenty of time for the Canaanites to repent. That they never did so, was proof they were hellbent to rebel. *Judgment was due!*

Moses also ordered, “**and kill every woman who has known a man intimately.**” This could’ve been targeted toward those who’d participated in Israel’s seduction.

“But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man

intimately.” These girls would become servants of the Hebrews, inherit a better life, and hopefully adopt the worship of the one, true God...

Moses goes on to describe how the army is to be sanitized before re-entering the camp, *with fire and water*. This protected against the spread of disease.

Verse 21, “**Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle, "This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses: Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification."** They melted down their idols. They kept the alloy, but not the image.

But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water. And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp." All the spoils had to be purified either by fire or water... And the same is true for us! *The fire is the Holy Spirit - the water is the Word of God*. We need the intense heat of His Spirit to purge and purify our desires. As well as the cleansing of the water of God's Word to wash our dirty minds and renew our thoughts.

Verse 25, “**And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Count up the plunder that was taken - of man and beast - you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation; and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation."** And this starts a principle that's repeated throughout the Bible. Only 1000 men from each tribe fought Midian - just 12,000 soldiers. Thus, 590,000 never saw combat.

Yet Moses decides that everyone deserves a share of the spoils - those who fought on the **frontlines** and those who stayed **behind the lines** to protect the camp. This is also the tactic of David in 1 Samuel 30. When his army returned from routing the Philistines he said, “**As his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.**” And this principle also applies to us...

It's not just the missionary or pastor God rewards. God knows for a frontlines' servant to be successful, it takes folks back home willing to stay with the supplies and send up support. Thus, both *the man who goes*, and *the man who stays*, deserve a portion of the spoil.

That's a **blessing**, but here's the **bummer**. Everyone gets a portion, but everyone should also pay a tax.

Verse 28, “**And levy a tribute for the LORD on the men of war who went out to battle...**” This “**tribute**” or tax went to the priests and Levites. Verse 31, “**So Moses and**

Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.” And the next few verses itemizes the spoils of battle; and then list the tax that was levied.

Verse 48, “Then the officers who were over thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, came near to Moses; and they said to Moses, “Your servants have taken a count of the men of war who are under our command, and not a man of us is missing.” *There had been no casualties!*

And this prompted gratitude. They want to thank God... “Therefore we have brought an offering for the LORD, what every man found of ornaments of gold: armlets and bracelets and signet rings and earrings and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD.” And the last verses of Chapter 31 add up the gold that the returning army gave to God...

Chapter 32, “Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock; and when they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead that indeed the region was a place for livestock.” “*Jazer*” and “*Gilead*” were regions east of the Jordan River, *what is today the kingdom of Jordan*. This was not actually part of the Promised Land, but it was a territory full of grassy hills, and lush pasture. And since these tribes had large herds it caught their eye!

Thus, “The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses...” Back in Chapter 21 Israel had fought battles with King Og and King Sihon of the Amorites. In defeating those kings east of the Jordan, their land came under Israeli control. Now Reuben and Gad want to settle in this fertile region.

Verse 5, So “They said, “If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants as a possession. Do not take us over the Jordan.”

“And Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben: “Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?” Their reason for wanting to settle on the east bank was the lush pasture land that would feed their herds, *but Moses jumps to conclusions*. He thinks they’re being lazy and selfish and were afraid to fight and help their brethren secure the land. The giants lived primarily on the west bank, not east bank.

“Now why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD has given them? Moses then recounts what happened to the first generation - *fear robbed them of faith*. And now he thinks history is repeating itself. Two tribes want to *stay put* rather than *move in* to the land.

Sometimes history does repeats itself. None of us are above making the same mistake twice. In fact, it’s the habit of some people to get right to the *brink of blessing* -

and since the **brink** of blessing is better than the **sink** and **stink** of sin - we figure that's as far as we need to go. We stop short, and settle for second best.

God wants us to have faith and press on, and enter into all the goodness that he has and intends for us.

Moses reminds Gad and Rueben of the price the first generation paid for their unbelief. Verse 13, "So the LORD's anger was aroused against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone. And look! You have risen in your father's place, a brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel. For if you turn away from following Him, He will once again leave them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all these people." Moses is asking them, *Do you want another forty years in the wilderness like your fathers?*

Let me say, Moses' concern was definitely legit, and it applies to the Church today. I run into Christians all the time with a *"me only"* attitude. *"As long as I'm blessed. As long as my family is successful..."* They have no sense of responsibility for the other tribes - or their brothers and sisters in Christ. *Why should we fight their battles - why fight when the outcome won't effect me?* Sadly, the church is full of **east bank Christians!**

Why help in the nursery? My kids are grown. I've done my duty... *Who cares about Christian education?* I don't even have kids... *Why should I pray for the marriages in the church?* I'm single... *Why carry on a relationship with a single friend?* I'm married now...

Some people say, I'm serving God, but their service is limited to what directly benefits them and their family. That's **selfishness**. I call it **the east-bank mentality**.

Thankfully, that was not Gad and Reuben's underlying attitude. They address Moses' concern in verse 16, "Then they came near to him and said: "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, but we ourselves will be armed, ready to go before the children of Israel until we have brought them to their place; and our little ones will dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land. We will not return to our homes until every one of the children of Israel has received his inheritance." They'll settle on the east bank; then leave families and flocks to fight with the other ten tribes until all Canaan is taken, and Israel occupies all the land.

"For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has fallen to us on this eastern side of the Jordan."

And Moses agrees to let them do this, *with a warning!* Notice what he says in verse

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.**” Notice that last line, *be sure your sin will find you out!*

It reminds me of the mom who went to visit her single son. She was surprised to find that John’s new roommate was a girl named Julie. The son assured her they were just friends. Nothing immoral was going on.

Well, several weeks after his mother’s visit Julie mentioned to John, *“Ever since your mom visited I’ve been missing the silver gravy ladle we use to serve dinner that night. Do you think your mom took it?”*

John said he didn’t think so, but he’d ask, so he wrote an email, “Mom, I’m not saying you “did” take the gravy ladle from my house, and I’m not saying you “did not” take the gravy ladle. But the fact remains that one has been missing ever since you were here for dinner.”

Several days later, John received a reply from his mom, “Dear Son, I’m not saying you “do” sleep with Julie, and I’m not saying you “do not” sleep with Julie. But the fact remains, if she was sleeping in her own bed, she would have found the gravy ladle by now.” As Moses said, *“be sure your sin will find you out.”*

Yet here, Reuben and Gad have every intention of fighting alongside the ten tribes. Verse 28, “**So Moses gave command concerning them to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel.**” Moses will be gone by the time the conquest of Canaan is complete. So he briefs Eleazar and Joshua on the terms of this deal.

Verse 31, “**Then the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying: “As the LORD has said to your servants, so we will do. We will cross over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, but the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of the Jordan.”** So Moses gave to the children of Gad, to the children of Reuben, and to half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph...” Half of the tribe of Manasseh was also a partner on the east bank.

These 2½ tribes will possess “**the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land with its cities within the borders, the cities of the surrounding country.**” *But in the end, was it a good idea to stop short of the Promise Land and settle on the east bank?* History confirms **it was not!** Every time a northern invader launched an assault on Israel the tribes east of the Jordan caught the full brunt of their fury. The East Bank tribes would’ve been better protected if they had settled west of the Jordan River.

Verses 34-42 list the cities of these 2 1/2 tribes. And notice, the cities of Reuben are

sandwiched between Gad and Manasseh. Just call it a *reuben sandwich*.

Now in our 45 years of marriage Kathy and I have moved just four times. But for me that's three times too many. Moving is a chore. It requires a ton of work.

It could be, though, you're just the opposite. If you had a dad in the military - or in the mafia - you probably moved often. Yet no matter how many times you moved, nobody moved more than the family of Israel.

Chapter 33 tells us the Israelites moved 42 times in forty years. *And we think we're a mobile society!...*

Chapter 33, "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 points of their journeys at the command of the LORD. And these are their journeys according to their starting points:" He begins in Egypt... "They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the 15th 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. For the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had killed among them. Also on their gods the LORD had executed judgments." Remember each of the ten plagues God brought on Egypt was designed to show His superiority over one of their false gods.

"Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses and camped at Succoth. They departed from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness. They moved from Etham and turned back to Pi Hahiroth, which is east of Baal Zephon; and they camped near Migdol. They departed from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness..." Here's how we'll cover Numbers 33... As I read you, follow the map on the big screen...

Marah... Elim... by the Red Sea... Wilderness of Sin... Dophkah... Alush... Rephidim... Sinai... then numerous other cities between Mt. Sinai and Kadesh.

Verse 38, "Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the LORD, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor. Now the king of Arad, the Canaanite, who dwelt in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel." So they departed from Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah... Punon... Oboth... Ije Abarim, at the border of Moab... Ijim... Dibon Gad... Almon Diblathaim... then the final spot: "in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo." Now they're by the Jordan River just across from the city of Jericho.

That's making a long story short!

Verse 50, "Now the LORD spoke to Moses... "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their **engraved stones**, destroy all their **molded images**, and demolish all their **high places**..." These were instruments of idolatry, **engraved stones**, **molded images**, and **high places**. And God hates idolatry. **God has the right to judge men who put other gods before Him**. Men today question the righteousness of God in these ancient judgments, *but they should cause us to look forward...*

Ronald Allen writes, "Nations today are at risk of God's judgment whether they realize it or not. The Bible tells us judgment will come. When it does there'll be no weeping over the women and children of ancient Midian 3 1/2 millennia ago; at that time the judgment of God will transcend anything written in the harshest Scripture." *God isn't afraid to judge and one day will!*

Verse 53, "You shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess. And you shall divide the land by lot as an inheritance among your families; to the larger you shall give a larger inheritance, and to the smaller you shall give a smaller inheritance; there everyone's inheritance shall be whatever falls to him by lot. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers."

But a warning is issued in verse 55, "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell."

And this warning applies to us. Ignore the sin God wants deleted from your life, and it'll be an irritant to you. It'll be a thorn - a hassle. *A bad habit you hold on to, a bad place you frequent, a non-Christian influence you harbor...* tolerate it and it'll harass your faith.

I know believers so pestered - so defeated - they end up giving up on God and the Christian life. *But they are really the one to blame!* Choose to live alongside the enemy rather than drive him out and you'll suffer!

Numbers 33 closes ominously. God says to Israel if you don't drive out the pagans, "Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them." Israel will drive out the unbelievers, or they'll drive out Israel.

In Numbers 34 Moses becomes a surveyor, and outlines for Israel the land God expects them move into and occupy. He provides exact boundaries...

Verse 1, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the children of Israel,

and say to them: 'When you come into the land of Canaan, this is the land that shall fall to you as an inheritance - the land of Canaan to its boundaries.' Verses 2-5 mark off the **southern** border... The **western** border was simple. Verse 6, "You shall have the Great Sea (or the Mediterranean) for a border; this shall be your western border..." Verses 7-9 designates a **northern** border...

And verses 10-12 survey the **eastern** border. From the Golan Heights to the "Sea of Chinnereth" - which was an OT name for the Sea of Galilee. "Chinnereth" means harp. And the lake is harp-shaped. The eastern border follows the Jordan to the "Salt" or Dead Sea.

In verses 16-29 the Lord gives Moses a list of men to divide the land among the tribes. Eleazar, the High Priest, and Joshua are to oversee its allocation. Each tribe will be represented by one of its leaders.

Now if you're paying attention you'll realize there's one tribe that's not mentioned in Chapter 34, the priestly tribe of Levi. God doesn't promise them a parcel. Levi's inheritance isn't **the land**, it's **the Lord**.

Remember, rather than farm land or herd sheep, the Levites served in the Tabernacle. And like a pastor today, they were supported by the people's tithes.

Numbers 18:20 explains, 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." In a very real sense, God was the Levites' livelihood. God wanted their dwelling to be in Him, not in a plot of land.

Yet the Levites still needed a place to lay their head. The Tabernacle had a basin and furniture, but no showers or beds! Obviously, God didn't want the Levites living in His tent, *stinking up the place*, so He appointed cities throughout Israel for them to occupy.

And Numbers 35 takes up the subject of these Levitical cities, "And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying: "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."

This reminds me of our CBI students. They're like Levitical, studying the Bible and serving in ministry. But around the house they've got some undeveloped land so they want to build a chicken coup and raise chickens. Fresh eggs each morning sounds good! *This is what the Levites did with their common-land.*

"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.” A cubit was 18 inches, so 1000 cubits was 1500 feet. Another 1000 cubits totaled 3000 feet. Thus, each city’s common land would be a little over 200 acres.

“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 42 cities. So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be 48; these you shall give with their common-land.”

There will be 48 Levitical cities, and they get listed in Joshua 21. Six of these cities were designated “**cities of refuge.**” Verse 14 tells us three of the cities were east of the Jordan - and three were west. You were never more than a half day’s journey to a city of refuge.

And this city was a safe place for a man on the run from an avenger, a *manslayer*... If you’ve (**clip**) ever watched an episode of *Law and Order* you know the difference between *murder in the first degree* and *manslaughter*. Manslaughter is unintentional or accidental. First degree murder is a premeditated act...

Well, in ancient times if a person were guilty of manslaughter, the family of the victim who was killed had the right to avenge their brother’s death, and kill the killer in cold blood. They chased him down... He was never safe... was always looking over a shoulder.

But God provided a **safe place** for such a man to flee. If he ducked into a city of refuge he had amnesty and protection. He was shielded from the avenging party until tried and declared innocent. These six cities were scattered all across Israel’s future territory and accessible from every corner of the Promised Land.

Verses 16-21 describe cases of first degree murder where the murderer deserved to die. Such as, striking a person with a weapon or stone with the intent to kill.

Verses 22-24 describe cases of manslaughter - push a person innocently, or throw a stone accidentally and they die; *then you are on the run to a city of refuge!*

Verse 25, “So the congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall return him to the city of refuge where he had fled, and he shall remain there until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.” Upon the death of the High Priest the person’s pardon became permanent. The manslayer could return home, no longer vulnerable to vengeance.

Of course, **Jesus is the ultimate city of refuge**. This concept illustrates our salvation. Run to Jesus and you become safe. Like the manslayer of old our pardon also became permanent at the death of our High Priest, Jesus. When He died it sealed the deal for our amnesty. The blood of Jesus saves us to the uttermost.

“But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled, and the avenger of blood finds him outside the limits of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood, because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession.”

And again here’s a lesson for us. **Salvation requires that we abide in Christ - continue in our faith**. Wander outside the city, or *Christ*, and you’re in danger!

Now ancient Israel imposed a death penalty, but the end of Numbers 35 provided laws guiding its implementation. No one was sentenced to death on the witness of a single person. It took 2 or 3 eyewitnesses.

And there was no bond for murder. Freedom couldn’t be purchased. The only thing able to atone for a crime of first degree murder was the death of the perpetrator.

Which brings us to the last chapter. Recall Numbers 27 where we read of Zelophahad’s four daughters. In ancient times it was customary for land to be passed down to sons not daughters, but Zelophahad’s daughters were his only offspring, and they thought they should be able to inherit their daddy’s parcel.

Moses asked the Lord what to do, and God sided with the girls. *But now, the case comes up on appeal...*

“The chief fathers,” or tribal elders, have a grievance. If land is inherited by daughters, what happens when one of the girls marries outside her tribe? She’ll take her land with her, and the total tribal territory will be diminished. It’ll create an unequal distributions of land.

Moses sees their point, and goes back to God for an answer... Verse 5, "Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying: "What the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks is right..."

Earlier in 27:7, Moses had said, "What the daughters speak is right." Now he says, "what the elders speak is right." And don't miss the lesson, it's a good idea to listen to both **the women** and **the elders** in your life.

And here was God's solution. For a woman to keep a parcel of land she should marry only within her tribe, prohibiting one tribe from losing territory to another.

The book of Numbers closes, verse 13, "These are the commandments and the judgments which the LORD commanded the children of Israel by the hand of Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho." For eight weeks we've been *crunching numbers*... Next time we'll tackle Deuteronomy 1-4!