

## Numbers 34-36

Good evening and thank you again for joining us. Would you turn in your Bibles to Numbers 34 please?

### VBS

Tonight we finish this incredible book. I'm proud of you-it's not always easy or glamorous, but this is the whole counsel of God, and we need the whole counsel of God.

Next week we will begin the book of Acts.

The title of tonight's message is A STUDY IN OBEDIENCE

Before we begin let's ask for the Lord's blessing.

### PRAY

In chapter 34 God gives detailed instructions to Israel concerning the boundaries of the promised land-the land of Canaan.

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "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. Notice God's promise again-when you come into the land of Canaan.

Verses 3-5 detail the southern border.

3 Your southern border shall be from the Wilderness of Zin along the border of Edom; then your southern border shall extend eastward to the end of the Salt Sea; 4 your border shall turn from the southern side of the Ascent of Akrabbim, continue to Zin, and be on the south of Kadesh Barnea; then it shall go on to Hazar Addar, and continue to Azmon; 5 the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and it shall end at the Sea.

The western border was simple. Verse 6

6 'As for the western border, you shall have the Great Sea for a border; this shall be your western border. The Mediterranean was their western border

Verses 7-9 give the coordinates for the northern border.

7 'And this shall be your northern border: From the Great Sea you shall mark out your border line to Mount Hor; 8 from Mount Hor you shall mark out your border to the entrance of Hamath; then the direction of the border shall be toward Zedad; 9 the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and it shall end at Hazar Enan. This shall be your northern border.

Verses 10-12 give the coordinates for the eastern border.

10 'You shall mark out your eastern border from Hazar Enan to Shepham; 11 the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain; the border shall go down and reach to the eastern side of the Sea of Chinnereth; (galilee) 12 the border shall go down along the Jordan, and it shall end at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land with its surrounding boundaries.' ” The eastern border follows the Jordan River to the “Salt Sea”, or Dead Sea.

Verses 13-15 describe what we saw last week regarding the tribes of Reuben, Gad and ½ tribe of Manasseh receiving their land east of the Jordan.

13 Then Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying: “This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which the LORD has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe. 14 For the tribe of the children of Reuben according to the house of their fathers, and the tribe of the children of Gad according to the house of their fathers, have received their inheritance; and the half-tribe of Manasseh has received its inheritance. 15 The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance on this

side of the Jordan, across from Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise.”

In verses 16-29 God gives Moses a list of men who are to divide the land among the twelve tribes. Eleazar, the High Priest, and Joshua are to oversee the distribution – and each tribe should be represented by one of the tribe’s leaders.

16-29

16 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 17 “These are the names of the men who shall divide the land among you as an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. 18 And you shall take one leader of every tribe to divide the land for the inheritance. 19 These are the names of the men: from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh; 20 from the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud; 21 from the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon; 22 a leader from the tribe of the children of Dan, Bukki the son of Jogli; 23 from the sons of Joseph: a leader from the tribe of the children of Manasseh, Hanniel the son of Ephod, 24 and a leader from the tribe of the children of Ephraim, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan; 25 a leader from the tribe of the children of Zebulun, Elizaphan the son of Parnach; 26 a leader from the tribe of the children of Issachar, Paltiel the son of Azzan; 27 a leader from the tribe of the children of Asher, Ahihud the son of Shelomi; 28 and a leader from the tribe of the children of Naphtali, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.”

29 These are the ones the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance among the children of Israel in the land of Canaan.

If you were to count these tribes you’ll notice there’s one tribe that’s not mentioned in here, it’s the tribe of Levi. Remember God doesn’t promise the Levites a parcel of land, rather they worked in the service of the Tabernacle.

Numbers 18:20 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.

Yet the Levites did need somewhere to rest their head, to live their lives. So in chapter 35 God appoints cities throughout the land of Israel for the Levites.

## CHAPTER 35

1-5

1 And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, saying: 2 “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. 3 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. 4 The common-land of the cities which you will give the Levites shall extend from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. 5 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. So the Levites were not given a specific parcel of land for their tribe, rather they were given land around the cities for their personal animals to graze and dwell.

6-8

6 “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. 7 So all the cities you will give to the Levites shall be forty-eight; these you shall give

with their common-land. 8 And the cities which you will give shall be from the possession of the children of Israel; from the larger tribe you shall give many, from the smaller you shall give few. Each shall give some of its cities to the Levites, in proportion to the inheritance that each receives.” There were 48 Levitical cities, and they’re all listed in Joshua 21. Yet six of these Levitical cities were designated as cities of refuge.

Very few Israelites lived more than 10 miles from a Levitical town. God provided these so that the Levites, whose responsibilities included the teaching of the Law, would not live far from anyone in Israel

The City of Refuge locations are described in verses 9-15

9 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, 11 then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there. 12 They shall be cities of refuge for you from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation in judgment. 13 And of the cities which you give, you shall have six cities of refuge. 14 You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, which will be cities of refuge. 15 These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there. Verse 14 tells us 3 of the cities were east of the Jordan River and the other 3 cities were west of the Jordan. This means an Israelite was never more than a half day’s journey to a city of refuge. The city of refuge was a safe place for a man on the run from an avenger.

Now we’ve gotta talk about some law here, because there is a big difference between murder and manslaughter.

Murder is intentional and premeditated.

Manslaughter is unintentional or accidental.

In ancient times if someone were guilty of manslaughter the family of the victim would look to avenge their loved one's death by killing the one who killed their family member. They would pursue the manslayer.

But God provided a safe place for the manslayer to flee. If he ducked into a city of refuge he was safe and protected. He was shielded from the avenging party until he could be tried and declared innocent.

These six cities were scattered across the land of Canaan and accessible from every corner of the Promised Land.

Verses 16-21 describe examples of murder in the first degree where the murderer would NOT be accepted into a city of refuge. Rather the murderer was sentenced to die.

16-21

16 'But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 17 And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 18 Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. 19 The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. 20 If he pushes him out of hatred or, while lying in wait, hurls something at him so that he dies, 21 or in enmity he strikes him with his hand so that he dies, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death

when he meets him. This again is talking about murder. But manslaughter is different...

Verses 22-24 give instructions on how to judge if a death was truly manslaughter.

22 'However, if he pushes him suddenly without enmity, or throws anything at him without lying in wait, 23 or uses a stone, by which a man could die, throwing it at him without seeing him, so that he dies, while he was not his enemy or seeking his harm, 24 then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood according to these judgments. If there was the absence of murderous intent, or if the death was clearly accidental, then the man was not guilty of murder and could not be turned over to the avenger of blood.

So the manslayer was to go into the city of refuge. And how long were they to stay in the city of refuge?

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 manslayer was fully pardoned and the manslayer could return to his home.

But what if the manslayer gets tired of the city of refuge, you know, gets a little homesick and wants to go back home? Verses 26-30 tell us.

26 But if the manslayer at any time goes outside the limits of the city of refuge where he fled, 27 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, 28 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.

29 'And these things shall be a statute of judgment to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 30 Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty. It took 2 or 3 witnesses

31 Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

Freedom should never be sold. All too often in our courts today, the verdict depends on who can afford the best lawyer.

32-34

32 And you shall take no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the priest. 33 So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. 34 Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel.' "The cities of refuge paint a beautiful picture of Jesus.

Psalm 46:1,

God is our refuge and strength,

A very present help in trouble

The Psalms speak of God as being our refuge more than a dozen times.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are within easy reach of the needy person.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are open to everyone, no one will be turned away during their time of need.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the guilty party would dwell. This wasn't a casual spot, you lived your life there.

With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the death of the High Priest.

Jesus is the ultimate city of refuge. His blood saves us so we are no longer guilty.

We begin CHAPTER 36 with a reminder of what we studied in chapter 27. In Numbers 27 we read about the four daughters of Zelophahad – where God ruled in favor of equal land rights for the single daughters.

Remember in ancient times it was customary to pass down land to sons, but not to daughters. But Zelophahad's four daughters were his only offspring, and these women thought they should be able to inherit their father's land. Moses asked the Lord, and the Lord sided with the girls.

But now we see the people have more questions about God's solution.

#### Chapter 36 1-4

1 Now the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the chief fathers of the children of Israel. 2 And they said: "The LORD commanded my lord Moses to give the land as an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel, and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters. 3 Now if they are married to any of

the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and it will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance. 4 And when the Jubilee of the children of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.” Solving the problem of Zelophahad's daughters had created another problem - how to keep the property in a tribe through the generations.

5-6

5 Then 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. 6 This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, ‘Let them marry whom they think best, but they may marry only within the family of their father’s tribe.’ If you are single tonight and hoping one day for a spouse, look carefully at verse 6. Who they think best, but within their fathers tribe.

As a Christian the bible tells us to marry another Christian, to not be unequally yoked. But notice God gives us the freedom in picking a spouse!

7-9

7 So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. 8 And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be the wife of one of the family of her father’s tribe, so that the children of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers. 9 Thus no inheritance shall change

hands from one tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance.” God’s solution is simple. If a daughter in a family receives an inheritance of land, she must marry within the tribe that she is from. Since the tribes were plenty large enough, this wasn’t restrictive at all.

Now verses 10-12 describes the conclusion of these daughters.

10 Just as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad; 11 for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to the sons of their father’s brothers. 12 They were married into the families of the children of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father’s family.

Verse 13 is the conclusion to the book of Numbers

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.

The Book of Numbers began in the wilderness. Now as the nation of Israel stood across from the city of Jericho, they are on the edge of the promised land!

We should take a moment and remember what’s taken place up to this point.

Remember the entire nation of Israel was birthed from Gods promise to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1 1 Now the LORD had said to Abram:**

**“Get out of your country,**

**From your family**

**And from your father’s house,**

**To a land that I will show you.**

2 I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Then, we see the 12 sons of Jacob, including Joseph who was sold into slavery. And through the harrowing ordeal and God’s provision, 70 descendants of Abraham went to Egypt, where they grew greatly in population.

Exodus 1 6 And Joseph died, all his brothers, and all that generation. 7 But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, “Look, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; 10 come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and it happen, in the event of war, that they also join our enemies and fight against us, and so go up out of the land.”

The Israelites then endured the bondage of slavery for 400 years in Egypt, and God raised up Moses to lead the nation. We witnessed the plagues, and the Passover, and God setting the Israelites free.

As the nation of slaves left Egypt, God miraculously provided manna and quail and water, and their shoes never wore out. God carried them through it all.

Throughout our OT studies we've seen God giving the nation the opportunity to grow from being a slave people to being a Promised Land people. He instructed them how to be ordered, organized, cleansed, and blessed. God taught them how to give and how to walk by faith.

All of this was instruction as the nation headed to the Promised Land.

Was their journey easy? Anything but easy!!

But through it all, God was teaching the nation to walk by faith.

Today we see many Christians who act like the first generation of Israelites in the book of Numbers. Lots of folks in churches today refuse to walk by faith, and they won't enter in to what God has set before them.

This results in a frustrated Christian who is living more in the wilderness than on the threshold of the Promised Land.

I don't know what God has planned for you individually, or even for us as a church. God rarely lays all the plans out in front of us.

Because he wants us to walk by faith. The question is, will we be obedient along the way?

For the Israelites it was certainly better to stay on the shores of the Jordan river than it was in slavery in Egypt. Being on the shore of the Jordan was better than wandering the wilderness! Yet it wasn't God's best.

The nation had come this far by faith, and they will need faith to take them the rest of the way.

And so it is with us.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

We titled this study in Numbers a study in obedience. Folks, take steps of faith. Be obedient to God. Let Him work in your life. Allow Him to show His faithfulness.