

1/16/93

**So You Want Second Best?**  
**Numbers 32**

The forty years of wondering are over and the first generation has died in the wilderness.

The second census has been taken, the man Joshua has been chosen by God to lead the people and the land is to be divided by lots according to the size of each tribe.

Just when everything seemed to be going right the tribes of Ruben, Gad and half of Mannasah expressed to Moses their desire to make their home on the east side of the Jordan River.

The lesson before us is a classic example of settling for God's second best rather than embracing God's first best.

We want to look at the developing dialogue to observe some important lessons for our own lives and finish up by pointing out some very practical consequences from choosing second best. Num. 32

- I. The petition of the tribes. vs. 1-5
- II. The reaction of Moses. vs. 6-15
- III. The explanation of the tribes. vs. 16-19
- IV. The agreement of Moses and the tribes. vs. 20-32
- V. The occupation of the land by the tribes. vs. 33-42

**I. The petition of the tribes. vs. 1-5**

- A. The tribes petitioning were three. vs. 1
  - 1. The tribe of Ruben, Jacobs oldest son. vs. 1a
  - 2. The tribe of Gad. vs. 1a
  - 3. The half tribe of Mannaseh. vs.33

**B. The reasoning behind the petition. vs.1**

- 1. They were a great multitude. vs. 1a
  - a. Ruben had 43, 700
  - b. Gad had 45, 500
  - c. Mannaseh had 52, 700, half would be 26, 350.
  - d. The total number would of been 141, 900.
- 2. They saw the land was good for livestock. vs. 1b-c

**C. The petition was solicited. vs. 2-4**

- 1. The leaders were Moses, Eleazar the priest and the leaders of the congregation. vs. 2
- 2. The five kings are named. vs. 3
- 3. The rationale is stated. vs. 4
  - a. The Lord defeated them, therefore we are entitled to it.
  - b. The land is for livestock and we have livestock.

**D. The petition stated. vs. 5**

- 1. Let this land be given to us. vs. 5a-b
- 2. Do not take us over the Jordan. vs. 5c

*The petition of the tribes was void of God's will!*

**II. The reaction of Moses. vs. 6-15**

- A. Will you sit idle while your brethren go to war? vs. 6
  - 1. Lack of commitment is the idea.
  - 2. Looking out for self is the focus.

- B.** Will you discourage the hearts of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them? vs. 7-13
1. The petition is implied to be senseless. vs. 7
  2. The failure to enter the land occurred before with their fathers at Kadesh. vs. 8-9
  3. The Lord condemned them to die in the wilderness, except for Joshua and Caleb. vs. 10-13
- C.** Will you be like your fathers, a brood of sinful men? vs. 14-15.
1. To increase the fierce anger of the Lord. vs. 14
  2. To turn them away from following the Lord. vs. 15a
  3. To leave them in the wilderness and have God destroy all of the people. vs. 15b-c

*The reaction of Moses was outrage!*

### **III. The explanation of the tribes. vs. 16-19**

- A.** They would first build secure places for their livestock and children. vs. 16
- B.** They would go armed ready to go to war until they had brought them into their place, while their children dwelt safely on the trans-Jordan. vs. 17
- C.** They would not return to their homes till everyone of the children of Israel had received his inheritance. vs. 18
- D.** They would not inherit with them on the west side of Jordan. vs. 19

1. They had made their decision, "We will not". vs. 19a
2. They would be the heirs of their own inheritance not God's. vs. 19b

*The explanation of the tribes was compromise!*

### **IV. The agreement of Moses and the tribes. vs. 20-32**

- A.** Moses held them to their word they had proclaimed. vs. 20-27
1. To go armed before the Lord for war. vs. 20
  2. To go till the Lord had driven out the enemy. vs. 21
  3. To go till the land would be subdued before the Lord. vs. 22a
  4. To be able to return blameless before the Lord and Israel. vs. 22b
  5. To be able to possess the land on the east side of Jordan. vs. 22c
  6. To fail in their word would be sin against the Lord, and their sin would find them out. vs. 23-24
  7. To affirm their understanding of the agreement the two tribes responded by repeating the specifics. vs. 25-27
- B.** Moses commanded the three tribes to be held accountable since he would not enter the promise land. vs. 28-32
1. The witnesses were three. vs. 28
    - a. Eleazar the High Priest.
    - b. Joshua the leader of Israel.
    - c. The chief fathers of the tribes.
  2. Their obedience would result in their possessing their own choice. vs. 29

3. Their failure would force them to accept the Lord's inheritance. vs. 30
4. Their agreement was voiced. vs. 31-32

***The agreement of Moses and the tribes was formality!***

**V. The occupation of the land by the tribes. vs. 33-42**

- A. Moses gave the land of King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan to the three tribes. vs. 33
- B. Gad took possession and built their cities. vs. 34-36
- C. Ruben took possession and built their cities. vs. 37-38
- D. Manasseh took possession and built their cities. vs. 39-42

***The occupation of the land by the tribes would be regretted!***

**VI. The devastation of second best.**

- A. What appeared to be an innocent and harmless petition had in fact a self-centered benefit in mind.
  1. Their petition was based on material consideration. (*Gahazi*)
  2. Their petition was based on human observation. (*Lot*)
  3. Their petition was based on self will, opposed to knowing God's will. (*Samson*)
    - \* So each of us must search our hearts and not allow anything that would take us from God's revealed will!

- B. What was declared to be best for them was despised and rejected by them.
  1. They said, "Do not take us over the Jordan. vs. 5d
  2. They said, "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 Jordan. vs. 19
  3. They said, "But the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us on this side of the Jordan. vs. 32b
- C. What appeared to be so good and worthwhile for the present turned out to be destructive in the future.
  1. They attempted to secure their identity with the other tribes after returning to the east side by building an altar, lest future generations would not acknowledge them and it almost cost them war with their own people. Josh. 22:26-27
    - a. So our separation from the people of God in gathering together for the study of the word of God, prayer, breaking bread and fellowship, can be destructive each of us.
    - b. Living as close to the world as possible without being out of God's protection is a dangerous decision.
    - c. The natural boundaries were to protect them from the enemy not to separate them from the people of God.
  2. They were the first to be attacked by the enemy for eighteen years these three tribes were harassed, literally shattered by the Philistines. Judges 10:8
    - a. Their protection had been compromised by settling for second best, being on the other side of the Jordan, so with us if we don't

- respect God's boundaries for our own lives, compromising our safety by our fleshly desires and settling for our own will.
- b. The flesh lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so you can not do what you wish. Gal. 5:17
3. They were the first to go into captivity, God stirred up the spirit of Pul the king of Assyria, Tilgath-Pileser, who carried these three tribes into captivity. 1Chron. 5:26
    - a. So every person who is constantly making provisions for his or her flesh to fulfill the lust there of, will be taken captive by sin. Rom. 13:14
    - b. Such a person that is overcome after having escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and again entangled, their latter end is worst than the first. 2Pet. 2:20
    - c. The strong warning is that it would of been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the Holy commandment delivered to them. 2Pet. 2:21
    - d. The wilderness experience of forty years had not taught them the basic lesson of obedience!

### Conclusion

The lesson of settling for God's second best rather than His first best is a sad commentary on our lives and a very costly one.

- I. The petition of the tribes was void of God's will! vs. 1-5
- II. The reaction of Moses was outrage! vs. 6-15

- III. The explanation of the tribes was compromise! vs. 16-19
- IV. The agreement of Moses and the tribes was a formality! vs. 20-32
- V. The occupation of the land by the tribes would be regretted! vs. 33-42
- VI. The devastation of second best is due to the fact that it is based on self centered motives, despises & rejects God's best and costs in the long run!