

Numbers 33 - 36 • Final Instruction

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Chapter 33 is an interesting chapter. I don't know how many of you people, when you're traveling, keep a travel log. Some of you like to do that. I remember back in the day; Sue and I used to keep scrapbooks. In fact, I think we've still got some of them sitting around in our closets. And they're pretty funny, when you go back and look at them now, cause we used to, when we were first married, we took our vacations on motorcycle, believe it or not, and traveled all over the country and really had a good time.

And of course, back then we're taking pictures with these stupid little instamatic cameras. Remember those things with the little square flashes and you flash, it goes and flips to the next one and, oh, they were so dumb. And the pictures were always terrible, but it was fun to recount the journey. I mean, it's fun to go back and look and we would even keep track of things like what kind of mileage we got on the motorcycle, how much gas costs.

That's funny to go back and look at 1970s and then we'd have a map of like the United States, and we'd put dots on the map, and we'd have our trip out and our trip back, and that was our scrapbook.

Chapter 33 of Numbers is Moses's scrapbook because the Lord directed him to keep track for 40 years. Now, that's a long vacation, and I don't think Moses ever thought it a vacation. But for 40 years he kept track of every place they stopped and where they camped and then where they moved on to. And that's what this chapter is about.

It begins by saying in verse 1, *“These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. ² Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, (In other words, that's KOA by KOA campground) by command of the LORD, and these are their stages according to their starting places. (And it begins by saying) ³ They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. (That is, it goes on to say) On the day after the Passover, the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians, ⁴ while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them. On their gods also the LORD executed judgments. (ESV)*

You guys know what that's all about as the Lord moved powerfully to cancel out everything that was claimed to be a power of those Egyptian gods with all the plagues that he brought.

Verse 5. *“So the people of Israel set out from Rameses and camped at Succoth. ⁶And they set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness. ⁷And they set out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which is east of Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol. ⁸And they set out from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and they went a three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham and camped at Marah.”*

Which is the first place where they ran out of water and had some issues about that. Now, at this point in the chapter it simply is going to go from place to place and place to place where the Israelites set out from and then camped and then set out from and then camped at. And unless you have an eidetic memory of the ancient places and you have a map in your head, it's probably not going to mean a whole lot to you and I, to sit here and just recite all of these different areas, frankly many of which we don't know anything more of than the name that's in here in the Scripture.

That's all we know because they're so ancient and many of these places are just no longer called that any longer. But it's interesting, before we kind of move past them, Bible students have wondered out loud throughout the years, why Moses kept this list? Well, we know that, I guess I should ask the question, why the Lord had Moses? We know why he kept it. The Lord told him to keep it. But why the Lord had him to keep it? Why write down for forty years every place you camped and then where you left and went to after that?

And frankly, some rather interesting and even somewhat fanciful attempts have been made to try to make sense of it all including taking the number of stops that they had that are recorded here, which is like 42, and then thinking, okay, well, what other 42s do we have in the Bible? Okay, there was this four, yeah, and trying to see if there's some kind of a numerical connection. And although they're interesting they ultimately remain fairly conjectural on the whole thing.

But this is just one of those Bible passages, one of these chapters in the Bible that includes a lot of information that you and I might look at and just go, huh. When you're reading through your Bible, I assume you kind of come to these chapters and you kind of just go, na-na-na-na-na and you don't really probably spend a whole lot of time trying to look up all the names and places, and gee, I

wonder what that name means to that place or something. Maybe that's some of the significance.

I do think, however, it is significant to remember the journey of the Lord has had you on. Ultimately this list of places, and we're not going to read all the names because it's just really an exercise in Hebrew pronunciation. But ultimately this list stands as a testimony of God's faithfulness during that time that He brought them through that season of time for 40 years, almost an unthinkable amount of time.

But of course, you know what was going on during that season there had been unbelief, rampant unbelief in the camp to the point that God said you will spend the next 38 years wandering in the wilderness until the generation, who expressed this heart of unbelief all perishes and you cried out for the sake of your children saying, our children are going to be eaten alive.

Well, it's your children who are going to actually go into the land, and I'll see that they do. And this list of places that populates this chapter is this record of the faithfulness of God. And it might not appear to you and I to really be very meaningful from the standpoint of just reading the names. Now, if you were one of the Israelites who spent the better part of their lives going on that journey, you'd probably, if somebody recited this in your hearing, you would instantly be brought back to your remembrance. Oh, I remember what happened there. That was the place, and that was the snakes, and that was the thing, and that was when that those bulls rose up against Moses and Aaron, the ground opened up, swallowed them. I remember.

And all these things will come back to your memory, and sometimes that's why keeping your own record of the faithfulness of God and the things that God does might not seem all that interesting at the time that you're doing it, but later on you go back and look at it and it becomes a record of God's faithfulness. And sometimes keeping that kind of a journal some people keep prayer journals, and that obviously is a lovely record of God's faithfulness as well. But what about just keeping like a record of here's what happened, here's where we went. And we went from here, and then we picked up, and then we went to there.

And that's what this record essentially is for you and I. But obviously for the people who went through it, it means so much more. And if you're going to write down the things that the Lord is doing in your life, moved into this new house, found this new, God provided a new vehicle, and just the things that you remember that this is what God did in my life. I think that there's something about that. I think there's an importance of marking those times, places and

provisions that the Lord brings into our lives so that we might rejoice down the road.

Skip down to verse 37. You can see we're skipping a lot of places, and they set out and camped at, and set out and camped at. Then verse 37 says, *"And they set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, (Now, Kadesh by the way, is the place they came to 40 years earlier, or excuse me, 38 years earlier, and that's where they camped and sent out the spies into the land. And those spies originally came back with that word of unbelief. But now they're there again, but then they set out from that place. They camp at Mount Hor) on the edge of the land of Edom."*

Verse 38 says, *"And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the LORD and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month."*³⁹ And (we're told) *Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor."*

Now, that's obviously one of the days that is being remembered because of the significance of the event that the very first High Priest passed on, and the people spent quite a bit of time there mourning for him.

And we're told in verse 40, *"And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the people of Israel."* As, of course, all the other kings did as well. And then it continues with their route. They set out and camped at, set out and camped at.

Skip down to verse 48, *"And they set out from the mountains of Abarim and camped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho; "*⁴⁹ *they camped by the Jordan from Beth-jeshimoth as far as Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab."*

And you guys all know what happened in the plains of Moab. We've already gone through all that. Of course, they're here on the doorstep of the promised land.

And it says in verse 50, *"And the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, "*⁵¹ *"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, "*⁵² *then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you (And look at this, look at this) and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places."* Stop there, if you would, please, just for a minute, because this is a significant statement.

They're just ready to cross the Jordan into the land. Now, I want you to remember something, and this is important. Going into the promised land again, is a picture of our life in Christ. It's that picture of entering into that new relationship with God, whereby we begin to walk out His promises. We also begin to deal with a lot of battles. We deal with a lot of challenges to our faith. We deal with a lot of enemies of the cross. But we walk by faith because it's the land that God gave us. And we're not talking about a physical geographic land anymore.

We haven't been given the United States of America like Israel was given the land of Canaan. We just happen to live here and we're kind of on borrowed soil as it were. The earth is the Lord's and everything in it. But, so we haven't been given the land. We've been birthed into a spiritual Kingdom that is filled full of glorious, wonderful promises that the Lord has given to us, and when we're birthed into that Kingdom, we are called then to begin to walk those promises out by faith and to live the Christian life and bring glory to God, live a life that's pleasing to God.

But of course, we come up with all kinds of challenges. Well, God prepares the people of Israel, and this is going into the promised land 101. This is basics, okay? He says, when you go into the land he says, first of all, you're going to drive out the inhabitants of the land, but you're not just going to drive out the inhabitants of the land. He goes on to say, you are going to destroy all of their worship, and all the accoutrements that go with their worship. And that's very significant. What He's basically telling them, well, and first of all, we need to explain the obvious.

The reason He's telling them to destroy all the things that they used in their worship is because He doesn't want them to get sucked in to that same kind of worship sort of a rhetoric. And so, the idea here is, do not worship what they worship. When you go into the land, be very careful that you don't worship what they worship. Now it's kind of different, isn't it, for you and I, in some respects, because we haven't been given the land. First of all, we're going, we're living in a land that's full of pagan worship, heathen worship. We're living right in the midst of all that. Right?

But we haven't been given the land in the sense of a geographic land, so we're not going around smashing the things that people worship. It's a different sort of a situation for us because we're living in a Kingdom within a kingdom. We live in the kingdom that is run by the enemy, which is the kingdom of man, but again, it's run by the enemy. The Bible tells us the whole world is under the control of the evil one. But we're living, we've been birthed into a Kingdom,

which is the Kingdom of God, which is within us and that's where the rulership of Jesus begins, right?

And then goes out from there from us and we, hopefully, are touching people and circumstances and situations to bring the light of God's Kingdom and the influence of His Kingdom into whatever corner of the kingdom of man that we happen to be living in, and hopefully we're doing that. Hopefully there's some kind of an influence that's going on. But we haven't been given the freedom to go around and smash things and break things that belong necessarily to other people. We are demolishing other things. The Bible says that through the Word of God we demolish arguments and strongholds, and it's through the Word of God and through prayer.

The weapons that we fight with are not carnal, Paul tells us. What are they? They're the weapons of spiritual warfare, right? We're not going around, and we see what the world worships. We see. They worship money. That's one of the things they worship. You don't see Christians having a bonfire in the church parking lot and throwing 5 dollar bills into the fire because this is what the world worships. The world worships power. The world worships pleasure. All kinds of things. These are the things that are worshiped.

And you and I are called to bring the Gospel, the truth of God's Word into this world and to convince people to give up their gods and come to the one true creator God. And that's of course not an easy task. Very, very difficult task. The Bible tells us even why. In the New Testament it says, and this is the verdict, light has come into the world, but men love darkness instead of the light. (John 3:19) Right? So, it's a very challenging sort of a thing that we enter into as believers. But there is, beyond how we're influencing the world, beyond how we're influencing people around us, there is a kind of destroying of the worship of the world that needs to happen in our hearts.

Because this is the Kingdom. This is the land we've been given. It's not a geographical thing you can point to on a map. It's in our hearts where the rulership of Jesus has been established and there in that place we are called to destroy, through the power of the Spirit, the things that cause men to bow down and worship. And we're to rid ourselves of those things. Just as the nation of Israel was told to go into the land and rid the land of these people and then rid the land of the things they worship, you and I are to rid those things from our lives. Paul talked about it in Ephesians as, kind of like, taking off a garment.

He talked about taking off the old self and putting on the new self. Well, the old self wants to worship the things of the world. We put on the new self, which is

created in the image of Jesus Christ to worship the one true God and to live for Him a life pleasing unto Him rather than living a life unto self and so forth. So, this is the challenge that you and I have. You know what? If we don't take this seriously, if we don't see what God is saying here about destroying the accoutrements of worldly worship from our own lives, then we're going to get sucked into them, just like the nation of Israel, potentially, was going to and ultimately did.

Because they never did actually rid the land of all the people, so they didn't rid the land of all the people's worship, and they ultimately got dragged right into it, just like God told them was going to happen if they failed to not rid the land. So, it's a challenging thing that we face. But it happens in a completely different way than the way. The Jews give us a picture, and it's a beautiful picture. Go into the land and break down their stuff and get rid of it. Throw it in the garbage. Find wherever you guys are putting your garbage and put it there. And the way it happens for you and I, is the Lord Himself who now lives within us on the throne of our heart brings conviction about the things that the world worships.

And He speaks to you and I, and He says, don't worship what they worship. Don't run after what they run after. Don't desire what they desire. And we're all convicted of that stuff, myself included. We can all easily get drawn away and sucked into that sort of stuff. And the Lord brings conviction. And what we do with that conviction is the important thing. What are we going to do? What needs to be changed? What needs to be smashed? What do you need to get rid of so that you're not worshiping the things that the world worships? Basically, God is telling them to get those things out of the way because they're just going to cause you to stumble.

Verse 53. It says, *"And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it."* And that's the same as for you and I. God has given us His promises to possess them.

"⁵⁴ You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit. ⁵⁵ But (listen to this) if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. ⁵⁶ And I will do to you as I thought to do to them." Boy that's a very sobering reminder and it really doesn't

need a whole lot of comment I don't think, as it relates to just the consequences of entangling ourselves in the things of this world.

Numbers chapter 34 verse 1. *“The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,² “Command the people of Israel, and say to them, When you enter the land of Canaan (And then it says, parenthetically) (this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, the land of Canaan as defined by its borders),”*

And then it's going to go on and define those borders. Let me put a map of those borders basically on the screen here for you.



And we'll leave this up while we're reading through this information because it might help you a little bit. Now, let me just say something. The green area on the left from north to south is the area in which God gave, by inheritance, to the children of Israel. Here's an interesting tidbit about that. They never lived in all of the land. Never once. There were some kings that brought the borders of Israel farther than any others, but they never actually dwelt in all of it and controlled all of it because they never completely rid the land of the groups that were living there.

That's the green area. Kind of the grayish area on the right side is that Transjordan region where the tribe of Reuben and Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh decided to settle. And when I say settle, I mean it not only in the sense that they settled there, but they also settled for less. You know how we use that term today? Hey, you're just settling. Meaning, you're compromising, you're living with less than what was intended, and they truly did.

They lived, they decided they wanted to live in a region that really wasn't part of the promised land. And so, they did. And these people fell away very quickly in their walks with the Lord. Things got very bad by the time Jesus came on the scene. Things were in a rough, rough, rough place. But anyway so you can of be looking at the map there while we're reading through here.

It says in verse 3, *“your south side shall be from the wilderness of Zin alongside Edom, and your southern border shall run from the end of the Salt Sea on the east. ⁴ And your border shall turn south of the ascent of Akrabbim, and cross to Zin, and its limit shall be south of Kadesh-barnea. Then it shall go on to Hazar-addar, and pass along to Azmon. ⁵ And the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and its limit shall be at the sea.”*

Here's the thing, these are such ancient markers. The map that you're seeing here is kind of, it's the best we can come up with using today's understanding, archaeological evidence and what we know about the region. The borders aren't perfectly defined from, he says go to here and then go to there and go to here. Well, that's not exactly, exact but that's about as close as we can get.

Verse 6 says, *“For the western border, you shall have the Great Sea and its coast. This shall be your western border.”* That makes it really simple. Now that one, we don't have any trouble determining because you've got the Mediterranean there that is the border.

“⁷ This shall be your northern border: from the Great Sea you shall draw a line to Mount Hor. ⁸ From Mount Hor you shall draw a line to Lebo-hamath,

and the limit of the border shall be at Zedad. ⁹ Then the border shall extend to Ziphron, and its limit shall be at Hazar-enan. This shall be your northern border. ¹⁰ “You shall draw a line for your eastern border from Hazar-enan to Shepham.

¹¹ And the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain. And the border shall go down and reach to the shoulder of the Sea of Chinnereth on the east. ¹² And the border shall go down to the Jordan, and its limit shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land as defined by its borders all around.” So there you go.

“Moses commanded the people of Israel, saying, (verse 13) “This is the land that 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 people of Reuben by fathers' houses and the tribe of the people of Gad by their fathers' houses have received their inheritance, and also the half-tribe of Manasseh.

¹⁵ The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, toward the sunrise.” ¹⁶ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁷ “These are the names of the men who shall divide the land to you for inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun. ¹⁸ You shall take one chief from every tribe to divide the land for inheritance. ¹⁹ These are the names of the men: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. ²⁰ Of the tribe of the people of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud. ²¹ Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon. ²² Of the tribe of the people of Dan a chief, Bukki the son of Jogli. ²³ Of the people of Joseph: of the tribe of the people of Manasseh a chief, Hanniel the son of Ephod.

²⁴ And of the tribe of the people of Ephraim (The other son of Joseph) a chief, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan. ²⁵ Of the tribe of the people of Zebulun a chief, Elizaphan the son of Parnach. ²⁶ Of the tribe of the people of Issachar a chief, Paltiel the son of Azzan. ²⁷ And of the tribe of the people of Asher a chief, Ahihud the son of Shelomi. ²⁸ Of the tribe of the people of Naphtali a chief, Pedahel the son of Ammihud.” ²⁹ These are the men whom the LORD commanded to divide the inheritance for the people of Israel in the land of Canaan.”

So now you have the instructions related to the divisions of the land and who was going to be doing it, and it's very wise of the Lord to bring in a representative from every tribe to be part of that process, along with the high priest, the son of Aaron, and Joshua kind of leading the way.

Chapter 35. *“The LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, ² “Command the people of Israel to give to the Levites some of the inheritance of their possession as cities for them to dwell in. And you shall give to the Levites pasturelands around the cities.”*

Now that we've dealt with the division of the land for the people, we're going to deal with the divisions of land or the land allotted to the Levites because, again, they receive no inheritance. We've said that many, many times during our study.

And so, these people not only needed land to live on, but they needed pastureland on which to graze their flocks, which they received from the people of Israel through the sacrificial system and through the giving and tithes and that sort of thing. Obviously, they're not going to graze animals that have been sacrificed, but they were also given live animals in the tithes and offerings and that sort of thing. Anyway, that would have been a really strange picture indeed.

Verse 3, it says, *“The cities shall be theirs to dwell in, (And when it says cities, many of these places are just very, very small villages) and their pasturelands shall be for their cattle and for their livestock and for all their beasts. ⁴ The pasturelands of the cities, which you shall give to the Levites, shall reach from the wall of the city outward a thousand cubits all around. (And that's about 500 yards. Now that was apparently, in a larger city. And then it goes on to say) ⁵ And you shall measure, outside the city, on the east side two thousand cubits, and on the south side two thousand cubits, and on the west side two thousand cubits, and on the north side two thousand cubits, the city being in the middle. This shall belong to them as pastureland for their cities.”*

Apparently that's if the city was smaller. So, they stretched 2000 cubits in each direction. *“⁶ The cities that you give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, where you shall permit the manslayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities. ⁷ All the cities that you give to the Levites shall be forty-eight, with their pasturelands. ⁸ And as for the cities that you shall give from the possession of the people of Israel, from the larger tribes you shall take many, and from the smaller tribes you shall take few; each, in proportion to the inheritance that it inherits, shall give of its cities to the Levites.”*

⁹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, “When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ¹¹ then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there. ¹² The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the

congregation for judgment. ¹³ And the cities that you give shall be your six cities of refuge.”

Let me just remind you that these 6 cities, once again, were to be set aside in case someone was guilty of manslaughter, which means the death of an individual unintentionally. They could flee there so that they could not be killed by the avenger of blood. In other words, the person who would otherwise have the right to take their life because of their crime. But accidents happen. You're out working, and the head flies off your axe, hits your partner in the head, kills him or something like that. And all the family knows is he's dead. And so that would be a situation where it was a death, but it was unintentional.

So, these cities were set aside so that they could run there and spare their lives. Now we've dealt with this in other passages in the Scripture and we understand, we see God's grace, we see God's mercy, we see God's justice. We see that God is providing an element of protection for people who, by no intent, precipitated in the death of another individual. That's not what this chapter is about. We're going to see at the end of this chapter what He's getting at, why He's setting aside these cities of refuge, okay? But bear with me for a minute because there is a much deeper, I think, more important theological point that is going to be made here related to this thing.

Verse 14. *“You shall give three cities beyond the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan, to be cities of refuge. ¹⁵ These six cities shall be for refuge for the people of Israel, and for the stranger and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills any person without intent may flee there. ¹⁶ “But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. ¹⁷ And if he struck him down with a stone tool that could cause death, and he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death.*

¹⁸ Or if he struck him down with a wooden tool that could cause death, and he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. ¹⁹ The avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. ²⁰ And if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him, lying in wait, so that he died, ²¹ or in enmity struck him down with his hand, so that he died, then he who struck the blow shall be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

²² “But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or hurled anything on him without lying in wait ²³ or used a stone that could cause death, and without

seeing him dropped it on him, so that he died, though he was not his enemy and did not seek his harm, ²⁴ then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these rules.” So, there was almost like a jury that would enter into the process of deciding whether or not this was intentional.

“²⁵ And the congregation shall rescue the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he had fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.

²⁶ But if the manslayer shall at any time go beyond the boundaries of his city of refuge to which he fled, ²⁷ and the avenger of blood finds him outside the boundaries of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, (He, now it's talking about the avenger) he shall not be guilty of blood. ²⁸ For he must remain 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 for a statute and rule for you throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. ³⁰ “If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.”

This is a wonderful, I think this is one of the most insightful sorts of little statements that's made in God's Word. And this is something the Jews really did their best to follow. Things need to be established by the testimony of two or more witnesses. And if it was simply one man's word against another, you could not charge them with a crime. Now they didn't have things like we have today. They didn't have DNA evidence, which is pretty amazing. Doesn't mean it's perfect and flawless, but it's compelling. We have other kinds of evidence. We have ballistic evidence and, but basically, they had eyewitness evidence and that was essentially what they had to go on.

And so, God set a rule, and He said, listen, two or more witnesses. You'll remember when they had Jesus in that mock trial that He was going through. They couldn't even get two people to agree, and they went on and on with this thing, and people would get up and say something, and then somebody else, their story would be different, and they couldn't corroborate any of that testimony. So finally, the high priest just had to stand up and say, “Who are you? Do you claim to be the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One,” and so forth? Because they were looking to try to keep this rule of two or more witnesses.

Verse 31, *“Moreover, you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death. (In other words, he cannot pay to get off) ³² And you shall accept 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 high priest. ³³ You shall not pollute the land in which you live (Alright, here's where we're getting down to it guys. Look at, I want you to pay attention here now. Verse 33 and following. You shall not pollute the land in which you live) for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it. ³⁴ You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, (and here's the reason why) for I the LORD dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.”*

Alright, I want you to stop there for just a bit. The idea of polluting the land has this underlying theology that I wanted to make reference to, and I talked to you earlier as we were talking about the cities of refuge. We've talked about those before, and we've made the reference to the fact that that was God's grace, that was God's mercy, that was God's protection. But again, as I said, that's not the point of this chapter.

This chapter is the holiness of God. This chapter is, here I'm giving you these cities of refuge, so you don't pollute my land so that the avenger of blood doesn't just take it upon his hands to go and put somebody to death for a situation that they had absolutely no intention of doing.

That pollutes the land, and that's the point that He's saying here. God is saying here and elsewhere, we know in the Scripture, that murder pollutes the land. It's not only an offense against the sanctity of life. It's an actual pollutant, and that's really interesting for us to hear, to use that word because we're so accustomed to hearing about pollutants thinking environmentally, and by the way, we shouldn't pollute the environment. I'm all for that. But what we're seeing here is that there is something that God sees that perhaps is worse.

You'll remember in Genesis chapter 4, after Cain slew his brother with no one around except the Lord saw it. The Lord confronted Cain with what he did, and He said, “The ground screams out with your brother's blood.” In other words, the land has been polluted. Now, that was the very first murder. Imagine, since that time, how many murders have taken place on the stage of the world, and how many continue to take place on a daily basis? So, He says, through Moses here, the land cannot be atoned any way but by the blood of those who shed it. That's an interesting sort of a comment, isn't it?

Especially, in light of the fact that here in the United States we've pretty much all but gotten rid of capital punishment. More and more states are eliminating the idea of capital punishment and the shedding of blood for the shedding of blood. And yet God says, the only way that the land can be atoned for is by the shedding of blood. And you think to yourself, how in the world? It's interesting that the writer of Hebrews covers this. Let me show you a passage from Hebrews chapter 12. It says,

Hebrews 12:24 (ESV)

...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Isn't that an interesting passage? The point, again, of this whole chapter is not just that there are cities for the Levites to live in or just that these cities have become sanctuaries for those who commit accidental death and where they can find refuge. The theology of this chapter finds its final conclusion in the statement at the end of verse 34 where God says, "I, the Lord, dwell in the midst of the people of Israel." That is the point. If God is to dwell among His people, the land may not be polluted, right? Here we become aware of a pollutant that the world doesn't even talk about that is every bit as dangerous, perhaps more dangerous, than polluting the environment.

Chapter 36. The final chapter here of Numbers is an addendum to an issue that arose in an earlier chapter. You'll remember that there was a group of daughters who had approached Moses and explained the fact that their father never had any boys. He only had girls. Don't know what he was thinking. And so, they argued to Moses basically saying our father I mean he died for his own sins. He wasn't involved in any rebellious activity beyond just being full of unbelief at Kadesh Barnea 40 years ago, but he died and doesn't have any boys. So, what allotment is our father going to receive?

And doesn't he have a right to receive land in the promised land even though he only has daughters? Shouldn't those daughters be able to inherit land? Now, again, this was unheard of in that day and age. But you'll remember that Moses took it to the Lord and the Lord said yeah, absolutely. If a man does not have any daughters excuse me, sons, his daughters should then inherit the land that would have otherwise gone to his boys. And so, they were like oh, okay, well, the Lord has directed us on this, and that's the way it's going to be. But that

decision brought up an issue that needed some further clarification as often they do.

What if those daughters decided to marry men who are outside of their tribe? So, they inherit land in the tribe in which they live, and then they marry a man who is of a different tribe and the land comes with them because it's part of their inheritance. And now that land migrates to another tribe, and that tribal division now has more land than they were originally to be given. So, here's how they dealt with it.

“The heads of the fathers' houses of the clan of the people of Gilead the son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the clans of the people of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the chiefs, the heads of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel. ² They said, “The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the people of Israel, and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters.

³ But if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the people of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. So, it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance. ⁴ And when the jubilee of the people of Israel comes, (And that came every fifty years) then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry, because land that was given by an inheritance did not go back to, it was not to change hands) and their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.”

So that's their complaint. They weren't complaining about the decision that had been made to give land to daughters, they were complaining about the integrity of that land if it were to transfer to another tribe.

⁵ “And Moses commanded the people of Israel (look at this) according to the word of the LORD, (So he went before God to get a word on this) saying, “The tribe of the people of Joseph is right. ⁶ This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad: ‘Let them marry whom they think best, only they shall marry within the clan of the tribe of their father.’”

What that means is they have to just marry within their tribe. Now, that would be, they still have thousands, tens of thousands of people, guys to choose from in that tribe. So, it's not like they're limiting them to like four or five guys. Pick one, you've got to be happy with them because you got this land thing.

Verse 7 says, *“The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another, for every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.⁸ And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the people of Israel shall be wife to one of the clan of the tribe of her father, so that every one of the people of Israel may possess the inheritance of his fathers.”*

Now, I assume that this isn't an absolute prohibition against a woman marrying outside her tribe. She just would have to give up the land in that case. It would just have to go back to a family member, closest family member, one of her sisters. Maybe one of her cousins if there wasn't another sister, an uncle, that sort of thing. So again, if she wants to keep the land that was given by inheritance, she has to marry within her tribe. The assumption here is if she marries outside of her tribe, she's just going to have to relinquish the land, the inherited land.

Verse 10 says, *“The daughters of Zelophehad did as the LORD commanded Moses,¹¹ for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to sons of their father's brothers.”*

It doesn't, it's unsure whether they were already married to men within their tribe, or if they went ahead and complied and married men within their father's tribe. If they were already married, I'm sure they would have been very happy with that ruling.

*“¹² They were married into the clans of the people of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan.
¹³ These are the commandments and the rules that the LORD commanded through Moses to the people of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.”*

And with that, we finish the Book of Numbers.