

Week 10

March 5 - March 11

Numbers 19-36

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We are often guilty of letting our human reasoning try to evaluate God's decisions. As we read the next few days of God's detailed plans for Israel, His purpose in discipline, and His motives for rules, we will come to understand the futility in trying to outguess God. Instead we should take great pleasure in our God who has a perfect perspective.

March 5th

Numbers 19-21. "Rationalizing"

Is that fair? Moses has been antagonized by these people for 39 years. He has just buried his sister, Miriam. All he does is hit a rock to silence the complaints, and next... Moses is in serious trouble. His punishment meant he would not enter the Promised Land.

Isn't that the way we often read this passage? Don't we often try to justify the situation? In actuality, we may not fully understand the situation.

In this instance, Moses was the leader, and example. Moses was also told by God exactly what to do. "Take the staff"—most likely the budding staff of Aaron the priest from the Ark of the Covenant. "Command the rock"—which even the word for "rock" is different than the one used in the Exodus 17 passage (where striking the rock was what God wanted).

The emphasis of Exodus 17 was judgment, foreshadowing the smitten Christ on the cross. The emphasis of Numbers 20 was on priestly work, foreshadowing the exalted Christ.

May we take following the determined commands of God's seriously.



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March 6th

Numbers 22-24. "Your Treasure Is Where Your Heart Is"

In today's passage Balaam looks pretty good on the outside. However, we are reminded that "the heart reflects the person" (Prov. 27:19).

As we continue reading Scripture, we find that Balaam's heart was far from right. Balaam was guilty of leading others astray (2 Pet. 2:14-15), and willing to do anything for money (Jude 11), and responsible for tripping up others to sin (Rev. 2:14).

In the very next chapter, 25, we will read of how Moab seduced Israel to defile themselves before God. Apparently, this was the result of Balaam's suggestion. When we get to chapter 31, we will see that not only did Balaam advise Moab of this, but he also moved into Moab. Balaam took allegiance with the enemies of God's people, and died at God's hand there as well.

Balaam knew God's power and even heard His voice. Yet, his heart did not yield. His heart was not softened toward the God he heard. The only personal changes Balaam was ready to make were those that would expand his pocketbook. What's in your heart?

March 7th

Numbers 25-26. "Counted with Whom"

Perhaps it's a baseball cap, sweatshirt, bumper sticker, or something else we utilize that gives evidence to the fact that we are identified with the winning team. We love to be part of the winning team.

If you can only be counted with one group which one will it be? Therein lies the conundrum. Human nature, being what it is, generally would prefer to be counted with each popular group. Yet that's not possible.

Do you want to be numbered with God's elect? It will mean persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). It will mean being disliked by the world (Matt. 10:22; John 15:18; 17:14).

Yet, because of the hope eternity holds for us, as well as the outstanding benefits even now, such as peace and contentment, we would still choose to be counted with God's elect.

Conversely, here is an amazing thought: because of Christ's love for us "He was counted among those who were rebels" (Luke 22:37). Unjustly (yet prophetically—Isa. 53:12), in order for us to be counted with Him, Christ was identified as the One crucified between the transgressors taking on our sins.

March 8th

Numbers 27-29. "Grandma's Fudge"

Try to recall one of your favorite aromas. It has to be a smell that was more than just sweet, but also comforting. For me it was Grandma's fudge.

Grandma made the best fudge, which we would drizzle on our vanilla ice cream (actually I would make every attempt to drown my ice cream in her fudge). When my brothers, sister, and I would smell Grandma's fudge on the stove we knew something special was coming. And, it was more than just the wonderful fudge; it was Grandma showing us her love.

Today's passage describes regular offerings to the Lord. Yet, a phrase that appears in nearly every paragraph is that it would be "very pleasing to the LORD." In the Hebrew this phrase conjures up the description of something pleasant, delightful, sweet, and yet also comforting, or restful. Meaning, this is more than something that smells good, it creates an emotion of satisfaction.

Now, apply this to our worship of our Lord. In order to be very pleasing it must be genuine, sincere, deliberate, careful, acceptable, appropriate, and transparent.

March 9th

Numbers 30-31. "Pinky Swear"

Do you ever remember a day when your childhood friends made you cross your heart, and then make sure your fingers weren't crossed, and then they would finally believe your words were true?

Some grown-ups apparently need the same prodding. Jesus condemned the Pharisees of declaring their pledge wasn't good if they swore by the Temple and not by the gold in the Temple, or if they swore by the altar instead of by the gift on the altar (Matt. 23:16-18).

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount He directs us to forget swearing "by God" or "by Heaven" or whatever else, but instead just let your "Yes" and "No" be enough (Matt. 5:33-37).

God knows the damage broken promises can bring. We see it every day; broken marriage vows, broken pledges of purity, broken financial oaths, and broken promises. God wants us to avoid unnecessary pain in our personal life, in our family life, in our church, or our business, by being people of our word.

We can rest in the fact that God keeps His promises and His Word is truth.

March 10th

Numbers 32-33. "God and Me"

My parents still live in the same home I grew up in. My children will not be able to say the same thing. We have moved several times, but nothing compared to the list in chapter 33. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness from place to place to place. From verses 5-49 a variety of locations are listed. Yet, what caught my eye most was the word in verse four and verse 50; "LORD."

Before and after: they were surrounded by the LORD's presence. In all their moves the LORD was with them. I can say the same thing with confidence. Some of our moves have taken us far from family. Some of our moves have taken us into difficult situations. Yet, in every move God has been with us, clearly.

The thought is not as shocking as it is humbling. Because of God's power I know it would not be challenging at all for Him to be with me. But because of His love He wants to be with me.

March 11th

Numbers 34-36. "God's View"

Envision the most analytical person you know (it may be you—it's not me). Everything has a place and everything is in its place. Everything is planned out and scheduled right down to the minute.

The chapters today remind us that God had things extremely planned out. God was meticulously concerned with and involved in the distribution of the Promised Land. God had specific instructions as to where the boundaries would be; what the portions would look like; how certain cities would function; and what property rules would entail.

Our God has not changed over the years. God has a plan for us as He did for Israel. It is good to be the child of a God who has a plan, free from chaos and coincidence.

It's reassuring to read words like; "I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD" (Jer. 29:11); "You chart the path ahead of me" (Ps. 139:3); "the LORD determines our steps" (Prov. 16:9).

God's perspective is as far as the heavens are from the earth different than ours (Is. 55:9).

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

Can you know God's Word, hear God's voice and still be off track?

What led Moses off course (Numbers 20)?

What led Balaam away from a personal relationship with God?

Numbers 22:20, God says, "Go", and yet verse 22 says, "God was furious that Balaam was going". Why?

Without trying to sound too "churchy", what can motivate you? (money, status, etc.)

If we want our worship to Him to be a very pleasing sweet aroma, then what must our worship be like?

How does knowing God has a plan and purpose for everything effect your life on a day-to-day basis?

List the good and bad to not knowing God's plan for your life.

Personal application: Is faith the only thing that tells you God is always with you?