

Numbers 30 Bible Study Notes

1 And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We saw in Numbers 29 verse 39 that God mentioned to Moses about vows and other sacrifices. Since sacrifices have already been addressed, in this chapter, we see the instructions about vows.

We note that Moses is passing the instruction about vows to the heads of the tribes of Israel, who in turn would pass these things down to those under them so that all Israel would know "thus saith the Lord". This was probably the way most of these instructions were handled as God gave them to Moses, so that all Israel would know what was expected of them, from God.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: The case supposed is that a person vows a vow unto the Lord, making God a party to the promise, and designing his honour and glory in it. The matter of the vow is supposed to be something lawful: no man can be by his own promise bound to do that which he is already by the divine precept prohibited from doing. Yet it is supposed to be something which, in such and such measures and degrees, was not a necessary duty antecedent to the vow. A person might vow to bring such and such sacrifices at certain times, to give such and such a sum or such a proportion in alms, to forbear such meats and drinks which the law allowed, to fast and afflict the soul (which is specified Nu 30:13) at other times besides the day of atonement. And many similar vows might be made in an extraordinary heat of holy zeal, in humiliation for some sin committed or for the prevention of sin, in the pursuit of some mercy desired or in gratitude for some mercy received. It is of great use to make such vows as these, provided they be made in sincerity with due caution. Vows (say the Jewish doctors) are the hedge of separation, that is, a fence to religion. He that vows is here said to bind his soul with a bond. It is a vow to God, who is a spirit, and to him the soul, with all its powers, must be bound. A promise to man is a bond upon the estate, but a promise to God is a bond upon the soul. Our sacramental vows, by which we are bound to no more than what was before our duty, and which neither father nor husband can disannul, are bonds upon the soul, and by them we must feel ourselves bound out from all sin and bound up to the whole will of God. Our occasional vows concerning that which before was in our own power (Ac 5:4), when they are made, are bonds upon the soul likewise.

The command given is that these vows be conscientiously performed: He shall not break his word, though afterwards he may change his mind, but he shall do according to what he has said. Margin, He shall not profane his word. Vowing is an ordinance of God; if we vow in hypocrisy we profane that ordinance: it is plainly determined, Better not vow than vow and not pay, Ec 5:5. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. His promises to us are yea and amen, let not ours to him be yea and nay.

2 If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: The definition of vow is: to promise to do or give something to God. This definition, and commandment, tells us that when we promise to God, not to man, to do something (anything that is lawful and not sinful) we are to follow through. This is carried forward in scripture in many references and contexts; here is one:

Ec 5:4-5; 4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. 5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. King Solomon tells us the same thing that is conveyed here, with the additional note that declares; a person that vows and doesn't fulfill his vow is a fool. We all know that a fool is one who denies the existence of God. To not pay your vow is to say the same thing as there is

not God. Thus we see the reason God here is again iterating the need to be faithful in all we do and say to God.

We shall see that this precept applies equally to men and women, with the few exceptions noted in the chapter. I would add, God is sinless and holy and pure and will not accept or honor a vow that is of ungodly or sinful sort. In other words; if you made a vow to do something that was a sin, God would not expect you to fulfill such a vow. Actually, if you made such a vow it would indicate that you were not a child of God. How can we say that? Let's see what scripture says: **1Jo 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**

So what are some things a person might or might not make a vow about?

3 If a woman also vow a vow unto the LORD, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth; 4 And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand. 5 But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the LORD shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.

We see an exception to the vow for the women in that if she is in her youth, and if her father hears her making her vow.

Adam Clarke's Commentary: In her youth; That is, say the rabbins, under twelve years of age; and under thirteen in case of a young man. Young persons of this age were considered to be under the authority of their parents, and had consequently no power to vow away the property of another. A married woman was in the same circumstances, because she was under the authority of her husband. If however the parents or the husband heard of the vow, and objected to it in the same day in which they heard of it, (Nu 30:5,) then the vow was annulled; or, if having heard of it, they held their peace, this was considered a ratification of the vow.

A rash vow was never to be kept; "for," says Philo, and common sense and justice say the same, "he who commits an unjust action because of his vow adds one crime to another, 1. By making an unlawful vow; 2. By doing an unlawful action."

6 And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; 7 And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. 8 But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the LORD shall forgive her.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: The next exception is for a married woman, who makes a vow and her husband hears it. If he annuls it, it is voided; if he doesn't then the vow stands.

9 But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her. 10 And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath; 11 And her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand. 12 But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard them; then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void; and the LORD shall forgive her. 13 Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void. 14 But if her husband

altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them. 15 But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity. 16 These are the statutes, which the LORD commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, between the father and his daughter, being yet in her youth in her father's house.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: The next exception is for a widow woman, who, if she makes a vow before her husband dies and her husband hears it. If he annuls it, it is voided; if he doesn't then the vow stands. However, if she makes a vow after she is widowed, after her husband is dead, then she is held to the vow.

Summary of chapters 28, 29, 30: The repetition of the commandments. We see that Israel needed a lot of reminders and they still failed many times. As we consider this and the reminders being given to the new generation, we see a comparable need for today. Think about New Testament scripture and how often we see the same things repeated.

We have the same need as Israel had here in the Old Testament. We need to be reminded of the commandments, and the great exploits of salvation in our own lives, just as Israel did in the Old Testament.

We could add to this; each time a new believer is added to the church, there is a need to review all the basic things that God has laid out for his people to do.

There is the continual need to be reminded that our salvation is a great work of Exodus in our lives and we don't want to go back to Egypt.

There is the great need to be reminded; if we are obedient to God and his commandments, we don't have to go die in the wilderness away from the Promised Land. Actually, we should realize that all of our born again life we are on a wilderness journey. The comparison to the wilderness journey of the children of Israel is: we can do like them and choose not to enter into the Promised Land, the church, and thereby confirm to ourselves a life of wilderness journey and death without enjoying the fruits of the land flowing with milk and honey.

This is why we find in New Testament scripture:

Eph 5:14-21 14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. 15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. 18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; 19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

Col 3:14-17 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Jude 1:20-25 20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, 21 Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23 And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. 24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

As we see in all these references there is the constant need to support one another in our pilgrimage here in time as Children of God.

Praise the Lord for the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and souls.

Praise the Lord for Christian love.

Praise the Lord for the great saving love of our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

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