

Numbers 32 Bible Study Notes

1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle; 2 The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and unto the princes of the congregation, saying, 3 Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon, 4 Even the country which the LORD smote before the congregation of Israel, is a land for cattle, and thy servants have cattle: 5 Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see here again that the people still do not want to be completely obedient to God. They are not trusting fully in God and the lust of the flesh has got them hooked on what the eye can see at present.

We shall see later on in scripture where this request to disobey God, not enter into the Promised Land and inherit their possession there, will come back to haunt them. They shall have continual warfare and trouble from the neighboring peoples, while their brethren in the Promised Land have peace.

The lesson for us is to be completely submissive to God's will, enter into the rest God and Christ has prepared for us, and not let our own lust lead us into trouble.

6 And Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? 7 And wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the LORD hath given them?

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Moses quickly, and rightly, points out that all of Israel has warred to remove the enemies of Israel from this land you are lustng after. Next Moses ask them; if it would be right for them to remain this side Jordan, in occupation that their brethren fought for, and them not go over Jordan and fight with their brethren, as they strive for their possession in the Promised Land.

8 Thus did your fathers, when I sent them from Kadeshbarnea to see the land. 9 For when they went up unto the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which the LORD had given them.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Moses reminds them; the reason they have wandered in the wilderness for 40 years is the sin of their fathers in not obeying the Lord. They sent spies into the Promised Land and doubted the power of God to deliver the land to them. They discouraged the people and caused them to disobey God. They refused to enter into the Land that God Promised to deliver to them and God spent the next 40 years punishing them for this disobedience.

The situation here is the same; then they could see the Promised Land and here they can see the Promised Land. In both cases all they had to do was look over the river Jordan and see it.

10 And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying, 11 Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: 12 Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Moses reminds them; because of the disobedience of Israel, the first time he told them to go in and possess the land, all that generation have died except Caleb and Joshua, who both encouraged the people to believe God and enter the Promised Land.

13 And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed. 14 And, behold, ye are risen up in your fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the LORD toward Israel.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Moses says to them; you all know this, and yet ye would turn away and not be obedient to God. You are committing the same sin your fathers did. God will have the same anger toward you as he did to your fathers.

15 For if ye turn away from after him, he will yet again leave them in the wilderness; and ye shall destroy all this people.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Moses says; if you do this great sin; God will destroy this whole nation of people.

16 And they came near unto him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle, and cities for our little ones: 17 But we ourselves will go ready armed before the children of Israel, until we have brought them unto their place: and our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

Adam Clarke's Commentary: Verse 17. *Because of the inhabitants of the land.] These were the Ammonites, Moabites, Idumeans, and the remains of the Midianites and Amorites. But could the women and children even keep the defensed cities, when placed in them? This certainly cannot be supposed possible. Many of the men of war must of course stay behind. In the last census, chap. xxvi., the tribe of Reuben consisted of 43,730 men; the tribe of Gad, 40,500; the tribe of Manasseh, 52,700; the half of which is 26,350. Add this to the sum of the other two tribes, and the amount is 110,580. Now from Jos 4:13 we learn that of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half of the tribe of Manasseh, only 40,000 armed men passed over Jordan to assist their brethren in the reduction of the land: consequently the number of 70,580 men were left behind for the defence of the women, the children, and the flocks. This was more than sufficient to defend them against a people already panic struck by their late discomfitures and reverses.*

18 We will not return unto our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance. 19 For we will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan, or forward; because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan eastward.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Then "The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spake unto Moses" and declared that we will go over and fight with our brethren. We will leave our families and flocks here, in a defensible position, and we will go and fight with Israel till they gain the full possession of the Promised Land.

20 And Moses said unto them, If ye will do this thing, if ye will go armed before the LORD to war, 21 And will go all of you armed over Jordan before the LORD, until he hath driven out his enemies from before him, 22 And the land be subdued before the LORD: then afterward ye shall return, and be guiltless before the LORD, and before Israel; and this land shall be your possession before the LORD. 23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out. 24 Build you cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which hath proceeded out of your mouth.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Moses tells them; if they do all they have promised to do, they can come back and possess this land, and not be guilty of discouraging Israel.

25 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben spake unto Moses, saying, Thy servants will do as my lord commandeth. 26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our cattle, shall be there in the cities of Gilead: 27 But thy servants will pass over, every man armed for war, before the LORD to battle, as my lord saith. 28 So concerning them Moses commanded Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the chief fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel: 29 And Moses said unto them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over Jordan, every man armed to battle, before the LORD, and the land shall be subdued before you; then ye shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession: 30 But if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan. 31 And the children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered, saying, As the LORD hath said unto thy servants, so will we do. 32 We will pass over armed before the LORD into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours. 33 And Moses gave unto them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and unto half the tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country round about. 34 And the children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer, 35 And Atroth, Shophan, and Jaazer, and Jogbehah, 36 And Bethnimrah, and Bethharan, fenced cities: and folds for sheep. 37 And the children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kirjathaim, 38 And Nebo, and Baalmeon, (their names being changed,) and Shibmah: and gave other names unto the cities which they builded. 39 And the children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead, and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it. 40 And Moses gave Gilead unto Machir the son of Manasseh; and he dwelt therein. 41 And Jair the son of Manasseh went and took the small towns thereof, and called them Havothjair.

Adam Clarke's Commentary: Verse 41. As these two tribes and a half were the first, says Ainsworth, who had their inheritance assigned to them in the promised land, so they were the first of all Israel that were carried captive out of their own land, because of their sins. "For they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after other gods. And God delivered them into the hands of Pul and Tiglathpilesar, kings of Assyria, and they brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and Gozan, unto this day." See 1Ch 5:25,26.

42 And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: One thing I will point out is that we don't have in this chapter a "**thus saith the Lord**" It seems that Moses took upon himself to grant the request without consulting the Lord. I don't believe that God is pleased with this arrangement, though he is going to allow it as he has allowed his people to go their own way many times. However, the end result is not good. We find that these tribes were taken captive and carried away by the Assyrians long before the rest of Israel that went into the Promised Land. See the scripture in: **2Ki 15:29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglathpileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abelbethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.**

These named places are the same lands of occupation as the 2-1/2 tribes possessed this side Jordan.

As I read this chapter I see that there is still disobedience in Israel against God. We see that the ones that desire a possession on this side Jordan, not in the Promised Land, are actually yielding to fleshly lust and saying to God, by so doing, we don't want what you have promised us, this is good enough for us here and we will just stay here and enjoy this place.

As I consider this thought; I think of our own pilgrimage in this life and wonder; how many times have I done the same thing in my life? How many times have I thought "this is good for me here"

and not really sought to please the Lord, or even inquire of him; is this what you have promised me?
Am I where you would have me to be? Or, am I where I want to be?

Certainly we see a principle here that should teach us to seek and desire to do what God wants us to do and not our own will.

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