

Numbers

For our admonition. I Corinthians 10:11

13 March 2024

Lesson: 22

Numbers 31

Preparing to Enter the Promised Land

Once again, the main outline is from the Open Bible, slightly edited.

Victory over Midian

Destruction of the Midianites (v.1-12)

God commanded Moses to destroy the Midianites for the evils they had done to Israel (v.1-2). God told him to take 1,000 men from every tribe (12,000 total) (v.3-5).

Note that Phinehas the priest went to war with the soldiers with holy instruments and the trumpets in his hand. Commentator Matthew Poole gives three possible explanations for *The Holy Instruments*. Some think it may have been the Ark (if they had not yet put it in the tabernacle), or the trumpets (it could read, the holy instruments that is, the trumpets), or the holy breastplate, wherein was the Urim and Thummim. Whatever these were, they represented God's presence and power.

In the battle, they killed all the males of Midian (v.7). This included five kings and Balaam (v.8). They captured all the women, children, and animals as spoil (v.9). They took all the spoil to Moses and Eleazar (v.11-12).

Moses' Rebuke for saving the Women (v.13-18)

When Moses saw all of the women captives, he was angry. He reminded them of the moral sins that the Midianite women had committed with Israelite men which caused God to plague them (v.16).

He commanded them to kill every man child and every woman who was no longer a virgin (v.17-18). This seems cruel, but those people were wickedly immoral, and idol-worshippers and God did not want His people to partake of their sins.

Purification of the Soldiers (v.19-24)

Every soldier who had killed a person or had touched a dead body must remain outside the camp for seven days. They had to purify their clothes and all things made of skin, hair, or wood.

Of the spoils, the gold, silver, brass, iron, tin and lead (things that would not burn), had to go through a fire to purify them. Then they had to purify it with the water of separation. The water of separation may have been the holy water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer, though some believe it was just water. Burnable things had to pass through the water.

Once again, they had to wash their clothing and then they could return to the camp (v.24).

Distribution of the Spoils (35-47)

God commanded that they divide the spoils into two parts. One part was for the fighting soldiers and the other was for the people who did not go into battle (v.27).

God required a levy from the soldiers consisting of one of five hundred (1/500) of all the virgin girls, and all the animals. These were to be given to Eleazar the priest (v.29).

God also required a levy from the congregation. They must give one of fifty (1/50) of all the virgin girls, and all the animals. This was to be given to the Levites (v.30).

The totals of the spoils were as follows:

Spoil	Total	Soldier	S. Levy	People	P. Levy
Sheep	675,000	337,500	675	337,500	6,750
Oxen	72,000	36,000	72	36,000	720
Asses	61,000	30,500	61	30,500	610
Virgins	32,000	16,000	32	16,000	320

Gift from the Soldiers (v.48-54)

The soldiers came to Moses and reported that not one of them had been killed in the battle. Therefore, they brought an oblation (i.e., gift, offering) to the Lord (v.50).

They gave of their treasures (v.50) and gave gold to the Lord weighing 16,750 shekels. Scholars say that a shekel was about .35 ounce. That is about 5862.5 ounces of gold. At today's prices gold is worth about \$3,271.01 AUD per ounce. That is \$19,176,296.

Moses accepted the gold and took it into the tabernacle as a memorial.

Principles for Us Today

For Christians to live lives separate from sin is a high priority in God's sight. He is not asking us to kill all the pagans around us, but we must not live our lives like them. (2 Corinthians 6:17)

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." As a whole, Christians are not doing a very good job of this.

The levy given is a reminder to us to tithe on income God gives us.

The generous gift of the soldiers reminds us to be truly grateful for God's protection and to express that to Him in our giving.