

2018 BIBLE TALKS—UNVEILING NUMBERS

Session 3

The Fighting of God's People

Hymns, #894

- 1 Will you be an overcomer?
Christ is calling now!
Will you then be such a follower,
Though you know not how?

Will you be an overcomer?
Will you make this choice?
Christ is calling, Christ is calling,
Listen to His voice!
- 2 Will you be an overcomer?
To the Lord be drawn!
Keep the "first love," never leave it,
Till the break of dawn.
- 3 Will you be an overcomer?
On His life depend!
Dare to suffer persecution,
Faithful to the end.
- 4 Will you be an overcomer?
Testimony bear!
Keep away from false religion,
"Hidden manna" share.
- 5 Will you be an overcomer,
Simple, real, and pure?
Overcome all evil mixture,
Ruling pow'r secure.
- 6 Will you be an overcomer?
Trust the living Lord!
Keep your "garments" from the deadness,
Win the life-reward.
- 7 Will you be an overcomer?
Never lukewarm be,
Ne'er content with what you've gotten,
More you need to see.
- 8 Will you be an overcomer?
Christ is calling still!
Will you now be loyal to Him,
His demand fulfill.

Scripture Reading: Num. 21:1-3; Num. 21—32:42; 33:50—36:13; Eph. 3:8; 6:12

Num. 21:3 And Jehovah listened to the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites, and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. Thus the name of the place was called Hormah.

31:1-3 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Thoroughly avenge the children of Israel on the Midianites; afterward you will be gathered to your people. And Moses spoke to the people, saying, Arm men from among you for the war, that they may come upon Midian to execute Jehovah's vengeance on Midian.

31:7-8 And they warred against Midian, just as Jehovah had commanded Moses; and they killed every male. And they killed the kings of Midian in addition to the others slain among them: Evi and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian; also Balaam the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

I. The fighting of the children of Israel against the Canaanites to possess and enjoy the good land typifies the spiritual warfare of the church as a whole, including all the members, against “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies” (Eph. 6:12) that the saints may enjoy Christ as the all-inclusive land—Num. 21:1-3; 21:21—32:42; 33:50—36:13:

- A. The kings of Arad, of the Amorites (v. 21), and of Bashan (v. 33) were the “gate guards” on the east of the Jordan, guarding the land of Canaan, the kingdom of darkness, for Satan; in order for the children of Israel to enter into the good land, they had to pass through the territory controlled by these kings and had to fight against them, destroy them, and take over their territory; this signifies that in order to enjoy the unsearchably rich Christ, the church must defeat and take over the territory of the enemies signified by these kings—21:21-32.
- B. The church must be such a corporate warrior, fighting against Satan's aerial forces so that God's people may gain more of Christ for the building up of the Body of Christ, establishing and spreading the kingdom of God so that Christ can come back to inherit the earth.

II. Balak, the King of Moab, joined with Midian, and they sent their elders to induce Balaam to come and curse Israel for them—22:1—25:18:

- A. The enemy changed not only his way of fighting but also his mode of fighting; realizing that he could not defeat Israel militarily or politically, Balak decided to take the religious way—22:1-40.
- B. Israel fell in fornication and idolatry—25:1-18:
 - 1. This iniquity comprises two ugly things: fornication and idolatry; according to the record of the Bible, fornication and idolatry go together; where there is fornication, there is idolatry.
 - 2. The plague was a purification of God's people, a sifting that dealt with the mixture among them.

- III. After the plague Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, Take the sum of the whole assembly of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, by their fathers' households, all who are able to go forth for military service in Israel—26:1-65:**
- A. Among all those who were included in the second numbering, none had been in the first numbering, except Caleb and Joshua.
 - B. This younger generation had received the benefit of all that the first generation had experienced; with a rich inheritance and strong background, they were qualified to be formed into an army to fight with God and for God for the accomplishing of His economy.
 - C. The renumbering took place in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho (vv. 3, 63), i.e., at the entrance to the good land; the first numbering was for the formation of the army (1:3); the renumbering was for the inheriting of the land.
- IV. By ensnaring the sons of Israel in fornication and idolatry, the Midianites offended Israel to the uttermost, with the result that more than twenty thousand lives were lost; God would not forget that, and He charged Moses to avenge Israel on the Midianites—31:1-54.**
- V. The prearrangement of the distribution of the good land shown in the last five chapters of Numbers typifies the sharing of the enjoyment of the rich Christ—32:1-42; 33:50—36:13; Deut. 8:7, footnote 1:**
- A. The distributing of the land by lot (vv. 55-56) was according to the blessing under God's sovereignty (see note 2¹ in Josh. 14), whereas the distributing of the land according to the number of people (vv. 53-54) was a matter of human responsibility; therefore, the distribution of the land depended both on human responsibility and on divine sovereignty.
 - B. The request of the two tribes, Reuben and Gad, to receive what God had promised (vv. 1-5) was not wrong; however, they were not right in wanting to receive this according to their choice as to what was the best; in spiritual matters it is much better not to act according to our choice but to leave matters in the hand of the Lord and let Him act according to His choice (cf. Gen. 13:5-18).
 - C. After driving out the devilish inhabitants of the land, they were to destroy all the idols and high places, the places where the idols were worshipped; only then would they be qualified to take possession of the land and enjoy it—Num. 33:51-53.
 - D. "And the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to; and besides them you shall give forty-two cities"—35:6; 35:1-34.
 - 1. The forty-eight cities given to the Levites were to be scattered among Israel, changing Jacob's curse on Levi in Genesis 49:7 into a blessing.
 - 2. That the cities of refuge were to be not only for the children of Israel but also for the strangers and sojourners among them signifies that the Triune

God as the refuge for mistake-making man is for all mankind; spiritually, the Old Testament saints had to remain in the city of refuge until Christ died; since Christ, our High Priest, has died, He is the refuge, not in the Old Testament sense but in the New Testament sense, to all His believers; this refuge is a matter of direct salvation.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

During the past twenty-five years, we have stressed the fact that Canaan, the good land, is a type of Christ. Now we are saying that Canaan is a type of the kingdom of Satan, with its evil spirits. This may seem contradictory, but actually it is not. If we study the typology carefully, we will see that Canaan has two features. On the one hand, Canaan is a land of riches, as revealed in Deuteronomy 8. Using this portion of the Word as the basis, we released the messages that have been printed in the book *The All-inclusive Christ*. On the other hand, Canaan was a land full of evil persons and enemies, all of whom were to be eradicated by the children of Israel. This feature, or aspect, of Canaan signifies the most evil part of Satan's dark kingdom. As we consider these two features of Canaan, we see that whether or not we can enjoy Christ as the all-inclusive land depends on whether or not we defeat the enemies typified by the Canaanites. This indicates that the church as a whole, including all the members, should engage in the spiritual warfare revealed in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians is a book on the all-inclusive Christ. Ephesians 3:8 tells us that the riches of Christ are untraceable. In order to enjoy such a Christ, we need to fight against the spiritual enemies, against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12). We

must defeat and crush the enemies signified by the king of Arad, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan. We all need to keep in mind that the Canaanites typify the fallen angels, who have become the powers, rulers, and authorities in Satan's kingdom, and that a war is raging between these evil spirits and the church. The typology in Numbers 21 shows us how to fight in this war. The slaughtering of the gate guards in this chapter indicates our need to defeat the evil spirits in the kingdom of Satan. It is helpful to have this view as we now consider 21:1-3, 21-35. (*Life-study of Numbers*, msg. 32)

In Balaam's prophecies all the points concerning Israel are very positive. Immediately after these prophecies we have a chapter showing us what kind of people the children of Israel actually were according to their nature. God's view of Israel, revealed in Balaam's parables, is altogether positive. But the actual situation and condition of Israel were extremely negative. In actuality, the children of Israel were a people of fornication and idolatry.

The Bible presents a full record of the aspects and statuses of God's people, revealing what we are in Adam and what we are in Christ. Numbers 25 exposes what we are in our Adamic nature—people of

fornication and idolatry. According to our Adamic nature, we are worthy only of being slain and hanged in the sun. God is jealous, and His jealousy burns upon us. In His burning jealousy He will not spare anything of the Adamic nature.

Chapters twenty-two through twenty-five give us a clear view of Israel. In the sight of God, the people were heavenly, but according to their real nature, they were fallen and sinful. The situation is the same with the believers today. On the one hand, in Christ we are wonderful; on the other hand, in ourselves we are people of fornication and idolatry whose fate is to be judged by God. (*Life-study of Numbers*, msg. 36)

Since the history of Israel is a complete type of the church, the mixture among the children of Israel is a type of the mixture in the church. There will often be some kind of mixture in the church life. Even with the apostles chosen by the Lord Jesus there was one—Judas—who was not pure. Acts 5 indicates that, at the very beginning of the church life, there was mixture in the church in Jerusalem. The mixture there was with Ananias and Sapphira, who were genuine believers but were not pure. Furthermore, the last of the epistles written by Paul, 2 Timothy, has much to say concerning mixture. Some, like Alexander the coppersmith (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14-15), hated Paul and opposed him to the uttermost. Many of those in Asia who had been raised up by Paul turned away from his ministry (1:15), and Demas, a co-worker, because of his love for the present age, forsook Paul (4:10). The point here is that there is mixture among God's people, and God uses the failure and turmoil among His people to purify them. (*Life-study of*

Numbers, msg. 37)

Moses commanded that every male among the little ones and every woman who had been married should be killed (vv. 13-18). If we do not have a spiritual view of the situation, we might think that this command was cruel and inhuman. But if we do have a spiritual view, realizing that the Midianites typify the filthiness of the lust of the flesh, we will admit that Moses' command was proper. (*Life-study of Numbers*, msg. 44)

The rescued killer was to remain in the city of refuge and live in it until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil, and after the death of the high priest he could return to the land of his possession (vv. 25b-29). The high priest here signifies Christ, who died for our sins. The Old Testament saints like Abraham, David, and Isaiah remained, spiritually speaking, in the city of refuge until Christ died. This was a refuge prior to direct salvation. Since Christ, our High Priest, has died, He is our refuge, not in the Old Testament sense but in the New Testament sense. This refuge is a matter of direct salvation. Christ has died and has resurrected, and now we are in Him, not merely as a refuge in the Old Testament sense but as our direct salvation. Christ is both the refuge and the direct salvation. Before His death, He was the refuge for the Old Testament saints. But now, after His death, He is our direct salvation. (*Life-study of Numbers*, msg. 47)

The books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers portray in typology God's need for a people to be saved and to go on with Him to enjoy His Christ, to receive His revelation, and to be built up with Him as the processed Triune God, that they may be formed into a

priestly army to journey with Him and to fight with Him. These books also show that God's people need to be disciplined by passing through certain difficulties and undergoing different kinds of frustrations. In Exo. 12—14 Israel as God's people was redeemed from God's judgment by the passover and saved from Egypt by the saving power of the Triune God. Then, they enjoyed the heavenly provision and the divine care in their initial journey in the wilderness (Exo. 15—17). In Exo. 19—40 and Lev. 1—27 they received the divine revelation and training in knowing God, in being built up together with God as His dwelling on earth for His expression and testimony, and in the building up of the priesthood for the divine service. All this took place at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the people were given the law as a portrait of what God is in His attributes. The book of Numbers records how God's chosen and redeemed people were formed into a priestly army to journey with God and to fight with God for His interest on earth (chs. 1—4; 9:15—10:36; 12:16; 20:1—21:35; 31:1-54; 33:1-49). In Numbers the children of Israel also passed through various

frustrations, trials, and disciplinings for their purification. Eventually, in ch. 32 and in 33:50—36:13 God's people received the prearrangement for the distribution of the promised good land. After all the foregoing, God's chosen and redeemed people were ready to cross the Jordan, enter Canaan, consume its inhabitants, and possess the good land promised by the faithful God (Josh. 1:2-3). With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, those who were qualified to take possession of the land were the younger ones, the second generation of those who had come out of Egypt. This younger generation had received the benefit of all that the first generation had experienced. With a rich inheritance and strong background, they were qualified to be formed into an army to fight with God and for God for the accomplishing of His economy. This history of Israel is a full type of the history of the church in its accomplishing of God's eternal economy in the mystical union with the all-inclusive Christ, who is the embodiment of the processed and dispensing Triune God. (Num. 36:13, footnote 1, *Recovery Version*)

Questions:

1. To the Christians today, what is the spiritual significance of the children of Israel fighting to enter into the good land?
2. What revelation can we see from Balaam's prophecies?
3. What is the difference between the two instances of numbering and forming of the children of Israel into an army?