

Message #36

Numbers 34:1-29

As Israel was about to enter the Promised Land, God reminded her how He brought her out of Egypt and brought her to this land. He specifically pointed out 41 campsites where God had directed her in the previous 40 years.

After going through the massive list of campsites, God said this to Israel—"you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it" (Numbers 33:53). God has never said that to any other nation. But He certainly has said it to Israel. God has given the Promised Land to Israel. It is His to give and as one writer said, "no such title was ever granted to any people."

There is absolutely no question that God has specific land boundaries in mind for the nation Israel. We don't know all God has in store for us, but we do know what He has in store for Israel. Israel has a God-ordained and God-appointed right to the Promised Land and one day that land will be hers:

GOD HAS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNATED THAT ISRAEL IS TO LIVE IN THE PROMISED LAND AND HE HAS SET THE BOUNDARIES AND ESTABLISHED THE LEADERSHIP.

In **verses 1-2** we learn that the word of the Lord spoke to Moses and told him what to command Israel to do. They were going to cross the Jordan and enter the land of Canaan as the inheritance that God had given to them and when they got there, they were to divide the land in a very specific way.

Now the land looked intimidating and so did the people living in the land. Their new land is called the "land of Canaan." Now one thing that is very interesting here is that even though God has given Israel the land, He does not leave it to chance as to how things are to be organized. He is very specific in the way this is to go down.

Now there were no survey crews or scientific instruments to measure property boundaries. Today, boundaries are determined by using a theodolite measuring tape, 3-D scanners, tripods, GPS and Survey Tachymeter. This equipment was not available back then, so God would cite towns and geographical places where He wanted those boundaries.

This passage breaks down nicely into two main parts:

PART #1 – The land boundaries God establishes for Israel. **34:1-15**

Now the boundaries for the land may be divided into five geographical sections God gives Israel and us reference points where these boundaries are to be located. Since God is the One who determines these boundaries by His pure grace, there is no room for jealousy or envy.

What does God say to Israel and to us by these boundaries? Certainly one thing this teaches us is being where God wants us within the boundaries He has prescribed for us is far better than having no boundaries in the world.

Section #1 - The boundaries for land in the south. **34:3-5**

The southern boundary of the land of Canaan stretched from the wilderness of Zin and followed the border of Edom (located on the west side of the Arabah) east and northeast and then heads east to the southern end of the Dead Sea. Then it continues through the wilderness of Zin to the south of Kadesh and then turns northwest and follows to the Mediterranean Sea some 45 miles south of Gaza. This is a lot of territory in the south.

We may recall that when Israel was journeying to the land, she asked Edom if she could cross and Edom refused. But in that text God said this land was “on the edge of your territory” (Num. 20:16).

Today, this land, as near as I may determine, is controlled by Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. It certainly is not controlled by Israel.

Section #2 - The boundaries for the land in the west. **34:6**

The Mediterranean Sea is the western border. In other words, the entire coastline of the Mediterranean Sea is supposed to be the western boundary of the Promised Land. Now if you look at a modern map of the Middle East, you will quickly see it is not controlled by Israel. Israel has only a small portion of the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is controlled by Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

Section #3 - The boundaries for the land in the north. **34:7-9**

The north border draws a line from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Hor. We may recall that Mt. Hor was the place where Aaron was buried (Num. 20:22-29). There is to be a line drawn from Mt. Hor to Lebo-hamath, and the termination of the border shall be at Zedad; and the border shall proceed to Ziphron, and its termination at Hazar-enan. Lebo-hamath was the northernmost city scouted by the twelve spies (Num. 13:21).

Section #4 - The boundaries for the land in the east. **34:10-13**

The eastern boundary picks up where the northern boundary left off in **verse 9**, at Hazar-enan. Some of the boundaries include Shepham, Riblah on the east side of Ain. The border goes all the way south to the east side of the Sea of Chinnereth, to down to the Jordan and terminate at the Salt Sea.

Section #5 - The boundaries for the land for the Transjordan tribes. **34:14-15**

Now the land given to the Transjordan tribes starts east of Jericho and goes “eastward toward the sunrising” (**34:15**). We know that Israel is supposed to have the land all the way east to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18).

What is very obvious from this is that Israel to this very day has not taken possession of this land. She does not control this land today, which God says is her land. She does not control but a fraction of the land and most people don't even acknowledge it is her land. Most say it belongs to the Palestinians.

So what has happened? What has gone wrong?

PART #2 – The distribution of the land through the appointed leaders of Israel. **34:16-29**

Originally there had been 12 leaders that Moses used to help in the census, but this number is ten, who would be responsible for following the Word of God and distributing the land on the west side of the Jordan. Only ten tribes would live there, because two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad, would live east of the Jordan. So only ten were needed. Aaron is already dead and Moses is soon to die. So these new leaders would be under the authority of Joshua and Eleazar the priest.

This is a fascinating text because none of the men listed here are mentioned again in the Bible, with the exception of Caleb. But these men are mentioned.

These men apparently held a very important place of leadership at that particular time in history. These men were important and known and named by God and their role would be to lay a foundation that would be followed. Think of all of the successful and wealthy people who have lived and who did live at this time. They are not eternally remembered and recorded in the Word of God, but these ten were.

We may assume that they were faithful men to God and His Word at that point in history. We may also assume they possessed and demonstrated solid leadership skills and abilities.

At the beginning of the book of Numbers, Moses chose 12 leaders to assist him in taking the census. Here he appoints ten men to help Joshua and Eleazar divide the land. One thing is obvious from these verses and that is God wants us to know whose boys these were. He wants us to know who the father was.

It is interesting to note that the order of the listing of the tribes is new as this is a new beginning. The tribes are listed in approximately the geographical position in which they would settle the land from south to north.

The southern four tribes—Judah, Simeon, Benjamin and Dan are listed in **verses 19-22**.

The central two tribes of Joseph–Manasseh and Ephraim–are listed in **verses 23-24**. The northern tribes of Zebulun, Issachar, Asher and Naphtali are listed in **verses 25-28**.

Division #1 - From the tribe of Judah the chosen representative was Caleb. **34:19**

We know that Caleb was a very faithful man of God who was loyal to the Word of God and will of God.

Division #2 - From the tribe of Simeon the chosen representative was Samuel. **34:20**

Division #3 - From the tribe of Benjamin the chosen representative was Elidad. **34:21**

Division #4 - From the tribe of Dan the chosen representative was Bukki. **34:22**

Division #5 - From the tribe of Joseph of Manasseh the chosen representative was Hanniel. **34:23**

Division #6 - From the tribe of Ephraim the chosen representative was Kemuel. **34:24**

Division #7 - From the tribe of Zebulun the chosen representative was Elizaphan. **34:25**

Division #8 - From the tribe of Issachar the chosen representative was Paltiel. **34:26**

Division #9 - From the tribe of Asher the chosen representative was Ahihud. **34:27**

Division #10 - From the tribe of Naphtali the chosen representative was Pedahel. **34:28**

According to **verse 29**, these were the chosen leaders that God commanded to appropriate the inheritance for the sons of Israel.

It is specifically stated that God chose these leaders and gave them the responsibility to appropriate Israel's inheritance in the land of Canaan. It is an honor to be named as any leader for God in any capacity. To God, people are not just a number.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS:

- 1. The safest place and most blessed place to be is within the boundary limits of the Word of God and not in the vast no-limits philosophy of the world.**
- 2. Any faithful service for God is noted by God and recorded for all eternity.**
- 3. God determines who has larger areas of life and ministry and smaller areas of life and ministry, but all are by His grace and all are sovereignly part of His plan.**