

## Take possession of the land!

Numbers 31:1 – 36:16

Key Verse 33:53

“Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess.”

Today we study the final lesson of Numbers. The book Numbers is the book of the failed entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land. The Israelites failed to conquer the Promised Land at their first attempt because of their unbelief and complacency. They disappointed God very much. But although the Israelites failed, God did not abandon his plan. God led his people through the desert until the old generation died and a new generation of Israelites grew up. With them, God made a new attempt to conquer the Promised Land. With the help of God, God's servant Moses led Israel for 40 years to the border of the Promised Land, despite all the setbacks and challenges. Today we will learn about Moses' final battle. We also learn about God's plan and vision for the new generation of Israelites. Through today's lesson, let us see and follow God's plan for us and be used for God's spiritual war of conquest in our generation.

### 1. Moses' final battle (31:1 – 32:42)

This part deals with the war with the Midianites (chapter 31) and the defense of the unity of the Israelites for the mission of God (chapter 32). It was a preparation for the conquest of the Promised Land.

Let us look at 31:1-3: "The Lord said to Moses, "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people." So Moses said to the people, "Arm some of your men to go to war against the Midianites and to carry out the Lord 's vengeance on them." God told Moses that he should order the Israelites to take revenge on the Midianites. The Moabites and the Midianites were peoples

who tried at all costs to prevent the plan of God, namely the entry of the Israelites into the Promised Land. But because they could not defeat the Israelites either militarily or spiritually, they resorted to cunning by seducing the Israelites to idolatry and sexual immorality (25:1-9). That was the sin of Balaam. As a result, the wrath of God came over the Israelites, so that 24,000 of them died from a plague. Only through the courageous intervention of Phinehas was the plague stopped, and were the Israelites saved (25:10-13). But the repentance of the Israelites was not yet complete. The Israelites were to drive out the root of sin with determination and consequence. This was a very important issue for God's people. If the Israelites failed, they would not be able to enter the Promised Land, let alone conquer and possess it. Rather, they would themselves be overtaken by the sin of the land. Thanks be to God who crucified his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, cleansing us from our sins by his wounds. However, forgiveness is not the end, but only the first step. After that, the good work must be continued through the decisive cleansing from sin and things that lead us to sin. This is why the apostle John says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

How did the Israelites react to God's direction? The Israelites obeyed God's instruction. They sent 1,000 men from each tribe among the Israelites under the leadership of Phinehas against the Midianites. It was a holy war. The Israelites straightened everything up thoroughly and brought all the plunder to Moses (7-13). However, Moses was not satisfied with

superficial success, but helped the Israelites to repent very concretely and more deeply (14-18).

Let's look at verses 19 to 54. When the Israelites obeyed God's direction and carried out their repentance, there was rich plunder. First, God helped the Israelites cleanse themselves and the spoils of war (19-24). Then the plunder was shared. The warriors who had fought the physical battle received half. The community received the other half of the spoils. Both groups gave portions to the priests and Levites (25-47). God's work is always a work of cooperation. In addition, the leaders of the warriors gave the Lord a great gift of thanks, because God had been gracious with them and returned all the warriors safely (48-54). They practically showed their gratitude for the undeserved grace and forgiveness of God. The sin of the Israelites was very grave. But through deep repentance through obedience to God's command, the cleansing could be accomplished and the Israelites could be readied again for the conquest of the promised land.

The teaching of Balaam is also very strong in our time. We should not remain indifferent or helpless or be satisfied with half repentance or punishment, but fight resolutely through the return to the Bible through the 1:1 Bible Study and lead the young people to true, deep repentance and salvation, so that they may become ready for a new history of God.

Before entering the promised land, Moses had one more challenge to overcome. This time it came from within. Let us look at verse 32:5: „If we have found favor in your eyes,” they said, “let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan.” The sons of Reuben and Gad had many cattle. They also saw that the land beyond Jordan, the land of the kingdoms of Sihon, Og and Moab, which they could conquer with the help of God and the whole congregation of Israelites, was very good. Therefore they did not want to go into the promised land

any more, but they wanted to settle outside the gates. They were very selfish. Above all, they worked against God's plan to conquer the promised land by saying: "We don't want to conquer the promised land any more and take the troubles and dangers and struggles upon us, but stay here. But the rest of you, fight and take the Promised Land." It was a relativization of God's plan so shortly before the Promised Land and also against the mission-centered unity of the Israelites. Moses did not remain indifferent, but rebuked the sons of Reuben and Gad very clearly: "Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, "Should your fellow Israelites go to war while you sit here? Why do you discourage the Israelites from crossing over into the land the Lord has given them? This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to look over the land." (32:6-8). Moses compared the plan of the sons of Reuben and Gad with the sin of their fathers, who also rejected the conquest of the promised land because they would not fight, so that as a result an entire generation of Israelites died in the wilderness. Here we learn that it is a very grave sin to relativize the conquest of the promised land. The fathers of the Israelites once said, "We cannot." Their descendants now said: "We do not want. We do not need! A mother first said about the cross of studies, "I can't." Later she said: "I don't want to". But a servant of God helped her so that she could complete her studies and experience God's omnipotence and now also help her children. Many pupils, students and the next generation also say: "I cannot. I do not want either. I do not need". But may we admonish and encourage them like Moses, so that they can seize God's plan and conquer the promised land and grow up as history makers and global spiritual leaders.

How did the Israelites react to Moses' admonition? Let us look at verses 17 and 18: "But we will arm ourselves for battle and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of

the land. We will not return to our homes until each of the Israelites has received their inheritance." The Reubenites and Gadites repented and even promised not only to take part in the conquest of the promised land with the other tribes of the Israelites, but even to go ahead of them and not to return until each tribe of Israel had received its inheritance. Until then, they had even wanted to leave women and children alone. Moses' spiritual reprimands turned the men of the Reuben tribe and Gad's irresponsible egoists and followers into pioneers and leaders who later encouraged Joshua and the entire community of Israelites. In Joshua chapter 22, we see that they kept their promise and fought with the other Israelites until each tribe received its inheritance.

A youngest son only thought of himself and was a source of discouragement. But a servant of God exhorted him not to be a follower, but to go forward with God's work, so that he could be used as a key person and leader for the mobilization of the next generation and for the work of God and even for the Muslim mission. As a physician, I always have many excuses to lag behind. But I thank God's servants who have helped me not to stand back or remain as a follower, but to be used as a leader and leader by the obedience of unbelief regardless of circumstances. I pray that through repentance and obedience of faith I may continue to advance God's work and be used as an encouraging influence for the pioneering work of the medical faculty and also by God for spiritual revival and further for Muslim mission and world mission. Let us, like Moses, motivate young people not to be followers or satisfied with a small selfish goal, but to lead the spiritual war for the conquest of the promised land. Thanks be to God who last year used and set up seven GLE staff as leaders and forerunners. This year we pray that 32 GLE squadrons may be appointed as spiritual leaders and forerunners.

## **2. God's Distribution Plan for Israel in Canaan (33:1-36,13)**

The second part begins with a review of the itinerary through a list of Israelite camp sites. Chapter 33:1-49 lists 41 stations on the way of the Israelites to the Promised Land. Why did the Lord command Moses to write down the stations of the desert journey so precisely and to have the Israelites learn it later even by heart? In every place there was a story of God. Above all, God's faithfulness and guidance became evident. By remembering the places of desert migration, the Israelites could remember the history and guidance of God.

Let us look at verses 50 to 56. From this point until the end, the book Numbers concerns God's directions for the Israelites for their life in the Promised Land of God. Let us read verse 53: "Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess." God's basic orientation for the Israelites was to take and possess the promised land. What does "take" and "possess" mean? According to verse 52, the Israelites were not only to dwell there somehow, but to drive out all inhabitants and destroy all idols and cast images and demolish all their high places. In other words, they should not adopt the lifestyle and idolatry of the previous inhabitants, but live in the promised land with clear identity and lifestyle as a holy people of God and as a royal priesthood and establish God's lifestyle and rules there.

Here we learn that the forgiveness of our sins and the restoration of the love relationship with Jesus Christ is not the end, but the beginning. God's goal of salvation and orientation for believers is quite clearly: to take possession. This fundamental orientation of God is the same in the Old Testament as in the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus gave His disciples and followers as His final command the Great Commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations: baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to keep all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19,20a). Jesus made it very clear in his Great Commission that it is not a matter of carrying out a superficial mass

evangelization or enjoying a beautiful community or getting many so-called Christians, but of raising up disciples of Jesus and teaching them to keep all that Jesus commanded. That is why God's command "to take" means for believers today to raise up disciples of Jesus through intensive Bible study, daily disciple training and daily spiritual fellowship. Taking means challenging the strong influence of the false teachings of humanism and materialism of our time with the spiritual authority and authority of Jesus and raising up the obedience of faith by teaching our children and sheep the truth of the Bible through intensive Bible study and empowering them through practical faith training.

In the last fifty years, God has used UBF missionaries and UBF Bible teachers and disciple educators to spiritually conquer the universities in more than 90 countries of the world, even in the CIS states and China, and to raise up numerous disciples of Jesus, who themselves are again used as disciple educators and pioneers and spiritual conquerors. Many scholars say that this work is the most significant spiritual work in the 21st century. On the occasion of the European Summer Bible Conference for the 50th anniversary of mission work in Europe, we would like to remember and pray that God will continue to use this work in the next 50 years, especially through the next generation, for his spiritual conquering work, to raise up disciples of Jesus at all 1700 universities in Europe.

In chapters 34 and 35, God spoke with Moses about the division and organization of the promised land. The territory that the Israelites were to occupy ranged from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan in the west-east direction and from the Desert of Zin in the south to Hamath in the north in the north-south direction (34:1-15). For God, it was not just a vision, but a concrete plan, for he had already established the leaders to distribute the land: Eleazar and Joshua the son of Nun and 12 tribesmen were to divide the land among the tribes (34:16-29). The Lord also appointed the gift of 48 cities for the Levites, including 6 free

cities, to be distributed throughout the whole territory of the promised land. The Levites had no land of their own, but their role was very important because they functioned as spiritual centers spread throughout the land. We also pray that God will lead Europe to spiritual revival through the development of 1700 colleges and the Muslim world through the establishment of three spiritual bases in I-City, C-City and D-City.

Jesus commanded his disciples to make all the nations of the earth disciples of Jesus and to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. God has also given each one of us his spiritual plan of distribution and his promise of what we may spiritually conquer. For example, God entrusted the land of the Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and the CIS Mission to the house church of S. Jochen and appointed S. Noah as a mission director for the I City and David Schweitzer for the K-Mission. God also entrusted the faculty of mathematics and natural sciences to S. Peter Schweitzer's house church and during God's time also the Egyptian mission (in the C-city). Let us stick to God's spiritual plan of distribution and world mission vision, through faith, and live as his great spiritual army and history-makers for spiritual conquest and world mission.

Finally, let's look at chapter 36. Zelophehad's daughters were great because they wanted to carry on the name of their father, who had no son. So they became their daughters in Israel. When they lived with a spiritual prayer concern through faith, they became very attractive women whom one would like to marry. Moses commanded them to marry within their father's tribe so that inheritance would not fall from one tribe to another, such that the tribes of Israel lost their territorial and spiritual identity over time (6-9). Here we see that the inheritance was associated with responsibility. For a man or woman with an inheritance, the priority in marriage was to preserve the inheritance of the father or tribe. How did Zelophehad's daughters react? Did they say: "My life belongs to me"? Let us look at verses 10 to 12: "So

Zelophehad's daughters did as the Lord commanded Moses. Zelophehad's daughters—Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milkah and Noah—married their cousins on their father's side. They married within the clans of the descendants of Manasseh son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in their father's tribe and clan." It is great that the daughters of Zelophehad had a spiritual view of marriage and valued the inheritance higher than their personal inclination. Thanks be to God that he has placed many spiritually responsible daughters and sons among the next generation and students, who preserve and carry on the spiritual heritage, also through marriage.

In today's text we have learned that salvation is not the end, but the beginning. God's holy orientation is: "Take possession of the land!" We can hold on to this orientation under all circumstances by preparing ourselves through deep repentance and by leading the way as pioneers and leaders, in the next 50 years as in the last 50. We can serve the ministry of spiritual conquest through discipleship to the ends of the earth. God bless our 10,000 1:1 Bible Study teams and the daily spiritual life together and the spiritual mobilization of the next generation. Let us hold onto to God's distribution plan to pioneer 1700 universities in Europe and to send out 100,000 missionaries by 2041.