



Thru the Bible in 2012

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever. Isaiah 40:8

Ladies for Jesus Thursday Bible Study Reflects

Readings for May 4, 2012 – May 10, 2012

Emailed: Thursday, May 10, 2012

For our ponderings, consider the questions listed below in regards to what we have read during the days of Friday, May 4th – Thursday, May 10th.

- **(Numbers 21:34)** God assured Moses that Israel's enemy was conquered even before the battle began! God wants to give us victory over our enemies. In reality, "our enemies" are usually problems related to sin rather than armed soldiers. But first we must believe that He can help us. Second, we must trust Him to help us. Third, we must take the steps He shows us. In what ways have you taken these steps in your own life?
- **(Numbers 22:20-23)** It seems God gets angry with Balaam for no reason. He tells Balaam to go, but then gets angry when he does. God was angry about Balaam's greedy attitude - which really shows its ugly head later in Scripture. Balaam claimed that he would not go against God just for money, but was his resolve beginning to slip. Could this be why God got angry? His greed for the wealth offered by the king blinded him so that he could not see how God was trying to stop him. Though we may know what God wants us to do, we can become blinded by the desire for money, possessions, or prestige. In what ways are you looking past the allure of fame or fortune to the long-range benefits of following God?
- **(Numbers 22:29)** The donkey saved Balaam's life but made him look foolish in the process, so Balaam lashed out at the donkey. Similarly, do we not do the same thing? Do you sometimes strike out at others who get in our way because you are embarrassed or your pride is hurt? Lashing out at others can sometimes be a sign that something is wrong with us. Don't allow your own hurt pride to lead you to hurt others.
- **(Balaam's Character)** Balaam was a noteworthy character in the Old Testament. His character was one where he did a lot of covering up the true self. His story throughout the Old Testament exposes the deception of maintaining an outward façade of spirituality over a corrupt inward life. He was ready to obey God's command as long as he could profit from doing so. Each of us has to face this process of realizing our true heart. Who and what we are will somehow come to the surface, destroying any masks we may have put on to cover up our real selves. Do you spend a lot of effort in covering up the corruption in your heart? The efforts you spend on keeping up appearances would be much better spent in finding the sin in your life and allowing God to purify your heart. Face yourself and realize that God is willing to accept you, forgive you, and literally make you over from within.
- **(Numbers 23:27)** Balak took Balaam to several places to try to entice him to curse the Israelites. He thought a change of scenery might help change Balaam's mind. Wow – how many times do we "change location" in an effort to change God's will instead of addressing the problem. Does this hit home? We must learn to face the source of our problems. Moving to escape problems only makes solving them more difficult. Problems rooted in us are not solved by a change of scenery. A change in location or job may only distract us from the need for us to change our heart.
- **(Numbers 24:11)** Although Balaam's motives were not correct, in blessing Israel he acted with integrity. God's message had so filled him that Balaam spoke the truth. In doing so, he forfeited the reward that had lured him to speak in the first place. How has staying true to God's Word cost you? Staying true to God's Word may cost us promotions and advantages in the short run, but those who choose God over money will one day acquire heavenly wealth beyond measure (Matthew 6:19-21)

- **(Numbers 25:1-2)** The Bible doesn't say how the Israelite men got involved in sexual immorality. We do know that sacred prostitution was a common practice among Canaanite religions. At first, they didn't think about worshipping idols; they were just interested in sex. Before long they started attending local feasts and family celebrations that involved idol worship. Their desire for fun and pleasure caused them to lose their spiritual commitment. Have you relaxed from godly standards in order to justify your desires?
- **(Numbers 26:64)** This new census brought on by the new generation was actually recording an underline miracle of God's work. This quiet but powerful miracle showed how a whole nation that moved from one land to another, lost its entire adult population, yet managed to maintain its spiritual direction. Sometimes it may feel like God isn't working dramatic miracles in our lives. However, God often works in quiet ways to bring about His long-range purposes. What are some of the ways He has done this in your own life?
- **(Numbers 30:1-2)** Moses reminded the people that their promises to God and others must be kept. In ancient times, people did not sign written contracts. A person's word was as binding as a signature. To make a vow even more binding, an offering was given along with it. No one was forced by law to make a vow; but once made, vows had to be fulfilled. Breaking a vow meant a broken trust and a broken relationship. Trust is still the basis of our relationships with God and others. A broken promise today is just as harmful as it was in Moses' day. How serious do you take the written or verbal vows you make in your own life?
- **(Numbers 32)** Three tribes (Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) wanted to live east of the Jordan River (sometimes referred to as the Transjordan area) on land they had already conquered. Moses immediately assumed they had selfish motives and were trying to avoid helping the others fight for the land across the river. But Moses jumped to the wrong conclusion. In dealing with people, do you find out all the facts before making up your mind or do you automatically assume that their motives are wrong, even if their plans sound suspicious?
- **(Numbers 32:16-19)** The land of the east side of the Jordan had been conquered. The hard work was done by all the tribes together. But the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh did not stop after their land was cleared. They promised to keep working with the others until everyone's land was conquered. After others have helped you, do you make excuses to escape helping them? Finish the whole job, even those parts that may not benefit you directly.
- **(Numbers 33:2)** Moses recorded the Israelites' journeys as God instructed him, providing a record of their spiritual as well as geographic progress. Have you made spiritual progress lately? A personal spiritual journal is a great way to record your thoughts about God and lessons you have learned over a period of time. This record can be a valuable aid to spiritual growth. Documenting your spiritual pilgrimage will let you check up on your progress and avoid repeating past mistakes.
- **(Numbers 34:16-29)** In God's plan for settling the land, He explained what to do, communicated this clearly to Moses, and assigned specific people to oversee the apportionment of the land. No plan is complete until each job is assigned and everyone understands his or her responsibilities. When you have a job to do, do you determine what must be done, give clear instructions, and put people in charge of each part? Doing so will not only accomplish the task the way God would, but also incorporate others in doing His work as well.



(Numbers 21:27-30) Chemosh was the national god of Moab. They worshiped this god as a “god of war.” This false god, however, was no help to the nation when it fought against Israel. Israel’s God was stronger than any of Canaan’s war gods.

(Numbers 22:4-6) Balaam was a sorcerer. He was called upon to place curses on others. Not much different than the sorcerers we see portrayed on televisions today. Belief in curses and blessings was common in Old Testament times. Sorcerers were thought to have power with the gods. Thus, the king of Moab wanted Balaam to use his powers with the God of Israel to place

(Numbers 22-23) At King Balak’s request, Balaam traveled nearly 400 miles to curse Israel. That wasn’t in a car - that was on a donkey!! Balak took Balaam to Bamoth-baal, which was considered the “high places of Baal,” then to Pisgah Peak, and finally to Mount Peor. Each place looked over the plains of Moab, where the Israelites were camped. From the Bamoth-baal high point they could see the entire Israelite camp.

(Numbers 22:27) Donkeys were all-purpose vehicles used for transportation, carrying loads, grinding grain, and plowing fields. They were usually highly dependable, which explains why Balaam became so angry when his donkey refused to move.

(Numbers 25:3) Baal Was the most popular god in Canaan, the land Israel was about to enter. Represented by a bull, symbol of strength and fertility, he was the god of the rains and harvest. The Israelites were continually attracted to Baal worship, in which prostitution played a large part, throughout their years in Canaan. Because Baal was so popular, his name was often used as a generic title for all the local gods.

(Numbers 32:16) A simple fold for livestock had four roughly built stone walls, high enough to keep wild animals out. Sometimes the top of the wall was lined with thorns to further discourage predators and thieves. The fold’s single entrance made it easier for a shepherd to guard his flock. Often several shepherds used a single fold and took turns guarding the entrance. Mingling the animals was no problem since each flock responded to its own shepherd’s voice. The three tribes who chose to remain east of the Jordan River wanted to build sheepfolds to protect their flocks, and cities to protect their families before the men crossed the river to help the rest of the tribes conquer the Promised Land.

(Numbers 34) The land was given by God as an inheritance; no tribe was to claim its own land. The boundaries declared by God are larger than the area actually occupied by the Hebrews. The boundaries correspond more to the land conquered by David and to the ideal territory portrayed by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 47-48). The size of the land portrays God’s generosity. He always gives us more than we could ask or think.



(Numbers 22:9) Why would God speak through a sorcerer like Balaam? When reading this it is obvious that God wanted to give a message to the Moabites. Since, they had already chosen to employ Balaam, God used Balaam as a way to deliver the message. This is very similar to the way He used the wicked pharaoh to accomplish His will in Egypt (Exodus 10:1). Balaam entered into his prophetic role seriously, but his heart was mixed. He had some knowledge of God, but not enough to forsake his magic and turn wholeheartedly to God. This part of the Scripture leaves us with the belief that Balaam turned completely to God. However, later passages in the Bible show that he couldn't resist the temptation of money and idolatry (Numbers 31:15; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11).

(Numbers 24:7) Agag was the title for the king of the Amalekites, just as Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt. Saul, the first king of Israel, defeated Agag (1 Samuel 15:8) Balaam prophesied correctly the ruin of Israel's oldest enemy (Exodus 17:14-16).

(Numbers 24:15-19) The star that will rise from Jacob is often thought to refer to the coming Messiah. It was probably this prophecy that convinced the astrologers to travel to Israel to search for the baby Jesus (see Matthew 2:1-2).

(Numbers 25:1-3) Well, well, well . . . thinking of Balaam's characteristic and heart . . . The combination of sexual sin and idolatry, it turns out, was Balaam's idea (see Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14)

(Numbers 25:12-13) Phinehas' act made atonement for the nation of Israel; in effect, what he did averted God's judgment. Because of this his descendants would become the high priests of Israel. They continued so throughout the history of the Tabernacle and the Temple.

(Numbers 26:64) This is where a new census is called because there was a new generation. At this point thirty-eight years had elapsed since the first great census recorded in Numbers 1:1-2:33. During that time every Israelite man and woman 20 years old and over – except Caleb, Joshua, and Moses – had died, and yet God's laws and the spiritual character of the nation were still intact.

(Numbers 31) The Midianites were the nomadic people who descended from Abraham and his second wife, Keturah. The land of Midian lay far to the south of Canaan, but large bands of Midianites roamed many miles from their homeland, searching for grazing areas for their flocks. Such a group was near the Promised Land when the Israelites arrived. When Moses fled from Egypt (Exodus 2), he took refuge in the land of Midian. His wife and father-in-law were Midianites. Despite this alliance, the Israelites and the Midianites were always bitter enemies.

(Numbers 35:6) Of the 48 cities given to the Levites, six were cities of refuge. These six cities were probably put under the Levites supervision because they would be the most impartial judges. Such cities were needed because the ancient customs of justice called for revenge in the event of the death of a relative or loved one (2 Samuel 14:7). The Levites would hold a preliminary hearing outside the gates while the accused person was kept in the city until the time of his trial. If the killing was judged accidental the person would stay in the city until the death of the high priest. At that time, he would be allowed to go free, and he could start a new life without worrying about avengers. If it was not accidental, the person would be delivered to the slain person's avengers. This system of justice shows how God's law and His mercy go hand in hand.

(Numbers 36:13) The book of Numbers covers 39 years and closes with the Israelites poised near the banks of the Jordan River with the Promised Land in sight. The wanderings in the wilderness have come to an end, and the people are preparing for the next big move – the conquest of the land. The apostle Paul says that the events described in Numbers are examples that warn us and help us avoid the Israelites mistakes (1 Corinthians 10:1-12). From their experiences we learn that unbelief is disastrous. We also learn not to long for the sinful pleasures of the past, to avoid complaining and to stay away from all forms of sexual sin. We must not weaken our biblical beliefs by compromising them with our culture's values. If we choose to let God lead our lives, we should not ignore His message in the book of Numbers.