

**Message #38****Numbers 36:1-13**

When we began this series, we said Numbers is a book that proves you are not just a number. God takes a personal interest in every one of His people. If His people are pursuing a right relationship with Him and they are responding to His Word, He listens to them and He blesses them.

The problem we have seen in this book is that when His people don't obey God and are not pursuing a right relationship with Him, He causes things to fall apart.

**WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE ARE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, GOD LISTENS TO HIS PEOPLE AND MOVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR REQUESTS AND NEEDS.**

God is immutable in that He does not change, but God is not immobile in that He does move. God has a living and moving relationship with His people. When His people obey Him, He blesses them.

There is no better personal relationship to cultivate than one with God. God is not some rigid ogre. He is a very Personal God who is very personally interested in His people.

We may remember that God had listened to the daughters of Zelophehad and had agreed that they should have a permanent inheritance in the land (Numbers 27:1-11). We may recall that their father died in the wilderness but had not died as a judgment for sin, and when he died he had no sons. So the daughters thought they should have an inheritance to which the Lord agreed. God gave them a good inheritance among the tribe of Manasseh, of which Zelophehad belonged.

Now as things were moving forward, some of the people thought through this and came up with a potential problem, which they decided to take to the Lord:

**PART #1** – The potential hypothetical problem concerning the female inheritance. **36:1-4**

According to **verse 1**, Machir, who was the oldest son of Manasseh by a concubine, decided to go to Moses to present a hypothetical problem. Again what impresses me about Moses is here is a man nearing his own death and yet he can't retire. People are still coming to him wanting to know the Word of God and the will of God. Moses just cannot seem to get away from being God's ambassador.

I don't know how long God will let us live. But we are His ambassadors and it is our job to keep representing Him and testifying of His truth until we leave this world. In some ways we are like Moses in that regard.

It is possible that perhaps one of the girls was dating someone and the other family members were beginning to see some potential problems.

Machir began by acknowledging that God was the one who would give them the land by lot. So this would indicate that they intend to follow the Word of God on this matter.

The potential problem was this. According to **verse 2**, the Lord commanded that an inheritance be given to the daughters of their brother. It is clear from this verse that these men were aware of the earlier ruling of Moses in which he granted the girls a land inheritance even though there was no male to carry on the family name (Num. 27:1-11). We may recall that Zelophehad's daughters had gone to Moses and God determined that those girls should have the inheritance.

But Machir said suppose one of those daughters from the family marries one of the sons of a different tribe of Israel who is a "non Manassite" (**v. 3**). What will happen? Would our family inheritance be subtracted and the other tribe's inheritance expanded?

Now it is clear that this was a very real concern to them. **Verse 4** says that when the Jubilee of the sons of Israel comes, then whose inheritance would the land be?

It is obvious that they were thinking about Jubilee legislation that is given in Leviticus 25:13-55. They were anticipating that they would be in the land and would be celebrating the Year of Jubilee. In the Year of Jubilee, the land was supposed to revert back to the original owners, but hypothetically because the daughters were married to other men of other tribes, they wondered if the land would be transferred to a new tribe. The Year of Jubilee data did not specifically address this matter, so it was of some concern.

Now Israel had never celebrated the Year of Jubilee. But it is obvious that as they were anticipating going into the land, they were carefully studying the Word of God and out of that study came this question.

It is not necessarily wrong to think through hypotheticals when it comes to God and life. It is the mark of wisdom to think through possibilities of this happening or not happening. Wise people do count the cost.

What is interesting here is that it is clear at this point in time Israel was concerned about every bit of their land and they were concerned about what was right before God. They wanted to know the Word of God and the will of God. It is a shame that this kind of focus is no longer in Israel. Had Israel kept this focus, she would not be in the mess she is in now. But this was one time when the Jewish people truly did want to know the will of God.

One other point of discussion. God is Omniscient and He knows all things and He knew this matter would come up and yet He did not address it until they came to Him and asked Him. God wants His people coming to Him concerning various issues at various times of life. He wants His people coming to Him and talking with Him. God's people need to realize this and take advantage of this. God does not give us all the answers, but we are able to go to Him with all the questions and when we do, He moves.

**PART #2** – The solution to the potential problem concerning the inheritance. **36:5-13**

**Verse 5** begins by saying Moses answered according to the Word of the Lord. This is interesting. God could have given this information at the beginning of this whole matter. But apparently, **God wants intimate communication and an intimate relationship with His people all through life.**

We don't know exactly how long it took for Moses to come back with an answer. But obviously after consulting with God, he did come back with an answer. This is a key principle to remember: we do not have to immediately give answers to complicated matters. There is wisdom in backing away and praying and meditating.

Moses came back with six conclusions:

**Conclusion #1** - The sons of Israel are right. **36:5b**

Now Moses begins by saying, "The tribe of the sons of Joseph is right in their statements." Think of this. God is listening to statements and determining if they are right. Just as God had listened to the daughters and they were right in their thinking, so now God is listening to the sons and they are right in their thinking.

**Conclusion #2** - The daughters may marry whomever they wish. **36:6a**

This is also fascinating. God is no dictator. God is a God who gives people freedom of choice within a certain framework. God could have said I will tell you who you are to marry. He did not do that. He left the choice to the girls.

**Conclusion #3** - The daughters must marry within the tribe of their family. **36:6b**

This is not optional, but obligatory. One stipulation was they need to marry within the family parameters. This is still a mandate in N.T. times. Christians need to marry Christians. They do not want to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

**Conclusion #4** - The land inheritance is not to be transferred between tribes. **36:7**

God says you cannot marry outside of tribe. In other words, the girls needed to marry someone from the tribe of Manasseh. We know that they would have a good selection to choose from because at their most recent census there were 52,700 males 20 years of age and older to choose from (Num. 26:34). We don't know how many were married, but certainly there were many who were not.

**Conclusion #5** - The daughter who marries has the inheritance within the family inheritance and this is the way it is to always be. **36:8**

The tribal inheritance is to stay within the tribal inheritance. This was to be true pertaining to every daughter who married.

**Conclusion #6** - The inheritance is not to be transferred but each is to hold on to his own. **36:9**

There was to be a certainty and tenacity to this. No inheritance was ever to be transferred to another tribe.

What is so sad today is that their inheritance has been transferred to other nations, mostly Arab. Think about this. Israel is supposed to have this land forever. She doesn't have much of it at all right now.

**PART #3** – The response of the daughters. **36:10-12**

What we learn from **verse 10** is that those daughters did exactly what God wanted them to do.

This is so refreshing. The book of Numbers has been a story of following God for a while and then drifting away. The book ends on a high note. Those girls were obeying God.

All five girls (Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, Noah) married their uncle's sons. They married from the family of the sons of Manasseh and their inheritance stayed in the family (**36:12**).

The book begins with a census of men, none of who makes it to the Promised Land. The book ends with five girls who are faithful to God and obeying God in the land.

**Verse 13** signs off the book by saying those were the commandments and ordinances of the Lord through Moses.

Now when you first read this chapter, you think well this is an odd way to end the book. But if you think through Numbers, it is a great way to end the book. The thing that got Israel into trouble in this book was they did not obey the Word of God.

Had they stuck to that, God would have blessed them. So now they are on the verge of taking the Promised Land and they are finally obeying the Word of God. If only they would have stuck to that, God would have blessed them. But to this very night, they have not stuck to it.

If the Israelites had the integrity of those five daughters, she would be blessed tonight. We must make sure we do not make the same mistake.

The book of Numbers ends by establishing that when it comes to God, you are not just a number. Whether man or woman, you are not just a number. God keeps track of His individual people by name.

He knows who is serious about His Word and who isn't. He knows who is obeying His Word and who isn't. We must never forget what this book of Numbers teaches because we are known and named and monitored by the God who inspired the book of Numbers.