**Survey of Old Testament**

**Numbers 22-36 Balak Sends for Balaam**

1. Balak was the king of Moab. He had seen the conquests of Israel (Num. 20–21) and was afraid his people would be overcome. He realized that physical force would never defeat the Jews, so he resorted to spiritual deception by hiring Balaam to curse Israel. He offered Balaam a good price for doing the job, but the prophet (having consulted the Lord) refused to agree. Balak’s messengers went home and reported failure.
2. Balak sent princes more noble than the first, promised Balaam greater wealth and suggested that the prophet reconsider the matter. This is what Satan often does once we have made a definite decision to obey God’s Word. Deep in his heart, Balaam wanted to go with the messengers because he was greedy of gain. This is “the way of Balaam” (2 Peter 2:15–16), using religion as a means of getting wealth. God permitted Balaam to go with the princes, but He did so only to test him. It is here that the well-known episode with the angel and the donkey takes place. The angel stood in Balaam’s way, but the prophet did not see him! The donkey did see, and acted so strangely that Balaam struck her. This should have been a warning to Balaam, but he was intent on his selfish mission and was not sensitive to God’s will. When his eyes were opened, Balaam saw the angel and realized his mistakes. God said plainly, “Your way is perverse”, so there was no reason for Balaam to say, “If it displeases You, I will turn back”. Balaam was playing with God’s will, seeing how far he could go. The main lesson here is to find the will of God and obey it, regardless of personal desires.
3. Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel and in this way protect Midian and Moab, but every time Balaam opened his mouth, he blessed Israel instead!
4. Balaam makes it clear that he cannot curse Israel because God has blessed Israel. He sees the nation as a special people, called by God and separate from the other nations (Deut. 26:18–19; 32:8–9; Lev. 20:26). Balaam gives a wonderful history of Israel in these four visions.
5. Had Balaam stopped with his visions from God, he would have been safe, but he wanted the money and the honor that Balak promised. So he told the king how to defeat Israel. His plan was simple: invite the Jews to share in the heathen sacrificial feasts and corrupt them with idolatry and lust. The ceremonies involved in Baal worship were very wicked, and Balaam knew that the Jewish men would be tempted to join with the Moabite women. This is exactly what happened. In fact, one Israelite was bold enough to bring a heathen woman home right in the sight of Moses. What the armies of the other nations could not do, the women of Moab and Midian were doing.
6. If Satan cannot overcome God’s people as a lion (1 Peter 5:8), then he comes as a serpent. Beware of the friendliness of God’s enemies! Their smiles are snares. Aaron’s grandson Phinehas took a definite stand for the Lord and opposed this compromise of God’s people with the heathen (2 Cor. 6:14–18). A plague from the Lord had already begun. When Phinehas killed the guilty man and woman, the plague stopped, but not before 24,000 people had died. See Num. 31:16. In this age when people are telling Christians to become friendly with their spiritual enemies, we need more courageous men like Phinehas who will take a stand for separation and holiness.
7. Balaam thought that Israel’s sins would destroy the nation. This is “the error of Balaam” mentioned in Jude 11. People look at the church today and condemn her for her “spots and wrinkles and blemishes,” but God sees His church from a different viewpoint. Revelation 2:14 mentions the doctrine of Balaam. This was his counsel to Balak that he invite the Jews to mix with the Gentiles, marry Moabite women, and share in their evil feasts. Such a “doctrine” is nothing but compromise. It is interesting that the NT warning comes in the letter to the church at Pergamos, because “Pergamos” means “married.” This is the great danger today: Christians are forgetting their calling to be separate and are joining themselves to the world. For other references to Balaam, see Deut. 23:4–5, Josh. 24:9–10, Neh. 13:2, Micah 6:5, 2 Peter 2:15–16, Jude 11, and Rev. 2:14.

**Numbers 26:1–27:11 Numbering the tribes**

1. This second census was taken for various reasons. The previous one taken in Numbers 1 was primarily for organizational purposes. But now, forty years had passed, bringing with it a new generation. Furthermore, the immediate goal was the division of the land they were about to conquer.

**Numbers 27:12–23 A change in commanders.**

1. Moses and Aaron had disqualified themselves from entering the land of promise when they had failed to honor the Lord by striking the rock.
2. Moses expressed his concern that Israel have a good leader to take his place. He seeks the God of the spirits of all mankind to select this leader. This unusual title of God (occurring only here and in Num. 16:22) refers to God’s omniscient understanding of everyone, which guaranteed the wisdom of His choice. The Lord’s response was immediate, take Joshua a Spirit-filled man, who had already demonstrated his qualities and capabilities. His appointment must be public, so the community would know Joshua was entitled to the same respect and authority as Moses.
3. After Moses laid his hand on him thus commissioning him, Joshua was to stand before Eleazar the priest to symbolize the relationship that the two would enjoy from then on.

**Numbers 28–29 Laws concerning offerings**

1. These chapters are, in a sense, an amplification of Leviticus 23, but it is also unique in that it gives for each festival a specific date and definite quantity for each sacrifice on that date. The only other Old Testament list of specific amounts for special days and festivals is found in Ezekiel 45:18–46:15.

**Numbers 30 Laws concerning vows**

1. The purpose of Numbers 30 was not to specify what kinds of vows might be made or how they were to be undertaken but only to teach how important it was that they be kept.

**Numbers 31 God’s judgment on the Midianites**

1. The Lord’s last assignment to Moses was carrying out God’s vengeance on the Midianites. The reason obviously was Midian’s role in Israel’s apostate behavior at Baal of Peor (Num 25:16–18).

**Numbers 32 The inheritance of the Eastern tribes**

1. Up to this point, all the tribes of Israel had fought together, traveled together, and, all too often, had sinned together. But now this would change somewhat. It began when two of the tribes, Reuben and Gad (half of the tribe of Manasseh would also later be included; see vs. 33) asked permission from Moses to settle on the eastern side of Jordan. The tribes had acquired much cattle and the area seemed ideal for their herds. Moses said … Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here? The tribes quickly reassure Moses that there was not a rebellious spirit and promise to cross over with the other tribes and do their part in conquering Canaan. Moses agrees, but urges them to carefully and completely fulfill all their obligations; for, if not, be sure your sin will find you out. This statement would haunt the tribes for years to come. This is still true for us today.

**Numbers 33–36 The assigning of the tribes’ inheritance**

These chapters deal with the assigning of the tribes’ inheritance, looking ahead to the time when the nation would possess Canaan. The tribes are assigned their portions, the Levites their special cities, and, most important of all, the cities of refuge are defined.