

MARCH 2026 | DAY 22

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 31
Numbers 32
Psalms 50

God keeps his promises, and that includes his promises to work against injustice. In today's reading, we see God's pursuit of justice in how he deals with the Midianites who led some of the Israelites into idolatry (Num. 25). Ancient warfare can be disturbing to modern readers, but for the Israelites, military defeat was a sign of divine justice. Israel's decisive victory over Midian reassures them that God's power is with them as they prepare to enter Canaan.

Now gathered at the Jordan River, the Israelites are ready to cross into the promised land. But there's a hitch: not everyone wants to go. The tribes of Reuben and Gad see that the land on the east side of the Jordan is good. They want it for themselves. Their desire acts as a subtle hyperlink to Eve at the tree of knowing good and bad. Like Eve, these tribes see and take something they desire instead of receiving God's gifts on God's terms. God's people once again believe they know what is best. They do what's right in their own eyes, just like Adam and Eve. Moses fumes, hearing echoes of the wilderness generation's fear and refusal to enter the promised land. Reuben and Gad's choice repeats not only Adam and Eve's sin but the division between brothers that followed.

The promised land was meant to be a place where brothers could dwell in unity. Now, only 10 tribes will live there, while Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh remain east of the Jordan. Moses allows this as long as they help the other tribes take the promised land. Yet the hyperlinks to Genesis 3-4 cast an ominous shadow over their decision.



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SCRIPTURE

Numbers 33
Numbers 34
Psalms 51

After 40 long years of traveling, Israel is still camped on the border of Canaan. The narrative flashes back to review their travel log during the last four decades, acting like a geographical and spiritual map of Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan.

For example, Rephidim reminds Israel of its failure to trust God when the water ran out, and it warns them against grumbling in the future. Other stops include Mount Hor and Dibon-Gad, where God provided victory for Israel over its enemies. Altogether, the travel log suggests that despite their distrust and disobedience, God will continue to love and care for them every step of the way.

Reminders of Israel's past give them courage and wisdom as they prepare for their future. God promises that the same mighty power and loyal love he revealed in the wilderness will empower the Israelites as they enter the promised land. He will grant them victory to the farthest borders of Canaan—all they have to do is trust him. But the temptation to rebel is everywhere, so they will need to purge the land of Canaanite idolatry. In this story, keeping covenant promises demands wholehearted loyalty.

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SCRIPTURE

Numbers 35
Numbers 36
Psalms 52

Israel has reached the end of their wilderness journey, and you have reached the end of Numbers. Congratulations! Watch the video for a review of the key takeaways we've covered so far.

God's final instructions reveal his priorities for Israel in the promised land and the kind of life he values for people. He demonstrates his generosity toward the Levites (who have no property inheritance rights) by granting them cities within the land allotments of the other tribes. God shows his desire to protect life by instructing Israel to establish cities of refuge. In the ancient Near Eastern context, it was common for families to demand vengeance from anyone who killed one of their family members, even if accidental. Cities of refuge provided safe haven for those who unintentionally ended a life and would have to live in fear of retribution. Finally, God gives additional direction to Zelophehad's daughters to ensure the land allotted to each tribe would stay within the family. The sisters' obedience closes the book of Numbers on a positive note. Before handing over the mantle of leadership, Moses stands to give one last speech to the Israelites.

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SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 1
Deuteronomy 2
Deuteronomy 3
Psalms 53

The entire nation of Israel stands on an open plain with the wilderness behind them, marked with the graves of their parents. Around them, the fortresses of their enemies lie in ruins, smoldering reminders of their first victories. In front of them flows the Jordan River, the last boundary separating the Israelites from the land God promised to them.

Before they pass through the waters, Moses delivers one last speech. He opens with an overview of Israel's history. The exodus generation allowed fear to compel their decisions, rather than love and trust in God. They ended up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

Now, Moses urges the new generation to avoid their parents' mistakes—to choose faith over fear, loyalty over idolatry, and obedience over rebellion. Moses explains the laws that will govern their lives. He urges them to choose well and stay faithful to their covenant partnership with Yahweh. Watch the video to preview Moses' call to covenant faithfulness in Deuteronomy.

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SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 4
Deuteronomy 5
Deuteronomy 6
Psalms 54

The last, rather grim, part of Moses' speech focused on the people who died during the wilderness journey, the generation set free from Egyptian enslavement. God delivered them and invited them into a new life with him, but they turned away in rebellion. Moses reminds the new generation that turning from God is also turning toward death.

Now Moses sets the choice between life and death before the people once more. He wants them to listen to Yahweh and know that Yahweh listens to them. As you'll learn in the video, listening involves more than merely hearing God's words. It includes an active response that aligns with God's instruction.

In today's reading, Moses reminds the Israelites that their love for Yahweh begins by listening to the Ten Commandments. He says that people who choose to give their wholehearted allegiance to Yahweh alone will enjoy the blessings of Eden: abundance and fertility in a lush garden land.

However, turning from Yahweh to trust other gods or anything else will bring ruinous exile and death.

Moses warns the people that trusting idols will be little more than trading the infinitely powerful rescuer Yahweh for lifeless blocks of wood and stone. When the Israelites fall into danger and call out to Yahweh, he will hear them and rescue them.

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SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 7
Deuteronomy 8
Deuteronomy 9
Psalms 55

In today's reading, Moses uses intense rhetoric to warn the Israelites about what happens when they choose to embrace Canaanite idol worship. His severe instructions about the people groups living in Canaan are disturbing. However, remember that Moses is using extreme language to warn against extreme consequences. Additionally, this is ancient literature, so keep paying attention to important nuances that temper these commands and shed light on their deeper meaning.

For example, Moses follows the command to wipe out the Canaanites' way of life by prohibiting Israelites from marrying them and rejecting all forms of covenant-making with them, which assumes at least some Canaanites still live in the land. This expectation of survivors suggests Moses is using hyperbolic language of utter destruction (which sounds like genocide) for rhetorical effect.

The biblical authors also weave hyperlinks from the flood narrative in Genesis 6-8 into this story, envisioning Israel's mission of conquering Canaan as a flood of divine judgment on human evil. Notice how the biblical story connects this generation of Canaanites with the dark, violent generation wiped out in the flood during Noah's generation. This includes the Anakim, who descended from the Nephilim (Num. 13:33), the warrior-giants whose violence stained the world with innocent blood.

These Canaanites have already chosen to be agents of death and de-creation. And God enacts justice by hurrying them along the path they have chosen.

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SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 10
Deuteronomy 11
Deuteronomy 12
Psalms 56

After a whirlwind tour through the highs and lows of Israel's history, Moses draws the first part of his big speech to a stirring conclusion. He distills Israel's covenant law into five main "to-do" actions for the people. They are to fear Yahweh, walk in all his ways, love him, serve him, and keep his commandments because Yahweh's wisdom overflows with goodness and life.

Now, the Israelites must decide. Will they listen or turn away?

Wholehearted loyalty to Yahweh will bring abundant blessing. God will shower the land with rain, and dry hills will burst into lush green, their slopes laden with grapes and grain. Idolatry, however, will bring curse.

There is no middle ground. They cannot serve two masters.

With this call to covenant faithfulness hanging over the Israelites' heads, Moses launches into the second section of his speech: a collection of laws describing covenant faithfulness in the promised land. Israel is to destroy all the Canaanites' sacred objects and places dedicated to idol worship. The Israelites will bring all their offerings to one single temple, where they will celebrate the goodness of the one true God. The entire nation will join the priests and Levites to feast on God's abundance. However, when they eat their sacrifices, the Israelites must be careful not to consume any blood because blood represents a creature's life.

The core idea here is that all life belongs to God alone. Watch today's video to learn about the connection between blood (dām in Hebrew) and life in the Bible.