

The Second Generation:¹ Warnings



SABBATH—DECEMBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Numbers 26–32; Romans 5.

MEMORY VERSE: “Israel, listen to me. The Lord is our God. The Lord is the one and only God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5, NlrV).

GOD PROMISED THAT THE REBELLIOUS² GENERATION WOULD NOT ENTER THE PROMISED LAND. And He kept that promise. Now, the Lord brought a new generation to the borders of that same land. There He commanded Moses and the high priest, Eleazar, to count the group of males from 20 years and upward, “all that [who] are able to go to war” (Numbers 26:2). Surprise! The total in this second count (601,730 [verse 51]) was almost the same as that in the first count (603,550) 40 years before (Numbers 2:32). A great many people in the first generation had died as a result of God’s punishment³ (except for Joshua and Caleb). But God plentifully had added to their numbers. The armies of Israel on the plains of Moab were almost as large as the armies of the first generation.

But there are several questions. Did this new generation learn from their parents’ bad mistakes? Were they ready to obey the Lord? How ready were they to take up the responsibility (duty) now given to them? What lessons were they going to have to learn? What can we learn from them too?

1. generation—all the people born about the same time. Your parents belong to one generation. You and your friends who are your age belong to another generation.

2. rebellious—fighting or struggling against authority (laws or rules) or any kind of control (power).

3. punishment—a penalty (price to be paid) for, or the result of, doing something wrong; when someone must suffer loss or pain for doing something bad, wrong, or against the law.

SUNDAY—DECEMBER 13**DIVIDING UP THE LAND
(Numbers 27:1–11)**

After the sad event at Shittim, a census⁴ was taken of the men 20 years of age and older (Numbers 26:1–4). The older generation had died off (except Joshua and Caleb; read verses 64, 65). And a new one had taken its place.

What was one of the reasons that the census in Numbers 26:52–56 was taken? Why would this count be important?

The second generation had conquered the land. Now the land needed to be divided fairly. If not, this could have caused fighting and confusion. Fortunately, Moses was still living at this time. So he could direct in this important matter. As the text states, those tribes with a lot of members were given the most land. Those with fewer members were given less land. What could be fairer than that?

What important principles (rules) are given in Numbers 27:1–11?

These verses show that families who owned land had certain rights. They had the right to keep property (lands or houses) and inheritances⁵ within the family as much as possible. The land was an “inheritance.” So it belonged in the family.

4. census—a count of people.

5. inheritances—the belongings of dead people that are given to living people.

6. successor—someone who takes the place of someone else.

These women in these verses had the faith and courage to bring up an issue of basic fairness to Moses. For this reason, the Lord established a “statute [law] of judgment” (Numbers 27:11, KJV). This law would continue for future generations. It would protect women who might find themselves in the same situations.

It is always so easy to let things we own control us. These things can cause us to forget even the most basic Christian principles. How can we protect ourselves from letting our desire for things ruin our relationship with God and with others?

MONDAY—DECEMBER 14**SUCCESSOR⁶ (Numbers 27:12–23)**

The people of Israel had spent so many years in the wilderness. But now they soon would cross into the Promised Land. A new generation had arisen. They soon would inherit (receive) the land first promised to them during Abraham’s time (Genesis 17:8). The people of Israel had suffered loss. They had rebelled (warred) against God. They had complained and shown a lack of faith. But God was going to keep His word. He was just going to do it with this new generation.

Read Numbers 27:12–23 and answer the following questions:

- In Numbers 27:12, the Lord talks about the land that He has given to the children of Israel. He did this, even though they were not there yet. What does that tell us about God's promises?
- The Lord told Moses again that he could not cross into this land because of his sin. But how does Moses answer? What is his concern? What does that tell us about the kind of man he was?
- Why was it important that Joshua be made Israel's leader in front of all the people?

Moses was soon to die. His work was almost finished. Leadership was now given to Joshua. He was chosen as Moses' successor. How interesting that one of Moses' sons was not chosen to be leader. Instead, someone who had proved his own worth was chosen. God, not Moses or the leaders of Israel, chose Joshua.



Joshua was chosen as Moses' successor.

Also, the verses make another thing clear about Joshua. Like Moses, Joshua was to lead only through God's leading. Joshua was to seek God's leading through the written laws and commandments. Joshua also was to seek the Lord's will through the "judgment of [the] Urim⁷ before the Lord" (verse 21).

How often do you pray to the Lord about important decisions (choices) you need to make? What guides your choices if you do not seek God's will?



Joshua was to lead the people only through God's leading and the written laws.

TUESDAY—DECEMBER 15

SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM⁸ RETAUGHT (Numbers 28:1–8)

The Lord spoke the Ten Commandments aloud (Exodus 20) from Mount Sinai. He commanded the building of the tabernacle⁹ (Exodus 25). At that time, the second genera-

7. Urim—one of two stones on the high priest's ephod or breastplate that God used to answer questions from the Israelites. The stones showed "Yes" or "No" when getting an answer from the Lord. One stone, the Urim, lit up for "Yes." The other stone was covered with a cloud for "No."

8. sacrificial system—in the Jewish sanctuary (house of worship) service, animals were sacrificed (put to death) so that the people of Israel could receive forgiveness of sins. This service helped point people to the future sacrifice (death) of Jesus Christ on the cross for their sins.

9. tabernacle—the place of worship or house of God in the wilderness (empty land); tent.

tion were children. Now God chooses to give hope to them. They are now adults. God uses the sacrificial system to teach them to hope in Him.

Numbers 28:1–8 describes the “daily” or “continual” offering of a lamb in the morning and one in the evening. It was arranged in such a way that this sacrifice¹⁰ always was burning (Leviticus 6:9, 13). This daily or continual offering was the centerpiece of the sanctuary.¹¹ It had importance over all other sacrifices. It was at the center of Israel’s worship. This sacrifice was a symbol (word-picture) of God’s love. It showed His continuing (ongoing) forgiveness of sin and His acceptance of us. This offering pointed to Jesus’ death on the cross. Jesus’ future death on the cross made God’s forgiveness and acceptance possible.



The daily sacrifice of the lamb was offered once in the morning and once in the evening. It was arranged in such a way that the sacrifice was always burning.

What does Romans 5 tell us about the fullness and completeness of Christ’s sacrifice for us?

On the Sabbath day, a special sacrifice was made. Two lambs, morning and evening, were sacrificed¹² (Numbers 28:9, 10). Then, Numbers 28:11–15 explained the sacrifices for the new moon. These verses were then followed by the verses about the festivals:¹³ Passover, Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Numbers 28; Numbers 29).

“Some wonder why God desired so many sacrifices. They wonder why He commanded the offering of so many bleeding victims¹⁴ in the Jewish system.

“Every dying victim was a symbol of Christ. This lesson was impressed on mind and heart in the most holy ceremony [service]. It was explained clearly by the priests. Sacrifices were planned by God Himself to teach His great and important truth. The blood of Christ alone forgives sins.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, page 107.

Why is trusting in Christ’s death on the cross the only way we can be saved? What happens if we start depending on ourselves? Why will

10. sacrifice—an offering given to God as an act of worship.

11. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times. Here the high priest offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

12. sacrificed—when something or someone is given up to save another person or thing; or to gain something that is wanted.

13. festivals—special holy days of feasting or celebrating.

14. victims—animals to be killed in the place of sinners.

we never be good enough to earn our salvation?¹⁵



The blood of Christ alone forgives sin.

WEDNESDAY—DECEMBER 16

KEEPING YOUR WORD (Numbers 30)

Read Numbers 30 about vows (promises) and oaths. What important principle can we learn from this chapter today? What does this tell us about the importance of our words? What warnings should we learn from the chapter too?

It is one thing to flat-out lie. That clearly is sinful and wrong. But that is not what is being talked about in the chapter. How often have we made a serious promise or a vow, in the Lord's name? Sure, we planned to keep it at the time. But later, for one reason or another, we break it.

In Numbers 30, we are dealing with vows made "unto the Lord." But really, when we as Christians say

that we are going to do something, we should keep our promise. What if we say we planned to keep our promises, but later were unable to do so? It will mean very little to the person who receives our promises. Maybe he or she will believe us again, maybe not. The important point is, how would it seem to people if we as Christians make promises but fail to keep them? What good is our religion if we do not keep our promises? That is why it is important that we be very careful in making promises. Otherwise, we might find ourselves in an embarrassing position if we fail to keep our promises.

"A Christian is honor-bound to keep his or her promise as long as it does not lead him or her to do a wrong act."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,¹⁶ page 506. In Israelite culture,¹⁷ failure to keep one's promise sworn in the name of God was called a sin. Really, failure to keep a promise is taking God's name in vain. This is very true if we are Christians who seek to do all things in the name of Christ.

How many times have you made promises to others, to God, or to yourself that you have broken? What can you learn from these experiences? What promises can you claim that will help prevent this from happening again and again?

15. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved.

16. *Patriarchs and Prophets*—patriarchs were leaders of God's people in early Bible times, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are given messages by God to give to His people.

17. culture—the way people live, dress, think, eat, and get along with one another.

THURSDAY—DECEMBER 17**ON THE BORDERS
(Numbers 32:1–5)**

After all this time, a new generation has arisen. This generation was more than ready to leave the wilderness.¹⁸ They finally were ready to have a home to call their own. Some people were more than ready to settle down.

What is going on here? Why would they ask this favor of Moses?

In Numbers 32:6–15, Moses gives his answer. He is not happy. He thinks their actions are sinful. He thinks it is a lot like what happened the last time the people were on the borders and ready to cross over. But this time, their reasons for not crossing over are different. The first time they were simply scared of the people in the land. They did not trust the Lord enough to go over. This situation is not the same. They are not afraid to go over. But they like it where they are and want to live there.

How did the leaders of Reuben and Gad answer Moses in Numbers 32:16–42? How did Moses answer them in return?

The people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad made an answer. The answer showed that they were willing

to fight for the rest of their countrymen. They wanted the land that they already claimed. But they were not going to be selfish about it. Yes, they liked very much what they claimed. But first they were going to make sure the rest of the Israelites got their lands too. Then they would settle down to enjoy their own.

Moses believed their willingness. But he warned them about not keeping their promise. If they broke their word, then, Moses said, “Your sin will find you out” (verse 23). But Moses accepted their vow and what they promised to do.

Think about your own relationship to the church group as a whole. How much do you give to the church? How much do you take from it? What does your answer tell you about yourself? At the same time, might there be times when you need to take more than you can give?

FRIDAY—DECEMBER 18

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Study the following verses about the points Moses gave to the second generation of Israelites. Moses’ points are based on the principle: “We have nothing to fear for the future, so long as we do not forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches*, page 196.

¹⁸ wilderness—an area in which few people live that is not used for farming and is more or less in its natural state.

- **Shittim plague in which 24,000 died (Numbers 25:9; Numbers 26:1).**
- **Korah's, Dathan's, and Abiram's rebellion (verses 9–11).**
- **Er and Onan, sons of Judah (verse 19).**
- **Nadab and Abihu, priestly sons of Aaron (verse 61).**
- **The first generation died in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua (verses 63–65).**

Most of these events listed by Moses were events the second generation experienced. Why bring up these sad events in Hebrew history? The apostle¹⁹ Paul explains, “These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who are living at the time when God’s work is being completed” (1 Corinthians 10:11, NIV).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How can one generation pass its values and beliefs to the next generation? Or can it? Or think about it this way: Should one generation expect the next one to have the same kind of experiences and faith that it had? Discuss.
- ② Think more about the question of what our role (work) is in the church. First, what is the role of the church as a whole? How do we fit in with that role? Should we always be giving? When is it the right time to take?
- ③ We have studied the children of Israel on the move in the wilderness. What mistakes did they make that we are in danger of making too? What important lessons can we learn from what they have done? What can we do to make sure that we do not fall into the same traps? Or if we already have, how can we get out of them?

¹⁹ apostle—a disciple (follower) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus returned to heaven.