

## NUMBERS 30

## A NEW BEGINNING (CONCERNING VOWS)

### AN OVERVIEW

Chapter 26 to 30 provides us with a break in the book of Numbers. Prior to chapter 26, the focus is on the first generation of Israelites who were delivered out of Egypt. In chapter 26, we were told that the first generation has perished and so from now on, it is a new start with the second generation of Israelites. Much of the materials in chapter 26/27 also points to this fresh start and the structure is as follows:

A fresh census (Chapter 26)

Zelophehad's daughters (Chapter 27:1-11)

- Clarification on the laws of inheritance for the promise land

New leaders for Israel (Chapter 27:12-23)

Sacrifice and worship in the promise land (Chapter 28-29)

On vows (Chapter 30)

These are all matters that have to do with life after possession of the promise land and they hold rich lessons for us,

### PART 4: CONCERNING VOWS

Read through chapter 30

Now chapter 30 and the preceding chapters (from 26 to 30) belong together. Discuss with your group the reason why we have chapter 30 in this section?

What are vows?

In verse 2, the original word for 'Man' do not necessarily refer to a 'male'. So we can re-read verse 2 as *"If a person [man] makes a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."* Now cross reference to Deuteronomy 23:21-23 and Ecclesiastes 5:1-7, would you modify your answer to the question "what are vows"?

Take the following verses and summarize the kinds of vows we see in the Bible:

Category 1 (Numbers 6:1-8):

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Category 2 (Psalm 56:12; 65:1; 116:12-19)

Category 3 (Leviticus 27:30-33; 1 Samuel 1:11)

Looking across the 3 categories, what can you say are the purposes of these vows?

Why do you think fulfilling our vows are important? Can you name a few reasons?

[Hint: Hebrews 6:13-20; Matthew 5:37; Matthew 5:48]

One particular emphasis of this passage is women who take vows. Looking at the passage we can see that there are no distinctions as to who can make vows. Both man and woman can make vows. But exceptions are given whereby woman can have their vows nullified. Name the 3 exceptions below:

Exception 1 (verse 3-5):

Exception 2 (verse 6-8):

Exception 3 (verse 9):

Conditions (verse 10-15):

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What is the meaning and relevance of this passage?

Husband and wife metaphor (see Isaiah 61:10; Jeremiah 2:32; theme of Hosea; Ephesian 5:2; Revelation 19:7, 22:17)

An example from Numbers 5:11ff

Why is the test so one sided? Is it possible that only the woman will commit adultery against her husband? So how do we look at 5:11ff?

There is anthropomorphic representation of Christ and his people hinted here in these passage. What does it mean? God (Jesus Christ) is the bridegroom and the husband of His people. We (nation of Israel in the O.T. revelation and the church in the N.T. fulfillment) are the bride. Can God be unfaithful? The answer is no, thus 5:11ff brings out only the case of the woman. In another word, we are often found to be unfaithful and to stray and the test is really meant for us!

So what is the relevance of Numbers 30 in the case of the woman making vows?

Take the current context (i.e. Israel in the O.T.)

Verse 2 can be said to be true for Yahweh.

Verse 3 ("in her youth") in the Scriptural context often points to Israel in her origin in Egypt (c.f. Hosea 2:15; Ezekiel 23:8, 19)

Question: What would be the consequence for Israel if they fail to pay her vow (covenant)?

What about her rash vows to follow after those pagan gods and idols (Ezekiel 20:32)?

So what does this passage teaches us about God?

What about us (the church) today?

See Jesus Christ in Numbers 30:15!

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