

Ir-ot-16

I Cannot Go Beyond the Word of the Lord
(Numbers 22-24; 31:1-16; See also Exodus 12:1-28; Leviticus 23:4-8)

By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background. “Numbers” verifies the Lord will bless Israel. He also reveals the **exact Times when He would bless them**. To learn more about how He foretold the precise times the Lord would bless Israel see www.thefinaldaysofawe.com .

I. Israelites being healed from fiery serpent bites by a serpent upon a brass pole (Numbers 20-21) was prophetic. It taught of Jesus Christ. So did the story of Balam and Balak.

A. In spite of both threats and bribes, Balaam the prophet could “not go beyond the word of the Lord,” and He could only bless Israel.

B. To understand more of this prophetic similitude we should remember that the ass which saved Balaam himself is a despised bearer of burdens

C. It **would be Jesus the Christ who, though despised and beaten, bore all men’s burdens and saved all mankind through His atoning sacrifice.**

D. The Savior **deliberately associated** Himself with this lowest of creatures by choosing to ride upon it into Jerusalem.

E. So this poor creature was an instrument of salvation, as was the serpent on the pole, and eventually as Jesus the Christ would be, for all mankind.

II. The story of Balak and Balaam shows the Lord will **ultimately** bless Israel (Numbers 22-24).

A. Does this story mean Israel will always be blessed *in spite* of what they do?

B. No. Remember the many examples which show when Israel has been disobedient she has been punished. (i.e., taken into captivity by Babylon, taken into captivity by Assyria; being conquered and scattered by Romans.)

C. There were many examples of Gentiles inheriting Israel’s blessings at times and becoming a part of God’s people (i.e., after most of Judah rejected Christ the gospel went to the Gentiles). **But then they became the New Israel.**

D. The Lord’s blessings would indeed be poured out on Israel, **but who made up “Israel” changed through the centuries.**

III. Clarification must be made: Genetic Israel would not always be blessed regardless of what they did, but *overall* they would be blessed. And especially believing Israelites in the Last Days would be, and are, being blessed.

A. In what ways are they blessed overall?

1. Jesus Christ would come to them and through them (Numbers 24:17).

2. While Israel would be cut off more than once, in fact for many centuries, and would be scattered while the Gentiles received the gospel, **in the last days they would again receive God’s Covenants** (Numbers 24:5-9).

IV. The Book of Numbers shows **precisely WHEN they would be blessed.**

A. Numbers 28 and 29 detail the holy observances God commanded which were previously given in Leviticus 23.

B. Through these Holy Days the Lord told precisely when His acts would save men.

C. While Israel kept these holy days in remembrance of past blessings, they were also prophetic of **greater future blessings**.

D. These holy days were divided into two groups.

1. The first group were observed at the time of Israel's first agricultural harvests.

2. The last group was to be observed in the Seventh Month at their final harvest.

3. So each set of Holy Days **taught of the salvation Jehovah would perform at both His First Harvest and His Final Harvest in the Last Days**.

The First Harvest

I. Passover (Numbers 28:16-8, 22, 24-5; Exodus 12:1-28; Leviticus 23:4-8).

Each sacrificed Passover lamb told of the **blessings which would come through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ**.

He was slain at the prophesied time, during the hours Passover lambs were being slain. His tomb was found empty, for as the lamb was totally consumed so His body had arisen in the Resurrection.

Through His shed lamb's-blood, **the depths of death would be Passed Over, men would be freed from the bondage of sin and death, and could inherit one of His Kingdoms**.

II. The Offering of the First Sheaf of the Harvest (Leviticus 23:9-14; Deuteronomy 26:1-4).

The offering of the first sheaf of the harvest taught of the blessing of Jesus' resurrection. The Lord commanded Israel that after they had entered into Canaan, they should bring a sheaf of the first ripe barley as an offering to the Lord. It was to be offered the day after the Sabbath at the time of Passover.

To keep this observance, the barley was always planted seventy days before Passover, in time to be ripened. The first sheaf was ritually cut down at the same time Jesus was taken down from the cross. This sheaf was taken to the temple where it was prepared and placed into a basket. Meanwhile, Jesus' body lay in the tomb.

On the first day of the week, the priest lifted up the sheaf as an offering to God.

On that same morning the barley sheaf was lifted up to God, Christ arose in resurrection, a living offering, thus becoming "the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20).

III. The Feast of First Fruits (Numbers 28:26; Leviticus 23:15-22).

The Lord also commanded Israel to count seven weeks from the time of the first fruit offering. The morning after (or the fiftieth day), was to be holy with many offerings made. These offerings would celebrate the gathering of the first fruits of the **wheat** harvest. **This feast also spoke of Christ's great blessings at His First Harvest**.

After Jesus' resurrection, he spent forty days preparing His apostles to bear witness of Him throughout the world. One vital step remained --- the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was to be a major force in helping gather the harvest which lay ahead.

When was this special promise fulfilled? It occurred on the Day of Pentecost, the Greek name for "the fiftieth day" or the Jewish holy day of the Feast of First fruits.

The first sheaf of barley offered fifty days earlier was symbolic of Christ, the very first fruit of the harvest from the dead. But this day, **the time of the wheat harvest, the first fruits obtained through the Spirit began to be gathered in, strengthening Christ's Church.**

On this day elders of Israel gathered to Jerusalem from many distant nations – to keep the Feast of First fruits. The Holy Ghost was poured forth as had been promised. Because of the Holy Ghost the apostles stood and bore witness that Jesus was truly the Messiah. And because of the Holy Ghost they spoke in tongues, in the tongues of those Jews who had come from many lands. Because of the Holy Ghost the hearts of many were penetrated. And that day nearly three thousand persons were baptized (Acts 2:41). Many of those baptized went back to their distant lands bearing witness that the Messiah had come. **This was the beginning of the harvesting of souls in the Meridian of Time --- the first fruits of the harvest of the Church of Jesus Christ.**

The Final Harvest

While the first three holy days taught of the blessings of Christ's first harvest, the holy days set for the seventh month and final harvest taught of his blessings in the Latter-days. [There would be a world-wide apostasy in between].

IV. The Feast of Trumpets (Numbers 29:1; Leviticus 23:23-25).

The Lord commanded Israel to blow trumpets on this feast day, to signify a call for Israel to awaken, repent, and gather. It was set for the time when Israel was to be blessed with the final agricultural harvest. **And it witnessed of the blessings of its *final spiritual harvest through Christ.***

Thus **it is extremely significant that the Golden Plates were delivered to Joseph Smith on the day the Jews were observing this Feast of Trumpets,** though this was unknown at the time. The angel Moroni who delivered those plates now stands on temple spires with a trumpet to his mouth proclaiming to all Israel it is time to waken and gather. And those records, now translated and spreading throughout the world are in fact bringing blessings to a latter-day Israel once scattered and in exile. (For further explanations see Lenet Hadley Read, "The Golden Plates and The Feast of Trumpets," *The Ensign*, January 2000; www.thefinaldaysofawe.com.)

Another Significant Witness of the fulfillment of Feast of Trumpets (Numbers 10:2-9).

The Lord commanded Israel that the blowing of trumpets was a signal they should gather to battle against those enemies who had oppressed them (Numb.10:2-9). This gives great significance to other events in the evening hours of September 22, 1827.

On that night, Heber C. Kimball recorded in his Journal that he and several others viewed together an amazing sight in the heavens. They saw an army marching across the heavens organized for battle. This vision went on for hours.

Others also saw this vision, which included Brigham Young who lived 45 miles to the East. He did not know Heber C. Kimball then, and neither had likely heard of Joseph Smith. Only much later did they learn that this very night Joseph Smith had received the Golden Plates. Not until the mid 1980's was it discovered this night was also the Feast of Trumpets and Israelite trumpets actually blown.

Alfred Edersheim (*The Temple*, p. 231;) explained that the trumpet was blown as signal for warfare, and that Israel was to assemble before the Lord “to be remembered and to be saved” (See also Numbers 10:9). This explains why the vision was of armies marching.

Furthermore, Numbers 31 is likely foreshadowing of this great latter-day battle.

V. The Day of Atonement (Numbers 29:7; Leviticus 23:26-32).

The holiest of all Israelite holy days, the Sabbath of Sabbaths, is the Day of Atonement, full of blessings through Christ. Anciently it was on this day the high priest entered the Holy of Holies, symbolic of entering the presence of God. Here he offered the blood of a goat which would atone for Israel’s sins, thus reuniting the repentant with God.

Christ performed His great work of atonement in the Meridian of Time. But for most, reunification with God remains incomplete. That will come only when we actually reenter His presence. Note that this day is to be a day of great “affliction of soul” (Numbers 29:7) Christ Himself warned of the great affliction to occur at His return. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (Matthew 24:21-2.) *The Book of Mormon* further reveals the affliction of soul which will occur at Christ’s return, which will be like His appearance made to Book of Mormon peoples. “O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out; then would our mothers and our fair daughters, and our children have been spared... And thus were the howlings of the people great and terrible” (3 Nephi 8:25).

This great affliction of soul will occur among the unbelieving and unrepentant as great destructions occur and the veil is finally rent and men behold their God, Jesus the Christ.

The Day of Atonement bore witness of Christ’s atonement wrought in the Meridian of Time but also of Christ’s return. For the believing and obedient there will be the blessings of reconciliation and reentrance into His presence, a prophesied portion of the Day of Atonement (one of the great steps of becoming “At-One.”)

VI. The Feast of Tabernacles (Numbers 29:12-38; Leviticus 23:34-44).

This last feast initially celebrated those times when Israel was sheltered by the Lord in the wilderness. But it is also a witness of the Millennium (Zechariah 14:16). Our true shelter then will be Jesus the Christ.

The ways ancient Israel kept this feast taught what the Millennium would be like:

1. They were to offer seventy (70) bullocks among lambs and rams. Jews and early Christians understood the number seventy symbolized all the nations of the earth. **The coming of people from all nations to celebrate this feast signified that in the Millennium all nations will acknowledge and worship Jesus Christ as Savior and King.**

2. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the completion of all the harvests of the year. The Millennium will truly be a celebration of Christ’s harvest. We will rejoice in that harvest which has already been brought in: the righteous from all previous dispensations, and all the deceased who will no longer be hidden as “dead,” but will arise and stand as souls harvested by Christ through His ordinances performed under His priesthood authority.

Obviously the full harvest will not be truly completed until the end of the Millennium. The wonderful news is **that at that time, every soul who has ever lived upon the earth will**

have heard the gospel preached without unrighteous restriction or influence, and all temple work will have been done for every receptive soul.

What great rejoicing there will be then in Christ's completed harvest!

This *Israel* will indeed be blessed. And its Numbers will be swollen with believing and repentant persons from all nations, all generations, and all ethnic backgrounds.

The Book of Numbers was full of prophecy. It told much about the future when some would be cut off from Israel's numbers. But it was also prophetic in telling the times when Christ would bless Israel.

Each of us must make our own choice of whether to "Numbered among Israel."

Again, here is a summary of **Israel's Times of Blessings**:

Christ's First Harvest

1. Passover = His Crucifixion:
2. The offering of the first sheaf of the harvest = His Resurrection
3. The gathering of *all* first fruits = Beginning of His First Harvest of souls.

Christ's Final Harvest

1. The Feast of Trumpets = Beginning of His Final Harvest of souls.
2. The Day of Atonement or At one ment = **A witness of The Second Coming of Christ (though not necessarily the exact time it will occur. For no one knows that time).**
3. The Feast of Tabernacles = The Millennium and the completion of His harvests!