



Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 5, Numbers (budd), 446pp

Philip J. Budd

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“This commentary is a product of extended reflection on the problems associated with the origins, exegesis, and interpretation of the Pentateuch. It builds on earlier researches into priesthood, and into the murmuring motif as exhibited primarily in the books of Exodus and Numbers,” begins the author in his preface. He goes on to explain, “. . . this book gathers together some of the relevant scholarly discussion pertaining to the book of Numbers, and . . . in certain respects it offers new ways of arranging the pieces, of looking at the background of the book, and at the possibilities of interpretation.”

In this commentary, Dr. Philip Budd divides the book of Numbers into three sections:

- Constituting the community at Sinai (1:1–9:14)
- The journey?its setbacks and success (9:15–25:18)
- Final preparations for settlement (26:1–35:34)

From this outline it becomes apparent that the book of Numbers accounts for that period of Israelite history known as the “wilderness wanderings,” which begins with the flight from Egypt and closes with the Israelites’ successful entry into the Promised Land. Here are explanations of the origins of Levitical priesthood, of Israel’s holy feasts, of the sobering results of rebellion against God, of the minutiae of the law, and of the blessings promised those who, like Caleb and Joshua, can “spy out the land,” assess its giants, and still live by faith.

While some modern readers feel distance from the Jewish laws for lepers, or the dietary requirements laid down in these writings, Dr. Budd shows the formative influence such material had in transforming the sons of Abraham into the nation of Israel.

Dr. Budd’s treatment gives due respect to the present canonical state of the text, while inquiring also into the forms in which much of this material must have been originally cast. His comments provide authoritative illumination of this important period in Old Testament history.



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