

## Numbers

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**GENESIS — was about CREATION** (beginnings). The creation of the heavens and earth. The creation and beginnings of mankind. In Genesis we see the first sin and we hear God make the first Gospel proclamation. All of that in the first three chapters. Genesis 12-50 dealt with God choosing a man named Abraham through whom God would create the nation of Israel — through that nation the savior of the world would come.

**EXODUS — was about REDEMPTION and INSTRUCTION.** By the blood of a lamb God redeemed Israel from Egypt. God's people moved from death and bondage in Egypt to the Government of God. God revealed to them how they are to live before Him and how they're to live with one another. He led the Israelites to Mount Sinai where they camped here for a YEAR (Numbers 10). During that year at the base of Sinai the 10 commandments are given; the Law is given; the design for the tabernacle is given and it is constructed.

**LEVITICUS — was about God's HOLINESS**

**NUMBERS — is about PREPARATION;** preparing the children of Israel for what they will face once they cross the Jordan and they enter into the Promised Land; preparation to further the Kingdom of God.

1. It pictures for us the work of God in preparing the New Testament church (you and me) to participate in the furtherance of His Kingdom

### 1. A FEW THINGS ON THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

1. The ancient title of this book was In the Wilderness. That title reveals the content of this 4th book of Moses. It tells us that this

book is going to follow the children of Israel in their journeying through the wilderness.

2. **It's the source of prominent N.T. Illustrations - Paul used these stories from the book of numbers to teach Corinthians lessons to strengthen our relationships with God**

### **NUMBERS TEACHES US ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF**

**DISOBEDIENCE** - In a perfect world, there would never have been the need for the book after this one "Deuteronomy" Let me explain.

3. **IMPORTANT!** This journey to the promise land was actually suppose to take 30 days from Sinai...It would end up taking them 38 years
4. Numbers tells us that the adults that were redeemed out of Egypt spent their lives wandering in the wilderness because of their unbelief — and died outside the promised land. Their children went into the land of promise orphaned
5. Deuteronomy means "Second Law." It's not new truth. It's old truth for a new generation. Moses is reiterating the law that was supposed to be taught to this new generation by their parents in the land of promise. We know that because God of what God says to the new generation in Deuteronomy 6:7

**THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK — Numbers divides fairly naturally into three sections.**

1. **Chapters 1-14** — deal with the first generation of Israelites that came out of Egypt.
2. **Chapters 15-20** deal with their wandering.
3. **Chapters 21-36** deal with the second generation, the new generation of Israelites that will go in to possess the land

promised by God to Abraham. They'll be instructed on what to do when they enter into the land

**Now, what I want to do...is back track and recap the first 10 chapters...and then pick it up in the 11th chapter**

## **NUMBERS 1**

### **God Numbers the people...**

We're told that all the men over 20 (he doesn't tell us where the cutoff point is). But here's the key — only those men over 20 and only those men who are able to go to war (v.3) In this first census God is counting only the people that are going to play a part in furthering the Kingdom

1. Understand the people of God were never meant to be spectators...but involved in the work of God

## **NUMBERS 2**

### **This chapter tells us about the set up of the camp...**

2. God's given the orders of how the camp should be organized and what he wanted was the 12 tribes were divided into four groups and the tabernacle right there in the center
3. **FIRST LESSON OF PREPARATION - KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE**
4. **Notice what the 12 tribes looked like when they were assembled the way God would have them be (Show slide) -**  
The Cross was not a mistake - Show slides what the camp looked like after God had arranged it
  - i) Your redemption was not an after thought to God...It was planed

- (a) Psalm 22
- (b) Isaiah 53

## NUMBERS 3-4

### These Chapters speak of God appointing the tribe of Levi into the Lords service as priest...

1. Remember — In chapter 1 they numbered the 603,550 guys whose job was to go to battle. In that numbering there was one tribe that didn't get numbered — the Tribe of Levi.
2. God said, Don't number those guys. Please know this — This was in no way an easy out — like a deferment in the draft! It's not that the tribe of Levi didn't go to battle
3. They were just called to engage in a different kind of battle — a different arena of warfare. It's interesting that the word used to speak of the Levites serving is a word that's is translated other places in the Old Testament as fighting a war. Instead of taking a physical sword and going into the field, they were going to fight for the spiritual maturing and development of the nation.
4. HERE'S THE PICTURE — God chose an entire tribe to do the work of the priest in the holy place...because the common folk were not allowed to enter

#### **(1) Big question - Do we still need a priest? - No**

- i) Jesus is our high priest and he made a way for us to come to God
- ii) Hebrews 10:19–22 (ESV) <sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by the new and living way that he

opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

## NUMBERS 5 & 6

In these chapters God calls the people the people to cleanse the camp from all impurities...

1. Last week we spoke about the fact that there were 2 types of “**impurity**” Morally and Ritually
  - (1) Ritually impure - skin disease, child birth, other bodily fluids - Not wrong, just don't go in to the presence of God in that state or you will die
  - (2) Morally impure - This requires confession and repentance and if needed restitution and sacrifice
  - (3) **Here's the picture:** All of this spoke of the fact that God though rich in love, is holy and will never tolerate sin in the camp

Chapter 6 spoke of something called the vow of the nazirite - This vow could be taken by anyone on the nation — no age restraint, no gender restraint, no time restraint

1. The vow of the Nazirite was all about consecration - During the duration of this time of special consecration you weren't to touch a dead body, you weren't to eat anything that comes from the vine, and you weren't to cut your hair. The cutting of the hair meant the end of the vow. You could do that at any time — at any time you could say, The time of my vow is completed — and signify it by cutting your hair

2. The most famous person associated with this vow was Samson. His was unique in that he was to be a Nazarite for life. Everyone knows that his demise was the cutting of his hair. For Samson to let Delilah cut his hair was essentially saying — I'm not committed to the Lord anymore. That was why his strength departed from him
3. But notice why, you would forsake those things - **V.2 To separate yourself TO THE LORD** - It was a time of growth in and commitment too the Lord - that was the whole purpose of it
  - (1) **That's important for us to remember** - It's not enough to be separated FROM the world, the power is in being separated UNTO Jesus
  - (2) **Here's the point:** We are not moral for "morality sake" we lay aside sin because it will stifle our **fellowship with Jesus**

### **Numbers 7 - Continues in the theme of consecration. There's an offering there by the leaders.**

In this chapter we see the leaders of the tribes of Israel bring an offering to the Lord...It's a big offering six wagons and 12 Oxen and they offered them to Moses for the service of the tabernacle

**Understand this!** None of what they offered to the Lord was required by God in the ministry of the tabernacle...but it was all useful. Especially the carts and the oxen!

1. The Levites rather were divided up into four groups. Aaron's group was the priests — then there were three other groups. Each of these three groups were given responsibilities, and those responsibilities were labor intensive
2. Some of the guys had to carry heavy silver blocks that were the foundation stones that the tabernacle was built on. It was their job

to carry them from camp to camp. I don't know if you've ever picked up a cinderblock — but imagine going on a day and a half journey and your job is to carry that cinderblock. That thing is going to get really heavy really quick.

3. **Here's what's sweet about this offering.** These men were the princes among the people — perhaps well off, successful, leaders — and they were looking at and thinking about these guys who are going to be doing the heavy lifting. They said, There's got to be a better way than throwing a heavy silver block on your shoulder and walking for a day. Let's build carts — **and we can give these guys carts and they can put those blocks on the cart and let the wheel and the oxen do the work!**
4. Now there were certain things that weren't allowed to be carried on carts — like the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. **But other things could be.**

(1) **Here's what's so beautiful about this** — it doesn't say that God told them to do it. They were just looking around — looking for needs they could meet. They said, We're here to help — we want to help you serve better, more efficiently so you can serve more effectively

(2) What a great way being a part of what God's doing — praying for the church, praying for what God's doing looking at how ministry can be done better.

(3) Look for ways to be helpful and generous

**Numbers 8 -10 are critical to the theme of preparation.**

The people are learning how to follow the Lord! They've been organized

1. **In Chapter 9** we learn that they were to move when the Lord moved (when the cloud by day or pillar of fire by night moved) and they were to stop when the Lord stopped

2. **In Chapter 10** we learn about two silver trumpets. Those trumpets were to be sounded to break camp and make camp. They were to be used to call the entire congregation to the tabernacle — they were used to call the leaders of the nation, and they were used to call people to war.
3. This is a picture of people moving in the will of God. Following God into His will!
4. *QUOTE: J. Sidlow Baxter — "Our motto must be this. The will of God, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else, always everywhere and at all cost."*
5. *"Our Lord's work for us is perfect. We must rest in it. Our Lord's word to us is perfect. We must live in it. And our Lord's will for us is perfect. We must walk in it."*

(1) **In Numbers 9-10 God is saying — just follow my instructions.** As Christians we don't have the cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night. We don't have the silver trumpets.

- i) But we do have the Light of God's Word and the Leading of the Holy Spirit.
- ii) **Here's the point:** God will get us where we need to be...He says, Walk by faith, obey His commands, and don't worry about the rest of the stuff

**NUMBERS 11-13** — we come to the place where we find out how an 11 day journey turned into 38 years of wandering. **Why? 3 reasons**

### **A. Complaining**

Numbers 11:1 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> And the **people complained** in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes, and when the Lord heard it, his anger was

kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp.

1. **The people went from groaning to grumbling.** They were groaning in Egypt under their cruel bondage. Now that they've been redeemed they've turned to grumbling and complaining. "I don't know why we have to move now — now is not a good time to move. Can't we wait two months — that would be a much better time to move"
2. **They had broken formation** - Here is tells us that God sent fire down and consumed the "outlying" or the "outer boundary" of the camp - **Back in Numbers 2** God made it clear where everyone was supposed to be. Who was supposed to camp on the outskirts? Nobody! There wasn't supposed to be anybody on the "outskirts! Everyone was assigned a place in the **insskirts**
3. The very first thing that started the process of 38 years of wandering was people deciding to be where they wanted to be, not where God wanted them to be.

## **B. Lust for things outside of God's will for their lives at that time**

Numbers 11:4–6 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> Now the **rabble** (mixed multitude) that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, "**Oh that we had meat to eat! <sup>5</sup> We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. <sup>6</sup> But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.**"

We're this group of people within the camp saying "**we're sick of manna. We don't want any more manna; we want meat**"

1. I don't think this is as much about the meat as I is about being dissatisfied about what God had already graciously provided for them...they we're ungrateful

God says fine. I'll send you meat! He sent quail! Enough quail to feed millions of people. They came in like waste high fastballs! The people took bats and whacked them. It says that they started devouring the meat — they gorged themselves.

Numbers 11:33 (ESV) <sup>33</sup> While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague. <sup>34</sup> Therefore the name of that place was called **Kibroth-hattaavah**, because there they buried the people who had the craving

The Graves of Lust. What an accurate picture of fallen culture — So many buried in Graves of Lust.

## **C. Disbelief**

### **NUMBERS 13**

This is the most famous part of the Book of Numbers. In Numbers 13 were told how 12 spies were sent into the land. The objective of the mission was NEVER about whether or not they should go into the land — or not go into the land. The objective was to see the goodness of the land — see the people that God was going to evict — see the enemies God was going to defeat.

They discovered that the land was good! It took two men to carry a single bunch of grapes. But then they saw the walled cities and the size of the warriors.

Numbers 13:26–31 (ESV) <sup>26</sup> And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and

showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup> And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup> However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup> The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.” <sup>30</sup> But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, **“Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.”** <sup>31</sup> Then the men who had gone up with him said, **“We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.”**

## NUMBERS 14

Numbers 14:1–9 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, “Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?” <sup>4</sup> And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” <sup>5</sup> Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. <sup>6</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes <sup>7</sup> and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.”

1. Think about this - 10 unbelieving hearts undermined the faith of millions! As a result they would spend 38 years wandering in the wilderness — it was a 38 year a death march — until every one of that generation would die.

2. Unbelief keeps us from walking in the abundant life that Jesus died to give to us

### 3. TENTH LESSON OF PREPARATION - UNBELIEF WILL KEEP YOU FROM ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR YOU

Those 38 years are recorded in Chapters 15-20

**NUMBER 16** — there's the account of a Levite named Korah and 250 others who resented the place God had given them in Israel and claimed that they had a right to do what Moses and Aaron were doing. The essentially dared God to something about their rebellion. That didn't end well!

Numbers 16:28–35 (ESV) <sup>28</sup> And Moses said, “Hereby you shall know that the Lord has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. <sup>29</sup> If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the Lord has not sent me. <sup>30</sup> But if the Lord creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, **then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord.**” <sup>31</sup> And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. <sup>32</sup> And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods. <sup>33</sup> So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from the midst of the assembly. <sup>34</sup> And all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up!” <sup>35</sup> And fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men offering the incense.

**NUMBERS 17** — God reaffirms the call of God on Aaron by causing the staff of Aaron to bloom and bear fruit. Dead sticks don't produce fruit. It was an absolute supernatural work of God!

1. **Application** — ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT FRUIT COMES FROM GOD NOT YOU

## The last part of the book takes us from Chapter 20 to the end

In this last section they will have three victories and one devastating loss. Their loss will not be in a battle — their loss will be in the form of compromised relationships and idolatry...yet amid all their failures God is still providing for them and showing them that he hasn't given up on them...

There are 3 stories in this book that I want to finish with, **they provide us with 3 sweet pictures of Jesus**

**1. THE WATER AND THE ROCK - NUMBERS 20** — Records the failure of Moses

Numbers 20:1 (ESV) <sup>1</sup> And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died was buried there

Think about we're they're disbelief began - Numbers 13:26 (ESV) <sup>26</sup> And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh.

1. You know what this means? This is the place where their wandering began 38 years ago. They had gone in one giant circle 38 years.
2. Moses' sister dies. Where? In the wilderness. Does she get to enjoy the fruit of the land? No She is the poster child of how GRUMBLING, CHASING AFTER THINGS OUTSIDE OF GOD'S WILL FOR YOUR LIFE, AND UNBELIEF keep us from receiving everything God has promised to us in Jesus!

They start complaining again

Numbers 20:2–9 (ESV) <sup>2</sup> Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. <sup>3</sup> And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! <sup>4</sup> Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? <sup>5</sup> And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.” <sup>6</sup> Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. **And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, <sup>7</sup> and the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,** <sup>8</sup> “Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and **tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water.** So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” <sup>9</sup> And Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

So God’s providing water for the people, He’s told Moses “Speak to the rock and water will come forth

Now, notice what happens next...

<sup>10</sup> Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: **shall WE bring water for you** out of this rock?” <sup>11</sup> And Moses lifted up his hand and **STUCK the rock with his staff twice**, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock.

2 failures here...

1. Moses tried to take credit for something that only God could do = **“SHALL WE BRING YOU WATER”**
2. **INSTEAD OF SPEAKING TO THE ROCK, HE STRIKES IT TWICE** - He misrepresents God - God still provided water for them but then he said to Moses **“You portrayed me as angry**

**towards them and I wasn't angry, so You're not going to lead the people into the promise land"**

3. Now, that seems like the harshest penalty ever right? you thought 3 strikes was bad? but Paul by inspiration of the spirit tells us why that was such a big deal to God
4. Think about this... **1 Corinthians 10:4 tells us That Rock was to be a picture of Christ**
  - (1) In Exodus 17 - We see Moses get water from the rock before - That time he STRUCK it!!
  - (2) This time He was suppose to CRY OUT to it!!
  - (3) **THATS A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE OF JESUS** - Jesus was Struck once for the sins of mankind, and when we cry out to it...He will give us water that satisfies our souls
    - (1) **He gives the water of life**
    - (2) **If you confess with your mouth Jesus is lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead...You will be saved**

## **THE BRONZE SERPENT - NUMBERS 21:4-9**

Numbers 21:4–9 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup> And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food." <sup>6</sup> Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. <sup>7</sup> And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the

people. <sup>8</sup> **And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.”** <sup>9</sup> **So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.**

You get bit by a poisonous snake — what's the cure? What do you do? Is the cure to look at a fake snake?

1. **John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15that whoever believes in him may have eternal life**
2. **Here's the point:** It's a miracle if looking at a bronze snake is going to cure you of being bitten by a poisonous snake. In the same way it's a miracle that believing in Jesus Christ can save a sinner.
3. Death to Life...is as simple as looking to Jesus in faith...
4. **LESSON OF PREPARATION - ALWAYS KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS SILLY TO DO SO**
5. Trusting Jesus Christ transforms your life. But the first step is simple belief. And that's found tucked away in the Book of Numbers.

## **BALAAM'S PROPHECIES - NUMBERS 22-24**

As The children of Israel are nearing the crossing point into the promise land the moabite king named BALAK is terrified of them so he sent for this mysterious pagan prophet named BALAAM to come and curse the children of Israel...so that his people would be so terrified, So Balaam begins to prophecy about the children of Israel, but every time He prophesies it's not bad, but it's actually really good stuff

and it all culminates in His final prophecy...

Numbers 24:17–19 (ESV) <sup>17</sup> **I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;** it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. <sup>18</sup> Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. <sup>19</sup> **And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!”**

1. This prophecy speaks of a king who would come out of the line of Jacob (Abraham’s grand son) who would vanquish evil and rule the world...Who would that king be?
2. Philippians 2:9–11 (ESV) <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father
3. **LESSON OF PREPARATION - ALWAYS REMEMBER JESUS IS KING...AND WHATEVER THE SITUATION MIGHT SAY, HE’S KING AND WILL DELIVER.**