

Numbers

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**

2. 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

Chapters 1-14 - is 3 parts

Part 1 - Chapters 1-4 "The organize"

So lets begin

Numbers 1:1–3 (ESV) ¹ The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, ² "Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, by clans, by fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male, head by head. ³

So God is saying Count the Men!

From twenty years old and upward, all in Israel who are able to go to war, you and Aaron shall list them, company by company.

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. In this first census God is counting only the people that are going to play a part in furthering the Kingdom

Numbers is about preparing them for battle. **They are going to conquer the land of Canaan.**

1. Now some would say "thats why I don't like God, because He sent His people to war to wipe out other people!"
2. The book of Numbers is a book about war: 3
3. **But you need to remember a few things:**

- (1) **War was a practical reality in the ancient Near East. Like all other nations back then, Israel had to fight to survive.** Israel's world was one in which "peoples [took] away land from each other by force."⁶ To keep their national identity, Israel would need to be prepared to do battle. Otherwise, they would not last
- (2) **Because God is holy, there comes a time—whether in this life or in the life to come or in both—when God must deal with unrepentant, wicked persons for the sake of his righteous character.** God wasn't wrong to bring judgment on corrupt Canaanite culture, and he was willing to receive any who would turn to him (as Rahab did) and **Geneses** tells us that they had 430 years to turn and chose not to
- (3) God directly punished the morally corrupt cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), but he indirectly punished the morally corrupt Canaanites by using Israel.
- (4) **God, who is the author and giver of life, is cheating no one by taking his life up again.** The suffering Job summarizes this nicely: "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21). It is God's prerogative to take the life he has given. He doesn't owe anyone seventy or eighty years of life. If God is punishing those who are corrupt and too far gone morally, God is not unjust in doing so

So God says count the men...

Numbers 1:46 (ESV)⁴⁶ all those listed were 603,550

Hey...not bad right? thats a lot of men!...But then in Numbers 13 we see them go in and spy out the land and their report is "We're gonna get slaughtered if we go against them

1. God didn't have the people number the army so they would say — 603,550! Nobody can stand against us! The point was this - Know your people. Organize them. But the numbers of men fit for war is not your source of strength or victory.
2. Ephesians 6:10 (ESV) ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the **Lord** and in the strength of **his** might.
3. Here's the point: Caleb and Joshua looked at the Lord. The other spies and the multitude of the people looked at the armies of the Canaanites.
4. **FIRST LESSON OF PREPARATION - IF YOU WANT TO BE PREPARED FOR ALL THAT GOD HAS FOR YOU - KEEP YOUR EYES ON HIM ABOVE ALL ELSE**

NUMBERS 2

Numbers 2:1–2 (ESV) ¹ The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ² “The people of Israel shall camp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers’ houses. They shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side

Numbers 2:17 (ESV) ¹⁷ “Then the tent of meeting shall set out, with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; as they camp, so shall they set out, each in position, standard by standard.

So here is the set up of the camp of Israel

5. 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
6. **FIRST LESSON OF PREPARATION - KEEP GOD AT THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE**

(1) God is always to be at the center of our lives as christians

(2) God is always to be at the center of our church

- i) Each person had their place
- ii) But Jesus is the center

(3) 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

This brings us to the third area of business and that is: “Who’s going to do the work of the ministry?”

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 ministry in the Tabernacle. An entire tribe is given to Aaron, the high priest, to minister to him.
 - (1) In the New Testament Jesus is called our great high priest - We don't need to a priest or some clergyman to represent us; we don't need a "go between"; we can go directly to the Father through our Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ
 - (2) And because Of Jesus look what the Net testament says about us!!! - 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
 - (3) **THIRD LESSON OF PREPARATION - UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE CALLED INTO THE SERVICE OF GOD** — God has chosen you to serve Jesus — the congregation of the redeemed and the house of the Lord. He not only chooses us to serve — He gifts us and organizes us for that work. We ought to be about the business of discovering our gifts, seeing where we fit, seeing how we can be a part of the Lord's work on earth, and then serve the Lord with all of our heart

Chapters 5-6 teach us that camp has to be holy.

NUMBERS 5 - (CLEANSE THE CAMP)

1. In Chapter 5 about things that they need to avoid - Last week we spoke about There types of “impurity” Morally and Ritually
 - (1) There were people that have become unclean by the behavior; they needed to be cleansed.

- (2) There are some people that are involved in sin; they need to repent. There are some marital problems, some unfaithfulness in marriage — and for the camp to be holy all of those things need to be addressed.
- (3) **FORTH LESSON OF PREPARATION** - before they go marching God says, You have to deal with the things that are wrong within - **Cleanse the camp**

Chapter 6 - (GROW IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD)

Numbers 6:1–2 (ESV) ¹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself to the Lord,

This vow could be taken by anyone on the nation — no age restraint, no gender restraint, no time restraint

1. The vow of the Nazarite 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) **FIFTH LESSON OF PREPARATION**— If we're going to move forward, make progress in the plan of God, **we need to be separated to Jesus - Grow in Him**

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

Numbers 7:2–6 (ESV) ² the chiefs of Israel, heads of their fathers' houses, who were the chiefs of the tribes, who were over those who were listed, approached ³ and brought their offerings before the Lord, six wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the chiefs, and for each one an ox. They brought them before the tabernacle. ⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, ⁵ "Accept these from them, that they may be used in the service of the tent of meeting, and give them to the Levites, to each man according to his service." ⁶ So Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levites.

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) **SIXTH LESSON OF PREPARATION** - Look for ways to be helpful and generous

Numbers 8 - We see that God giving some more instructions about the levites

1. **They were to be holy and all we're simply held to a different standard than the rest of the camp** - That's important for believers to

understand - You are called to be different, and it's gonna be noticeable to you camp

He also spoke about what to do when Levites time of service comes to an end

Numbers 8:23–26 (ESV) ²³ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴ “This applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall come to do duty in the service of the tent of meeting. ²⁵ And from the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the duty of the service and serve no more. ²⁶ **They minister to their brothers in the tent of meeting by keeping guard, but they shall do no service.** Thus shall you do to the Levites in assigning their duties.

It's important to understand that in God's service, “to everything there is a season” And sooner or later in the life of every servant, God will call you out of your post into a new one, their new post was not as spectacular but just as necessary

1. **SEVENTH LESSON OF PREPARATION - WHEN GOD SAYS “LET GO”...LET GO**

Numbers 9-10 - 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. 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) **EIGHTH LESSON OF PREPARATION** 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. It had its beginnings roots in two things — but their undoing was unbelief.

Numbers 11:1 (ESV) ¹ 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.

2 Things:

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.

Numbers 11:4–6 (ESV) ⁴ 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! ⁵ We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. ⁶ But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at."

Lets talk about this rabble or mixed multitude here...

When the Israelites left Egypt there were Egyptians who said that they didn't want to be Egyptians anymore. I don't want to be those guys; I want to be those guys. The rabble — **the mixed multitude were those who changed teams, but they didn't really commit to the Lord.**

1. It's like the person who comes to church because He got a DUI or He wants to serve at church because he's got to work off community service...But he really doesn't want to know Jesus
2. The rabble were men and women who had one foot in Egypt and one foot in the camp of the redeemed. They weren't fully

committed to the Lord. They weren't yielded to the Lord — they were yielded to the desires of the flesh. That didn't end so well

3. They said — we're sick of manna. We don't want any more manna; we want meat. 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) ³³ 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. ³⁴ 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.

- a) **NINTH LESSON OF PREPARATION - BE ALL IN WITH GOD**
- Because when the pressure hits...Whats in you all comet of you...so if theirs issues and unbelief...deal with it now

NUMBERS 13 — The big sin takes place in Chapter 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) ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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.” ³⁰ 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.**” ³¹ 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) ¹ Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. ² 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! ³ 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?” ⁴ And they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” ⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. ⁶ 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 ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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 - DISBELIEF WILL KEEP YOU FROM ALL THAT GOD HAS 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. They essentially dared God to something about their rebellion. That didn't end well!

Numbers 16:28–35 (ESV) ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ 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.**” ³¹ And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. ³² 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. ³³ 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. ³⁴ And all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up!” ³⁵ And fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men offering the incense.