

Numbers

“Preparing for Battle”

I. Introduction to Numbers

- A. Numbers is the 4th in a 5 part work written by Moses, called the Pentateuch
 - 1. By word count Numbers is the longest book in the Pentateuch and the 5th largest in the Old Testament.
 - It contains 36 Chapters and 1288 verse
 - 2. The central message is preparing the nation for battle
 - 3. Exodus spoke of redemption, Leviticus of worship and Numbers of preparation to further the kingdom of God.
- B. Numbers gets its name from a series of census taken in chapter 1, another in chapter 3 and finally one in chapter 26.
 - 1. This name is somewhat unfortunate since it reveals little about the purpose of the book and has discouraged its reading by some.
 - 2. Prior to the Septuagint, this book went by the name “In the Wilderness” from Numbers 1:1.
 - A much more revealing title
 - For this book follows the Children of Israel in their Wilderness journey
- C. Three reason to study Numbers
 - 1. It supplies the background for understanding the rest of Scripture. Much of what happens in numbers is referred to later.
 - Caleb’s heroics
 - National unbelief
 - Water from a rock
 - Bronze serpent
 - Balaam’s prophesy
 - Just to mention a few
 - 2. It illustrates key spiritual lessons.
 - a. As taught in 1 Corinthians 10:6-12, and Hebrews 3:16-19; warning against:
 - Lust (1Corinthians 10:6)
 - Idolatry (1Corinthians 10:7)
 - Sexual immorality (1Corinthians 10:8)
 - Tempting Christ (1Corinthians 10:9)
 - Complaining (1Corinthians 10:10)
 - Pride (1Corinthians 10:12)
 - Disobedience and unbelief (Hebrews 3:16-19)
 - 3. It is rich in messianic prophecy and types of Christ.

II. Numbers Outline

- A. Genesis covers 2500 years
- Exodus covers 82 years
- Leviticus covers 1 month
- Numbers covers 38 years
 - 1. Numbers follows the Children of Israel as they march through the wilderness and prepare to take the land.

2. God is training His people for the special role they will play in His plan of redemption.
 - a. It serves as a “How-to” Manual for the Nation
 - b. In many ways it is like a book of Acts for the Old Testament saints.
 - They will learn how best to further the Kingdom.
3. Numbers begins 13 months after leaving Egypt.
 - a. Israel has been camped at Sinai for 11 months
 - b. 19 days after Numbers begins, they will march toward the Promised Land.
 - c. Numbers tells the story of their journey through the wilderness.
 - Deuteronomy 1:2 explains that this was an 11 day journey
 - It took them 38 years

Let's see why . . .

B. Numbers Outline Defined

Numbers is a book on the move. One man referred to its contents as “Marching and Murmuring”

The book is naturally divided into 3 parts.

1. The First Generation – chapters 1-14
2. The Wandering – chapters 15-20
3. The Second Generation – chapters 21-36

III. The First Generation (Chapters 1-14)

These events fall into 3 groupings.

A. Organizing the People

1. Chapter 1 – First Order of Business
 - a. A census
 - b. Numbers 1:2-3 Count the men of war
 - c. Numbers is about preparing for battle to further the kingdom and illustrates the role of the New Testament church in reaching the world for Christ.
 - War mentioned 31 times
 - Battle 7 times
 - More than in any other book
 - d. The census reveals 603,550 soldiers
 - Application for N.T. believer.
 - Our confidence must not be in numbers
 - When no enemy was in sight, that seemed like a great army
 - When the Israelites saw the Canaanites, they seemed too few
 - Ephesians 6:10 - To be battle ready we must understand our strategy is in the LORD
2. Chapter 2 – Next Order of Business.
 - a. Where will they camp
 - b. Numbers 2:2 - Everyone shall camp by his standard or banner.
 - c. Tradition says the banners matched the color of the stones the High Priest wore for each tribe.
 - d. The Tabernacle was in the center and the people all camped around it to receive their marching orders.
 - e. Application for N.T. believer – Picture of 2 things:
 - Keep Jesus central
 - We each have a place in the church of Christ
 - Chapter 11 – Those on the outskirts of camp create problems and suffer judgment

- To be battle ready we must be part of the camp.
- 3. Chapters 3 & 4 – Third Area of Business
 - a. Who will do the ministry?
 - Numbers 3:11 – God selects the tribe of Levi instead the first born from every family
 - What are they selected for?
 - Serve the Lord, the people, the tabernacle
 - Word used to describe warfare
 - They fight fir the spiritual development of the congregation
 - b. Why were they selected? Exodus 32:25-28
 - Good with the sword
 - c. Application for N.T. believer
 - To be battle ready we must be good with the sword of the Spirit
- B. Instructing the People Chapters 5 - 10
 - Chapters 1-4 Dealt with outward organization
 - Chapters 5 - 10 Deal with inward condition
 - The camp must be holy
 - Four areas addressed
 - 1. Chapter 5 – Some things must be avoided
 - a. What defiles the camp must be removed
 - 2. Chapter 6 - Some things must be encouraged
 - a. The Nazarite Vow
 - Designed to challenge Israel to a deeper commitment
 - b. Nazarite – separate
 - Call to separate from the world, to the Lord
 - c. Application for the N.T. believer
 - Identity in Christ
 - To be battle ready we must be dedicated to Christ
 - 3. Chapter 7 & 8 – Some things must be given Verse 2 – Leaders offer carts.
 - a. Not essential, but helpful for ministry
 - 4. Chapter 9 – Something must be central
 - a. Numbers 9:17 – must ;earn to follow the Lord
 - b. Notice, it was when they were camped under the banner that they would best recognize the leading of the Lord
 - c. Application for the N.T. believer
 - To be battle ready, we must follow the Lord
 - 5. Chapter 10 (11-14) Journey to Kadesh
 - a. Keep this in mind: 2 million people camped around the Tabernacle, the cloud lifts, the trumpet blasts, and the march begins.
 - b. 10:35-36 Tells us they sang worship as they went
 - c. Deuteronomy 1:2 tells us this was an 11 day journey
 - d. It took them 38 years. Why?
 - 6. Chapters 11 – 12 Three Little Sins
 - a. Complaining (11:1-3)
 - Outskirts – Those who did not camp within the congregation
 - b. Lust (11:4-35)
 - Mixed multitudes fellowshipped with godly
 - c. Power struggle
 - Personality conflict
 - 7. Chapters 13 – 14 Big Sin
 - a. 12 leaders sent to spy out the land; look for 3 things
 - Was it a good land?

- Are the people strong?
- Are the cities fortified?
 - They found that they were
- b. The Israelites are filled with fear.
 - They look at the obstacle instead of the Lord
- c. Joshua and Caleb plead with the people
- d. The people refuse to enter and are left to wander
- e. Key verse 14:25
- f. Key lesson: Little sins lead to big failures

III. The First Generation, Part 2 Years of Wandering (Chapters 16-20)

- A. 35 years of wandering covered in 5 short chapters
- B. 3 main events
 1. Chapter 16 - Fighting for the priesthood
 2. Chapter 17 – Fruitfulness in ministry
 3. Chapter 20 – Failure at Kadesh
 - Miriam dies
 - People complain
 - Moses reacts
 - Death of Aaron

IV. The New Generation

40 years have passed and a generation has died in the desert. A new generation arises and their story begins.

- A. First they make their way back to Kadesh (J.S.B. pg. 180)
- B. Their journey includes:
 1. Chapter 21 – 25 Battles
 - a. Victories
 - Arad
 - Sihon
 - Og
 - b. One devastating loss
 - Balaam (25:1-3)
 2. Chapter 26 A second census
 - a. Have they grown in the wilderness
 3. Chapters 27 – 30 Reminders about worship
 - a. Joshua chosen (27:12-23)
 4. Chapter 32 Temptation to quit
 - a. Rueben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh chose to settle for what is east of the Jordan.
 - We've come far enough
 5. Book closes with instructions for entering the land.
 - 6.

V. Types of Christ in Numbers

- A. Chapter 21:4-9 The bronze serpent
 1. John 3:14-17