

NUMBERS (Teacher's Edition)

Part One: The Preparation of the Old Generation to Inherit the Promised Land (1:1--10:10)

- I. The Organization of Israel 1:1--4:49**
 - A. Organization of the People 1:1--2:34
 - B. Organization of the Priests 3:1--4:49
- II. Sanctification of Israel 5:1--10:10**
 - A. Sanctification through Separation 5
 - B. Sanctification through the Nazirite Vow 6
 - C. Sanctification through Worship 7:1--9:14
 - D. Sanctification through Divine Guidance 9:15--10:10

Part Two: The Failure of the Old Generation to Inherit the Promised Land (10:11--25:18)

- I. The Failure of Israel En Route to Kadesh 10:11--12:16**
 - A. Israel Departs Mount Sinai 10:11-36
 - B. Failure of the People 11:1-9
 - C. Failure of Moses 11:10-15
 - D. God Provides for Moses 11:16-30
 - E. God Provides for the People 11:31-35
 - F. Failure of Miriam and Aaron 12
- II. The Climactic Failure of Israel at Kadesh 13:1--14:45**
 - A. Investigation of the Promised Land 13
 - B. Israel Rebels against God 14:1-10
 - C. Moses Intercedes 14:11-19
 - D. God Judges Israel 14:20-38
 - E. Israel Rebels against the Judgment of God 14:39-45
- III. The Failure of Israel in the Wilderness 15:1--19:22**
 - A. Review of the Offerings 15
 - B. Rebellion of Korah 16:1-40
 - C. Rebellion of Israel against Moses and Aaron 16:41-50
 - D. Role of the Priesthood 17:1--19:22
- IV. The Failure of Israel En Route to Moab 20:1--25:18**
 - A. Miriam Dies 20:1
 - B. Moses and Aaron Fail 20:2-13
 - C. Edom Refuses Passage 20:14-21
 - D. Aaron Dies 20:22-29
 - E. Israel's Victory over the Canaanites 21:1-3
 - F. The Failure of Israel 21:4-9
 - G. Journey to Moab 21:10-20
 - H. Israel's Victory over Sihon 21:21-32
 - I. Israel's Victory over Bashan 21:33-35
 - J. Failure with the Moabites 22:1--25:18

Part Three: The Preparation of the New Generation (26:1--36:13)

I. The Reorganization of Israel	26:1--27:23
A. The Second Census	26:1-51
B. Method for Dividing the Land	26:52-56
C. Exceptions for Dividing the Land	26:57--27:11
D. Appointment for Israel's New Leader	27:12-23
II. The Regulations of Offerings and Vows	28:1--30:16
A. The Regulations of Sacrifices	28:1--29:40
B. The Regulations of Vows	30
III. The Conquest and Division of Israel	31:1--36:13
A. Victory over Midian	31
B. Division of the Land East of Jordan	32
C. The Summary of Israel's Journeys	33:1-49
D. Division of the Land West of Jordan	33:50--34:29
E. Special Cities in Canaan	35
F. Special Problems of Inheritance in Canaan	36

AUTHOR-

Moses is the author of this book as was discussed in Genesis about the first five books of the Bible. One thing to note is that although there are **third person** references to Moses, use of **the third person** by an author was extremely common in Moses' day, and this is consistent in the first five books.

WHEN THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN-

Here is an interesting note: Leviticus was written covering **one month** of time (the time the Israelites were in front of Sinai). The book of Numbers covers their wanderings for over a **thirty-nine year period** (1440-1405 B.C.)! Moses must have written Numbers some time just before his death as the Hebrew people prepared to enter the Promised Land. This would place the time of writing at about 1404 B.C.

ABOUT THE BOOK-

This book gets its name from **the two censuses** in found in chapters 1 and 26. It is actually a **sequel** to the Book of **Exodus**. Exodus follows the Hebrew people as they escape from slavery in Egypt, cross the wilderness, and arrive at Mount Sinai, where they receive the Ten Commandments and other parts of God's Law. The Book of Numbers picks up this story with the people still at Sinai. It follows their wanderings through the Wilderness of Sinai for the next 40 years until they finally arrive at Moab on the eastern side of the Jordan River, ready to occupy the land of Canaan. These wanderings deal with the **failure of the redeemed people** in the face of every **divine provision** for their **welfare and success**.

Just as Moses is the central figure in Exodus, he also is the dominant personality in Numbers. His leadership ability is pushed to the limit in Numbers as the people

grumble about everything from the food they have to eat to the water supply. Time after time God supplied their needs by sending manna, quail, and water; but still they cried out in a **stubborn spirit**. Finally, in exasperation, Moses struck a rock with his rod to produce drinking water. This was a **clear violation** of God's command, since He had instructed Moses to **speak to the rock**. Because of his disobedience, Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. He died shortly after viewing the land at a distance from atop Mount Nebo in Moab (Deut 34).

The Book of Numbers presents the concept of **God's correcting wrath** upon His own disobedient people. Through their **rebellion**, the Hebrews had broken the covenant. Even Moses was not exempt from God's wrath when he disobeyed God.

But even in His wrath, God **did not give up** on His people. While He might punish them **in the present**, He was still determined to bless them and bring them **ultimately** into a land of their own. You might say that the book of Numbers shows that side of God He is **slow to reveal** but **WILL reveal**- His **anger**.

Numbers demonstrates (especially through the story of the spies) the **horrifying consequences** from being **faithless and negative**. When God speaks a promise we should respond with **optimism not pessimism**. The repeated **grumbings** of His people in light of His continual **provision** teach this generation in America to MAINTAIN an attitude of **gratefulness** even if we have "needs".

The book of Numbers so well illustrates the fact that God is loving and merciful, and yet He **is also just**: when repeatedly **rejected and disobeyed** He must and will judge and chastise- severely if need be!

A BASIC ASSESSMENT OF NUMBERS (THE BASIC THEME)-

This wonderful book speaks volumes to us on a wide variety of subjects. It emphasizes the fact that whatever you do, **don't make moves** unless God is leading you (see 9:15-23). It also emphasizes that **organization** is a key to effective forward movement for the Kingdom- AS LONG AS THE STRUCTURE COMES FROM GOD! Organization and its disciplines are not **a hindrance to freedom** when all is submitted to God; it **releases** the fullest possibilities of **growth and grace**.

Obviously, with structure come people in positions of authority. If a people or an army is to move efficiently and effectively, they must obey chains of command. Numbers deals with these issues by pointing out an assortment of lessons. We learn in chapters 16 & 17 that rebellion against God's appointed leaders brings nothing but **death** and the end of **potential promise**. In 12:1-16 we see that **jealousy and self-seeking** pursuit for position will inevitably bring shame and decay. And perhaps most humbling for those in leadership, we learn in 20:1-29 that leaders who **lose patience** with their people embarrass themselves, reflect poorly on God, and ultimately block their own **future effectiveness**.

Another theme that is repeated as a lesson throughout the rest of the Word, it is that complaining and murmuring should never be allowed to get a hold of God's

people's hearts. In fact, the book lambastes the idea that we can complain and have God just deal with it- see **Numbers 11:1-3**.

But if there is one key lesson that this book teaches us, it is that there can be no conquest or victory in our lives apart from **struggle and warfare**. We as God's people must do more than "believe in our heads". We are to have complete trust, a trust that leads to **bold action** in a **right spirit**. Our lack of total trust is unbelief that leads to rebellion. It leads to lost "God" opportunities and delays or eliminates the fulfilling of His intended promise for our lives.

A POSSIBLE KEY WORD-

I think the key word should be "**WANDERINGS**" since the book is a record of the failure of Israel to believe or trust in the promise of God with the result of wandering in the wilderness. We could also use the term "**lost opportunity**".

KEY VERSE(S) AND CHAPTER(S)-

The pivotal verses in Numbers deal with the critical mistake of people and leader. That is why I choose: **Numbers 14:22-24 & 20:12** with my key chapter the pivotal **Numbers 14**.

The reason for all this deals with the reality of what God has been trying to get across from the Garden of Eden. He is God and should be trusted and obeyed. These two things show respect and honor. To lack trust is to lead to disobedience that will lead to a public dishonoring of God. In a very real sense, a lack of trust dishonors Him as God and makes us seem better than Him! Yet in spite of all this, God was merciful in His judgment of the people, making sure in their wanderings they were still well taken care of- see Deuteronomy 8:4. Also note that key to Spiritual leadership is the necessity of leading the way in trusting God!

JESUS REVEALED IN THE BOOK-

- The priesthood is a type of Jesus our high priest
- **Jesus is shown in the Passover for He is our Passover**
- **In Numbers 20, Jesus is the Rock! 1 Corinthians 10:4 tells us that Jesus was the rock that followed them and provided their spiritual drink.**
- **How about Numbers 21:8 and the snake on the pole (see John 3:14)**
- Joshua himself is a type of Jesus as he had Jesus name

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE BOOK-

- **He is directly spoken of in chapter 11 as anointing for leadership and inspiring prophecy**
- **The seven lamps in Numbers 8 show the seven-fold nature of the Spirit as mentioned in Revelation 4:5**
- **How about God speaking in Numbers 7:89?**
- **How about the cloud in Numbers 9 leading them?**

- All the miracles: from earthquakes to rods budding to Balaam's inability to prophesy anything but blessing
- Joshua was filled (the only one in the OT)

SOME TRUTHS AND APPLICATIONS-

Numbers 6:1-8

This is the Nazarite vow as God called Samson to. Holiness means separation! Strength comes from separation- let's be a separate people-not self-righteous!

Numbers 25:1-5, 16-18

We must guard against sexual immorality! If we compromise our sexuality, we destroy our spiritual strength. Our greatest source of compromise will come from relationships not ordained of God. Note: when Balaam could not curse Israel, he counseled how they could be destroyed and was judged for it- see Numbers 31:8, 15-16.

Numbers 12:3-7

Consider this praise about Moses! It is related to his response to his own family's insubordination. When faced with sharp criticism be like Moses (and reveal true meekness). He does not defend himself or say anything, but lets God speak for him. Humility expresses complete dependence on God and the truly meek entrust themselves only to Him. With the Spirit of God inside of us, we can take the high road of submission and suffering, following Christ's example as shown in 1 Peter 2:23.

Numbers 22: 32

Not all restraints or oppositions in your life come from the devil. God will often stand in your path if you are being reckless in your ways.

A Brief Lesson to be Shared

Guidelines for Growing in Godliness

Numbers gives several important guidelines for building a life that increases its capacity for God. Becoming godly does not happen automatically through exposure to religious activity or by watch others exercise their religion. Rather, it is the result of a conscious pursuit of God. From the way we regard the community of God (the church) to the way we embrace the truths of our redemption, every aspect of godly living is important.

What the book of Numbers taught us regarding this:

1) **1:49–51** We should honor the pastoral position. Ministers are really gifts from the Lord to the church, no matter what bad experiences we may have had in the past (see Eph. 4:10–13).

2) **2:2, 17** We should gather as often as possible with God's people. We should make gathering with Christians, especially around the study of the Bible, a central part of our life.

3) 9:2, 3 We should set apart regular times in our lives where we celebrate what God did for us by sending Jesus to die for our sins. All our special moments shouldn't just be for a raise we got, or a worldly accomplishment.

4) 21:8 We need to ask ourselves this question: "Are we only looking to Jesus to be forgiven of our sins, or do we trust our own good works. See John 3:14-16.