

The book of **NUMBERS**



Lesson One: Introduction

Lesson 1	Introduction	
Lesson 2	Census and Centrality of God	Chp 1-4
Lesson 3	Laws About Purity	Chp 5-9
Lesson 4	God Leads, People Complain	Chp 10-12
Lesson 5	Spies Sent Out and Return.	Chp 13-15
Lesson 6	Korah Rebels	Chp 16-19
Lesson 7	Moses Strikes the Rock	Chp 20
Lesson 8	Curse of the Serpents	Chp 21
Lesson 9	Balaam	Chp 22-25
Lesson 10	End of An Era	Chp 26-27
Lesson 11	A Nation Prepares	Chp 28-32
Lesson 12	A Look Back	Chp 33
Lesson 13	Preparing for Possession	Chp 34-36

The book of NUMBERS



Lesson One: Introduction

The Pentateuch (Five Books of Law)

Our Old Testament begins with the five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch. These books serve as an introduction to the history of Israel in the Promised Land. Genesis begins with the creation of the world and slowly narrows its scope until we see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (whose name is changed to Israel) located in Egypt. Exodus opens with Israel in slavery and cover's Moses' call to leadership and Israel's departure from Egypt to Mount Sinai. Leviticus reveals God's Law to Israel. The Book of Numbers begins one year after the reception of the Law of Moses and covers the journey of the nation to the edge of the Promised land over a course of about forty years. Deuteronomy is a final sermon given by Moses summarizing the Covenant and encouraging the nation as they prepare to take possession of the Promised Land.

The Background of the Book of Numbers

Numbers tells of Israel's journey from Mount Sinai to the borders of the Promised Land, summarizing thirty-nine years of the nation's history. After Israel was freed from slavery and received the Law (Exodus and Leviticus), Numbers begins with the people's preparations to leave Sinai. It then records their triumphal setting out, before a series of events in which people grumbled about the difficulty of the journey and the impossibility of conquering Canaan. This leads God to delay their entry into Canaan by forty years so that a new, faithful generation arises. The closing chapters of the book tell how the people at last set out again and reach the banks of the Jordan, ready to cross into the land promised to their forefathers. The author of the Book of Numbers is Moses. With his background as a Levite, he focuses this book on three main characters: God, the Nation of Israel, and the Tribe of Levi.

Outline and Pacing of the Book

Numbers consist of three major blocks of material describing events and laws that happened in three locations where Israel camped for a significant amount of time. These places are Sinai (Chapters 1-10), Kadesh (Chapters 13-19), and the Plains of Moab near the Jordan River (Chapters 22-36). These three blocks are linked by two short travel periods recording what happened on the way from one camp to the next.

1 or 1a

2

3

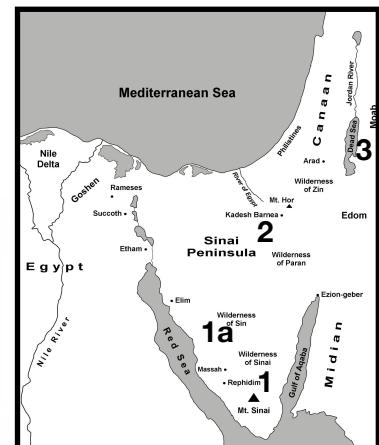
Law Giving
at Sinai
Exodus 19:1-
Numbers
10:10

Journey
from Sinai
to Kadesh
Numbers
10:11-12:16

Law Giving
At Kadesh
Numbers 13:1-
19:22

Journey from
Kadesh to the
Plains of Moab,
Numbers 20:1-22:1

Law Giving
On Plains of
Moab
Numbers 22:2-
36:13



Major Events and Lessons From the Book

The book as a whole has much to teach Christians today. As Israel began her spiritual journey with God, the Lord made his presence in the middle of them through the tabernacle. When they prepare to move they are organized into a military formation, marching through as a conquering army with the Lord at her head, to establish his kingdom in the Promised Land. The book graphically displays the nation's identity as the redeemed of the Lord, establishing God's Kingdom on earth. God's purpose in history is shown as his people invade the arena of fallen humanity and exalt the name of the Lord.

One of the more interesting and referenced characters in the New Testament found in the Book of Numbers is Balaam (Numbers 22-24). This man is a prophet who was hired by Balak, King of the Moabites to curse Israel. Balaam appears to be a righteous man saying he cannot prophesy anything apart from the word of God. His story is a lesson in worldly compromise, greed, and corruption. Not able to speak evil against Israel, Balaam worked hard to do something at least to hamper God's people. Because of this he was rebuked by his own donkey, 2 Peter 2:15-16. Secondly he was motivated by greed, Jude 11. His desire for wealth offered up by the King of Moab caused him to rebel against God and continue to help Israel's enemies. Not able to speak evil prophecies against God's people, he instead encouraged the Moabites to seduce Israel with loose women, Revelation 2:14. Because of this 24,000 Israelites died.

Numbers also shows the discipline of God's wrath against his disobedient people. When Israel refused to obey God after hearing the doubts of the 10 spies, the nation was left to die as God raised up new people who would be obedient to him. Even Moses, the great prophet was not immune to punishment when he disobeyed. In Numbers 20 we see the end of Miriam, the sister of Moses and the punishment of Moses for his pride and disobedience. This book clearly shows God's wrath intermingled with his mercy.

The Book of Numbers works as an illustration of how God fulfilled his promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. First of all, the book shows the fulfillment of the promise of land as the nation travels to receive its home. Secondly, the book shows the numerous descendants. Abraham had been promised that his descendants would be as many as the stars in heaven (Genesis 15:5). Jacob's family consisted of just 70 persons when he entered Egypt (Genesis 46:27). Now they had increased immensely. The first census (Numbers 1:1-46) shows that the fighting men numbered 603,550. That did not include women and children. When Balaam saw Israel's camp he said, "Who can count the dust of Jacob or count the fourth part of Israel?" (23:10) Thirdly we see the covenant relationship with God. The essence of the covenant was "You shall be my people and I shall be your God." The Lord's presence with Israel is constantly highlighted through the Book of Numbers.

1. Who are three main people or groups that Numbers focuses on and why?
2. What were three sins of Balaam in the book that are referenced in the New Testament?
3. In what ways does the book show the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?

The book of **NUMBERS**

Lesson Two: The Census, Chapters 1-4



The Book of Numbers received its name in the Latin and English translations because of the census at the beginning and end of the book. In the Hebrew Bible it is known as “The Book of the Wilderness.” It has also been called the Book of Journeyings or the Book of Murmurings. It is a book of transition, setting aside the old nation because of unbelief (chapters 1-20) and then preparing the new generation to inherit the Promised Land (Chapters 21-26).

The People Are Numbered, 1:1-54

A month after the tabernacle was built, preparations began to conquer the Promised Land. One of the first things to do was to take a count of the army. Therefore Moses and Aaron chose representatives of each tribe and clan within them to count the number of fighting men available. The number of each tribe combined with the others, excluding the Tribe of Levi, came to 603,550 men over 20 who were of age to fight. When women, children, and men under 20 and over 60 are added to that number, the population of Israel was probably around two million people. There were seventy people who left the Land of Canaan to go to Egypt (Genesis 46:27) and they stayed in Egypt for over 400 years. From 70 to 2 million in that amount of time figures to be about 2.4 percent growth a year. This is robust but seems reasonable due to God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and the Egyptian concern over the Israelite’s fertility in Exodus 1:12-16.

Placement of Tribes Around Tabernacle, 2:1-34

In Exodus 32, the Nation of Israel grew tired of waiting for God and Moses on Mount Sinai. Therefore they built a golden calf to represent the gods who freed them from Egypt. This sin that broke the first two of the Ten Commandments was punished severely. It also represented the need for the Tabernacle so that God would be plainly seen to be among his people. When Israel was camped at a location, the twelve tribes were to camp in a ring about the tabernacle so as to be near the presence of God. On the east side was Judah, with Issachar and Zebulun. On the south side was Reuben, with Gad and Simeon. On the west side was Ephraim, with Benjamin and Manasseh, and on the north side was Dan, with Asher and Naphtali. Within the circle of tribes were located the portions of the tribe of Levi. The Priest of Kohath were on the side of Judah, the Levites of Kohath were on the side of Reuben, the Levites of Gershon were by the side of Ephraim, and the Levites of Merai were on the northern side near Dan. As the nation marched, it was led by the ark and Judah’s group, followed by Reuben’s group with the tabernacle in the center. Then came Ephraim’s group followed by Dan’s group. In every instance, the Lord’s house remained in the center of the camp.

Israel In Camp



North

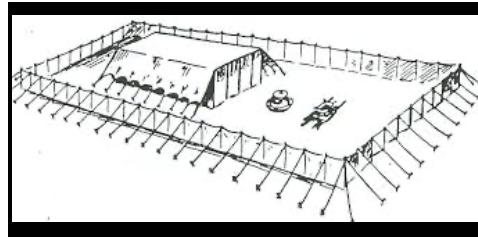
Asher DAN Naphtali

(Merari)
Levites

Benjamin

EPHRAIM (Gershon) Levites

Manasseh



(Kohath)
Levites
(Sons of
Aaron)
& Moses

Issachar
JUDAH
Zebulun

(Kohath)
Levites

Gad REUBEN Simeon

The Levites, Chapters 3 & 4

Levi was the third son of Jacob but his tribe was chosen to be the special servants of Israel because of their zeal in defending the Lord, Exodus 32:26-29. The tribe of Levi was also chosen for the task of leading the worship of Israel because they represented the firstborn (first fruits) of the nation of Israel, Numbers 3:40-50. During the 10th plague, the Lord slew the firstborn of every citizen and animal in Egypt. Because of their obedience, the Nation of Israel had been spared of this death. Instead, the Lord required the first born of every family; symbolized in taking the Tribe of Levi as servants of God. This Tribe would not inherit a portion of land like the other tribes but would instead be spread throughout the land in order to serve God specifically. While through the nation's history, the first born of every animal had to be sacrificed to the Lord, for Israel this first born sacrifice was symbolized by the Tribe of Levi which was set apart for service to God. The two main tasks of the Levites were to guard the tabernacle and to conduct the worship at the tabernacle.

The first High Priest was Aaron. Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Each of these sons also acted as priests in the tabernacle. In Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu were punished for incorrect worship. Therefore Eleazar and Ithamar and their sons filled in as priests at the tabernacle. Levi, the father of the tribe, had three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Shimei, Genesis 46:11. Moses and Aaron were descendants of Kohath. Aaron's sons were in charge of the entrance of the tabernacle and worship within God's House. The rest of the Kohathites camped on the south side of the tabernacle and were in charge of transporting ark and the holy furniture. The Gershonites who camped on the west side of the tabernacle were responsible for transporting the curtains and hangings from the house of God. Finally the Merarites camped on the north side of the tabernacle and were in charge of the structural components of the tabernacle such as the frames, pillars, pegs, and cords.

- 1.What are some alternative names for the Book of Numbers? Which do you think is best?
2. Why do you think God always placed himself in the middle of the camp?
3. Why was the Tribe of Levi in charge of worship for the Nation of Israel?

The book of **NUMBERS**

Lesson Three: Purity, Chapters 5-9



One of the primary purposes of the Old Testament is to show God's holiness and man's need for redemption so that he can follow God in holiness. Before Israel is able to begin the journey to the Promised Land, the camp must be cleansed from everything that is unholy. The concept of uncleanness (that which disgusts God) is a very important theme of Scripture and is more fully explained in Leviticus 11-16. Biblical uncleanness ranges in seriousness from mild uncleanness (marital sex, Leviticus 15:18), to moderate uncleanness (skin diseases of Leviticus 13), to severe uncleanness such as disobedience, idolatry, adultery, and murder. People who were unclean were not allowed to participate in worship. The Day of Atonement was designed to cleanse the tabernacle once a year (Leviticus 16). These regulations found in Numbers 5-6 are designed to eliminate sin from the camp so that God will remain with his people as they travel. They show how important God is and our need to prepare to be in his presence. Beginning in Numbers 5:6 the Law is given concerning making things right among brethren. When a person wrongs his neighbor and realizes his guilt, he is to make restitution with his neighbor plus twenty percent. But if his neighbor has passed away and there is no next of kin, he is to give that restitution to the Lord through sacrifice. If a man suspects his wife has committed adultery against him, he is to take his wife to the priest. If she claims innocence, the Lord gives a series of actions that show the seriousness of the situation. A prayer is prayed that if she is guilty she will be punished and if she is innocent then she will remain unharmed.

The Nazarites, 6:1-21

A Nazarite was someone who desired to have an extra dedication to the Lord. Most people who took the Nazarite vow did so for only a short period of time, but some (Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptizer) followed this vow for their entire lives. Among the extra commands that a Nazarite would follow were they would not eat or drink anything that came from grapes, they did not cut their hair, and they would not go near a dead body. When a person completed his time as a Nazarite, he would go to the priest and offer a Burnt, Sin, and Peace offering. He would also shave his head and burn it and pay the priest with a shoulder of ram and unleavened bread.

Aaron's Blessing of the People, Numbers 6:24-26

***The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to
shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift
his countenance upon you and give you peace.***

Consecrating the Tabernacle, Numbers 7:1-89

When the tabernacle was completed, Moses received wagons and oxen from each of the tribes so that the Levites could perform their duties of moving the tabernacle when it was time. However, the Kohathites received no wagons because they were to carry the ark and the furniture of the tabernacle by hand. After the wagons and oxen were delivered then each Tribe (one per day for twelve days) contributed a small silver utensil with flour and oil, a small bit of oil, a small bit of incense, and multitude of animals. These gifts from each of the tribes gave what was needed to start the daily sacrifices of the tabernacle.

Cleansing and of the Levites, 8:5-26

The Tribe of Levi was set apart for God. All followers of God in the Old Testament were required to offer the first born to the Lord. God used the Tribe of Levi to stand in place of the first born of the other eleven tribes. Therefore the Levites were not given property necessarily in the Promised Land. Instead they lived in the Levitical cities placed throughout the land and around the tabernacle. God commanded Moses to consecrate the Levites for service. Their dedication ceremony was not as elaborate as the priest's ceremony in Leviticus 8-9 but still went to show that they were set apart for special service. They were ceremonially cleaned by the sprinkling of water, they were to shave their bodies and wash their clothes. The leaders then laid their hands on them and bulls were offered to God on their behalf. A Levite was to begin service around the age of 25 and continue until the age of 50. At that age they could still guard the tabernacle but they were not to be in charge of the other duties of the Levites.

Celebrating the Passover, 9:1-14

After the passing of a year since Israel had left Egypt, the Lord reminded the nation of the importance of keeping the Passover feast. It was to be celebrated on the 14th day of the 1st month. Anyone who did not celebrate the Passover was in danger of being cutoff from the people because of their disregard of God's Commands. However, if a person was unclean during that time, they could celebrate the Passover on the 14th day of the 2nd month. Foreigners living among the Israelites were allowed to keep the Passover as well.

The Cloud over the Tabernacle, 9:15-23

Now that the people were cleansed from unholiness, they were ready to begin their journey to the land that had been promised to them. On this journey it was important that they follow God closely. God's presence was seen in a great cloud that was above the tabernacle. At night the cloud would appear as a great fire. As long as the cloud rested over the tabernacle, the people were to camp. But when the cloud began to move, the people were to prepare to move with the cloud as God guided them along the way.

1. Why does God focus so much on his holiness throughout the Old Testament?
2. What were some of the unique commands that Nazarites had to follow?
3. What was Israel to do when the cloud of God's presence moved from the tabernacle?

The book of NUMBERS



Lesson Four: God Leads, People Complain, Chapters 10-12

A good working title of the Book of Numbers is “The Worst Road Trip Ever.” Just like the trials we experience today, the difficulties the Israelites faced while traveling exposed their faith as real or weak. In chapters 10-12, we see the source of troubles began with the fringes of the camp (11:1), moving to the mixed rabble of the people (11:4), to an organized strike (11:4, 10), to finally members of Moses’ own family (12:1). As the situation grew, Moses had to intercede for the people and rely on the Lord for guidance and salvation. This lesson will remind us to remain faithful to God in our trials and to respect those who are leaders in the Lord’s Church.

The Nation Begins Its Journey, 10:1-35

As the nation is making its final preparations to travel to the Promised Land, the Lord commands the people to make two silver trumpets. The blowing of these trumpets in different ways will signal to the people to begin moving, will call them to meet together at the Tabernacle, will warn them to prepare for battle, and will signal to the nation to prepare for the national feasts celebrated by the people.

The Book of Numbers goes back and forth with sections on law-giving and organization and then travel reports. In chapters 10-12 Israel moves from Mount Sinai to Kadesh, an area near the southern border of Canaan. Another travel period will come in chapters 20-21 where they move to the Plains of Moab.

After remaining near Sinai for a year, the cloud over the tabernacle moved to the wilderness of Paran. Following the organizational commands of God, Israel moved in formation, following the Ark of the Covenant. Whenever the ark would begin to move, Moses would bless the people saying, “Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered and let those who hate you flee before you.” When the ark reached a resting place, Moses said, “Return O Lord to the thousand, thousands of Israel.” Amazingly, over two million people moved in perfect obedience to the Lord towards the Promised Land for this three day journey.

Leadership Lessons From Moses

1. Leadership is not easy. People often focus on the wrong, not what is right.
2. Good leaders delegate, train, and are not jealous of others.
3. Leaders advocate for their people; even when they are not perfect.
4. Good leaders train up the next generation of leaders.
5. When times are difficult, good leaders learn to rely on the Lord.

Moses invited his brother-in-law, Hobab, to accompany them on the way to Canaan but his brother-in-law initially refused saying he wanted to remain among his own people. It appears that he did in fact did go with him to share his knowledge of the land because we read of his descendants being in Israel later in Judges 1:16 and 4:11.

The People Complain, 11:1-30

As the journey continued, the people began to complain about their misfortunes. The Bible says that many of them were filled with a strong craving. Due to the complaints, the fire of the Lord consumed the outskirts of the camp. Moses interceded for the people and the fire died down. The people's complaint was that they missed the joys and foods of Egypt. The memories of the good times for them outweighed the bad memories. They were tired of the manna and longed for their former lives in slavery. As Moses struggled with the stress of leadership, God tells him to appoint seventy people from among the leaders of Israel to help him lead the nation. These men were given the ability through the Spirit for a short while to prophesy before the people. The purpose of being filled with the Spirit for these men was to show they were approved by God. Two men Eldad and Medad continued in prophecy after this period. When Joshua became concerned that their miraculous ability would become a challenge to Moses, Moses told him that he wished all of Israel were able to speak God's word to one another.

The Lord Provides Mercy And Judgment, 11:31-35

Hearing the needs of the people, the Lord caused a great wind to blow in a large amount of small quail to the Israelites. The blessing of God for meat was abundant (approximately 450 pounds of meat per person). The people were able to eat until they were engorged by the food. But there was also a curse on the people who had the craving, causing many people to die. God blesses his people but also punishes those who lack gratitude and who murmur against him, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Romans 11:22.

Miriam And Aaron Oppose Moses, 12:1-16

The brother and sister of Moses stood in opposition to Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. But the real issue was their jealousy (12:2) of his being in charge of the people. Moses was a meek man but the Lord called all three of them to stand before him at the Tabernacle. The Lord spoke to them of his close relationship with Moses and struck Miriam with leprosy. Aaron was not struck because if he had disease he could no longer offer the sacrifices to the Lord. As Miriam and Aaron repented and Moses interceded, the Lord healed her and allowed both of them to live.

1. What are some leadership lessons we learn from Moses in Numbers chapters 10-12?
2. Why do you think some of the people longed to return to Egypt?
3. Why do you think Miriam and Aaron opposed the leadership of Moses?

The book of NUMBERS



Lesson Five: The Spies Sent Out, Numbers 13-15

The Bible records two major rebellions of Israel towards God during the wilderness wanderings. In Exodus 32-34 Israel created a golden calf while they were receiving the Law of God and in Numbers 13-14 Israel rebelled against God while receiving the Promised Land. Both time God's people were acting their worst while receiving God's greatest blessings.

The Spies Are Sent Out, 13:1-24

In a very short period of time, God had led Israel to the border of the Promised Land. Paran is on the southern border of what soon will belong to God's people. Before they enter the land, upon the urging by the people (Deuteronomy 1:22) God commands Moses to send twelve spies (each one a representative of his own tribe) to spy out the land that the Lord has given. Among these spies is Caleb of Judah and Hoshea (later to be called Joshua) of Ephraim. The spies cover a great amount of ground (220 miles) from the south of the Promised Land all the way beyond the north in only forty days. As they travel through they find great prosperity in pomegranates and figs and even large clusters of grapes needing two men to carry.

The Spies Report Back, 13:25-33

When the twelve returned after the forty days they reported to all the people. They spoke of the land of milk and honey and showed the fruit of the land. They said, however, the people who lived in the land were strong and well fortified. They saw giants there, along with the Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, and Canaanites. Caleb quieted the people and encouraged them to conquer the land. But the ten other spies said it was a place that devoured people. The Israelites were little more than grasshoppers compared to them. The more the spies spoke, the more they exaggerated the dangers.

The People Rebel And Are Punished, 14:1-45

When the people heard the negative report, they wept loudly. They spoke against Moses and Aaron saying that they wished they were still in Egypt. They feared their children would now become prey and moved to choose new leaders to take them back to Egypt. Joshua and Caleb begged the people to take the land. They noted it was a land of milk and honey and said that with God's help they could eat up the people (meaning conquer them) like bread. With God's power, there was no shadow or escape for the inhabitants of the land.

The Ten Rebellions

Numbers 14:22

The ten rebellions mentioned could be symbolic, meaning a completeness of rebellion. Or maybe they could refer to the ten unfaithful spies who turned on God.

The Jewish Talmud (a Second Century A.D. commentary) lists the following rebellions: two instances at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:11, Psalm 106:11); two in demanding water (Exodus 15:23, 17:2), two for food (Exodus 16:27), two for meat (Exodus 16:3, Numbers 11:4), the creation of the golden calf, and the faithlessness of the spies.

Although Joshua and Caleb begged the people to not rebel against God, the nation threatened to stone them along with Moses and Aaron. At this instant the glory of the Lord appeared at the tabernacle to confront the nation. The Lord told Moses that Israel would be wiped out with pestilence and a new nation would be created through the family of Moses. The Lord asked, “How long will these people despise me in spite of the signs I have done among them?” These people had seen the ten plagues, the Red Sea open up, the wonders at Mount Sinai, the manna from heaven, and the quail. Yet they still did not trust God’s power. Moses interceded for the people saying that Egypt and the nations would claim that God could not deliver on his promises. Moses pointed out that God is a God of steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgressions. Yet God will never clear the guilty and will punish those who rebel greatly. Moses begged God to forgive the sins of the people. Numbers 14:20-23 is an interesting passage. God forgives his people but they still face consequences. Because of the rebellion of the people, none of them will be allowed to receive the gift of the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb will be the only ones currently over twenty years old to receive the inheritance. The children that the people had claimed would be no more than prey to pagan nations would be the ones who will in the coming generation destroy those who stood before God. The ten spies who discouraged the people died immediately and the people were told they would remain in the wilderness for forty years until everyone of them perished, except for Joshua and Caleb. When the people heard this they mourned greatly and changed their mind. They gathered and told the Lord they were ready to conquer the land. Although Moses told the people that they were trapped in their consequences, they marched into Canaan but were defeated by the Canaanites and Amalekites.

God's Laws For The New Land, 15:1-41

Whenever the nation camped somewhere for a period of time, the writer of Numbers listed various laws to be followed in the Promised Land: Sinai (Exodus 20-Numbers 9), Kadesh (Numbers 15), and Moab (Numbers 28-36). First Moses reviews the sacrifices that had been explained in Leviticus 1-7. In Leviticus the sacrifices had been commanded but here in Numbers (Numbers 15:2) it is said that when they received the Land of Promise they were to include flour, oil, and wine with these sacrifices. Numbers 15:22-29 covers forgiveness of sins that were committed unintentionally. Referring back to Leviticus 4, we see that sins that were not done on purpose could find forgiveness when the offender repented and sacrificed to God the correct offering. But a person who sins with “a high hand” or prideful heart would be cut off from the people. God will not put up with a person who is not willing to humble themselves in God’s sight. An example of this is in Numbers 15:32-36 where a person is caught working on the Sabbath Day. When the people inquire what is to be done to a person who stands in rebellion to God’s Law, the Lord tells them to put him to death. The section closes as the Lord tells the people to place tassels on the corners of their clothes. These blue cords are to serve as a reminder to the people to be obedient to the Law of God, Deuteronomy 6:8-9.

1. Why do you think the people of Israel were so afraid of conquering the Promised Land?
2. What are some lessons we learn from the consequences of Israel’s rebellion?
3. What are some things we can use today to remind us daily of the Word of God?

The book of NUMBERS



Lesson Six: Korah's Rebellion, Numbers 16-19

Korah And His Treacherous Friends Rebel, 16:1-40

Korah was a Levite from the Kohathite clan (not a priest) who decided to rebel against Moses. Still smarting from the fact the nation's lack of faith kept the Israelites out of the Promised Land, Korah decided that this failure was an opening for him to be in charge. Korah's clan was not allowed to be priests. Instead they were in charge of transporting the holy furniture of the Tabernacle when the nation traveled. This is a place of honor, but he wanted more, Jude 11. He is joined by Dathan, Abiram, and On who are Reubenites. Even though Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, his sins caused him to lose the blessings of the firstborn to Judah. This loss of leadership opportunity may have appeared to be unfair to them. These men were in league with one another because they were placed near each other in the camp (Numbers 2:10-11, 3:29). These men along with 250 chiefs from all of the Tribes rose up against Moses saying, "We are all holy and the Lord is among us so why do you claim to be exalted?" When Moses heard this challenge, he called on Korah and his partners to take up their censers and meet before the Lord with him in the morning. After that, he rebuked Korah saying, "Isn't it enough that you serve before the Lord in the Tabernacle? Why do you insist on being a priest as well?" Moses then called Dathan and Abiram to the Tabernacle to meet but they refused to come. Blaming Moses for their dark fate in the Wilderness, they said they were no longer blind to the circumstances and they refused to listen to Moses' commands any longer. Moses responded that he had not profited in anyway from leading them and that he was not to blame for their troubles.

The next morning all of the people rose up against Moses and Aaron. Korah and his followers carried their censers so that they could lead worship as priests, obviously forgetting what had happened to Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10). Then the glory of the Lord appeared before all the people. When the Lord told Moses and Aaron to separate themselves from the people so that the rebels would be killed, the people fell down before the Lord asking for the punishment to only be given to Korah. Moses then led the people to the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and said, "If these men die naturally then you know the Lord is not with Moses and Aaron. But if these men die in a new way, then the Lord is truly with us." When he had finished saying these things, the ground opened up and swallowed up Korah, his family, and his possessions. When the crowd fled from his tent, fire came from the Lord and consumed the 250 men who had desired to lead in the worship. Then Eleazar, the son of Aaron was commanded to scatter the fire left from destroying the men and gather the bronze censers of the now deceased 'want to be' priests. The metal from those censers was hammered into a covering for the altar of the Lord as a reminder to the people.

Aaron Reaffirmed, 16:41-17:13

The next day the congregation complained that the Lord had destroyed good people. When Moses and Aaron turned toward the Tabernacle, the Presence of the Lord told them that the rebel complainers would be consumed. Aaron was told to take his censer and light it with fire from the altar and take it to the congregation so atonement might be made for them. As Aaron ran into the assembly, his presence formed the dividing line of the living and the dead. Not counting the death of Korah and his followers, 14,700 people died in this rebellion. After this Moses told each of the 12 tribes to bring a rod to the Tabernacle with their name placed on it. The Tribe of Levi had the name of Aaron on it. They were to place the rods within the Tabernacle and see who God chose to lead the worship of Israel. The next day the rod of Aaron had sprouted, produced blossoms and ripe almonds. Moses brought the rods out to the people so that they could see the results. The rod of Aaron was placed back into the Tabernacle as a reminder to the people and the congregation developed great respect for God's Law.

Duties Of The Priests, 18:1-32

God told Aaron and his children that they bore the responsibility of leading the worship of Israel in the Tabernacle. While they were not given a land like the other Tribes of Israel, the Lord was their inheritance. Each sacrifice given by the people to the Lord had a portion withheld to provide for the Levites. The firstborn of man and unclean animals must be "redeemed" or replaced by a gift. A price for a first born son was to be five shekels in silver. The Levites income consisted of the tithe given by each of the other Tribes. The Levites then tithed to the priests. Therefore the priesthood ended up with the best of the best from the sacrifices of the people. This made up for them not having their own territory.

Laws For Purification, 19:1-22

The children of Israel were commanded to bring in a red heifer without defect that had never been used in the field. The High Priest was to witness the slaughter of the beast outside the camp and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tabernacle seven times. The cow is then to be burned whole while the priest adds cedar, hyssop, and red yarn to the fire. After the fire is reduced to ash, it is to be collected outside the camp and put in a clean place. The ashes of the heifer were then mixed with water as a sin offering for the impurity of the people. Human corpses cause the most serious pollution under the Law of Moses. Anyone who touched a dead body or came near to one needed to undergo ritual cleansing. Much of this was to show how physical death is the antithesis of God's plan for man. Death came to the world because of man's sin but the Son of God took death on himself so that those who obey the Lord may have eternal life.

1. Why do you think there are so many disagreements among God's people concerning who should be in leadership?
2. How were the Levites and the Priests to provide for themselves? Why do you think God chose this way?
3. What are some similarities between Jesus and the Red Heifer?

The book of NUMBERS



Lesson Seven: Moses Strikes The Rock, Numbers 20

Numbers chapter twenty marks a turning point in this book. The chapter opens up with the people of Israel reentering the Wilderness of Zin and staying in Kadesh. The last time they were here the spies were sent to search the land, Numbers 13:21. It was here the nation rebelled against God and it will be here that the great leaders of the nation would meet their end. Numbers does not give us the year of the events of this chapter but we are told that Aaron died in the fortieth year of the Exodus, Numbers 33:38, so this shows we are near the end of the journey. Between chapter fourteen and nineteen has been an interval of about thirty-eight years. Not much is said about the nation during this time but we do know they were not very faithful, Ezekiel 20:15, Amos 5:25, Hosea 9:10, Acts 7:42.

Death of Miriam and Aaron, 20:1, 20:22-29

The death of Miriam is an important event both to Moses and to the Nation of Israel. She was the older sister who saved the life of Moses, Exodus 2:4-8, and was a prophetess and influential woman to her nation, Exodus 15:20-21. She sinned in rebellion against Moses and was therefore denied entry to the Promised Land. At the end of chapter 20 the Lord pronounces judgment on Aaron. The brother of Moses, having reached the ripe age of 123, died on Mount Hor five months after the passing of Miriam. Just before his death, Moses stripped the Priestly garments off of his brother and placed them on Aaron's son, Eleazar. The High Priesthood was to pass through the line of Aaron's family throughout the time of the Nation of Israel. This showed the passing of leadership from the generation that left Egypt to the next generation who would enter into the Promised Land.

Moses Strikes The Rock, 20:2-13

Once again the people found themselves in the wilderness without adequate water for themselves and their flocks. Even though God had provided for the nation without fail for forty years, the people still acted like all hope was gone when they ran low on supplies. This new generation sounded very similar to the old generation as they blamed God and their leadership, Exodus 17:3. They accused Moses and Aaron (and God) of failing to keep the promises. Instead of living in a land with fruit, honey, and food, they claimed Moses had led them to a barren wilderness. They failed to realize they were left in this situation because of the decisions they had made a generation ago. It's often easier to blame others than it is to

The Sin of Moses and Aaron, Numbers 20:12-13

Moses spoke to the people, not the rock

Moses struck the rock rather than speak to it

Moses ascribed the source of power as he and Aaron rather than God

examine ourselves to see how we contribute to our own troubles. The Lord told Moses to take his rod from the Tabernacle. This rod was a symbol of God's presence to the Pharaoh and to the Red Sea. It was a symbol of God's authority and power. Then Moses is told to speak to the rock so that it will produce water. This command is different than the earlier command to strike the rock with the staff, Exodus 17. This may well be because of the rock symbolized Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:4. Perhaps there is a symbolism of Christ offering water to the people when he was struck on the cross for our sins as people enter into the wilderness. Once we are Christians, we speak to Christ (here seen as the rock) to obtain continual water or forgiveness and power. Instead of speaking to the rock, showing God's power and authority over the situation, Moses accused the people of insubordination and struck the rock. While the action may seem minor and still led to the water to be given to the people, the disobedience to God's command showed a spirit of rebellion against the holiness of God. Our strict obedience to God shows our reverence toward him. When we follow ourselves rather than God's commands, we make light of God's holiness, Numbers 20:12-13. God still blessed the people with water, but those who disobeyed were punished greatly.

Edom Refuses Passage, 20:14-21

The nation of Edom descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. In this sense the two nations were brothers. From their birth, Jacob and Esau had been rivals. Jacob deceived Esau for his birthright and deceived his father to steal Esau's hereditary blessing. While eventually the brother's reconciled, animosity remained between the two nations. Here we read of one of the first acts of bitterness between the nations which will continue for centuries until the destruction of the nation of Edom (read the Book of Obadiah). Because of Edom's unwillingness to allow Israel passage, Israel is forced to take a longer and more difficult route to the eastern edge of the Promised Land.

Edom's Rebellion

Edom descended from Esau who fought with Jacob, Genesis, 25:30 (red stew)

The brothers reconciled

But the nation denied Israel passage during a time of need, Numbers 20:14-21

David conquered Edom and made them slaves, 2 Samuel 8:13-14

Edom raided Judah after they fell to Babylonians, Ezekiel 25:12-14

Because of this God sentenced Edom's destruction, Malachi 1:2-5

Obadiah tell us of Edom's pride, violence, and apathy to Israel's destruction

Idumeans were violent to Israel in New Testament times (Antiochus IV Epiphanes and Herod)

They were destroyed in AD 70 by the Roman army.

1. Why did Aaron and Miriam die in the wilderness?
2. What are some lessons we learn from the sin of striking the rock instead of speaking to it?
3. What are some lessons we learn from the conflict between Edom and Israel?

The book of **NUMBERS**

Lesson Eight: The Fiery Serpents, Numbers 21



After chapter 20, the Book of Numbers changes its focus to the younger generation of Israel winning battles as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. They still complain and sin in other ways occasionally, but for the most part they are faithful and victorious. After forty years in the wilderness, Israel is now arriving with purpose to the Promised Land.

Israel Begins To Win Her Battles, 21:1-3

Israel was pulled into a battle they did not begin. They were attacked by the King of Arad about 50 miles north of Kadesh. This would also be true of many of the battles occurring in the Trans Jordan region. As the people moved through the land they made a vow to God to not keep the spoils of war for themselves. Rather, they destroyed everything as being “devoted” to God.

The Bronze Serpent, 21:4-9

As the journey continued, the people once again became impatient and spoke against the Lord and Moses because they were tired of the “worthless food” they had to eat every day. While the manna was nutritious and good, the people had become weary of eating it every day. Due to their complaints, God sent fiery serpents among the people. Those who were bit by the snakes died and the people remaining began to cry out in despair. When they came to Moses in repentance, he prayed in intercession for the people, God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole and then lift it up. When they gazed at the bronze serpent they would survive the snake bite. The bronze spoken of here is a copper alloy that has a reddish color. The redness of the copper

What Does The Brass Serpent Teach Us Today? (A simple comparison to Jesus)

The great enemy of God's people took the form of a serpent (Revelation 12:9)

God's plan of salvation was unique. There was no one else to look for salvation, John 14:6

The lifting of the serpent up was similar to how Jesus would die. He was lifted on a cross.

The brass serpent had the form and likeness of the serpents, Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, Romans 8:3.

The people were saved by hearing God's word, believing, and obeying the commands of God.

represented the atonement of blood (Numbers 19:1-10). In John's gospel, Jesus goes to great lengths to show that this situation was a forerunner of his work as a mediator between God and man. In John 3:14-15 Jesus says that just as Moses lifted up the serpent, so the Savior would be lifted up. Those who believed on Jesus would be saved as the Israelites were saved in their obedience. His sentiments in John 12:32-36 are the same. Many years later this bronze serpent was destroyed because it was treated as an idol by God's people, 2 Kings 18:4.

Israel Continues To Travel, 21:10-20

Israel now travels nearer the Promised Land and eventually nears the Mountain of Pisgah. This is the place where later Balaam will look down on the people (Numbers 23:28) and from where Moses will die after he sees the Promised Land, Deuteronomy 34:1. While on this journey, the Israelites dig a water well to receive the water they were crying out for to God. This is an example of where the nation is slowly beginning, with God's guidance, to provide for itself. The manna will stop once they enter the Promised Land.

More Successful Battles, 21:21-35

Israel was extremely successful in her battles as they neared the Land of Promise. When the King of the Amorites refused passage to the Israelites, they were conquered and their land was possessed, Genesis 15:16. Later Og, the king of Bashan (Deuteronomy 3:11) was overwhelmed by Israel as well, even though he was one of the giants feared by the 10 unfaithful spies (Numbers 13). This is the beginning of the conquering and occupation of what will eventually become the land of Israel as we know it in the Old Testament. The area taken here will be where the three eastern tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh will live as the others live on the other side of the Jordan River. From here Israel stood at the gate of Jericho across the river. But they still were to deal with Balaam and the failures of Baal-Peor before they began to take over the rest of the Land promised to them by God.

1. What are some of the similarities of the bronze serpent in Numbers 21 and Jesus' death on the cross?
2. What two things happened in the Bible on Mount Pisgah?
3. What is the significance of Israel defeating Og, King of Bashan?

The book of NUMBERS



Lesson Nine: The Work of Balaam, Numbers 22-25

The story of Balaam is a fascinating passage showing that God cannot be overcome by any human power, Numbers 23:21-23. Balaam may have been a pagan seer but it appears that he was well acquainted speaking God's word (23:5, 24:2). Whatever Balaam's views of God were, it is quickly evident he was more worried about his payment and influence than he was truly serving God's people.

Balak Summons Balaam, 22:1-21

Balak, King of the Moabites had not been attacked by Israel. God's people had passed around their territory but the king was still afraid of them. After the destruction of Sihon and Og, the king summoned Balaam to come and pronounce a curse against the Israelites for an upcoming battle. It was well known that those whom Balaam blessed were truly blessed and those whom Balaam cursed suffered greatly. When the messengers arrived to see Balaam, the seer asked them to spend the night while he consulted God. God rejected Balaam's request to curse the people. When Balaam informed King Balak of this, greater messengers with more money returned to the prophet to entice him to curse Israel. Balaam said he could not go even if his house was filled with Balak's silver. When Balaam asked again, finally God relented on the condition that Balaam would only say what the Lord had told him to say.

Balaam's Donkey And The Angel, 22:22-41

As Balaam made his way to see King Balak, the Lord knew that Balaam's love of money would lead him to disobey. In his anger, the Lord sent an angel to confront the prophet. Seeing the angel, Balaam's donkey ran off of the road, causing Balaam to beat him. Later while walking between the walls of a vineyard the donkey ran from the angel, crushing Balaam's foot and causing him to strike at his donkey. Finally when the angel confronted them, the donkey laid down angering Balaam once again. The mighty prophet could not see God as clearly as his donkey could. Balaam had been distracted by money, power, and prestige. The Lord opened the mouth of Balaam's donkey to argue with his owner about obedience to God and Balaam repented and said he would only speak what the Lord said for him to speak.

Balaam's Oracles, 23:1-24:25

When Balaam meets Balak, a sacrifice is made and then Balaam is brought to Bamoth-Baal where he could see a portion of God's people. When seven altars were built and a bull and ram sacrificed on each altar, Balaam began to speak. But his prophecy, 23:7-10, was only a recounting of how Israel had been blessed by God. In his anger King Balak took him to

Mount Pisgah and once again sacrificed on seven altars. Balaam's prophecy here, 23:19-24, was that God doesn't waver from his purposes and God's people will always prevail. Balak begged for Balaam to curse the people. Once again with seven altars and sacrifices, Balaam sought to please his employer. Rather than seeking an omen, Balak looked away from God into the wilderness. But the Spirit of God filled the prophet Balaam anyway and he spoke of Israel's ultimate success in obtaining property and land (24:3-9). And then he prophesied that one day King David (24:17) would conquer the Moabites.

Sin With The Daughters of Moab, 25:1-18

Unable to destroy Israel with the prophesies of Balaam, King Balak encouraged Baal worship among the Israelites and sent loose women among the camp of Israel causing them to commit adultery. This was done at the suggestion of Balaam, Numbers 31:16. As a result of this sin, 24,000 Israelites died as punishment. The son of High Priest Eleazar, Phinehas was so zealous to keep Israel from sin that he slew many people as punishment. Because of his zeal, God promised that the Priesthood would remain in Phinehas' family for generations. A war began at this time with the Moabites that would continue all the way to the Book of Judges.

Special Note:

Among those who preach the gospel, there are special dangers that are faced, James 3:1. In Numbers chapters 22-24, Balaam is a case study for temptations that may cause preachers, even those who preach the truth, to put themselves in danger. The first example of Balaam's work is seen in 2 Peter 2:15-16 where he is blinded by an agenda. Being told specifically by God to only preach the message of God, Balaam is so blinded by his own ego and desires that he cannot see the angel of the Lord any better than a donkey can. It is not until the donkey argues with him that Balaam's eyes are opened to the Lord's presence. In Jude 11 we see that Balaam is blinded by his desire for gain. Going against the command of God, Balaam sought to gain money and notoriety for himself. While it appears that Balaam didn't plan to fully subvert the word of God, he was wanting to bend it as much as possible in order to promote himself. It is good and necessary for preachers to be paid well, 1 Corinthians 9:14. But the love of money is a root to many sins. Thirdly, in Revelation 2:14 we see that Balaam may have technically preached truth but his actions caused a stumbling block to be placed before God's people. While the prophet did not lead them to sin by his words, his actions brought them to destruction. Preaching is the greatest occupation any man of God can choose to pursue. But those in the service of God must beware the dangers placed before them.

1. Why do you think King Balak feared Israel so much?

2. What do you think motivated Balaam in his actions through this passage?

3. What are some lesson we learn today from the actions of Balaam?

The book of **NUMBERS**



Lesson Ten: The End of An Era, Numbers 26-27

Three major themes in the Book of Numbers are journey, warfare, and inheritance. The Book of Numbers matters to Christians today because our life of faith also is composed of the three themes of journey, warfare, and inheritance. The Book of Hebrews especially emphasizes the aspect of our journey, Hebrews 11:13-16. And early Christian writings (and many of our songs) see similarities in the journey of Israel from Egypt (the land of sin), the crossing of the Red Sea (our baptism into Christ), the wilderness wandering (our Christian walk), and the crossing of the Jordan River (our passage into the Land of Promise or heaven). The picture of warfare is known to Christians today as we read Ephesians 6 and see our spiritual struggle with the forces of darkness. God equips us for this fight and gives us the victory just as he did for the Nation of Israel. The third theme, seen most clearly in Numbers 26 and 27, is inheritance. Although at times it may have seemed unlikely, in only a little over 400 years God fulfilled his promise to Abraham to give the land to his descendants, Genesis 15. Mixed with this promise of inheritance there are warnings. In 26:1 we see that Israel was recovering from a plague brought on by sin. Because of this sin, 24,000 potential soldiers would not be around for the coming invasion because they had died as punishment for their sins, 25:9. The consequences of sin are also seen in 26:10 with the death of Korah and his followers, in 26:19 where the two oldest sons of Judah died for treachery (Genesis 38), and in verse 63-65 where we see even the leaders of Israel would fall in the wilderness due to sin.

A Census is Taken, 26:1-65

After Balaam's prophecy of Israel's future success (Numbers 24:17-19), the rest of the Book of Numbers is written in preparation for Israel's entrance into the Land of Promise. The Lord tells Moses and Eleazar, who is now High Priest, to take a census of the nation. The purpose of this census is to determine the size of each tribe so that land can be allotted to each accordingly, 26:53-54. The census taken in the beginning of the book was to show the nation how many men were available to fight, but this issue is only mentioned once in verse two of the second census. The plans for dividing up the land are why so much emphasis is placed on the clans of the tribes in this census. The total number of Israelites above the age of twenty who are able to fight is very similar between the two censuses: 603,550 in the first to 601,730 in the second. But even though the number may be similar, the composition of the nation is much different. The only two who have survived to be counted in both censuses are Joshua and Caleb. As far as the tribes go, the major two changes are in the numbers of Simeon and Manasseh. The number of people of the Tribe of Simeon has fallen from 59,300

to 22,200 due to the plague brought on by Zimri, the Simeonite (25:9-14) but there is no explanation given for the increase of Manasseh from 32,200 to 52,700. Since the Tribe of Levi will not inherit land as the others will, their census is given later and done in a different way, v. 57-62. Their numbers, consisting of all males a month old or older have increased from 22,000 to 23,000. While a census may seem obscure for the modern day reader, there are some lessons for us today in this passage. In verse 11, we see the sons of Korah did not die. Even though Korah had instigated one of most notable rebellions in Israel's history, his sin was not inherited by his children. In fact, the descendants went on to write Psalms 44-49, 84-85, and 87-88. This is a showing of God's amazing grace. Another lesson for the trivia students is the name of the mother of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Numbers 26:59 and Exodus 6:20 identifies her as Jochabed.

The Daughters of Zelophehad, 27:1-11

After the census, the five daughters of Zelophedad, who was of the Tribe of Manasseh, approached Moses explaining their father had died and there were no men in their family to receive their inheritance of land. After Moses consulted the Lord about the situation, he instituted the rule of the kinsman redeemer. If man died and had no sons, the inheritance would go to his daughters. If he has no daughters then the inheritance would go to the man's brothers. If he had no brothers then the inheritance would go to his uncles. If the man had no uncles then the inheritance would go to the closest relative. This law would be seen in effect in the Book of Ruth as Boaz laid claim to Ruth and the lands she would have inherited from her father-in-law, Ruth 4:1-12.

Joshua to Succeed Moses, 27:12-23

In a parallel passage to Deuteronomy 34, Moses turns over the leadership of the nation to Joshua. Moses was not allowed to lead his people into the Land of Promise because of his sin at the waters of Meribah, Numbers 20:10-13. When the Lord chose Joshua as the next leader, Moses turned over his leadership to his trusted helper so that the nation would not be as sheep without a shepherd. Now Joshua only received some of the authority of Moses because he now had to turn to Eleazar, the High Priest to inquire of the Lord to find direction. Joshua, unlike Moses, was not able to talk directly to God in every situation. Although there would be some times that God would speak directly to him, Joshua 1. The transition from Moses to Joshua in some ways marked a failure. It was a failure in that Moses did not finish his goal of taking the nation to Canaan. It was a failure in that a great man of God was left outside the Promised Land. But in other ways this transition was a sign of success. Moses had trained this young man to take his place and to do his job well. It was a success in that Moses had the meekness to allow others to finish his work.

1. What are some major themes in the Book of Numbers that we can learn from today?
2. What is the name of the law that allowed Ruth to marry Boaz?
3. What are some ways Joshua in the Old Testament is similar to Jesus in the New Testament?

The book of NUMBERS

Lesson Eleven: A Nation Prepares, Numbers 28-32



Offerings and Sacrifices Instituted, 28:1-29:40

Chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine speaks of the offerings that will be performed when Israel enters into the Promised Land. The sacrifices listed are what is given in public worship and do not include private sacrifices that others in the nation of Israel may desire to give. These commands are strong assurance to Israel of the coming wealth that the nation will have as an agricultural society. When you add up the sacrifices required over a year they total 113 bulls, 1,086 lambs, over a ton of flour, and 1,000 bottles of wine and oil. The Feast Days and multitudes of sacrifices demanded the attention and planning of the Israelites.

Calendar of Public Sacrifices	Bulls	Rams	Lambs	Goats
Every Day (28:3-8)			2	
Sabbath Day (28:9-10)			2	
1st Day of the Month (28:11-15)	2	1	7	1
Unleavened Bread: Each Day of the Feast (28:17-25)	2	1	7	1
Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) 28:26-31)	2	1	7	1
1st Day of the 7th month (29:1-6)	1	1	7	1
Day of Atonement (29:7-11)	1	1	7	1
Feast of Booths (29:12-38):				
 1st Day of Feast	13	2	14	1
 2nd Day of Feast	12	2	14	1
 3rd of Day of Feast	11	2	14	1
 4th Day of Feast	10	2	14	1
 5th Day of Feast	9	2	14	1
 6th Day of Feast	8	2	14	1
 7 Day of Feast	7	2	14	1
 8th Day of Feast	1	1	7	1

Importance Of Keeping Vows, 30:1-16

The people of Israel were soon to be at constant war, taking possession of the Promised Land. In times of crisis, people will often take a vow or make a promise to God for success or protection, Genesis 28:20-22, 1 Samuel 1:11. But there is a danger that when the crisis is over people will rethink their vow and no longer keep their promise. The Bible contains strong warnings that when a promise is made it must be kept, Deuteronomy 23:21-23 and Ecclesiastes 5:4-6. There are some interesting rules from verses 3 to 16 of chapter 30 concerning women and vows. If an unmarried woman makes a vow and her father hears of it, he has the right to nullify that vow. Likewise if a wife has a husband and he hears of the vow, as long as he acts as soon as he hears of it, he may also nullify that vow as well.

Midian Receives Vengeance From Israel, 31:1-54

Before Moses dies and Israel enters the Promised Land, one more task needs to be done. The Midianites need to be destroyed for their treachery against Israel. These Midianites of Moab were the ones who hired Balaam to prophesy against Israel and eventually corrupted Israel into sin with the temptation of Baal worship and Moabite women. Taking a thousand fighting men from each tribe of Israel, they were lead by Phineas, the son of the High Priest, to destroy these people. They killed the five kings of the tribes along with Balaam the prophet. After burning the cities, they brought all the women and the plunder to Moses. Moses insisted that since it was the women who caused Israel to fall that all the adult women needed to die as well. Then the plunder was divided among the fighting men and the nation. A census revealed that none of the Israelites had died fighting in this battle and much of the plunder was dedicated to the Lord.

Reuben And Gad Settle In Gilead, 32:1-42

The people of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben saw the land of Sihon and Og that had been defeated in Numbers 21 was good for cattle grazing. Knowing this, they asked Moses, Eleazar the High Priest, and the heads of each Tribe if they could have possession of this land rather than having to cross the Jordan to live. When Moses heard this request he was very upset. He saw it as similar to the faithlessness of the spies who encouraged Israel to refuse to go into the Promised Land forty years earlier. He was afraid that the Lord would strike down this generation as well because of their refusal to conquer the Promised Land. When the two tribes said they were willing to go and fight with their brethren as long as they could return home afterwards, Moses agreed to allow them to do so. Because of this the Tribes of Gad and Reuben and half of the Tribe of Manasseh were able to settle on the Western side of the Jordan River.

1. What are some lessons we learn from the sacrifice schedule given in Numbers 28 & 29?
2. Why did the Lord command Israel to destroy the Midianites?
3. Why do you think Moses was angry when he first heard the request of the Tribes of Gad and Reuben to settle outside of the Promised Land?

The book of NUMBERS

Lesson Twelve: A Look Back, Numbers 33



Archeologists in the Near East often find records left by kings of their conquests and accomplishments. The style used by these kings is similar to what is seen in Numbers 33. What we see here is God's victory procession from Egypt to the edge of Canaan. This chapter is difficult for the map maker because of the forty-two places mentioned, only twenty-four are mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. Many of these places were desert encampments, not cities, with lasting archeological evidences. It's an amazing list because all 42 places were visited in approximately 40 years. The list gives six stages of seven places each, showing God's protection and guidance through the nation's journey. The list is said to be written specifically by Moses.

Stage One: From Egypt to the Red Sea, v. 3-10 (Exodus 12:37-19:2)

Israel leaves the city of Ramses of Egypt the day after the Passover. Though they were slaves for hundreds of years they did not leave Egypt in shame. They left with boldness after God had conquered each of the Egyptian gods through the plagues and destroyed the firstborn male of every family in revenge of the killing of the Hebrew males earlier. God guided them on their journey and parted the Red Sea for them to cross, v. 8. After crossing the sea, God mentions Marah but does not bring up their sin there. Instead the focus is on Elim with its seventy palm trees and twelve springs.

Stage Two: From The Red Sea to Hazeroth, v.

11-17 (Exodus 16-19, Numbers 10-11)

Camping in the Wilderness of Sin took around a year's time. But much of this time was not spent traveling, but in receiving the Law at Mount Sinai.

Stage Three: From Hazeroth to Haradah, v. 18-24

There is no record anywhere in the Scriptures of this part of the journey.

Stage Four: From Haradah to Bene-jaakin, v. 25-31

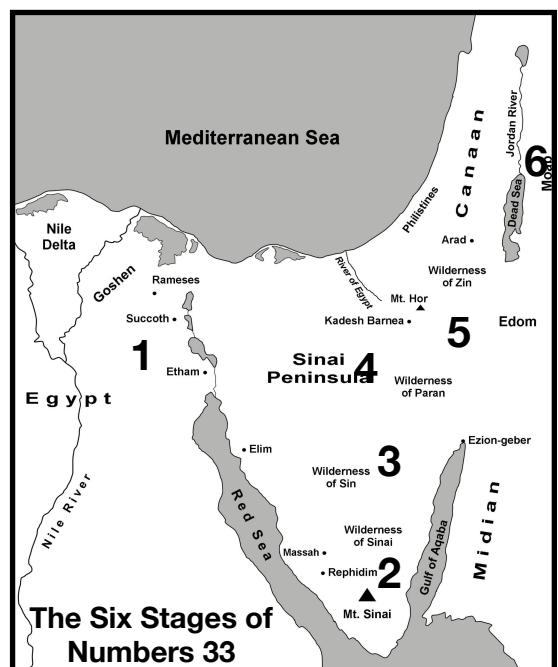
(Deuteronomy 10)

There is no record anywhere in the Scriptures of this part of the journey.

Stage Five: From Bene-jaakan to Zalmonah, v. 32-41

(Numbers 20-21)

Here Israel has reached the land of Kadesh (for the



second time) after forty years in the wilderness. Mount Hor is given special mention, honoring the death and burial place of Aaron the High Priest and the brother of Moses.

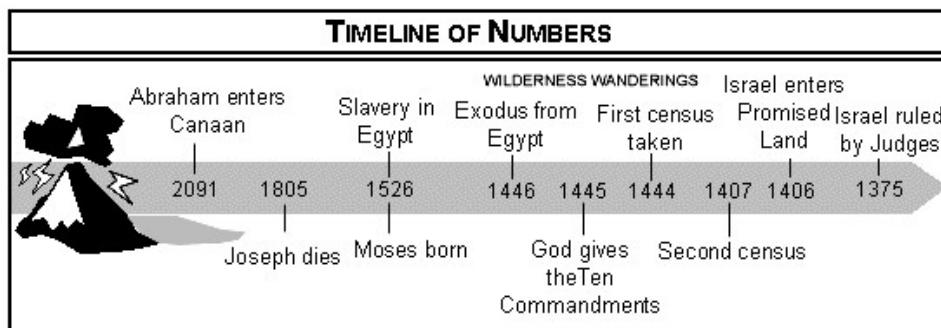
Stage Six: From Zalmonath to the Plains of Moab, v. 42-49 (Numbers 21-22)

This was Israel's current position, on the doorstep of Canaan. In a few months they would move from the Plains of Moab across the Jordan, into the Promised Land of Canaan. Their encampment stretched from Beth Jesimoth to Abel Shittim, which is a little over five miles.

Looking Ahead, the Conquest of Canaan, v. 50-53

God had a unique role for the nation of Israel. In one sense they were receiving the Land of Canaan as the answer to a promise given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. On the other hand, God is using this nation to bring judgment on the peoples who lived in the land. The strong language God uses is seen in four verbs translated: drive out, destroy, destroy, and demolish. There are some who claim that the judgment on the people of Canaan is contrary to the nature of God. But this punishment shows God's character in three ways. First it shows God will not tolerate sinful rebellion. These people had been exposed to God's goodness and guidance but had entered into idolatry and full rebellion against God.

Secondly it shows God's power in that it is a fulfillment of prophecy from hundreds of years before, Genesis 9:25. Thirdly it shows God's providence because he knew the effect these sinful people would have on his people if they intermarried and lived together. God wanted nothing left of Canaanite culture for influence towards idolatry and immorality. Israel was not to tolerate a co-existence with the immorality of the Canaanites. As Joshua would later tell the people, the Canaanites who remained would be barbs to the eyes and pricks to the side of the people, Joshua 23:13. Israel was to take the purified land and then divide it among the tribes in an equal fashion according to the value of the land and the size of each tribe.



Always remember that history is "His Story." It is good for us to review the past and look at the hand of the Lord at work. For Israel, history meant knowing why the past unfolded as it did, so that their present and future could be understood properly. Each stop along the way proved God's grace, faithfulness, power, and love.

1. Why do you think Moses wrote this travel journal in this part of this book?
2. What is the purpose of focusing on the good things in this history of the nation?
3. What was the danger of coexisting with the Canaanites in the Promised Land?

The book of NUMBERS



Lesson Thirteen: Preparing For Possession, Numbers 34-36

The entire book of Numbers looks forward to Israel's settlement in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob earlier. Therefore it makes sense that the Book of Numbers would close with the commands from God for when they took possession of the land. The six commands given to the people are: First, they are to eliminate the Canaanites from the land (33:50-56). Second we see the God given boundaries of the Promised Land. He tells the nation exactly what he is giving them (34:1-15). Third, in 34:16-29 we see who God has appointed to be the leaders who will distribute the land to the people. Fourth, in 35:1-8, we see God providing cities for the Levites to live in. Fifth, in 35:9-14 we see the God ordained ways to purify the land from the wickedness of the Canaanites. And sixth, in 36:1-12 we see the rules for inheritance that God has set up for the land for the coming generations.

The boundaries of the new nation, 34:1-29

As Israel stood at the doorway to the Promised Land, God tells them the borders of their nation. While the promise to Abraham was that he would be given all the Land of Canaan (Genesis 17:8), the exact boundaries of that land had never been stated. Archeologists tell us that the boundaries here are roughly the same ones that Egypt and other areas of the world of that time recognized to be the boundaries of Canaan. While it is difficult to locate some of the locations given in this chapter on a modern map, it generally consists of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, plus the southern portion of modern Lebanon to some of modern Syria. It is interesting that Israel never possessed all the land that is described in this chapter. Some people who believe there will be a return of the Nation of Israel in modern times claim that the fact Israel never completely conquered all of the land promised is proof that God will someday empower the modern nation of Israel to restore its borders and reign over the earth as God's specific nation once again. A better explanation of this passage is that God is more generous to us than we can handle. God gave his people more land than they would ever use. Numbers 33:53 told the people to "Take possession of the land and settle it, for I have given it to you." While Israel had been given the land they still needed to go and take it. Starting in verse 16 we see God's kindness in solving problems before they came up. He gave the land proportionally to each tribe according to their size and need. This made sure everything was fair for everyone involved. Secondly had the land distributed by lot. This allowed each tribe to receive their inheritance without any evidence of favoritism. Thirdly, he chose wise, experienced men to divide up the land to the people within each tribal area. These actions removed the possibility of a civil war during the settlement within the land promised to Israel.

The Levitical cities, 35:1-34

Since the Levites were scattered throughout the land, each person of Israel was never far from the spiritual help and ministry of the Levites. According to verse three, the pasturelands of Israel were considered community property, available to anyone. Farmland, in contrast, was private property. The Levites did not receive an inheritance of land in Canaan (Numbers 18:20-23). Including the forty-eight towns given to the Levites in Joshua 21, the Levites were given around a total of 15 square miles according to what we read in 35:4-5. That land together amounts to about one tenth of one percent of all the land given to the Israelites. Among the forty-eight cities, six cities are chosen as “cities of refuge.” These cities were places where someone who killed a person could go for protection. A murderer was someone who killed someone else in malice. That person was to be killed immediately by a close relative of the victim. But if the person killed someone in an accident he could go to the city of refuge and remain there. As long as he remained in the city walls, he was safe. When the High Priest of the nation died, all people hiding in cities of refuge were free to go home without fear of retribution. The nation is called to act holy, because the Lord lived with them in the land, Numbers 35:34.

Making provisions in inheritance, 36:1-13

The Book of Numbers closes with a continuing of a command given in chapter 27. In Numbers 27:1-11, Zelophehad's daughters had come to Moses with an issue concerning inheritance. Since their father had died and the daughters had not yet found husbands, there was a fear that these ladies (and anyone in their situation after them) would lose the blessings God had given to their family in having land. While every fifty years (The Year of Jubilee), the land reverted back to the original owners through inheritance, these daughters knew that the current law had left them homeless because only men owned property. Because of this problem, God commanded the principle of the kinsman redeemer. We see in the Book Ruth that the nearest relative was to marry and provide for the widow or virgin daughter who was left destitute. Chapter thirty-six of Numbers introduces a problem with this issue. If a woman who was placed in the situation of needing to marry a kinsman redeemer found someone from a different tribe, then the land that formerly belonged to one tribe would then forever belong to another tribe of Israel. This would make it difficult for the boundaries of the tribes to remain the same forever, Genesis 17:8. The solution given is that any ladies who were in the same situation as the daughters of Zelophedad's daughters had to marry someone in the same clan of their tribe in Israel. The Book of Numbers closes by reminding the reader that the Lord commanded the contents of this book be written by Moses to Israel. The very last word of the book is the name of the city, Jericho. While Moses would now preach the sermon we know as Deuteronomy, the Nation of Israel is now perched at the gate of the Promised Land.

1. Why do you think the Lord gave more land to Israel than they would need?
2. What is the wisdom found in the creation of “Cities of Refuge?”
3. What is the significance of “Jericho” being the last word of this book?