

LESSON 5 - NUMBERS

LOGOS

A General and Light Survey of the Bible

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Lesson 5:

NUMBERS

- This book was originally titled with the Hebrew phrase for, “Numbers In the Wilderness.” It was given the Greek name *Arithmai* in the Septuagint, then *Numeri* in the Latin Vulgate, and *Numbers* in English. It was so named because it contains two census reports, once at the beginning and again toward the end.
- Numbers takes up where Exodus left off. There is about a month between the end of Exodus and the beginning of Numbers. The instructions in Leviticus were given during that time.
 - “So, the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year” (Exodus 40:17).
 - “The LORD spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt” (Numbers 1:1).
- The New Testament refers to Numbers on at least two occasions:
 - *For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock (ref. Numbers 20:11) that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness (ref. Numbers 14:29). Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died (ref. Numbers 25:1-9). We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes (ref. Numbers 21:5-6). And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. (1 Corinthians 10:1-11)*
 - *Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house (ref. Numbers 12:7),” bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory. So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did (ref. Numbers 14:3). That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been said: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.” Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt (ref. Numbers 14:2)? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned,*

whose bodies perished in the wilderness (ref. Numbers 14:29)? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. (Hebrews 3:7–19)

- Numbers is a book of movement – movement through the wilderness and movement from one generation to the next. There are two generations, two numberings, and two sets of instructions.

OUTLINE

- The Old Generation (Chapters 1–14) – traveling from Sinai to Kadesh.
 - The numbering (Chapters 1–4). This The numbering (census) was for military purposes. Each of the twelve tribes were numbered and assigned a position around the tabernacle.
 - Chapter 1 - Numbering of adult males.
 - Chapter 2 - Distribution of the tribes.
 - Chapter 3 - Numbering of Levite males (priesthood). They were exempt from the general census. As priests, they were set apart to serve God and care for the tabernacle.
 - Chapter 4 - Distribution of Levite duties.
 - Instructions Chapters 5-10). These five chapters deal with the inward condition of the camp.
 - Chapter 5 - Deals with purity, honesty, and truth.
 - Chapter 6 - The Nazarite Vow.
 - *A special vow, a vow of dedication to the Lord (v. 2).*
 - *They must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or other fermented drink. They must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins... they must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins (vv. 3-4).*
 - *... no razor may be used on their head... they must let their hair grow long (v. 5).*
 - *...must not go near a dead body. Even if their own father or mother or brother or sister dies, they must not make themselves ceremonially unclean on account of them... (vv. 6-7).*
 - *If someone dies suddenly in the Nazirite's presence... they must shave their head on the seventh day... Then on the eighth day they must bring two doves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting... one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering... That same day they are to consecrate their head again... for the same period of dedication and must bring a year-old male lamb as a guilt offering. The previous days do not count... (vv. 9-12).*
 - *...when the period of their dedication is over. They are to be brought to the entrance to the tent of meeting. There they are to present their offerings to the LORD: a year-old male lamb without defect for a burnt offering, a year-old ewe lamb without defect for a sin offering, a ram without defect for a fellowship offering, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and a basket of bread made with the finest flour and without yeast - thick loaves with olive oil mixed in, and thin loaves brushed with olive oil... Then at the entrance to the tent of meeting, the Nazirite must shave off the hair that symbolizes their dedication. They are to take the hair and put it in the fire that is under the sacrifice of the fellowship offering... the priest is to place*

in their hands a boiled shoulder of the ram, and one thick loaf and one thin loaf from the basket... then wave these before the LORD as a wave offering; they are holy and belong to the priest... After that, the Nazirite may drink wine. (vv. 13-20)

- Chapter 7 - the free-will offering of leaders of each tribe for the work of the Tabernacle.
- Chapter 8 - the consecration of Levites.
- Chapter 9
 - Observing the Passover (vv. 1-14).
 - *On the day the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant law, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. At the LORD's command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the LORD's order and did not set out. Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days; at the LORD's command they would encamp, and then at his command they would set out. Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they set out. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out. Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in camp and not set out; but when it lifted, they would set out. At the LORD's command they encamped, and at the LORD's command they set out. They obeyed the LORD's order, in accordance with his command through Moses. (vv. 15-23)*
- Chapter 10
 - Two trumpets (vv. 1-10).
 - Leaving Sinai.
- Chapters 11
 - *Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down. So that place was called Taberah, because fire from the LORD had burned among them. (vv. 1-3)*
 - Quail from the Lord (vv. 4-35).
- Chapter 12
 - *Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife... "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?" they asked. "Hasn't he also spoken through us?" And the LORD heard this. (vv. 1-2)*
 - *...he said, "Listen to my words: When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (vv. 6-8)*

- Miriam was struck with leprosy, but Moses prayed for her healing and it was given after seven days outside the camp.
- Chapters 12-14 – Exploring the Promised Land.
 - Moses sent twelve men, one from each tribe to explore Canaan – among these were Caleb and Joshua.
 - *They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh... There they reported to them... and showed them the fruit of the land. “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.” But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are... The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there... we seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.” (13:26-33)*
 - The Nephilim – *“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown” (Genesis 6:4).*
 - They were probably powerful rulers who were controlled (indwelt) by fallen angels (demons).
 - These *sons of God* were not divine if they were demon-controlled. They were powerful and demon-influenced, but mortal. Their children were apparently giants by the standards of the biblical era. However, they were flesh and they died out in due course.
- *That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” (14:1-4)*
- God was ready to destroy the whole nation, but Moses pleaded for them.
- *The LORD replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness... not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors.” (14:20-23) In this wilderness your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. (14:29-30)*
- *...these men who were responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD. Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh survived. (14:37-38)*

- *Early the next morning they set out for the highest point in the hill country, saying, “Now we are ready to go up to the land the LORD promised. Surely we have sinned!” ...Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah. (14:40, 45)*
- The Wandering-Transition Era (Chapters 15–20).
 - Chapter 15 – God expressed hope for the coming generation by giving additional instructions regarding offerings, keeping the Sabbath, and wearing tassels on their garments.
 - Chapter 16 – Another rebellion.
 - *Korah son of Izhar (a Levite) ...and certain Reubenites - Dathan and Abiram... became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD’s assembly?” (vv. 1-3)*
 - *When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: “In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy... You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put burning coals and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!” (vv. 4-7)*
 - *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to the assembly, ‘Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.’” (vv. 23-24)*
 - *...the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions... And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense. (vv. 31-32, 35).*
 - Chapter 17 - Aaron’s staff blossoms and produces almonds to signify his place as God’s chosen – the staff is placed in front of the Ark of the Covenant as a permanent sign to anyone else who considered rebellion.
 - Chapter 18 – additional instructions for the priesthood and the Levites.
 - Chapter 19 – cleansing water.
 - Chapter 20
 - Miriam died and was buried at Kadesh.
 - Moses disobeyed and was told, *“Because you did not trust be enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them” (v. 12).*
 - The Edomites refused to give Israel safe passage.
 - Eleazar was chosen to succeed Aaron and Aaron died.
- The New Generation (Chapters 21–36).
 - Chapter 21
 - The king of Arad attacked the Israelites and was destroyed (vv. 1-3).
 - The Bronze Snake – The Israelites spoke against God and Moses and God sent venomous snakes that killed many of them. Under God’s instruction, Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole so that anyone who was bitten could look at it and live. (vv. 4-9)
 - The Israelites traveled from Kadesh to Moab, defeated Sihon and Og.

- Chapters 22-24 – Balaam.
 - Balaam was not a prophet of God, but part of a cult of diviners and seers who consulted spirits and were known to give blessings and curses.
 - Balak, king of Moab summoned Balaam. *But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed.”* (v. 12). Balaam told the king’s messengers he would not go with them.
 - *That night God came to Balaam and said, “Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but do only what I tell you.”* (v. 20)
 - The donkey speaks. *The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you.” So Balaam went with Balak’s officials.* (v. 35)
 - Through a series of seven messages from God, Balaam blessed the Israelites.
- Chapter 25 – the Moabite seduction.
- Chapter 26 – The Second Census.
- Chapter 27 – Joshua is chosen to succeed Moses.
- Chapters 28-30 – Additional instructions.
- Chapter 31 – Midian is conquered.
- Chapter 32 – Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh were allotted land west of the Jordan River.
- Chapter 33 – An account of the trip of Egypt to Canaan.
- Chapter 34 – The boundaries of Canaan.
- Chapter 25 – Towns for the Levites and Cities of Refuge.
- Chapter 36 – Instructions for daughters who inherit land.

THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

<u>Original</u>	<u>Entering Canaan</u>
Reuben	Reuben
Simeon	Simeon
Levi – <i>became the priestly tribe, not counted among the twelve</i>	
Judah	Judah
Dan	Dan
Naphtali	Naphtali
Gad	Gad
Asher	Asher
Issachar	Issachar
Zebulon	Zebulon
Joseph – <i>became two tribes through his sons</i>	Ephraim
	Manasseh
Benjamin	Benjamin

Read the book of Deuteronomy — six chapters each day.