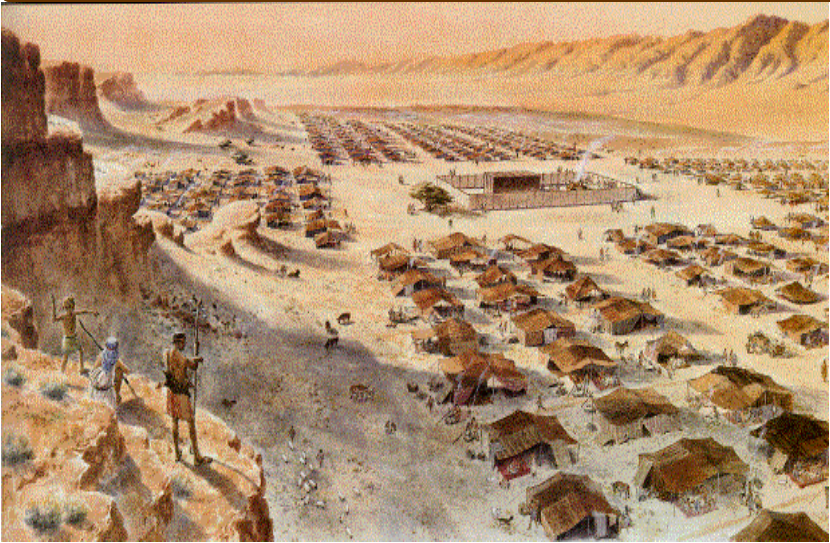




Sowing the Word



According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, each according to his service and according to his task; thus were they numbered by him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Numbers 4:49

Numbers 1-4 **February 4th-10th, 2010**

So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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Helpful Study Resource:

Explore the Book by J. Sidlow Baxter

Online Help:

Numbers: The Incomplete Christian Life by Ray C. Stedman

<http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/2987/0204.html>

http://preceptaustin.org/numbers_commentaries.htm

Commentary:

The commentary used with permission throughout
this booklet is:

With the Word Bible Commentary

by Warren W. Wiersbe.

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

Outline

I. Israel at Sinai: PREPARATION (1–10)

- A. Counting - a Census of the people (1)
- B. Arranging - ordering campsites around the Tabernacle (2)
- C. Assigning - Counting the Levites, their duties assigned (3–4)
- D. Maintaining - Standards for purity (5)
- E. Separating - Nazirites (6)
- F. Supporting - Offerings for the Tabernacle from Israel's leaders (7)
- G. Inaugurating - Dedication of the Levites (8)
- H. Guiding - Passover, Fiery cloud, silver trumpets (9:1–10)

II. Sinai to Kadesh: FRUSTRATION (11–20:13)

- A. Complaining - Complaints and solutions (11)
- B. Criticizing - Miriam and Aaron criticize Moses (12)
- C. Rebelling - Rebellion at Kadesh-barnea (13–14)
 - i. God gives hope - Additional laws for the Land (15)
- D. Striving - Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (16)
 - i. God's Calling - Aaron's staff buds (17)
 - ii. God's Appointing - Duties of Levites (18)
 - iii. God's Cleansing - Purification by the ashes of a red heifer (19)
- E. Misrepresenting - Moses strikes the rock (20:1–13)

III. Kadesh to Moab: ANTICIPATION (20:14–36:13)

- A. Blocking - Edom denies passage to Israel (20:14–21)
- B. Replacing - Death of Aaron (20:22–29)
- C. Saving - Bronze serpent (21:1–9)
- D. Enabling - Israel defeats Sihon and Og (21:10–35)
- E. Protecting - Balak and Balaam (22–24)
- F. Disciplining - Israelites seduced by Moabites (25)
- G. Counting - Second census of the people (26)
- H. Discipling - Joshua to succeed Moses (27)
- I. Worshipping - Regulations for worship and vows (28–29)
- J. Committing - Regulations for vows (30)
- K. Empowering - Israel defeats the Midianites (31)
- L. Quenching - Settlement of Transjordan tribes (32)
- M. Remembering - Review of the wilderness journey (33)
- N. Expecting - Settlement of Canaan described (34–36)

Quick Facts



Author: Moses

There are in Numbers more than eighty claims that “the Lord spoke to Moses.” It is apparent (33:2) that Moses kept detailed records as an eyewitness of the events in this book.



Time: Numbers stretches over almost thirty-nine years (c. 1444–1405 b.c.). It records Israel’s movement from the last twenty days at Mt. Sinai, the wanderings round Kadesh Barnea, and finally the arrival in the plains of Moab.



Theme: Numbers is the book of Wanderings. It is a sad but very real picture of the possibility of being rescued from the world (the Exodus), but not entering into the promised land of God’s blessings. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-11:1 often in this study.



Title: The book of Numbers takes its name from the two numberings of the Israelites—the first at Mt. Sinai (ch. 1) and the second on the plains of Moab (26:1–51).

In the Hebrew Bible it is more aptly entitled, “In the Wilderness”, and that’s what the book describes – the children of Israel’s wilderness wanderings.

In fact, there’s another title for the book. I like to call it, “How to Turn a Fifteen Day Walk into Forty Years of Wandering.” Numbers reveals the reasons why the Hebrews failed to enter the land God promised them, and died in the desert. And this is why the book abounds with lessons for us. Spiritually speaking, we’ve been delivered from the Egypt of sin, and promised a place of rest and blessing – but in order to enter in, we like the Hebrews, need to have faith. If we yield to doubt and fear,

Time To Organize

As we gaze over our progress so far in our study through the Bible, we can see a picture forming that hopefully will become more and more clear.

We have seen **Genesis**—a book of Beginnings. All of us has had a physical beginning, a birth. But like the book of Genesis—we also see the birth of sin in our lives.

We have seen **Exodus**—a book of Redemption. If you are a Christian, you have had an Exodus, you have come to the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. You have been rescued from the world and its destruction.

We have seen **Leviticus**—a book of Worship. As we come to the Lord, we learn and are learning how to deal with sin. We learn how we as an unholy people can approach a Holy God.

We are now looking at **Numbers**. Much of the book will deal with Israel's wanderings. It is a sad picture. The truth is that not every Christian has to experience times of wanderings. Yet the truth is, many do. Yet, I will leave discussing that for a later booklet. This week—we don't see that yet in Numbers—instead—we see a time of organization and order.

Order, it is one of the hard keys for Christians to learn. Call it what you will—discipline, self control, self order and more.

All the details given us in the book of Numbers – speaks of the value God places on organization. Throughout the Bible, God places a premium on effective utilization of our time and resources.

When Jesus fed the 5000, He first arranged the people in groups of 50 and 100. Then as He broke the bread He gave it to the disciples to serve the people. Jesus didn't do it Himself. In other words, He was good at organization and delegation.

I run into believers in Jesus who are opponents of what they call “organized religion”. They assume the more organized you are the less spiritual you are – and I admit, it's possible to organize out the work of the Holy Spirit. I've seen it done. Church leaders become so dependent on their management of a ministry they don't allow room for God to work. They trust in the flesh, not the Spirit.

But you really can't read through the book of Numbers without concluding that the worship of God was intended to be “organized”. In 1 Corinthians 14:40, the Lord commands the Church, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Don't think it's more spiritual to meet together without a plan and purpose. Numbers 1:3 calls Israel the army of the Lord - just as you and I are soldiers of Christ - and no army goes into battle without a strategy, an organization. Too many churches are weakened by a lack of organization. No one knows their roles and duties. There's wasted time, and a duplication of effort. Ministry is done sloppily rather than with the excellence the Lord deserves. It's been said, "Don't agonize. Organize." That's a message for the Church. Remember in Romans 12:8 one of the gifts of the Spirit is that of leading, or spiritual management. We need people with this vital spiritual endowment. All life has structure. Take away the skeleton from which your organs hang, and over which your skin is wrapped - and you'll become nothing but a mound of goo. Spiritual life also needs some structure, and organization. Further, some look at every call to discipline and order in the Christian life as synonymous with legalism. Again, the sad truth is that in seeking discipline—many do and can become legalistic. But that is not saying that order and discipline are bad—no, they are necessary. Just many lose focus—the focus on God. They focus on the discipline alone, and rejoice in their own efforts.

Just understand this, order, discipline, organization—are not bad things—but Godly things. We can see it in creation, we can now see it in His word and how He sets up the plan of His people following Him. God is a God of order....and it is so in your life as well. Disorder is not the aim.

I am always drawn to the fact that one of the fruits of the Spirit is "Self-Control". Self control, discipline, is a Godly attribute. One of my favorite proverbs about this is this one:

The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting,
But diligence is man's precious possession. (Pr 12:27)

That is a proverb that is worth considering....and I tell you this, when you find diligence, discipline...it is precious. It is a good thing. Again, my simple point here...is to note with me, that order is a good thing.

For a good book on this, you might consider one of these:

Ordering your Private world *by: Gordon MacDonald*

Rebuilding Your Broken World *by: Gordon MacDonald*

Mid-Course Correction: Re-Ordering Your Private World for the Next Part of Your Journey *by: Gordon MacDonald*

A Resilient Life You Can Move Ahead No Matter What *by: Gordon MacDonald*

Discipline: The Glad Surrender *by: Elisabeth Elliot*

Cure for the Common Life: Living in Your Sweet Spot *by: Max Lucado*

With the Word Bible Commentary

Numbers 1-2

Genesis pictures God's people as pilgrims and strangers, looking for their inheritance. Exodus and Leviticus depict Israel as a holy nation of priests, worshiping the Lord. The book of Numbers emphasizes God's people as warriors, overcoming the enemy and claiming the promised inheritance.

They counted the men, twenty years and older, who were able to go to war. They did not ask for volunteers. When you enter the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, you automatically become one of His soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3-4). Every believer is a soldier, either a good one or a bad one.

The army was organized, each tribe with its leaders and its standard. There was unity in diversity. Perhaps the camp of Israel pictures the church. There are different "tribes" and standards, with their different leaders, but it is one army, following one Commander and fighting one enemy: "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4).

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Nu 1:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

With the Word Bible Commentary

Numbers 3-4

The priests were also a part of the battle, for without the blessing of the Lord, there could be no victory. Some of God's people are in the front lines of the battle, while others are behind the lines, interceding to the Lord.

It was important that the tabernacle of the Lord go with the people, so God instructed the priests and Levites exactly how to dismantle it and carry it. Each detail about the Lord's work is significant and must not be left to mere human wisdom.

And each person is vital to the work of the Lord, no matter what task God assigns. No task is trivial, not even taking care of the pegs (3:37). Some Levites had heavier burdens than others, but God had given them the assignments and He would enable them.

The putting up and taking down of the tabernacle were tasks as essential as the offering of the sacrifices or the burning of the incense. Spiritual ministry is no place for idle spectators or careless workers, for it is a matter of life and death (4:17-20).

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). *With the word Bible commentary* (Nu 3:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

" They declared their pedigrees."

Numbers 1:18

Written by: F B Meyer

Taken from: Our Daily Homily

It was not enough to be a true-born Israelite, a man must be able to show his descent. The genealogical tables were kept with the greatest care; and there was a holy pride in being able to vindicate the claim of having the blood of the patriarchs in the veins.

It is a blessed thing to be sure that we have passed from death unto life, and are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. True, our eternal destiny does not hinge on it. Many will doubtless be saved at last, who have spent their lives between hope and fear. But it is very needful for our comfort and growth in grace to be able to declare our pedigree, and to know that we have been translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son.

The Gospel of John was written that we might believe; the Epistle that we might know. But many seek this knowledge in the wrong way, and are exposed to endless questionings. They try to discover the date, place, or experience in the past, when they were incorporated into the Divine family; and because they cannot point to these, they imagine that they are still outside. Now for every one that has had a definite experience of the new birth, there are perhaps a score who entered the Divine family almost as a sailor passes the line of the Equator. Yet it is possible for you to know that you are born again, though you may not be able to tell your birthday.

If you are trusting Jesus, if the Spirit witnesses with your spirit that God is your Father, if you are full of a holy fear of grieving Him, if you are becoming like Him, if you love the brethren — you may certainly declare yourself his child.

***“ The Children of Israel shall pitch every man
by his own standard.”***

Numbers 2:2-34

Written by: F B Meyer

Taken from: Our Daily Homily

Our God is a God of order; and it was needful for the order of the camp, whether at rest or on the march, that each man should know his place, and keep to it. But though there were different standards and positions, there was one center, the ark, and one host of redeemed men.

Each believer has an appointed place in the great army of God. It is indicated by the voice of God, and by the circumstances of our life; and it should be jealously retained. Repeatedly the Apostle bade his converts abide in the calling wherein they were called. Yours may be towards the bleak north of difficulty, or the warm south of privilege — in the home, the country parish, or the difficult foreign post. But, on the whole, you should stay where you are; unless the Captain of our salvation moves you by some unmistakable indication of his will. The apostle Paul ever lived in such dependence on the Holy Spirit for guidance, and for the unfolding of the Divine purpose, that from some apparently trivial circumstance he would “gather” the movements of the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night. And interval there was none between his apprehension of the Divine purpose and his endeavor to strike his tent and follow wherever it might lead (Acts 16:6–7).

The main point with us all is to face the ark, to which the doors of all the tents looked, so that we may ever catch the first symptom of the movement of the cloud. On the whole, we do best to pitch and fight under our own standards. There is a closer bond of brotherhood possible between those who think alike. But whilst we are positive in what we affirm for ourselves, let us not deny that other standards represent necessary aspects of the common faith.