

INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY OF

NUMBERS

NUMBERS OVERVIEW

The name of the Bible's fourth book comes from its census reports (chs. 1-4, 26). "Camping in the Wild" would be a more historical title.

The long list of numbers and names in Numbers discourages many readers. However, these must be viewed as the Israelites viewed them. The lists were the final roll call before the battle. They prompted praise to God for His faithfulness to them. He protected them and multiplied their numbers even in the middle of a barren wilderness.

CRUCIAL EVENT

The turning point is the multitude's unbelief after hearing the report of the spies from Canaan (chs. 13, 14). Here at Kadesh, Israel failed the test by refusing to enter the nearby Promised Land and was assigned **40 years** in the wilderness, while all over age 20, except Joshua and Caleb, died (26:63-65).

40-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

- Israel departs Mt. Sinai (ch. 10).
- They crave meat, get quail (ch. 11).
- 70 elders receive the Spirit (ch. 11).
- Aaron, Miriam complain against Moses (ch. 12).
- Sabbath-breaker is punished (15:32-36).
- Korah's rebellion is followed by plague (ch. 16).
- Aaron's rod blossoms (ch. 17).
- Miriam, Aaron die; Moses disobeys (ch. 20).
- God sends snakebites and a cure (ch. 21).



CURRENT SERIES

- Kings Sihon, Og refuse passage, are defeated (ch. 21).
- Balak hires Balaam to curse Israel (chs. 22-24).
- Israel commits harlotry with Moab (ch. 25).
- Joshua is named Moses' successor (27:12-23).
- Israel wars against Midian (ch. 31).

THE NUMBERS?

The first census counted males over 20: 603,550 (1:46), plus Levi's 22,000 (3:39). With women and children, this suggests a mass migration of 2 or 3 million Hebrews from Egypt. Thirty-nine years later, the second census showed little change: 601,730 males (26:51), plus Levi's 23,000 (26:62).

NUMBERS IN A SENTENCE

Under the strong and humble hand of Moses, inconsistent Israel follows the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night from Mt. Sinai toward Canaan, is severely tested along the way, and arrives at the Jordan River after enduring 40 years of unbelief, grumbling, and death in the wilderness.

ANCIENT BLESSING

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace" (6:24-26).

cont.

APPLICATION

Three basic questions form this section.

What does this story tell us about God?

Over and over again we see God's patience shown to the people of Israel. Countless times they failed, even on the brink of their greatest triumph: going into the promised land, they still failed to trust God.

Though He was patient with them, He did not let them off the hook. There were consequences for not following God.

"The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; He punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."

Numbers 14:18

WHAT IS MY STORY? (THOUGHTS):

What does this story tell us about humanity?

Again, we see ourselves mirrored in the nation of Israel. They constantly complained about their circumstances; yet God constantly provided for them on a daily basis.

How do we apply this to our lives?

Two wonderful examples of integrity and honor stand out among all those numbered in Numbers; Caleb and Joshua. In the midst of all their fellow spies they stood firm and proclaimed their trust in God while the others were afraid.

Both men were the only ones of that generation who were allowed to enter into the promised land. God blessed their faith and trust in Him.