

Numbers: *Book of Wanderings*

Wandering in the wilderness of sin

Numbers gets its title in Hebrew (*bemidhbar*) from verse one, "in the wilderness of," since most of the book records the history of Israel wandering in the wilderness. The English title "Numbers" comes to our English from the Greek LXX because of the prominence of the census (chapters 1-3, 26). The name of the book is taken from the two numberings of the Israelites, first at Mt. Sinai in chapter one and the second on the plains of Moab in chapter twenty-six.

AUTHOR: Moses kept detailed records of the events as an eyewitness, and then wrote Numbers near the end of his life in the early 1400 s'B.C. (33:2). No one else was better qualified to write the Pentateuch than Moses.

The author uses a common technique of the ancient authors when referring to himself in the third person (8:23; 14:36; 15:1, 22; cf. Ex. 24:1; Lev. 6:1; Deut. 5:1).

Clyde T. Francisco notes the author is "an interpreter of the history of his age. He saw in each event God s'hand, directing His Chosen People, tending to their needs, enduring their sins and weaknesses, keeping his covenant with them, and disciplining them. Kadesh-barnea will always be a condemnation of God s'people of any age who refuse to go forward by faith."

TIME COVERED: is almost 39 years. Israel spent 39 years wandering when they could have made the trip in 39 days. Numbers forms a natural sequence to the book of Leviticus because the first part is of a statistical and Levitical character.

PURPOSE: Numbers gives the official record of Israel s'journey from Mt. Sinai to Moab. God demonstrates His faithfulness to His chosen people. Little is recorded of the aimless wanderings during these years. Two events are mentioned. The rebellion of Korah, a Levite, who challenged Moses and Aaron s'leadership. The second event followed the rebellion of Korah. When Aaron s'rod budded and produced blossoms and ripe almonds.

THEME: Numbers is connected with the wilderness journeys of Israel. It is the official record of the journey from Sinai to Moab. It is a clear illustration of the faithfulness of God to His people, and man s'responsibility to live by faith in Him (Num. 10:29; 33:1). God s'people must walk by faith. God judged Israel according to the number of days in which they spied out the land, forty days, thus for each day they would bear their guilt for forty years (14:34). His divine mercy is seen in the provision of the bronze serpent suggesting a greater provision in God s'mercy at the cross of Jesus (21:4-9; John 3:14). The divine presence is seen in the pillar of fire and the cloud (10:11), and the provision of God is seen in the daily provision of manna for food and the rock which provided water. Each of these provisions prefigures the coming of the Lord Jesus (John 6:31-33; I Cor. 10:4).

The book reveals the painful process of testing and maturation as God teaches His chosen people the consequences of rebellion and walking by sight rather than by faith. God s'people can move forward only as they depend on Him. Divine judgment on Israel s'unbelief is also prominent in Numbers. The last year of wandering is recorded in 20:1-36:13 and Deuteronomy. After thirty-eight years of wandering the children of Israel find themselves at the same spot they were thirty-eight years before.

KEY VERSES: 10:29; 14:3; 33:1

KEY WORDS: Work, war, wandering, wickedness

TYPES IN NUMBERS

The Nazarite (6:2-8) typifying holiness, harmless, undefiled, consecrated to god (Heb. 7:26; Phil. 2:6-8).

Aaron s' Budding Rod (17:8) typifies Christ rising from the dead. Aaron s'rod was dead, yet it budded.

Red Heifer (19:1-10) was without spot and blemish. She removes defilement of death (Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 13:11-12; Rom. 3:24-25).

Bronze Serpent (21:4-9; Jn. 3:14-15)

Bright and Morning Star (24:17) a ruler from Jacob (rev. 22:16)

Cities of Refuge (35:6ff; Rom. 8:1, 33, 34; Phi. 3:9)

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Title: Introduction to Numbers

Series: A Look at the Book

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