

From the Garden to Glory

Numbers

Author: Moses (commonly accepted)

Timeline: c. 1446 - 1407 B.C.

Location: The Wilderness

Category: Historical
Pentateuch

Theme: Consequences of Unbelief

Overview:

Numbers can be called the Roll Call of God. It can also be called the "Book of Murmurings" because it is filled with the spirit of rebellion against God in the hearts of His people.

The book of Numbers stretches over almost thirty-nine years. Those years the children of Israel spent wandering in the wilderness because of their unbelief in the promise of God. The critical turning point of Numbers is in chapter fourteen, when Israel refused to go up and conquer the Promised Land.

Israel's lack of spiritual progress should be a lesson for us. Unbelief brings correction and hinders God's blessings in our lives.

Introduction:

The book of Numbers describes the process by which God tests and teaches His people so they will be prepared to enter the Promised Land. In preparation for your study of the book of Numbers, consider the following questions and write your answers:

1. How do you generally deal with God's testing and discipline in your life? Do you obey joyfully, obey grudgingly or do you rebel?
2. The book of Numbers records Israel's failure to believe God's promise. Can you think of a time you failed to believe God? What were the consequences?
3. Is there a "journey" you are about to take? How are you feeling about this journey? What do you need from the Lord and His Word to be prepared for your journey?
4. Look up the words *wilderness* and *wandering* in a dictionary and write the definitions. Think of a time when you were "wandering in the wilderness". What were some of the difficulties you encountered? What were some of the lessons you learned?

The Guiding Cloud

Read Numbers 9:15-23

1. Look at verses 15-16. What covered the tabernacle by day? What covered the tabernacle from evening until morning?
2. Read Exodus 40:34-38. Make a note of all you learn about the cloud and the fire.
3. What did the children of Israel do when the cloud "continued long"? What is your response when the Lord keeps you in one place for a long time? What did the children of Israel do when the cloud remained only from evening until morning? How do you respond when the Lord moves quickly in your life?

4. Consider your answers to question #3. Which is easier for you, "continuing long" or moving quickly? Which is more difficult? Why?

The Report of the Spies

Read Numbers 13:16-33

1. Consider verse 16. Hoshea means "desire for salvation." Joshua means "the Lord is my salvation." Why do you think Moses changed Joshua's name? How has this change happened in your own life?
2. What were Moses' instructions to the spies as he sent them to look at the land of Canaan? What were they to bring back?
3. Summarize the description of the land found in verses 26-29? Look at verses 31-33 and note the response of the majority of the spies.
4. Although it appears that Caleb concurred with the report, his response was different. What did Caleb suggest that the children of Israel do? Why do you think his response was so different from the other spies? What is your response when faced with an "impossible task"?

Israel's Unbelief

Read Numbers 14

1. How did the children of Israel respond to the spies' report in verses 1-4?
2. Look at verses 6-9. What did Joshua and Caleb say to the congregation?

3. Consider verses 11 and 26-27. How does God view complaining? It has been said that ultimately all complaining is complaining against the Lord. Why is this true? Is there an area of your life where you are complaining? If so, confess it to the Lord, repent and walk in His forgiveness.

4. Look at verses 20-23? What had all these men seen? What had they not done? What would be the consequences?

Water from the Rock

Read Numbers 20:1-13

1. Describe the situation in verses 2-5.

2. Whose counsel did Moses and Aaron seek in response to the congregation's complaint? To whom do you go when people "contend" with you?

3. What did the Lord instruct Moses to do to the rock? What did Moses do?

4. What were the consequences for Moses' and Aaron's disobedience? Why do you think the consequences were so severe?

The Brazen Serpent

Read Numbers 21:1-9

1. What was Israel's vow to the Lord? What was His response? How has the Lord given you victory against your enemies? Be specific.
2. Summarize verses 4-6.
3. What did the people do in verse 7?
4. What did the Lord instruct Moses to do in verses 8-9? What happened to those who looked at the pole? Read John 3:14-15. How do these two sections of Scripture relate to one another?

Balaam's Feast

Read Numbers 22

1. What was Moab's fear in verses 1-4? Look at Deuteronomy 2:9 and note why this fear was unfounded.
2. Who was Balak? What did he want Balaam to do for him?
3. Look at the following verses and write everything you learn about Balaam: Numbers 24:1-25, 31:16 Deuteronomy 23:3-6, Joshua 13:22, 24:9-10, Nehemiah 13:1-3, 2 Peter 2:15-16, Jude 11 and Revelation 2:14.

Balaam himself used the name "LORD", and he even called the LORD, "the LORD my God". In this verse it must be assumed that Balaam expected the God of Israel to speak to him. As a pagan prophet he would anticipate making contact with the gods of many people...Israel's God did communicate to Balaam. However, rather than using the term "LORD", which indicates a covenant relationship, God consistently used the word "God" when He spoke to him. Though Balaam used the word "LORD", the Biblical text makes it clear that he did not have a relationship with Israel's God. John MacArthur

4. Summarize verses 10-40. What is the most important lesson you learn from this section of Scripture?

The Cities of Refuge

Read Numbers 35:6-34

1. Look up the word *refuge* in a dictionary and write the definition. Where do you find refuge? Be specific.
2. How many cities of refuge were to be established? What was their purpose?
3. For which criminals were the cities of refuge *not* available? What was to be done to these criminals?
4. Read verses 33-34. Note what you learn from these verses.

Summary

As you conclude your study of the book of Numbers consider the following questions and write your answers:

- 1.** What is the most important lesson you have learned from your study of this book? How can you apply this lesson in your life this week?
- 2.** What "new insights" did you learn about the Lord and yourself from your study?
- 3.** List one way in which your study caused you to do each of the following:

Praise and worship the Lord:

Confess an area of sin to the Lord:

Thank the Lord:

Ask for something from the Lord: