

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 5 – “Numbers”
February 25, 2007

Let's retrace the history we've covered thus far in Genesis, Exodus & Leviticus:

- God promised Abraham a land for his descendents. By faith, Abraham set out for Canaan, a land he had never seen before.
- During the time of Joseph (Abraham's great-grandson), the family of Israel (Jacob) relocated to Egypt. The family then consisted of about 70 people.
- For some 400 years, the Israelites were held in Egyptian bondage. While in captivity, they increased in number to approximately 2 million. God raised up a man named Moses who led them to freedom.
- Then, the Israelites went to Sinai, where they spent at least 13 months.
 - They received the Law of God regarding How They Should Live.
 - They received instructions regarding the Tabernacle.
 - They received all of the information on How to Worship.
- Then, they began their journey back to Canaan, the Land of Promise. (This is the context of the Book of Numbers.)

The book's name? 1:2 – “census” (literally, sum or number)

The census results? (1:45-46) – 603,550 men age 20 & above (i.e., able to go to war).

NOTE: v. 49 – one tribe or family group was to be exempt from the draft—the Levites. Why? These were the priests.

Chapter 26—38 years later, there was another census. v. 51—this time there were 601,730 men (1,820 fewer than before!) That's part of the tragic story of this book.

Outline of Numbers

1. Chapters 1-9 – God's People Prepare to Travel.

The book begins with the Israelites' last several weeks at Sinai. The people are getting ready for their trip to the Promised Land.

2. Chapters 10-14 – The Journey to Kadesh-Barnea. (11 days – Deut. 1:2)

- They should have entered the land immediately. Instead, they sent a 12-man committee (one from each of the 12 tribes) to spy out the land for a period of 40 days. All 12 returned brimming with excitement. 13:25-27
 - “But...” the majority (10 of the 12) offered a pessimistic report. 13:28-33
 - The minority (Joshua and Caleb) offered an optimistic report.
 - Tragically, the people heeded the words of the pessimists. 14:1-10a
- This resulted in God’s judgment. 14:34-38
- The people then responded with a futile attempt to seize the land out of their own strength. 14:39-43
- Suffering a stunning defeat, they retreated back into the wilderness. 14:44-45
- Thus, an 11-day journey winds up taking them 38 years. Not because they lost their way geographically, but because they lost their way spiritually.

3. Chapters 15-36 – Wandering in the Wilderness. (38 years)

- **For the disobedient older generation, it was a time of punishment.**

They were released from bondage to go to Canaan, but they never got to experience what they were released from Egypt to do. Joshua & Caleb were the only exceptions. Not even Moses got to enter the Promised Land.
- **For the younger generation, it was a time of preparation.**
- As a nation, it took the Israelites a total of 40 years to go from Exodus to Conquest, when it should have taken them less than two.
- The sad story of Numbers is a story of missed opportunity and missed blessing.

4. Applications from This Book

- God is greater than any struggle we’ll ever face.
- Our decisions—for good or bad—always have an effect on other people.
- Sin is forgivable, but it often has consequences.
- Our God is the God of the second chance.