

Introduction

“The book of Numbers narrates the transition of the Israelites geographically, thematically, and theologically. Geographically, what began at Sinai (Num. 1:1–10:10) soon revolved around Kadesh (10:11–20:13) and culminated in Moab (20:14–36:13). Thematically, the community was formed (1:1–9:14), undertook their journey (9:15–25:18), and prepared for their national settlement (26:1–35:34). Theologically, Israel’s redemption underwent the death of the exodus generation (chs. 1–25) before shifting to the generation of the conquest (chs. 26–36). Two censuses frame the entire book; the first became a memorial to a fearful generation (ch. 1), and the last a pledge of hope to their children (ch. 26). Each phase of encampment included law-giving, future promises, rebellion, and divine discipline.”

Jason S. DeRouchie

What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About, p.123–124

This year we are memorizing Isaiah 40. This week’s verse is Isaiah 40:12...

“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span,
And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance
And the hills in a pair of scales?”

Day One

*Read selected Scriptures from Numbers 1–10; **The Faithfulness of Israel at Sinai***

Note: As the book of Numbers begins, the people of Israel had camped in the wilderness of Sinai for eleven months and it had been a month since the tabernacle had been erected. Numbers 1 chronicles the census, designed to calculate the people’s strength as they prepared to enter Canaan to conquer the land and subdue the foreign nations according to God’s promise.

1. Remembering our study last fall through Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, give a single-sentence summary of each book and how they relate to the story of God’s redemption of His people.
2. According to Numbers 2:1–2, what direction did God give Israel about how to organize their camp?
 - a. What do you think was the significance of the central position of the tent of meeting? What principle can you draw from that and apply to your own life?
3. From 2:34, 4:49, 5:4, and 8:22, what was Israel’s response to God’s commandments?
 - a. From 6:22–27, how did the Lord respond to Israel’s obedience?
4. According to 10:11–13 and 29–36, what was Israel’s destination as they set out, and what was their attitude?

Day Two

*Read Numbers 11–14; **Israel’s Rebellion and Disobedience, Part 1***

Note: Numbers 11 marks a change in Israel’s attitude and obedience toward God. The next two days’ questions focus on the nation’s repeated rebellion and God’s divine judgment, a cycle that seemed to jeopardize the covenant blessings. Each question’s text details an act of rebellion. Identify Israel’s complaint, Moses’ response, and God’s reaction or judgment.

1. Numbers 11:1–3

2. Numbers 11:4–34
 - a. What is the difference in God’s response to the people’s complaints in Numbers 11 and Exodus 16:1–12?
3. Numbers 12
4. Read Numbers 13. How does God’s covenant promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3 and His reaffirmation to Moses in Exodus 6:2–4 deepen your understanding of the instructions given to Moses in verses 1–2, and Moses instructions to the people in verses 17–20?
 - a. List several things that God had already done to prove to His people that He was sovereign over all things and would care for His people. Why do you think these things didn’t matter to the Israelites in this passage?
 - b. What do you tend to focus on when circumstances around you are difficult? How can you practically deepen your recollection of, and trust in, God’s faithfulness?
5. Read Numbers 14. From verses 11–19, on what basis did Moses intercede with God on behalf of the people, and how can that be an example for believers today? (See also Leviticus 14:13–19 and Exodus 20:5 and 34:6–7.)
6. In what ways is a complaining spirit the same as a rebellious spirit? How can one person’s grumbling lead to open rebellion?
 - a. What evidence is there in your own life of either a complaining or submissive spirit? Remembering that contentment results from an internal attitude rather than external circumstances, what do you need to change in order to live with greater contentment?

Day Three

Read Numbers 16–17 and 20:1–21:9; *Israel’s Rebellion and Disobedience, Part 2*

Note: Each question’s text details an act of rebellion. Identify Israel’s complaint, Moses/Aaron’s response, and God’s reaction or judgment.

1. Numbers 16–17
 - a. In chapter 18, immediately following the rebellion of Korah, the Lord instructed Aaron regarding the priestly duties of the Levites. Considering the Lord’s righteous anger towards Israel’s unbelief and rebellion, how does this magnify the character of God and His faithfulness to His covenant with Israel?
2. In Numbers 20:2–13, the congregation was again in Meribah without water. When the people complained, what did the Lord command Moses to do, and how did he respond?
 - a. What was God’s judgment against Moses and Aaron for their disobedience? Do you think it seems harsh or unfair? Use Scripture to support your answer. What can believers today learn from this?

3. Numbers 21:4–9

- a. What remedy to the snakebites did the Lord give Moses? Presumably, some people looked at the bronze snake while others did not. Why do you think people responded differently?
- b. How does Moses' example of constant intercession for Israel encourage or challenge you? What does his mediation demonstrate and foreshadow?
- c. For whom can *you* be interceding in prayer this week? How can you grow in this area?

Day Four

Read Numbers 21:31–25:18; Balak, Balaam, and God's Covenant Faithfulness

Note: Balaam was a pagan prophet and an outsider from the nation of Israel who was chosen by God to bless Israel in the midst of their unbelief, disobedience, and wilderness wanderings.

1. According to Numbers 21:31–22:6, what caused Balak to fear Israel, and what did he ask Balaam to do?
2. From Balaam's Oracles in Numbers 23 and 24, summarize his blessings of Israel and how that reaffirmed and expanded the Abrahamic Covenant.
3. According to Numbers 25:1–3, what was the final failure of Israel before the conquest of Canaan?
 - a. According to Numbers 31:16, whose counsel led to this failure, and why is that significant?
4. From Numbers 25:4–13, how did God judge Israel?
 - a. What did Phinehas do that pleased God, and what did God establish in response to his zeal for holiness?

Day Five

Read Selected Passages; The New Generation's Preparation to Enter the Promised Land

Note: A second census in Numbers 26 signals the transition from the unbelieving generation that perished in the wilderness to the second generation on the verge of beginning their conquest of the Promised Land.

1. From Numbers 26:63–65, who were the only ones remaining from the original generation that left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness because of disobedience?
 - a. How does the fact that only Joshua and Caleb were spared magnify God's holiness and faithfulness?
2. According to Numbers 27:15–23, who was chosen to succeed Moses?

Women of Grace

• Lesson 9 • Numbers: Rebellion and Wilderness •

- a. Joshua, like Moses and Caleb, was to lead by faith in God's promises, not allowing the obvious significant obstacles before him to eclipse his understanding and trust in God's covenant plan and provision. How can you follow this example of faith and trust in God and His Word? Be specific.

3. As Israel stood on the plains of Moab near the Jordan River across from Jericho, prepared to enter the Promised Land, what command and warning did the Lord give them in Numbers 33:50–56?
 - a. How does this deepen your understanding of God's holiness, and the need for His people to walk by faith and trust in His promises?