

Numbers 1 - Thursday, April 29th, 2010

- Tonight we begin a long awaited study in the book of Numbers as we make our way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.
- The book of Numbers is a book of Numbers. Here in chapter one, the Israelites are numbered, then their numbered again in chapter 26.
- By way of both review and preview, it's only been a little over a year since the Israelites made their Exodus out of slavery in Egypt.
- The book of Exodus records a period of one year, the book of Leviticus records only one month, and now Numbers is about 39 years.

"Since the tabernacle was erected upon the first day of the first month, in the second year after their coming out of Egypt, ... and this muster of the people was made on the first day of the second month, in the same year. It is evident that the transactions related in the preceding book must all have taken place in the space of one month, and during the time the Israelites were encamped at Mount Sinai, before they had begun their journey to the Promised Land."
Adam Clarke

- So much happens and there are so many lessons in the book of Numbers that the Apostle Paul refers to this period in 1 Corinthians 10.

1 Corinthians 10:6-13 6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did-and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test the Lord, as some of them did-and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did-and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. 12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. NIV

2 Timothy 3:16-17 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. NIV

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

- We begin with verse one saying; "the Lord spoke to Moses," and we'll need to get used to this because it's repeated over 150 times.
- Notice where and when the Lord speaks to Moses; though in the wilderness he's in the tabernacle of meeting. That's where He speaks.
- Also, He speaks after the first year after being saved out of slavery in Egypt, and now it's in the second month of the second year.
- Perhaps the application here is that it's the same for us. The first year or so after we're saved out of our Egypt, it's sort of a honeymoon.
- Then, in the years that follow when we're in those wilderness seasons in our lives, God still speaks and it's in and through the church.

2 "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, 3 from twenty years old and above -- all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies. 4 And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house.

- Here God commands Moses to take a census of all the men who are 20 years old and above and that are able to go to war in Israel.
- God wants them to asses where they were at both numerically and militarily so as to prepare them for the battle that lay ahead of them.
- This is rich with application for us in how we need to asses where we're at in preparation for the spiritual battles that lay ahead of us.
- It's interesting to note that they're counted by their families suggesting their strength individually was based on their family collectively.

5 "These are the names of the men who shall stand with you: from Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur; 6 from Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai; 7 from Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab; 8 from Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar; 9 from Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon; 10 from the sons of Joseph: from Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud; from Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur; 11 from Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideon; 12 from Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai; 13 from Asher, Pagiel the son of Ocran; 14 from Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel; 15 from Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan." 16 These were chosen from the congregation, leaders of their fathers' tribes, heads of the divisions in Israel.

- This would seem to indicate that these leaders as head's of their tribe, we're elected as a Governor of sorts, because they were chosen.
- One thing that will stand out in our study of this chapter and this book is how God is a God of order in His organization and perfection.

17 Then Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned by name, 18 and they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month; and they recited their ancestry by families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, each one individually. 19 As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai.

- There's something here that we need to see because it can easily be missed at first glance; notice "they did as the Lord commanded."
- In other words, verse one tells us what God commanded them to do, but it's not until we get to verse 17 that we see them doing it.
- Suffice it to say; we, like Moses, need to be both hearers and "head-ers" of God's Word. First He tells us what to do, then, we do it.

James 1:22-25 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. NAS

20 Now the children of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:21 those who were numbered of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred. 22 From the children of Simeon, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, of those who were numbered, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:23 those who were numbered of the tribe of Simeon were fifty-nine thousand three hundred. 24 From the children of Gad, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:25 those who were numbered of the tribe of Gad were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. 26 From the children of Judah, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:27 those who were numbered of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred. 28 From the children of Issachar, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:29 those who were numbered of the tribe of Issachar were fifty-four thousand four hundred. 30 From the children of Zebulun, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 31 those who were numbered of the tribe of Zebulun were fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 32 From the sons of Joseph, the children of Ephraim, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:33 those who were numbered of the tribe of Ephraim were forty thousand five hundred. 34 From the children of Manasseh, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:35 those who were numbered of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred. 36 From the children of Benjamin, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:37 those who were numbered of the tribe of Benjamin were thirty-five thousand four hundred. 38 From the children of Dan, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:39 those who were numbered of the tribe of Dan were sixty-two thousand seven hundred. 40 From the children of Asher, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:41 those who were numbered of the tribe of Asher were forty-one thousand five hundred. 42 From the children of Naphtali, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war:43 those who were numbered of the tribe of Naphtali were fifty-three thousand four hundred. 44 These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each one representing his father's house.45 So all who were numbered of the children of Israel, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war in Israel --46 all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

- This is what gives the book of Numbers its name. Interestingly the Hebrew title for the book is not Numbers rather it's In the Wilderness.

- In verses 20-21 we see Reuben with the number of 46,500. In verses 22-23 Simeon is 59,300, and in verses 24-25 Gad is at 45,650.
- In verses 26-27 we see Judah with the number of 74,600. In verses 28-29 Issachar is 54,400, and in verses 30-31 Zebulun is at 57,400.
- In verses 32-33 we see Ephraim with the number of 40,500. In verses 34-35 Manasseh is 32,200, and in 36-37 Benjamin is at 35,400.
- In verses 38-39 we see Dan with the number of 62,700. In verses 40-41 Asher is 41,500, and in 42-43 Naphtali is at 53,400.
- Finally, in verses 44-46 we have a total number of 603,550. Perhaps you're wondering why we need to know all of these numbers.

- Here are a couple of reasons why I believe that it's important we both know and understand the totals of the numbers of these tribes.
- First, this is how we are able to estimate the total number of Israelites to be approximately two to three million people after the Exodus.
- OK, why do I need to know that? Because God is making good on His promise to Abraham that He would make them a great nation.

- A second reason is that in the second counting the number totals don't change much. Wow! Now why do I need to know that?
- Because not only is this a validation of God's promises, it's also the protection and direction of God's people. He gets them through it.
- In other words, no matter what God will always make good on His promises and He will always get us through the wilderness of life.

47 But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe;48 for the LORD had spoken to Moses, saying:49 "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel;50 but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle.51 And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death.52 The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies;53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony." 54 Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they did.

- The reason the tribe of Levi was not counted was because of their priestly service in the Tabernacle there in the wilderness.
- Lord willing next week, we'll see a fascinating study related to the arrangement of the camps of the Israelites around the Tabernacle.