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Introduction To Numbers

The book of Numbers is not the most read book of the Old Testament nor one which commentators have flocked to write commentaries on yet it is one of the riches books for practical Christian living and the person of Jesus Christ.

The amount of detail given in the book of Numbers, such as the counting of the population, names, places and orders is not to fill up pages to make it look like an important book but as evidence of it's importance.

The references to it in the New Testament both in literal events and types are many as we will see in our study.

I. The book of Numbers.

A. The name of the book comes from the LXX, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures by the 70 scholars from Alexandria in Egypt.

1. The Greek title "Arithmoi" is due to the census taken at the beginning and at the end of the journey, meaning numbers. ch. 1-4, 26

- * The word numbers occurs close to 100x's in the first four chapters.
- 2. Our English word "arithmetic" and the Latin word "Numeri" comes from it.
- 3. The Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text is called "Be-midbar" which means in the wilderness from the first verse of the first chapter. 1:1

B. The author is Moses

1. The book bear testimony to his authorship. 32:2
2. The number of times the phrase "The Lord spoke to Moses" is 52x's in the thirty-six chapter.
3. The fact that the Lord spoke to Moses from the Tabernacle is declared two times. 1:1, 7:89
4. The phrase "the Lord spoke to Aaron" appears only three times. 18:1, 8, 20
5. The Jewish community has always accepted Moses' authorship without question.
6. The Lord Jesus Christ declared Moses wrote numbers by referring to the events in the book such as the serpent in the wilderness. Jn. 3:14-15
 - * Throughout the Lord's ministry He referred to the law of Moses, Moses

wrote of Me, the commandments of Moses etc.

7. The critics of modern literary criticism espouse a theory of various authors as for the other four books of the Pentateuch called the J.E.D.P. or "Documentary Hypothesis".

C. The date of the book is found in the book itself.

1. The date is on the first day of the second month May of the second year, after they had come out of Egypt, for April was the beginning of their new year in their religious calendar. 1:1
2. The Tabernacle had been reared up only one month before, on the first day of the first month of the second year, after the Exodus, April. Ex. 40:17
3. The period between the raising of the Tabernacle and the order to march was one month which the book of Leviticus was given. Ex. 40:17, Lev. 26:46, Num. 1:1
4. The march through the wilderness took place nineteen days after or on the twentieth from the command by God to Moses regarding the census in chapter one, on the 20th day of the second

month, May, of the second year after the exodus. 1:1, 10:11

D. The time increments in the book

1. About eleven months were spent at Sinai.
 - a. Arrived on the 3rd month, June after the Exodus. Ex. 19:1
 - b. The Tabernacle was reared up on the April 1st of the 2nd year. Ex. 40:17
 - c. The wondering began on the 20th of May of the second year after the Exodus. 10:11
2. The thirty-eight year wondering in the wilderness. 20:28, 33:38 Duet. 2:14
* Aaron died in the 40th year, the fifth month and the first day and they mourned him for 30 days. 33:38 20:29
3. The remaining time was a few month in preparation to enter the land.
4. The man Moses spoke on the first day of the eleventh month of the 40th year, six month after Aaron death to the children of the second generation. 33:38, Duet. 1:3
5. The death of Moses took place in the plains of Moab being 120 years old, his eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor reduced and God buried him in a valley

in the land of Moab, opposite of Beth Peor, mourning him for thirty days but no one knows his grave to this day. Deut. 34:1-8

- E.** The key verses are descriptive of the book.
1. The camp must be holy for God dwells in the midst of the camp. 5:3
 2. The Lord went before them guiding them. 10:35-36
 3. The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation. 14:18
 - 4 The judgment for unbelief was death in the wilderness. 14:29-34
 - 5 The pollution of the land comes from blood that is not avenged among the people that God dwells with. 35:33-34

II. The book of Numbers in relation to the Pentateuch.

- A.** Genesis is the beginning of creation, fall, redemption and God's people. Gen. 3:1-7, 15,12:13

- B.** Exodus is the redemption of God's people from the world in order to tabernacle among them as a chosen people. Ex. 19: 5
- C.** Leviticus is God's standard to walk and worship with God through sacrifice, obedience, a mediating priest and social order marked by holiness. Lev. 1-7
- D.** Numbers is the record of a forty year death march due to disobedience and rebellion against God. 14:29-31
- E.** Deuteronomy is the law and the instructions given to those born in the wilderness in preparation to pass the land. Deut. 4:1

III. The structure of the book of Numbers

- A.** The book is the continuation of the book of Exodus.
1. Thirty days after the rearing of the Tabernacle. Ex. 40:17, Num. 1:1
 2. Thirty days during which the Levitical law was given.
- B.** The book seems to relate the insurrections of God to Moses from the Tabernacle. 1:1, 2:1, 3:1, 5, 11,14, 40, 44, 4:1, 21, 5:1, 5, 11, 6:1,

22, 7:4, 11, 8:1, 5, 23, 9:1, 9, 10:1, 11:16,23, 12:4, 14, 13:1, 11, 15:1, 17, 37, 17:1, 10, 18:25, 20:7, 23, 21:8, 25:10, 16, 26:1, 27:6, 12, 18, 28:1, 31:1, 25, 33:50, 34:1, 16, 35:1, 9

- C.** The record of disobedience is evident by the specific events recorded and the decreasing of each tribe between the two census. ch. 1-4, 26
1. The rebellion of the people.
 2. The rebellion of the leadership.
- D.** The book is not concerned with the chronology nor the entire record of all events but only with certain ones that would be instructional for the people of God in the future. Rom. 15:4, 1Cor. 10:1-12, Heb. 3:7-4:13
- E.** The book is full of symbols and types.
1. The manna spoke of Jesus. 11:7, Jn. 6:32-33
 2. The budding of Aarons rod was a symbol of Jesus' resurrection. 17:8, 1Cor. 15:20
 3. The rock that Moses struck was Christ. 20:10-11, 1Cor. 10:4
 4. The water symbolized Jesus, the satisfaction of life. Jn. 4:10

- 5** The bronze serpent spoke of Jesus. 21:4-9, Jn. 3:14-15
* There are others we will cover through the book!

IV. The message of the book of Numbers.

- A.** God knows all of His people to the very number, none escape Him. 1-3
- B.** God is the God of order after His desire and choosing revealing it to His people through His word. 4-10
- C.** God is the One who leads His people by His Spirit and His wisdom. 9:15-16, 22-23, 10:11, 35-36
**cloud and pillar of fire.*
- D.** God is the God of long-suffering, mercy and grace towards a sinful people. 14:18
- E.** God is severe with ongoing disobedience and rebellion. 11:33, 12:9-10, 16:31-32, 25:4-5
** Not even Moses entered into the promise land!*

- F. God is faithful to His divine justice and promises, He can not lie. 23:19
- G. God is faithful to fulfill His promises to those who receive and obey. 14:24, 29
- H. God desires to do things in eleven days rather than forty years. 33:38, Deut. 1:2
- I. God commands capital punishment to cleanse the land. 35:31-34

VI. The outline to the book of Numbers.

- A. The preparation for the journey of the first generation. 1:1-10:10
 - * Mount Sinai at the wilderness of Sinai. 1:1
 - 1. The organization of Israel. 1-4
 - a. The order of the first census. ch.1
 - b. The order of encampment. ch.2
 - c. The order and census of Levites. ch. 3
 - d. The order and duties of the Levites. ch. 4
 - 2. The ordinances for holiness. 5-6
 - a. The laws of purity. 5:1-5
 - b. The law of restitution. 5:6-10
 - c. The law of a jealous husband. 5:11-30
 - d. The law of the Nazarite. 6:1-21

- e. The law of blessing. 6:22-27,
- 3. The orderly offerings of the leaders for the Tabernacle. ch.7
 - * Each offered the same!
- 4. The order miscellaneous things. 8-9
 - a. The lamps order regarding Aaron. 8:1-4
 - b. The dedication of the Levites. 8:5-26
 - c. The second Passover. 9:1-14
 - d. The order of God's leading. 9:15-23
 - e. The trumpets to order the encampment and departures. ch. 10
- B. The problems in the journey with the first generation. 10:11-21:9
 - * Mount Sinai in the wilderness of Paran to Kadesh-barnea. 10:33
 - 1. The people depart from Sinai. 10:11-36
 - 2. The people despised the manna and leaders chosen to help Moses lead. ch. 11
 - 3. The dissension of Aaron and Miriam. ch. 12
 - 4. The departure of the 12 spies and return. ch. 13
 - 5. The disobedience of the people to enter the land condemned by God. ch. 14
 - 6. The sins of presumption. ch. 15
 - 7. The presumptuous sin of Korah. ch. 16

8. The proclamation of Aarons authority. ch. 17
 9. The personal duties and support of the Levies. ch. 18
 10. The purification laws. ch. 19
 11. The presumptuous sin of Moses. ch. 20
 12. The poisonous serpents. ch. 21:1-9
- C. The promises at the end of the journey for the second generation. 21:10-36:13
- * The wilderness of Paran to Moab. 22:1
1. God's faithfulness to give victory over the enemy. ch. 21:10-35
 2. God's thwarting of Balak and Balaam's purposes. ch. 22-24
 3. God's judgment at Moab for idolatry with Baal of Peor. ch. 25
 4. God's second census. ch. 26
 5. God's oppointment of Joshua and supplimental laws of offerings & feasts. ch. 27-30
 6. God's vengence over Midian. ch. 31
 7. God's permissive will to settle on the trans-Jordan side. ch. 32
 8. God's record of the journeys from Egypt to the plains of Moab. ch. 33
 9. God's appointed boundaries of Canaan and the leaders to divide the land. ch. 34

10. God's appointment of the cities of the Levies and the refuge cities. ch. 35
11. God's ordinance for female heirs. ch. 36

Conclusion

The words of Jesus and the new Testament puts a very high priority on the book of Numbers, I pray that we not think ourselves wiser than Scripture or our Lord an dSavior Jesus Christ!