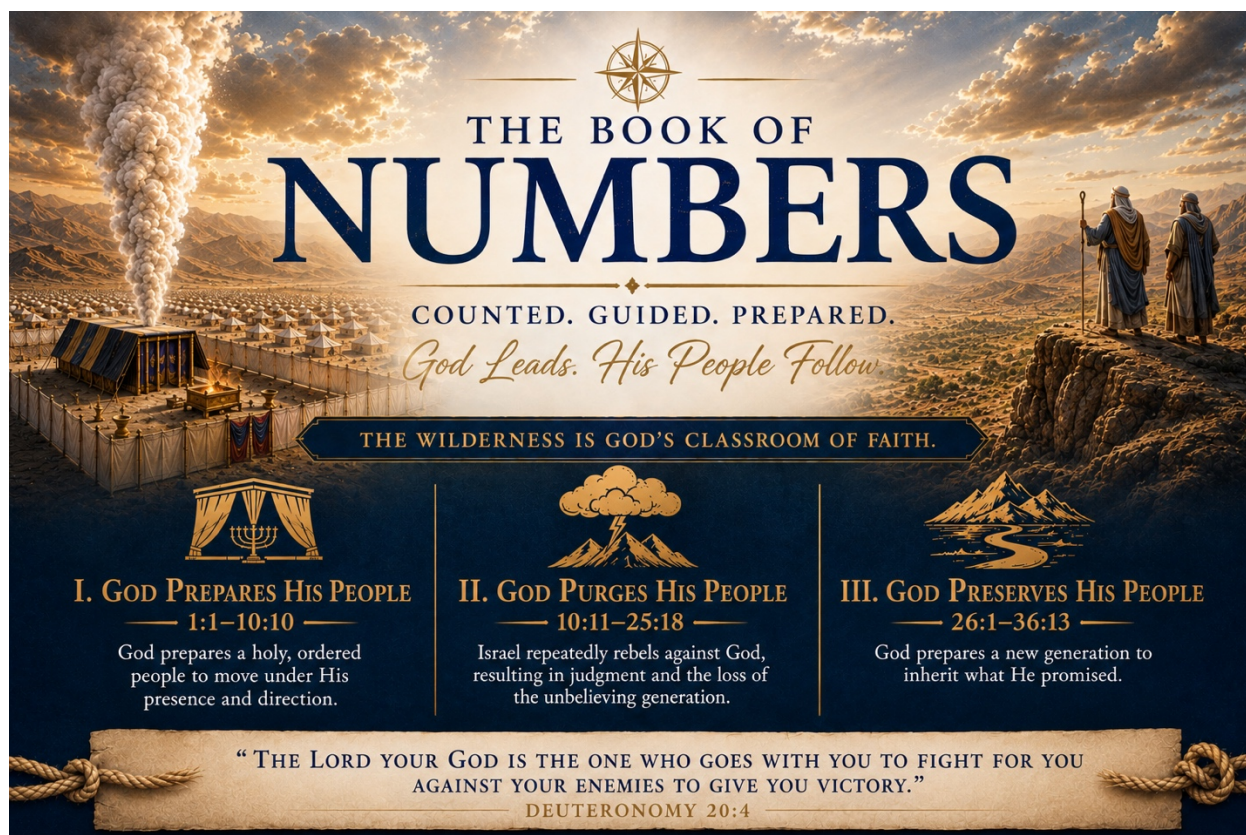




Theme: Numbers shows that God advances His glory by faithfully leading, disciplining, preserving, and preparing His people until His covenant purposes are accomplished.

If I asked you to name the books of the Bible where you would expect to see **the glory of God**, I doubt Numbers would be the first book that came to mind.

We might think of **Genesis**, where God speaks the universe into existence. We might think of **Exodus**, where the glory of God descends upon Mount Sinai. We might think of **Isaiah**, where the prophet sees the Lord “lofty and exalted” and hears the seraphim cry, “*Holy, Holy, Holy.*” Or perhaps Revelation, where the glory of God illuminates the New Jerusalem.

But Numbers?

For many Christians, Numbers sounds like exactly what its English title suggests—a book filled with censuses, lists of names, tribal arrangements, offerings, and seemingly endless details about Israel's journey through the wilderness.

And yet, when we open the book of Numbers, we discover something remarkable: **This is a book about the glory of God.**

In fact, at one of the darkest moments in the entire book—when Israel stands at Kadesh-barnea and refuses to believe God—God makes this astonishing declaration:

“But indeed, as I live, **all the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD.**”—
Numbers 14:21

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Think about when God says that.

Israel has been redeemed from Egypt. They have seen His miracles. They have eaten His manna. They have followed His cloud. They have stood beneath His glory. And now, standing on the threshold of the Promised Land, they refuse to trust Him.

They complain. They rebel. They want another leader. They even talk about going back to Egypt. Humanly speaking, the whole enterprise appears to be falling apart. And right there God declares: **“All the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD.”**

In other words:

Israel may fail—but God will not.

Their unbelief will not overturn His promises.

Their rebellion will not derail His plan.

Their sin will not diminish His holiness.

Their failures will not frustrate His purposes.

God will judge.

God will discipline.

God will provide.

God will preserve.

God will raise up another generation.

And God will continue moving history toward the fulfillment of every promise He has made.

That is the great message of Numbers.

The book begins with a generation numbered at Sinai and ends with another numbered on the plains of Moab. Between those two censuses lie nearly forty years of complaining, unbelief, rebellion, judgment, death—and the relentless faithfulness of God. And through it all, God demonstrates that His glory does not depend on the faithfulness of man. His glory rests on the unchanging perfection of who He is.

As we walk through Numbers, we will discover a God who displays His glory through His sovereign providence, His gracious redemption, His righteous judgment, His sanctifying work, and His unwavering preservation of His people.

Ultimately, Numbers will point us beyond Moses, Aaron, Joshua, the sacrifices, and the wilderness to **Jesus Christ**—the One lifted up so that dying sinners might live, the perfect Mediator God's people desperately need, and the promised King who will finally accomplish God's glorious purposes. The wilderness may reveal the failure of God's people. **But Numbers reveals the faithfulness—and the glory—of their God.**

I. An Overview of Numbers

A. **God Prepares His People** – **1:1-10:10** - God prepares a holy, ordered people to move under His presence and direction.

1. The Census and Organization of Israel – 1:1-4:49 – God **numbers, orders, and assigns** His people according to His purposes.

- a) The tribes are counted and arranged around the tabernacle, while the Levites are set apart for the service of God's dwelling place.
- b) The organization of the camp emphasizes that **God dwells at the center of His people and orders their lives around His presence.**



2. **The Consecration of Israel – 5:1-10:10** – God **purifies, consecrates, and prepares** His people to live in His presence and follow His leading. Regulations concerning purity, restitution, marital faithfulness, the Nazirite vow, priestly blessing, worship, Passover, and divine guidance demonstrate that **a holy God requires His redeemed people to be holy and ready to move according to His direction.**

B. **God Purges His People – 10:11-25:18** – God displays His glory by judging the rebellion of an entire generation.

1. **The Departure from Sinai – 10:11-36** – After nearly a year at Sinai, Israel begins its journey toward the Promised Land under God's direction. The ordered departure of the tribes and the movement of the ark demonstrate that **God Himself leads His people and goes before them.**
2. **The Discontent in the Wilderness – 11:1-12:16** – Almost immediately, Israel's journey is marked by dissatisfaction and rebellion. The people complain about their hardships and food,

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while Miriam and Aaron challenge Moses' leadership, revealing **the unbelief and discontent of hearts unwilling to trust God's provision and authority.**

3. **The Defiance at Kadesh** 13:1-14:45 – After the spies survey Canaan, Israel refuses to enter the land because they fear its inhabitants rather than trust God's promise. Their unbelief brings God's judgment: **the rebellious generation will die in the wilderness, while Joshua and Caleb will enter the land.**
4. **The Directions amid Rebellion** – 15:1-19:22 – Even after Israel's failure at Kadesh, God gives instructions anticipating their future life in the land, demonstrating the certainty of His promise. Yet Korah's rebellion and subsequent challenges to Moses and Aaron show that **God demands submission to His appointed authority and graciously provides priestly mediation for His sinful people.**
5. **The Disobedience on the Way to Moab** – 20:1-25:18 - As the new generation journeys toward Moab, Israel continues to experience sin, opposition, and judgment. Moses fails at Meribah, Edom refuses passage, Aaron dies, the people complain again, and Israel eventually falls into immorality and idolatry at Baal-peor, demonstrating that **a new generation still possesses the same sinful heart and remains utterly dependent upon God's grace and faithfulness.**

C. **God Preserves His People** – **26:1-36:13** – God displays His glory by preparing another generation to receive the inheritance His unbelieving people had forfeited.

1. **The Second Census** – 26:1-65 – God commands a census of the new generation of Israel after the rebellious generation has died in the wilderness. The census demonstrates **God's faithfulness in preserving His people and preparing a new generation to enter and possess the Promised Land.**
2. **The Inheritance and Leadership** – 27:1-23 - God establishes principles governing inheritance in the land and appoints Joshua to succeed Moses. These provisions demonstrate that **God faithfully prepares both the inheritance and the leadership necessary for His people's future in the land.**
3. **The Worship in the Land** – 28:1-30:16 - God gives Israel instructions concerning regular sacrifices, appointed feasts, and the keeping of vows. These commands emphasize that **life in the Promised Land must center upon faithful worship, continual devotion, and obedience to the Lord.**
4. **The Preparation for Possession** – 31:1-36:13 - God prepares

Israel to possess Canaan through judgment upon Midian, the settlement of the eastern tribes, a review of Israel's journey, instructions for conquering and dividing the land, and regulations concerning boundaries, cities, and inheritance. These chapters demonstrate that **God sovereignly prepares His people to receive, possess, and preserve the inheritance He promised to them.**

II. The Purpose of God in Leviticus

- A. **Creation:** God glorifies Himself as Creator by sovereignly commanding creation to serve His purposes for His people.
 - 1. Pillar of Fire and Cloud – **Numbers 9:15.**
 - 2. Provision of Quail – **Numbers 11:31.**
 - 3. Provision of Water from a Rock – **Numbers 20:11.**
 - 4. God opened the earth to swallow the rebels of Korah – **Numbers 16:30, 32.**
 - 5. God opened the mouth of a donkey to speak – **Numbers 22:28.**
- B. **Providence:** God sovereignly governs every aspect of His people's worship, life, and future according to His covenant purposes.
 - 1. Israel does not wander through the wilderness independently – God personally determines when they camp and when they move – **Numbers 9:23.**
 - 2. Even Israel's delays, hardships, enemies, and the duration of their wandering were under God's sovereign direction.
 - 3. God fed them with manna every day throughout the 40 years in the wilderness – **Numbers 11:8.**
 - 4. God providentially caused their shoes to last through their wanderings – **Deuteronomy 29:5.**
 - 5. Balak's desire to curse Israel was providentially blocked by the Lord – **Numbers 23:12** – his intentions could not escape the boundaries established by the Lord.
 - 6. The Lord providentially supplied Moses' successor – **Numbers 27:18.**
- C. **Redemption:** God provides deliverance from judgment and anticipates Christ through the bronze serpent and messianic promise.
 - 1. Numbers continues the redemptive trajectory begun in Genesis and Exodus and is clarified through the bronze serpent – **Numbers**

21:8.

2. Jesus specifically identifies this event as anticipating His own saving work – **±**.
3. The celebration of the Passover continually reminded Israel that they are purchased (redeemed) through substitutionary blood.
4. It reemphasizes that sinful humanity needs a mediator who can stand between divine wrath and guilty sinners – **Numbers 16:48**.
5. Numbers provides a commentary on God's willingness to redeem – **Numbers 14:18**.

D. Righteous judgment: God vindicates His holiness by judging unbelief, rebellion, immorality, and presumption.

1. Numbers contains some of Scripture's starkest demonstrations that God's holiness cannot coexist with rebellion and sin.
2. Examples of God's judgment:
 - a) *Israel complains that God isn't doing enough* – **Numbers 11:1, 33**.
 - b) *Korah rebels* – **Numbers 16:32, 35**.
 - c) *Israel refuses to enter Canaan* – **Numbers 14:22-23**.
 - d) *Israel joins itself to Baal of Peor* – **Numbers 25:3-4**.
 - e) *Moses fails* – **Numbers 20:12**.
3. Each of these judgments were designed to demonstrate why grace is needed – cp. **1 Corinthians 10:11**.

E. Sanctification: God separates His people from uncleanness and teaches them to live as His holy possession.

1. Numbers demonstrates that not only did God remove Israel from Egypt, but He also intended to remove Egypt from Israel.
2. The tabernacle sitting physically at the center of Israel's camp makes a profound theological statement: The presence of God is to be the center of the life of God's people – **Numbers 5:3; 2 Corinthians 6:16**.
3. God desired to remind them that they were to be separate from the nations through the tassels He required on their garments – **Numbers 15:39**.
4. You can see the progressive nature of Israel's sanctification as God brings Himself glory at every step:
 - a) *God redeems Israel from Egypt* – **Numbers 15:41**.

- b) *God places His presence among them (shekinah glory) – **Numbers 9:15-16.***
- c) *God separates them as His possession – **Numbers 23:9.***
- d) *God gives them His Word – **Numbers 15:39-40.***
- e) *God cleanses their defilement – **Numbers 19:11-12.***
- f) *God exposes their rebellion – **Numbers 14:11.***
- g) *God purges the unbelieving generation – **Numbers 26:64-65.***
- h) *God prepares a new generation for the inheritance – **Numbers 26:52-53.***

F. **Consummation:** God preserves a new generation and prepares them to enter their promised inheritance.

- 1. Taking Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land pictures the ultimate blessing from the Lord to the sinner whom He brings out of sin and delivers to their Eternal Rest.
- 2. Hebrews 3–4 explicitly uses Israel's wilderness experience to warn God's people against unbelief and point toward God's ultimate rest.

III. The Anticipation of Christ

- A. Christ is anticipated throughout **Numbers** through **types, offices, events, and direct prophecy**. The book demonstrates that Israel needs more than deliverance from Egypt: they need a **Mediator, Priest, Sacrifice, Shepherd, Source of life, and ultimately a victorious King**. All of these find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- B. Ways Jesus is pictured:
 - 1. He is the Passover Lamb – **1 Corinthians 5:7.**
 - 2. He is the faithful High Priest - .
 - 3. He is the final sacrifice – **Hebrews 10:12.**
 - 4. He is the fulfillment of the serpent lifted up to deliver from God's wrath – **John 3:14-15.**
 - 5. He is the Rock from which they drank – **1 Corinthians 10:4.**
 - 6. He is superior to the red heifer for purification – **Hebrews 9:13-14.**
 - 7. He is the greater Mediator than Moses – **1 Timothy 2:5.**
 - 8. He is the greater Shepherd than Joshua – **John 10:11.**
 - 9. He is the direct fulfillment of Balaam's prophecy – **Matthew 2:2.**

- C. All of this teaches us that the gospel is not a “try harder and become better” message – it is a call to look away from oneself to God’s provision of cleansing through Jesus Christ.

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