

V. Traveling Route 66: The Bible in Biblical Perspective
The Journey to Christ, the Promised One
"Numbers – The Book Of The Wilderness"
Selected texts from Numbers
Dr. Harry Reeder
February 20, 2011 – Evening Sermon

Praise the Lord for the book of Numbers. It's that place of reward after you have made it through Leviticus. You refuse to quit at Leviticus when you are reading through the Bible and you have made it to Numbers. The Lord is refreshing you because of that. We are going to look at a couple of things from the book of Numbers so please have your Bibles ready. I'd like to begin by looking in Numbers 1. By the way all that you are hearing and seeing in the service is available to you on our website at <http://www.briarwood.org/sermons>.

Now here is where we have been. We are on the 39 books of the Bible of the Old Testament which is our journey to Christ and then upon completion of that journey we will have the 27 books which is our journey with Christ. All we are doing is what the Bible says. It says beginning with Moses (which covers Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and with all the prophets (which starts in Joshua, the first of the former prophets, all the way through the latter prophets after the Babylonian captivity) He explained Himself in all the Scriptures. He said to the scribes and Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you find life but actually they bear witness of Me." The Scriptures point to Him. The Apostles and Prophets have given us the foundation of the Word of God. Christ is the Cornerstone that everything points to Christ and expounds Christ. So we want to learn from the Bible in the Old Testament and there are so many facts, insights, examples, stories, romance, adventure and everything but we have to remember that if we're properly handling the Scripture we are moving toward understanding who Christ is increasingly.

So you have those ten books that make up that first book of the Bible, the book of origin. These ten books are called the book of Genesis. Then we went to the second book which is the book of Exodus we call it the book of deliverance where God's people are delivered out of bondage and into the presence of the Lord. From Genesis to the end of the book of Exodus you have 350 years that have transpired. You have the introduction of Moses and then you have an 80 year span that takes place in the book of Exodus. Then the people are being delivered out of the bondage of their sin and out to Mount Sinai for the purpose of what? Why does God save us and disciple us? It is so that we can be worshippers. So He took them out of Egypt so that they could come out and worship Him at Mount Sinai. It is worship that is honoring to Him that is God centered.

That brings us to the next book of the Bible which is Leviticus because this is the book of worship. We took time to look at what God tells us about God centered worship in the Old Covenant anticipating the New Covenant worship from all of the complexity of what God teaches in the Old Testament to the simplicity of New Covenant worship which is prayer, the Word, sacrament and fellowship. All of those things in the book of Leviticus have been fulfilled in Christ.

Now we come to Numbers. Many of us get bogged down in Numbers because we kind of take our cue from the title. We see Numbers and we actually see there are two different kinds of census given in the book of Numbers and we think how does that lead us to Jesus. There is more to it than just the counting of people and the ‘numbers’ that are there. In fact there is a lot more to it but the first thing I want to do is get the title right.

Let’s look at Numbers 1. The title out of the Hebrew Bible is it actually comes from the fifth word in the original text. Numbers 1:1 starts off by saying “*The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai...*” In the original text ‘wilderness’ is the fifth word in the Hebrew Bible in the book of Numbers. The Jewish people called this the book of the Wilderness, the book of the desert of Sinai. Numbers 1:1 says “*The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt...*” I want to give you some more of the timeline here.

We have come out of Egypt. There was the 350 years and then the 80 years with Moses and were headed to the Promised Land that God has said He will take them to. We are at Mount Sinai where they stayed for one year. What is given in Leviticus is given while they are at the foot of Mount Sinai and the first part of Numbers is given at the foot of Mount Sinai. Then they rise up after that and move forward. The rest of the book of Numbers will be the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and that will then bring them back to the entrance into the Promised Land and the plains of Moab.

I want you to think of three words in the book of Numbers – Divine **preparation**, Divine **presence**, and Divine **power**. I want you to remember those three words as we work our way through this.

Who wrote the book of Numbers? These are the books of Moses so this is kind of a giveaway. Jesus told us who wrote this and that was Moses and he probably had some divinely authorized secretarial help in regards to this. Moses and his secretaries write Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy but yet he didn’t quite write all of Deuteronomy because part of Deuteronomy is describing Moses’ death and what happened after his death. It would be particularly hard to write that if you’re dead and by the way it was written. That would have been one of the secretaries that helped out there but we’ll get to that next week.

When was the book of Numbers written? It was written sometime between 1400 and 1410 BC. Most people date it 1406 BC at that time. It’s hard to actually date it for sure because it reports what happened during the year of Mount Sinai as the Lord is preparing His people to go to the Promised Land and then it also records what happens over the three to four months to get to the Promised Land. Then it records their unbelief and the fact that they’re turned away because they did not believe the promises of God that He would give them the Promised Land. Their fear caused them to not believe and to doubt and therefore that entire generation was turned back around for the wandering of the wilderness that’s described in the book of Numbers for 40 years. Then the next generation is disciplined and prepared and we end the book of Numbers at the plains of Moab getting ready to go into the Promised Land and the preparations to do that will be seen in the book of Deuteronomy.

Where was the book of Numbers written? It was written in the wilderness of Sinai and it was finished and delivered at the plains of Moab which is just on the other side of the Jordan River before you cross over into the Promised Land.

Now, what is written in the book of Numbers? The book of the wilderness basically falls into three divisions. I could have given you a much more detailed outline but I just want to give you these three basic divisions. The first division describes what takes place over a year which is the Divine preparation of a generation for the mission at Mount Sinai. What is the mission? The Lord says, "I'm going to take you to the Promised Land and I'm going to deliver the Promised Land to you." So the people are being prepared. The book of Leviticus prepares them. The first ten chapters of the book of Numbers are preparing them. As they are being prepared such as with the construction of the tabernacle, the identification ordination and consecration of the priests, all of those things are taking place to prepare them to go and that finishes in one year at Mount Sinai.

Then Numbers 11 through 14 is their trip through adversity, complaining, grumbling, and the faltering of leaders and the people. Moses will falter and many other faltering will take place including the complaints of the people but the big problem here is the unbelief of the people and their doubting of God. So God then turns them back around.

The third part of the book is what takes place during the 40 years. So there is the Divine preparation of a generation for the mission at Mount Sinai. Then you have the Divine discipline upon that generation for unbelief at a place called Kadesh-Barnea. Then there is the Divine patience and preparation of the next generation, the coming generation and then their positioning at the plains of Moab. That description takes place from Numbers 15 through 36 and it covers 40 years.

What about the themes in the book of Numbers? There are a lot of things we need to cover here so I want to go through some of them with you. One of the themes is the faithfulness and patience of God. Let me ask a question here. Do churches falter? Do people falter? Do Christians falter? Absolutely. Does God periodically have to bring judgment and discipline of them out of love? Yes He does. Here's the fact. God delivers the people of Israel and gives them their mission to go and take the Promised Land and drive out the enemies of God. As He sends them up they falter in unbelief so God disciplines them and they are returned to the wilderness and there that generation perishes but please notice that they weren't sent back to slavery.

Many times in our Christian life we forfeit the blessings of being useful for God and that doesn't mean you lose your salvation or you go back into the bondage of sin but you can and I can falter in the call and promise of God in our life. I can lose that opportunity. Now God will still be patient. He still loves me. I won't lose my salvation. He is still refining me, teaching me and in fact sometimes He will use that generation to teach and prepare the next generation that they would not do that but that they would go to the next level that their forefathers did not go to. So there is the faithfulness and patience of God.

Secondly, there is the faithfulness and unfaithfulness of His people. Now God is always faithful but we're not. Sometimes, and this is the sovereign hand of God, He knows when you have faltered and He puts you over here to teach you for a while, raise you up and move you forward. Sometimes you falter and it's a serious falter and God says "I love you, I'm going to keep you, refine you, grow you but you have forfeited

being useful for Me at this time.” So He sets you aside and raises somebody else up to serve Him. So God is always faithful. We are faithful but at times we are unfaithful and God sovereignly is at work in our lives in various ways.

Thirdly, we live in a broken world. In this world we are serving the Lord, we’re broken, we live in a broken world, we have adversaries and we have adversity. God uses both. God uses adversaries to point us to Christ, back to Him. God uses adversity so that we see who we are. I am paraphrasing C. S. Lewis but I love this phrase. “Adversity is the gracious gift of God designed to introduce you to yourself.” Circumstances do not dictate your character they reveal it and they become the opportunity for us to refine it by God’s grace. We live in a world in which there is adversity and adversaries. You will see in the book of Numbers that these people are going to be confronted by adversity and by adversaries and some of it within themselves. Some of it will be from the outside.

One might think, “That’s in the Old Testament.” It’s also in the New Testament. Do you remember when the Apostle Paul left the church at Ephesus? What did he say to the elders? He said “From among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things and leading the disciples astray.” So there are adversaries outside and inside and adversity outside and inside.

Fourthly, God will fulfill His promises. We may be faithless, unfaithful and falter but God is always faithful and His promises will be secure. This generation doesn’t get there but the next generation will. God will fulfill His promises. I want to point out one other thing and we’ll start looking at some passages in a minute.

Fifthly, God will also provide for His people to accomplish the mission He calls them to do. In the first ten chapters you have God preparing the people to go and take the Promised Land. He is going to do all kinds of things to properly prepare them. God will prepare us for that moment. When adversity comes and God is teaching us count it all joy when you encounter various trials knowing that the trying of your faith produces endurance, endurance character, character hope. In other words, when adversity comes God has just rung the school bell and you and I are learning because God is very likely preparing you for something. He is burning out the dross. He is refining the gold. He is working in our lives to prepare us for that moment so that we can move forward to serve Him. God prepares us with His presence, with all the instruments we need, and He prepares us constantly in order that we can serve Him effectively.

Sixthly, God will be with His people as He sends them. Matthew 28:19-20 says *19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” Not only does God go with His people but He goes in the midst of His people. Back in the book of Exodus 33 God was meeting with Moses in the Tent of Meeting. Do you remember where the Tent of Meeting was? It was outside the camp. It won’t be outside the camp after Numbers. God is going to put the Tent in the middle of the camp. He will be in the midst of His people and He will descend in the fire and the cloud into the Tent of Meeting. The Tent of Meeting will be in the midst of the people. So God will be with His people as He sends them.

The seventh one is God will discipline His people in their unbelief. God works in our life. We don’t lose our salvation or the love of God. In fact those whom God loves He disciplines. So He disciplines His people individually and corporately. God is always

disciplining His people out of His love for them so that He can grow us. You and I are always interested in the mission and rightly we should be. God's mission is going to get done but you and I need to understand that God is developing a relationship with us where we know He is a Father who loves us, cares for us and works in our lives. So even when we falter in unbelief God disciplines His people.

Finally, God's patience is not only there to prepare us but God's patience is there to discipline us and raise us back up so that we as His people can accomplish the purposes He has set before us. Those are themes that are constantly at work throughout the book of Numbers. They are just all over this book.

Where do we see Christ in Numbers? This is so rich and I have given you these themes as rapidly as I could because I really want to spend some time here in this study. How do we see these glorious testimonies? We see this in the next section which is the journey to Christ Himself. God is not only preparing a people for the Promised Land but God is preparing a people for the Promised One – the One in whom everything is fulfilled. How does He do this?

The second thing He does throughout this book of Numbers there are types of Christ. I want to give you three major types of Christ. I want to first look at Numbers 19. The Lord begins to teach us things we need to learn and one of those is this matter of the type of Christ with the red heifer in worship. These are lessons on how God will lead His people not only to a Promised Land but He will lead them to a Promised One who will atone for their sins. Numbers 19:1-3 says *1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 2 "This is the statute of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish, and on which a yoke has never come. 3 And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered before him. Who will lay down His life and shed His blood outside the camp for us? It is Jesus Christ who will do that.*

Let's continue. Numbers 19:4-9 says *4 And Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times. 5 And the heifer shall be burned in his sight. Its skin, its flesh, and its blood, with its dung, shall be burned. 6 And the priest shall take cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn, and throw them into the fire burning the heifer. 7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. But the priest shall be unclean until evening. 8 The one who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water and shall be unclean until evening. 9 And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place. And they shall be kept for the water for impurity for the congregation of the people of Israel; (What is the red heifer?) it is a sin offering. It is an offering of atonement. Who is the fulfillment of this? It is Christ who will shed His blood. The heifer is burned completely and everything that has touched it. Christ will go to the cross and for the only time in history, hell and the fire of judgment falls upon Him. He is consumed in drinking to the bottom the wrath of God in our judgment.*

What is all this about a priest? Jesus is going to be the Priest that brings the red heifer and this Jesus will not need an atonement. He is not only the atonement, the sacrifice, the red heifer but He is in fact the Priest that doesn't need an atonement who can bring the heifer on our behalf. Then the blood is sprinkled on the tabernacle seven times which is the number of fullness and its cleanliness. Who is the tabernacle? You

are. The Holy Spirit dwells within you and the blood of Christ now sanctifies you. Who is the tabernacle? It is the church of Jesus Christ which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Christ's church has been purchased with His own blood. All of this is pointing to Christ.

The writer of Hebrews understands that. Hebrews 9 tells us we are to move from the baptisms in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament there were three kinds of baptisms. There were baptisms of water, blood and oil. All of them were by sprinkling or pouring. All of those baptisms are described in Hebrews 9 and one of them is the act in the book of Numbers of the cleansing of the tabernacle with the ashes and the water that had the ashes of the heifer that had been slain for us. Hebrews 9:11-14 says **11** *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (Christ is the Tent of Meeting) (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

See the richness of all of this. Here is the tabernacle. Who is the fulfillment of the tabernacle? The glory of God has come in Christ. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Christ is not only the tabernacle but Christ is the heifer. Christ is the Priest. It is Christ who is at the beginning, the end and throughout all of this. Therefore when Christ the Priest comes in the tabernacle from heaven, the incarnation of Christ that has come down, not the copies or the types or the red heifer or the Tent of Meeting out in the wilderness but now Christ is the Tent of Meeting, the heifer and the Priest. Now is not a ritual cleansing of the flesh but a cleansing of your soul. You are forgiven because of Christ. So the writer of Hebrews tells us this is pointing to Him.

What about the water from the rock? Let's look at Numbers 20. Here the book of Numbers is bringing us to Christ again. How is it doing this? Numbers 20:1-13 says **1** *And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. And Miriam died there and was buried there. 2 Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. 3 And the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the LORD! 4 Why have you brought the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? 5 And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink." 6 Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them, 7 and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 8 "Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle." 9 And Moses took the staff from before the LORD, as he commanded him. 10 Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" 11 And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. 12 And the*

LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them." 13 These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the LORD, and through them he showed himself holy.

This is a very rich text. I thought they were quarrelling with Moses but the last verse says they were quarrelling with the Lord. They may have thought they were quarrelling with Moses but because the Lord sent Moses as His representative they were quarrelling with the Lord. The people say they would rather die in Egypt and have the flesh pots of Egypt rather than be out here and that's a complaint against the Lord not Moses because the Lord told Moses to bring them out there. Then there is the whole dynamic of the fact that this is the act that cost Moses the privilege of going into the Promised Land with the People because God told him "I'll give them water. Hold up the water, speak to it and when you speak to it I'll bring forth water and they'll know that I am holy." Moses didn't speak to it. He said to the people "Aaron and I will show you" and he struck the rock twice. God still gave the people water. It's amazing how God will use faulty instruments, even preachers that don't do what He tells them to do. God still gave them water but the preacher had to pay the price of not being able to enter into that Promised Land with the people after that. The Lord said to Moses "You did that for yourself instead of doing it as I told you."

This is so important. We are sitting here wondering in the PCA and other churches how we are going to reach this world. God's means are sufficient. The sharing of the Gospel through evangelism, the prayers of God's people, the preaching of His Word, and I'm not saying we can't be innovative in how we do it but our confidence is not in our innovation and we don't move out of frustration which is what Moses did. But who is that rock? That rock is Jesus. Why would I say this rock is Jesus? It is because Jesus tells us that in the New Testament.

Let's look at I Corinthians 10:1-5 which says **1** *For I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.* They didn't go back to bondage but they displeased the Lord so it cost them in terms of their walk with the Lord, the joy and the things they could have been a part of in God's promise on a human level but God was still going to get His promises done. When God brought that rock He was setting up a signal and a sign. It is through the spoken Word, not beating the people or the rock or the preacher elevating himself but elevating Christ Himself who pours forth refreshment to His people in a dry and thirsty land.

We not only have the rock but we have the serpent. Let's look at Numbers 21. By the way, there is whole lesson here that I don't even have time to talk about. There is a man in the book of Numbers named Balaam who becomes an example of a false teacher. Jude and II Peter point us to the error of Balaam who would speak for money and would not speak the truth yet God still used Balaam to accomplish His purposes as He so desired but let's look at Numbers 21 first then we'll get to Balaam.

Numbers 21:4-5 says **4** *From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. 5 And the*

people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” Isn’t funny how the Lord’s people are grumbling and complaining? I’m so glad this is just an Old Testament thing (not). I probably shouldn’t say this but I’m going to give you an illustration. One Sunday I had a person tell me I was preaching too loud and right after that another person said to me “Since you have been back from Sabbatical you are preaching so much lower.” This all happened on the same Sunday after the same sermon in the same lobby. Another person came by and said, “Preacher, you went a little long today.” When I got home I had an email from one of the guys in the church who said “Pastor, since you have been on Sabbatical I’ve noticed you seem to be pressed for time. You’re shortening the sermons. I don’t want you to shorten the sermons.” So on one Sunday I was too loud, too low, too long, and too short all on the same Sunday. You have to work hard at that. So here the people are complaining with Moses so let’s continue.

Numbers 21:6-9 says **6** *Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.* **7** *And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.* **8** *And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.”* **9** *So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.*

Now let’s look at John 3 to see the trajectory into the New Testament from this event as we see Christ again. John 3:16 is the verse we all love which says “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” Therefore many of us don’t read the two previous verses which says (John 3:14-15), **14** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,* **15** *that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.* What was the serpent? It was the judgment of God because of the sin of the people. That serpent had to be lifted up and when the people looked they were delivered. Jesus becomes sin on our behalf and receives our judgment. As He is lifted up on the cross He saves sinners. Here the bronze serpent finds its fulfillment in Christ who became the sin offering and became sin for us and bore the judgment of God that we might have everlasting life.

There are also prophecies of victory over God’s enemies. Now I want to cover the story about Balaam back in Numbers. There is a whole story here about Balaam that I would love to further develop. Balaam becomes an example of false teachers, false preachers and becoming a hireling in order to appease power instead of speaking to power but he gives a series of oracles and God makes and calls him to give a true oracle, not a false oracle. We find this in Numbers 24:15-19 which says **15** *And he took up his discourse and said, “The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,* **16** *the oracle of him who hears the words of God, and knows the knowledge of the Most High, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered:* **17** *I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; (Who is Him?) a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.* **18** *Edom shall be dispossessed;*

Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. 19 And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!"

This is one of those absolutely marvelous prophecies where it comes here in the book of Numbers and coming out of Jacob from Judah will be a star, a scepter that will rule. That scepter shall defeat and he names the enemies of God. That will be fulfilled in the life of David. Then there will be One greater than David who will defeat our greater enemies. He is the Star of the Morning, the Scepter of Israel, the Lion of Judah, Jesus Christ. Ultimately that prophecy is pointing to Christ Himself.

A fourth one is the presence of God in the tabernacle with the people. That is ultimately pointing to Jesus. This is found in John 1. The tabernacle is put in the middle and the Shekinah glory of God descends on the tabernacle to be in the midst of the tabernacle in order to be in the midst of the people. That is pointing to this moment in John 1:14 which says (speaking of Jesus), *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."* *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* is an interesting phrase. It is a verb that is actually a noun. The noun form of the verb 'dwelt' is tabernacle. We make nouns out of verbs all the time, right? For instance I got 'friended' the other day on Facebook. That was a noun that was turned into a verb. I got 'walled' the other day on Facebook. That's a noun that was turned into a verb. That's what happens right here. So you can translate that phrase this way and still be right; *"And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."* And we beheld His glory, where the Shekinah glory of God has now descended into that tabernacle, full of grace and truth, the glory of the Father. That is of course fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So you not only have the tabernacle in the midst of the people but you have the Lord Himself in the midst of the tabernacle.

I want to give you a few bonuses here. Bonus number one is the angel of the Lord in the book of Numbers. The angel of the Lord is a pre-incarnate ministry of Christ. This appears around a miracle. This is found in Numbers 22. This is my favorite miracle in the Bible because I am in this miracle. Balaam has been a false prophet so God's anger is kindled. Numbers 22:22-35 says **22** *But God's anger was kindled because he went, and **the angel of the LORD*** (It is the same one that wrestled with Jacob, came to Gideon and that spoke through the burning bush. It is the pre-incarnate ministry of Christ.) *took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. 24 Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. 25 And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. 26 Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. 28 Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey* (This is me, a Presbyterian minister, the donkey.), *and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?"* (The miracle isn't the donkey talking here it is the fact that Balaam talks back to the donkey.) **29** *And Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you."* **30** *And the donkey*

said to Balaam, *“Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?”* And he said, *“No.”* **31** Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. **32** And the angel of the LORD said to him, *“Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you because your way is perverse before me.”* **33** The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live.” **34** Then Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, *“I have sinned, for I did not know that you stood in the road against me. Now therefore, if it is evil in your sight, I will turn back.”* **35** And the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, *“Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you.”* So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.

God, Himself sends His Son who becomes an adversary. I love this miracle. If this is legend it wouldn't appear this way in the Bible. If it wasn't true it would appear this way; 'Balaam was riding along on a donkey and you just won't believe what happened next...' Notice that the Bible doesn't excuse this. The Bible just describes it. This is what happened. The angel of the Lord stands here. The donkey does this. Three times the angel of the Lord does it and lo and behold Balaam starts talking to his donkey. Then God is using all of this to teach Balaam a lesson so that you get the right prophecy in the 24th chapter. God is working all around you. God is working in ways that you don't know about. God is accomplishing His purposes all around us.

I want to show you one more text. Bonus number two is the precursor of Jesus' baptism. We will finish with this found in Numbers 8 but there are some others. Actually let's look at Numbers 4 first. The priests come from what tribe? The tribe of Levi. Numbers 4:1-3 says **1** *The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying,* **2** *“Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their clans and their fathers' houses, (When could you start your ministry as a priest? It was at 30 years of age.)* **3** *from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting.* Put your finger on Numbers 8 but let's go to Matthew 3.

In Matthew 3 Jesus begins His public ministry. What is the ministry of Jesus? What is He called to be? He is called to be the Christ. The Christ is the New Testament phrase for the Messiah. What is Messiah? Messiah is the Anointed One. He fulfills the three anointed offices of prophet, priest and king. He is now about to begin His public ministry in Matthew 3. Matthew 3:13-17 says **13** *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.* **14** *John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”* **15** *But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”* Then he consented. **16** *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;* **17** *and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

Here is John the Baptist who said “I baptize with water but there is One coming after me who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and power. I am here to prepare a way for Him and I am here to point to Him.” Then Jesus comes up to be baptized by him. John says “No, I need to be baptized by You.” John is doing a baptism of repentance and he says “This is the Messiah, He doesn't need repentance” but Jesus hasn't come for John to

baptize Him with the baptism of repentance. Jesus has come for an official baptism. That is what Jesus would need to have before He could begin His ministry.

When Luke describes this in his book he adds a piece of information. When Jesus begins His public ministry at this time with the baptism Luke adds that Jesus is 30 years of age when this happens. John the Baptist baptized a lot of people but does anyone know their ages? Why does Luke take time to say Jesus is 30 years of age? Jesus came to fulfill righteousness. He told John to permit this baptism at this time for it is fitting for us (Jesus and John) to fulfill righteousness. Jesus is saying that there is something in the Law that He needs to fulfill. Why did He need John the Baptist? It was to fulfill righteousness. What is righteousness? It is obedience to the Law.

So what in the Law is He talking about? Let's look back at Numbers 8. All of you deep water Presbyterians I'm about to make you shallow water. Numbers 8:5-7 says *5 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 6 "Take the Levites from among the people of Israel and cleanse them. (In the Septuagint, the Levites had to be washed, baptized, they had to be clean.) 7 Thus you shall do to them to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of purification upon them...* Then he goes on to describe what else had to be done. Jesus is coming. This is pointing to Jesus who is Prophet, Priest and King and when He comes He begins His ministry.

When could a prophet begin his ministry? It would have been any time the Lord called him. When could a king begin his ministry? It would have been any time the Lord called him but a priest had to wait until he was 30 years of age. Have you ever wondered why Jesus waited until He was 30? It was because of the Law. Jesus had to be obedient to the Law. The Law said you had to be circumcised on the eighth day. In Luke 2 it tells us that Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. If it had been on the tenth day He would have been disobedient. Then it says you are to present them at 40 days. In Luke 2 when was Jesus presented at the temple? He was presented on the 40th day, not the 50th but the 40th day. Then it said you had to bring them on their 12th year. Jesus came to the temple on the 12th year to be confirmed. He didn't come at 13 or 11 but He came when He was 12. He was obedient to the Law. When could He begin His ministry as a priest? He could begin at age 30. This is not a moral act of baptism but this is an official act of baptism that's part of His ordination at age 30.

So what does Jesus do? He goes down to the river. Why did you have to have a river? It was not because of the depth of the water but you had to have running water. It's a rite of cleansing so He goes to the river. There He goes down into the river. He is baptized as the water is poured over Him and it's sprinkled down upon Him. Then He rises. After being baptized He comes up out of the water and now He has been obedient to Numbers 8. Why did He need John the Baptist? It was because you had to be baptized by another priest. John the Baptist was a priest. How do I know he was a priest? His daddy was a priest. Have you ever wondered why John the Baptist didn't argue with Jesus? John the Baptist knows exactly what Jesus is talking about. How old is John the Baptist? He is six months older than Jesus. He knows exactly what Jesus is talking about.

Now Numbers 4 and Numbers 8 are pointing you to that moment where John the Baptist will ordain Jesus and then He'll go forth to save us from our sins. He was obedient to the Law, fulfilling all righteousness. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together today. Thank You for the privilege to be in Your Word. We love You and we love Your Word. God this is so rich. Thank You for the privilege to at least go to the level we have, in Jesus' Name, Amen.