

The Book of Numbers - Intro - Why Study This Book?

Num 1:1 NIV **The LORD spoke to Moses** in the tent of meeting **in the Desert** of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt.

In the wilderness

- In the English Bible it is called ***Numbers*** - because of the two censuses taken
- In the Hebrew Bible it is called - ***B'midbar*** - which means ***"in the wilderness"***
 - **"In the wilderness" is a fitting description** since it documents This is the story of the children of Israel for the time spent in the wilderness after the LORD delivered them from Egypt

What is the wilderness all about?

It is where God deals with man - it is between BONDAGE in EGYPT and the PROMISED LAND

Examples

- Ex 3:1-4 God **called Moses in the wilderness** and spoke to Him in the burning bush
- Luke 4:1-2 & 14 - Jesus was led by the Spirit **into the wilderness** - tempted and empowered
- Mat 3:1-3 - John the Baptist was **"a voice calling in the wilderness"** God's message to repent came from the wilderness

An interesting definition for wilderness = SPEECH:

...a desert; also ***speech (including its organs)***:

God **speaks** in the wilderness

- Hos 2:14 NIV "Therefore I am now going to allure her; **I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her.**
- In the book of Numbers ***the LORD spoke to Moses more than 150 times*** and in more than 20 different ways.
- He spoke to the entire people of Israel (over 2 million at once) and gave them the 10 commandments

An interesting definition for speech = SUBDUE

- (The LORD **spoke** to Moses) = to **speak**; rarely (in a destructive sense) to **subdue**

There was definitely a rebellious heart that needed to be subdued (9x rebellion is referenced)

- Num 20:24.....Num 27:14.....Num 14:9.....Num 17:10.....Psalm 78:40.....Deut 31:27.....Psa 78:17.....Psa 78:40.....Heb 3:8

This is one way we can think of the wilderness - it is the place / circumstance / experience in our lives God uses to SPEAK to us...and in His speaking, He is always seeking to subdue us that we would be submitted and surrendered to His ways, that our desire might be for HIM

Moses recounted the reason **God LED them** in the wilderness

Deu 8:2-5 NIV Remember how **the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness** these forty years, **to humble and test you** in order **to know what was in your heart**, whether or not you would **keep his commands**. 3 **He humbled you**, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, **to teach you** that man does not live on bread alone **but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD**. 4 **Your clothes did not wear out** and your feet did not swell during these forty years. 5 Know then in your heart that **as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you**.

- To humble us
- To test us to see what is in our hearts
- To see if we will keep his commands
- To teach us how critical the word of God is - it is our source of life
- That He cares for us - for forty years their clothes did not wear out
- That He is a Father who disciplines us

Paul explained why we should study Numbers

1Co 10:1-14 NIV For **I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact**, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 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 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 Christ, 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 culmination 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 overtaken you except what is common to mankind. **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 endure it. 14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

Why study Numbers? - These things were written to serve as examples (vs 6)

- To deal with the cravings of our heart -- idolatry, sexual immorality, and rebellion, grumbling

Why study Numbers? - These things were written to serve as warnings (vs 11)

- Heb 3:7-19 NIV So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, **if you hear his voice**, 8 **do not harden your hearts** as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" 12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 **But encourage one another daily**, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. 15 As has just been said: "**Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts** as

you did in the rebellion." 16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

Why study Numbers - It is a book written for those who live in the last days (vs11)

Why study Numbers - It is a book reminding us of the faithfulness of God (vs 13)

- He led them, he fed them, he clothed them, His presence remained among them even in their rebellion. He promised to take them into the promised land, now he is fulfilling the promise

Nehemiah Recounted the Faithfulness and Mercy of God

Neh 9:9-23 NIV "You saw the suffering of our ancestors in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. 10 You sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. 11 You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. 12 By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take. 13 "You came down on Mount Sinai; **you spoke to them from heaven.** You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. 14 You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses. 15 In their hunger **you gave them bread from heaven** and in their thirst **you brought them water from the rock;** you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them. 16 "But they, our ancestors, became **arrogant and stiff-necked,** and **they did not obey your commands.** 17 They **refused to listen** and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and **in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery.** But you are a **forgiving** God, **gracious** and **compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.** Therefore **you did not desert them,** 18 **even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf** and said, 'This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,' or when they committed awful **blasphemies.** 19 "Because of your great compassion **you did not abandon them** in the wilderness. **By day the pillar of cloud** did not fail to guide them on their path, nor **the pillar of fire by night** to shine on the way they were to take. 20 **You gave your good Spirit to instruct them.** You **did not withhold your manna** from their mouths, and you gave them **water for their thirst.** 21 For **forty years you sustained them** in the wilderness; **they lacked nothing,** their **clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.** 22 "You **gave them kingdoms and nations,** allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan. 23 You made their children **as numerous as the stars in the sky,** and **you brought them into the land that you told their parents to enter and possess.**