

Numbers

Who, When, Where

Written by Moses. Moses was a Hebrew, born in Egypt towards the end of the 215 years that his people lived there. He was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter as a baby and raised as part of the royal family. He left (ran away) from Egypt when he was 40 and lived in Midian to the east where he married and worked as a shepherd for his father in law. When he was about 80 Yahweh called him to return to Egypt and lead his people back to their promised land. He did, but it was a journey that took another 40 years. Moses himself never entered it, but he died at 120, just before they finally entered the land under the leadership of his disciple, Joshua.

Numbers starts two years after the Exodus, and ends 40 years later as they are on the edge of the Jordan river, about to finally enter the promised land of Canaan.

Apart from all the counting, Numbers is the story of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

Summary

Numbers is about the journey the Israelites took from Egypt to Canaan, the promised land, after the Exodus. It includes Yahweh coming to live with them in the tabernacle, the temple made from a tent which they carried around with them for 40 years.

It is also the story of a people who seem to constantly grumble and be unsatisfied with whatever Yahweh does for them. And his seemingly unending patience with them - simply because he has taken them as his people.

Before You Read

There is a lot of grumbling and complaining in this story.

How much do you do?

How much are you willing to put up with from other people? How about from kids?

Ask Yahweh to show you how often you grumble.

The Israelites are told to be very ruthless when they destroy their enemies. The Israelites possessing the promised land is a great illustration of Christians overcoming sin to live the kind of Christian life that God wants them to live, by faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

How ruthless do you think we need to be?

Key Verses

Numbers 1:2

Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel

All up there were about 600,000 men. That's pretty prolific given that there were only 70 of them when they entered Egypt. No wonder the beginning of Exodus says "they increased abundantly"!

Later we read that David took a census, but Yahweh considered that a great sin. Why do you think this one was OK?

Do you think sin is about motive, or the actual action? What was David's motive? What was Yahweh's?

Numbers 6:22-27

Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is how you shall bless the children of Israel.' You shall tell them, 'Yahweh bless you, and keep you.

Yahweh make his face to shine on you, and be gracious to you.

Yahweh lift up his face toward you, and give you peace.'

"So they shall put my name on the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

God's name is Yahweh. He wanted them to use it and to be known as his people.

Most modern Bibles don't use it, and they write LORD instead. How do you feel about that?

How do you think Yahweh feels about that?

Numbers 7:89

When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Yahweh, he heard his voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim: and he spoke to him.

How awesome would that be! To physically speak with God face to face.

Would you like to be able to do that? Or do you think it would be a bit scary?

When you pray, who are you talking to?

Numbers 21:9

Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it on the pole. If a serpent had bitten any man, when he looked at the serpent of brass, he lived.

Kinda weird medicine eh. Do you think that would still work as a cure for snakebite?

What was special about these snakes?

Do you see any similarity with this story and the execution of Yeshua?

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should repent.

Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not make it good?

How about you? Once you've said it, can people rely on you?

Do your actions match up with your words?

What do we call people who say one thing but do another?

Numbers 33:55

"But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those you let remain of them will be as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will harass you in the land in which you dwell.

Like our sin. As soon as we compromise and don't cut it out of our lives completely it will plague us forever.

We have to be ruthless with our sin.

(And remember that verse in Exodus where God said he would drive them out little by little, not all at once. We need to wait on the Holy Spirit to decide when to deal with each one, but as each sin or habit is dealt with we need to be totally ruthless and get rid of it entirely without compromise.

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

In Egypt all the firstborn Jewish males were spared from the final plague. There were just over 22,000 of them.

In their place, God accepted the Levites. There were exactly 22,000 of them. So they sacrificed a sheep for each of the extras and God's accounting was done.

This kind of detail in God's plans is totally amazing to me. It is so him.

Some people find genealogies, and counting of people, and page after page of specific rules on food and religious rites pretty boring. And they wonder why it's in the Bible at all. Perhaps it's not there for them?

I once heard of a tribe where the most important status was being able to trace your ancestry back further than anyone else. When they read Matthew 1 and saw that Yeshua traced his ancestry all the way back to God... they became Christians.

Not every verse in the Bible is there for you.