



2020 → Year of Transformation

Numbers

Introduction to Numbers

The book of Numbers is the 4th book in the Pentateuch. The book was written by Moses between 1440- 1440 B.C. The purpose of the book of Numbers is to tell about how Israel prepared to enter the promise land, but sinned and was punished. It describes Moses taking two population censuses, hence the name Numbers.

The book is basically the sacred history of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness following the departure from Mt. Sinai where they received the law and before their occupation of Canaan, which is the Promised Land

Theme and Purpose

The theme of Numbers is the gradual fulfillment of the promises to Abraham that his descendants would be the people of God and would occupy the land of Canaan. The book shows the reality of God's presence with Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire over the tabernacle. It also shows how Israel's unbelief delays the entry into Canaan and costs many lives. Nevertheless, by the end of the book, Israel is ready to enter the land.

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Outline

Numbers consists of three major blocks of material describing the events and laws associated with three centers where Israel encamped for a significant time. These centers are Sinai (ch. 1–10), Kadesh (ch. 13-19), and the plains of Moab (ch. 22-33). They are linked by two short travelogues recording what occurred as Israel journeyed from one camp to the next.

- I. Israel Prepares to Enter the Land (1:1-10:10)
- II. Marching from Sinai to Kadesh (10:11-12:16)
- III. Forty Years near Kadesh (13:1-19:22)
- IV. Marching from Kadesh to the Plains of Moab (20:1-21:35)
- V. Israel in the Plains of Moab (22:1-36:13)

Christ in Numbers

We see Jesus in multiple ways in the book of numbers. In chapters 1-9 , He is represented in the tabernacle itself. In Numbers 6, Jesus is represented as the cloud and the fire. In the new testament, Jesus is referred to as the light of the world (John 8:12). Jesus is represented in the bronze snake. This was a powerful sign God used to save his people from death. The waters of separation, parallels the cleansing of sin by Jesus (Numbers 19), the prophecy of Balaam, Jesus is referred to as the "Star out of Jacob" and the phrase "Scepter shall rise out of Israel, all points to Jesus (Numbers 24:17-19). Jesus is present in the entire book of Numbers.

Week 8: "Walk this Way "

Numbers 22 & 1 Samuel 15

Teacher notes: This guide is meant to be used as a resource to help you go deeper in your small group discussion. While it is not exhaustive, it is a guide to help you. Think of it as a launching pad to help you facilitate discussion. Please feel free to go deeper, study on your own, pull in other scripture, share your personal story, or bring in other illustrations. It is just a resource to help you take your group on a journey with God.

Introduction:

President Franklin D. Roosevelt got tired of smiling his usual big smile and saying the usual things at all those White House receptions. So, one evening he decided to find out whether anybody was paying attention to what he was saying. As each person came up to him with extended hand, he flashed that big smile and said, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." People would automatically respond with comments such as "How lovely!"

Nobody listened to what he was saying, except one foreign diplomat. When the president said, "I murdered my grandmother this morning," the diplomat responded softly, "I'm sure she had it coming to her."

The problem today is not that God is not speaking, but rather we are not listening for Him. Sometimes we only want to hear what we want God to say. Many times we pray for God to speak to us in ways that we will know it's him. We will look for ways and signs we think God is speaking to us.

I have seen some people look at the sky to see if the clouds have written messages, or are arrows pointing in the right direction. Others might look for a "sign" from God in other ways. I have even seen people use a magic 8 ball to give them confidence after they have prayed for something to see if it comes true. Some people believe fortune cookies have all the answers. Many times the things we pray for are selfish, and do not honor God.

Today, we will look at how God used a donkey to speak to a prophet of God who was selfishly going in the wrong direction. Balaam was a prophet that sought God for his own personal gain. Balaam's heart was revealed, and God intervened. He was "seeking God's will" regarding something that was plainly not His will. Wow! How often do we do this? Balaam began on a dangerous course entertaining the carnal as if it was spiritual. Because of his love for money

Today, we will look at Numbers 22 & 1 Samuel 15

Read Numbers 22:4-35

Discussion Questions

Question 1: God never asks a question for His own benefit, discuss what God is trying to get Balaam to see by asking this question in 22:9.

- What are ways God speaks to us today?
- Why would Balaam entertain the proposition from Balak?
- Discuss why is it important for us to seek God for direction in life?

Question 2: What were the things that God clearly directed Balaam to follow in 22:12? How did Balaam respond?

- Do you think God gives us clear direction today? Why or Why Not?
- Does money or wealth always equal blessing? Explain!
- Describe the difference between obedience and blessing. Do they go hand in hand? How?

Question 3: Why is it that even when we know God's direct will we are prone to depart from it and do things our own way?

- Describe a time in your life when you have strayed from God's direct will for your life?
- Do you think God allows us to get off track from his plan? Why would he do this?

Question 4: Balaam did not see The Angel of the LORD but Balaam's donkey did! What message is God communicating through this bizarre account? How can it also apply to us today?

(Leader Insight) Donkeys can be very reliable means of transportation. They are like the ATV of the animal world. They are strong, can carry a lot of weight, and can travel great distances. Teaching a donkey requires a different mindset to teaching a horse; they cannot be rushed into doing something they don't want to do! Donkeys are very social animals and like company. They will develop very strong emotional attachments with other animals and people. Donkeys, if scared will freeze and investigate whatever scared them, which has given them the reputation of being stubborn. Typically, though, donkeys are very obedient. Balaam's donkey saw the "Angle of the Lord" with his sword drawn and reacted 3 times. The first time it ran into a field, the second time it pushed up against a rock wall hurting Balaam's leg, and the third time it just laid down on the road and wouldn't move. Each time Balaam reacted by scolding the donkey and beating it with a stick. God opened the mouth of the donkey, and it spoke to Balaam. This is bizarre, Balaam finds

himself having a conversation with a donkey. God used this donkey to get Balaam's attention and to help him get back on the right track.

Question 5: How does God speak to you?

- How would you have reacted if the animal you were riding on started speaking to you?
- Describe a bizarre way God has spoken to you.

Read 1 Samuel 15:1-3; 9-23

Question 7: What did God tell Saul to do in verses 1-3?

- Did Saul listen to God? Why or Why Not?
- Is partial obedience still obedience? Explain!

Question 8: What was Saul's excuse as to why he did what he did?

- What excuses to you give God as to why you didn't do something?
- How does this usually work out for you?
- Is disobeying God easy or hard to do? Why?

Question 9: Why is it essential for a person to identify the root cause of sin?

- What happens if a person merely tries to modify their sinful behavior without identifying the root cause of sin?
- Have you ever done this?

Question 10: How is obedience greater than sacrifice? Explain (see verse 22)

- How do we sometimes think that what we do for God is better than listening to God?

Question 11: Describe the relationship between obedience and humility. What does God say about humility?

- Describe how pride affects our relationship with God!
- What are ways you combat pride in your own life

Next Steps:

1. Write down something you learned from this week's study? (Beginner)
2. Pray and ask God to show you where you are not being obedient to His plan! (Beginner)
3. Share with someone in the group where you are not being obedient to God. (intermediate)

4. Write down action steps to help you stay humble (Intermediate)
5. Write down 5 verses that will help you combat pride (Next level)