



Numbers 6:24-26 *“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”*

This book is more than just numbers. There were moments in the Bible where God told His people not to count themselves. Gideon wanted a bigger army. David counted his men. Yet, at times, God was not happy with the counting. Why did He ask Moses to count? I think it was for several reasons. One is that nobody is lost or left behind. If God says He will deliver them from Egypt, He did! The first section of Numbers is about tribes and positions. The camp was constructed with God in the middle. The priests were structured into clans that preformed certain jobs for God. What we have is the earliest forms of the organized church. We all have our place in His kingdom.

Narrative

As I stated above, the first 11 chapters distinguish the Israelites place in God’s kingdom. In the New Testament we have spiritual gifts. They existed in the Old Testament too. Chapters 12-14 account for the last of the murmuring. Arron and Miriam attempt to over step Moses. The people begin to grumble. On top of this is God ordering Moses to send spies into the Land they were about to possess. Again, we find God doing something He normally would not do. God is testing, refining, and orchestrating His people into the nation of Israel. Yet, He is using their failings to grow them.

Numbers 14 is a pivotal point in the Bible as Genesis 11 is. In Genesis, God scatters the people and we begin the journey of one nation. In Numbers 14 we have God take a nomad people and wipe them out over 40 years in order to create a new generation under God that does not know Egypt. Numbers 15-23 has the last of the old guard (Arron and Miriam) pass away. It's Moses Joshua, and Caleb now.

Interestingly, we have a break in the Israelite story. The narrative of the prophet Balaam is in Numbers 22-25. This story has historical significance because it's mentioned several times in the Old and New Testaments. Finally, we have God adjusting the leaders towards the promised land. Joshua is to succeed Moses and only people 20 years old or less are left. It's just as God said would happen 40 years before. Amazingly the 40-year journey is sparsely recorded. It's a massive time jump. Here we stand at the edge of the Promised land.

Intent

I have stated the intent of this book. It's all about what God did and what He is about to do. Yes, we have a 40-year gap. Yet, God said He would deliver them out of the hand of Egypt and into a promised land. Through the years God took Egypt out of the people far more than the people out of Egypt. There is structure in God's kingdom. We are to know our place within God's will. The grumbling must end. The past is the past. Numbers is all about who is listening to God. From the Israelites, Moses and Balaam we have failures to follow the Lord completely.

In an army you want numbers. A great nation could be counted as such by its sheer size and numbers. Is it boasting to say you command ten men or ten thousand? I look at the Book of Numbers as a lesson in numbers. We have lists of who is represented in the nation of Israel. There is also the realization that God does not need to grow a nation to become a great nation.

The time in the dessert was all about reduction. The Book of Numbers displays our place in God's kingdom. What is your role? Who is in and who is out? Only God's people whom He accepts will be allowed in His kingdom. Those who accept Jesus as their Lord and saviour are entering the kingdom in the New Testament. If Jesus is God, then who is Lord in your life. That is what Numbers is all about.

Characters

Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua, Caleb, Eleazar, Korah, Balaam

Who wrote this book?

We say Moses wrote it. That is tradition. However, some have believed Joshua wrote these accounts for Moses. That makes some sense due to the recording of Moses death in Deuteronomy.

Famous verses

Numbers 6:2-8 is the Nasserite vow. Numbers 6:24-26 is the Lords Benediction prayer or blessing. Numbers 14:18, Numbers 21:8, Numbers 24:17, Numbers 30:2

Controversies, issues, and Questions

The counting of the Israelites. God really disapproved of counting His People. We are to trust in the Lord. I believe God only counted the people in this book to prove that He would deliver a great multitude into the promised land. It's the covenant with Abraham. The promise to Eve. The promise to Jacob. Some; however, disapprove of God counting the people.

Balaam and the talking Donkey. There is a miracle of a talking donkey, an angel of the Lord and more in this book. Why did God ask Balaam to not go and then go?

The creation of the serpent staff. Why a snake? Was it symbolic of people not following God but a serpent like in the garden? Years later they worshiped this very staff for all the wrong reasons.

We also have the Morning star. Both Jesus and Satan are called the Morning Star. This term is like Emanuel. It is not a name but a title. There is the leader or line of Abraham and David. There is the title of Satan. Which line do you follow? Yet, there are those who say that Satan is the one God created to save humanity because he can be called the morning star. What is the oracle of Balaam (Numbers 24:17)?

Connections

Numbers 24, Matthew 1 (the Lineage); Numbers 24:17, Revelation 22:16 (the star); Numbers 30:2, Matthew 5:37 (The Vow)