



# NUMBERS

# TITLE

The name “Numbers” comes from the fact that there are two major censuses in the book

The Hebrew title is “In the wilderness” because most of the book takes place there

Both titles gives a good indication of why most Christians ignore this book



# COMPOSITION

Like Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, Numbers is also traditionally attributed to Moses.

It was probably written about the same time as Deuteronomy, right before Moses died and the Israelites entered the Promised Land

The events in the book cover the 40 years of Israel's wilderness wanderings



# LITERARY ANALYSIS

The genre of Numbers is “instructional history.”

The Pentateuch functions almost like a biography of Moses

In Numbers we learn:

- Specifics about his unique role as mediator
- What kind of character Moses had (12:3)
- Why Moses never entered the Promised Land (20)





# OUTLINE

The book could be outlined this way:

- Israel Prepares to Enter the Land (1:1-10:10)
- Israel Moves from Sinai to Kadesh (10:11-12:16)
- Israel Spends 40 Years Near Kadesh (13:1-19:22)
- Israel Marches From Kadesh to Moab (20:1-21:35)
- Israel Camps in the Plains of Moab (22:1-36:13)

A super simplified outline would look like this:

- Out with the Old Rebellious Generation (1-25)
- In with the New Faithful Generation (26-36)

# PURPOSE

Numbers explains how God was continuing to fulfill the promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) by growing Israel in number and leading them into the land of Canaan

“Where Leviticus stresses the role of sacrifice in creating and maintaining right relations between God and man, Numbers accentuates the indispensability of the priesthood for preserving the nation’s spiritual health”

- Gordon Wenham (Numbers, TOTC, 45)



# MAJOR THEMES

Very similar to Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, there are four main themes in Numbers:

- The Land
- Descendants
- Covenant Relationship with God
- Blessing to the nations

The key people besides Moses are Joshua and Caleb, the spies who brought a faithful report (13) and ended up being the only wilderness wandering survivors



# KEY WORD

Over and over again, the word “murmuring” appears in the book of Numbers.

Israel grumbles about:

- The way (11:1-3)
- The food (11:4-6)
- The giants (13:33-14:2)
- Their leader (16:3)
- The divine judgments (16:41)
- The desert (20:2-5)
- The manna again (21:5)





# THEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

“The nation [of Israel] never recovered from the failures of this wilderness period, and the remainder of the OT presents the history of an Israel provided with countless unrealized opportunities to become what it was meant to be – a separated people of God.”

- William Dumbrell (The Faith of Israel, 56)





# THEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

“Each generation of Christians should place themselves in the position of the new generation of the book of Numbers. God has acted redemptively in our midst, and by so doing, he has given our lives meaning and hope. Just like the Numbers generation, we are called upon to respond to God’s grace with obedience”

- Longman and Dillard (An Introduction to the Old Testament, 100)



# NUMBERS IN THE NT

“For the writers of the New Testament, the book of Numbers stands as a great warning. Despite the miraculous deliverance from Egypt, and the daily evidences of God’s provision for their needs, Israel refused to believe and rebelled against their Saviour. Numbers records a trail of spectacular judgments that ought to provoke caution in every believer.”

- Gordon Wenham (Numbers, TOTC, 56)

# NUMBERS IN THE NT

Look up the following passages:

- Romans 15:14
- 1 Corinthians 10:1-10
- Hebrews 3:7-4:13
- Jude 5, 8, 11
- John 1:14-18, 3:14, 4:10-15, 6:26, 19:36

