

Foundations for Faith

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[0 : 00] Weeks in a row, it's a big lift, and she's been doing a great job, so hopefully she can rest a little bit today and I'll be able to fill the gap.

But let me open us in prayer real quick before we get started, if that's all right. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the truth that it brings to our lives. As we consider this morning the book of Numbers, we ask that you would prepare our hearts and minds to receive the word that you have for us.

I pray that you would guard and guide my words, that they would be only that which you have ordained for us today, and I pray that this discussion would bring you honor and glory even as it instructs and encourages us in our walks with Jesus.

And I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. All right. So we're picking up this week in our study of the Pentateuch with the book of Numbers.

[1 : 06] So I'll just get started with a little bit of background and setting the scene. Numbers is the English translation of the Greek title of the book, which is derived from the pronounced focus on numbers in the book.

The Hebrew title, though, is translated in the wilderness, which may arguably be the better title as we follow the Israelites through their journey from Mount Sinai.

So I'm wondering, when you guys think of the book of Numbers, I'm curious to hear what comes to mind. Complaining.

Complaining. It's a great answer. What else? Boring. Boring.

Let's get straight to the point. Yeah, boring. Okay. So a lot of Bible reading plans can struggle when you get to this point in the Leviticus and Numbers arena.

[2 : 13] But actually, my hope today is that we can infuse a little bit of excitement and enjoyment into the book. What else?

Unpronounceable names. Unpronounceable names. Another good one. So there's censuses. Yes. So there's lots of information, descriptive and prescriptive information that we're trying to get at or that's being reported to us in the book of Numbers.

So there's law giving, counting of the nations. There's dividing up of the promised land. We're setting borders. But there's a few other things.

There are fiery serpents. Miraculous healings. People being devoured by the earth.

The earth opens up and devours people. Food falling from the sky. Water flowing from rocks.

Talking donkeys. Prophecies. It sounds kind of like a fantasy novel to me if you kind of like lay it out that way, right?

[3 : 28] So in the midst of these stories, and we also, again, have these censuses and laws, and it's kind of, there's a stark contrast.

And I think because of a lot of the laws and the information, like I said, like Ivor pointed out, Numbers has a reputation for sort of lacking relevance in our daily lives.

Even in the narratives, it does sound a little bit like fantasy, and it's hard to understand how do I make this apply to my life. But I hope that we can uncover some of the flavor of Numbers today and provide a little bit of fresh encouragement.

So Numbers picks up after Leviticus, and at this point, God has delivered Israel from Egypt by miraculously leading the entire nation out of Egypt.

They've crossed the Red Sea to arrive at Mount Sinai, where God establishes his covenant with the nation of Israel, and he's providing a framework that's necessary for him to dwell with his people.

[4 : 33] So Numbers begins with Israel encamped at Mount Sinai and taking a census of the warrior-aged men in the nation in preparation for conquest of Canaan, which is the land that God had promised to Abraham.

So there's one way of viewing the structure of the book, the structure and content of the book. We're following the movement of the Israelites through the wilderness, so the breakdown can kind of be summarized by these phases of law-giving and journeying.

And this is kind of a diagram that's been put forth by a guy named Gordon Wynnnum, so if you're interested to see it.

But we have law-giving at Mount Sinai that happens roughly in chapters 1 through 10. And then there's a journey.

I can't write that way. Journey. Oh, wow. That's not good. Journey from chapters 11 to chapters 10 through 12.

[5 : 42] Sorry. Then there's more law-giving. This is a journey from Sinai to Kadesh. Then once they get to Kadesh, there's more law-giving that happens from chapters 13 through 19.

And again, another journey from Kadesh to the plains of Moab in chapters 20 through 22.

And then finally, more law-giving from 23 to 35, 36.

So it breaks down this way, starting in Sinai, then journeying from Sinai to Kadesh, more law-giving in Kadesh, journeying from Kadesh to Moab, and then more law-giving.

And there are narratives interspersed throughout the entire thing, but a lot of the narratives happen in these journeying moments. So while law-giving is certainly a significant component of the book, I'll focus a little bit more today on the narrative components.

[6 : 55] Laura will be covering Leviticus and Deuteronomy together next week, and I'm sure she'll be covering the law in more detail than. So this morning, I'd like to first just take a quick walk through some of these narratives in numbers, and we'll talk about them in their particulars, and specifically what they're revealing about God and about humanity.

And then at the end, I'll try to zoom out a bit and talk more about where the book sits in redemptive history, so how it's pointing forward to Jesus and what it can mean for us today.

Sound good? All right. So first, as we move through these narratives of the Israelites wandering, I think there's a loose pattern of the events that can be helpful as we think about interpreting the stories.

Much of the narratives include some kind of sin that takes the form of a complaint or rebellion, like Matt was saying. These events then have some downstream consequence or result, and importantly, they all have some kind of resolution at the end.

And as we examine these events, we'll see our sin contrasted against God's holiness and righteous judgment. But in these, we'll also see God's steadfast love, his grace and his mercy toward his people in the midst of our unfaithfulness.

[8 : 14] All right. So let's take a walk through a few of these. I won't... There are lots of narratives, so I won't hit all of the narratives, just a few as examples. So first, as the narrative begins around chapter 11, that should be chapter 11, I think.

We find the Israelites packing up for their first trip from Mount Sinai on the way to Kadesh. So remember, they've already been camped at Mount Sinai for approximately a year since God rescuing them out of Egypt.

And he's been dwelling with them in the tabernacle. And so now they've packed up the tabernacle according to all of the instructions that he's given them. And they're moving through the wilderness to their next destination.

So as they're moving on this journey, there are three events which follow that loose pattern I mentioned, a complaint or a sin. There's a consequence.

And there's some kind of resolution. So not long after the journey begins, the Israelites descend into, in verse 1, complaining in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes.

[9 : 22] So in other words, circumstances were bad, and they blamed Moses, and by extension, God. And the result is God kindling his anger against them and consuming the outermost parts of the camp by fire.

The fire is stopped after Moses' intercession on behalf of the Israelites, but the grumbling sort of continues and even becomes a little bit more specific.

They say, oh, that we had meat to eat. Remember, God had been providing manna up to this point, but now they remember the quote unquote better days of their enslavement in Egypt when they had fish, had mango, had garlic, and other satisfying foods.

And they say, but now our strength is dried up, and there's nothing at all but this manna to look at. And God's anger blazed hotly.

And Moses basically says to God, Lord, if you find favor with me, take me now. I can't take the weight of this anymore, and I don't want to see my wretchedness.

[10:36] I don't know if this is intended to be funny, but if you have even one fussy eater at home, it's hard not to chuckle a little bit at this.

But in seriousness, I think Moses is saying, I really cannot take the weight of this. You've given me this entire nation that I'm supposed to be leading, and they're asking for meat, and I simply can't provide it.

And I don't want to see my failure in this. So ultimately, in God's grace, he sends his spirit to more people to help Moses bear the burden of caring and interceding for the nation.

And God also provides quail in plenty for the Israelites to eat. But in his sovereignty, he also predicts that they will be overcome by their greed and gluttony.

So he sends the quail, and in fact, the people end up collecting roughly 480 dry gallons of quail for themselves. I don't know what that would look like exactly.

[11:42] But the abuse here is addressed by God through a very great plague that strikes down many people in the camp, says, while the meat was yet between their teeth.

So already we're seeing this pattern of sin and consequence, and the resolution we have to look deeply at to understand how God is resolving these things.

But again, in this journey, there's a third event unrelated to these. Miriam, Moses' sister, and Aaron grumble against Moses because of the uniqueness of his authority.

They say, has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also? So God reiterates Moses' unique stance before him, and then he inflicts Miriam with leprosy, and Moses has to plead with God to heal her.

And she ultimately has to be shut outside the camp for seven days to be healed. So in just three days, we already have instances of discontent, fear and anxiety that the Lord will not provide for their basic needs, greed and gluttony when he does provide for their requests, and pride mixed with selfish ambition.

[12:59] And already we see that the consequences of sin are severe. We see destruction by fire, death by plague, and exile by leprosy and uncleanness.

So the tendency here, I think, is usually to focus on the severity of the consequences, right? Particularly in our modern sensibilities, people tend to read these types of events and kind of wonder if God is just a spiteful and vengeful ruler.

And this stems, I think, from the underlying tendency to believe that we're all inherently good. It's a message that we're constantly hearing from the world around us. And because of this perspective, the kinds of consequences we see here might feel extreme to us because of our own assessment of ourselves.

But the reality is that God is perfectly pure and perfectly holy in a way that we simply cannot comprehend.

And even a slight offense against the eternal and perfect and living God deserves some kind of judgment. But there is good news in the resolutions of these events.

[14:09] God is righteous and holy, and he is also personal and merciful. God does not completely wipe out the nation for its sin, though he would be perfectly justified in doing so.

He listens to the prayers of the righteous, and he responds in grace. He listens to Moses' intercessions, and he relents in his judgment by ending the fires that are consuming the camp and providing a path to healing and restoration for Miriam.

Even in the midst of complaining, he still provides meat for the Israelites at their request, knowing that their sinful hearts are going to take hold of this as an idol rather than receiving it as a gift.

And in this, I think there's an invitation to examine our own hearts and experiences and to recall God's faithfulness in our own lives despite our sin.

Because we do this, don't we? We grumble about our circumstances. We often forget about the gifts that God is giving to us, even in that same moment. We take those good gifts, and we can turn

them into idols.

[15:22] We think very highly of ourselves, and we desire glory in the eyes of man. And yet God is still there in our midst, walking with us through the wilderness.

And where Moses was interceding for the Israelites, we now have Jesus interceding for us, which we'll talk about a little bit more. All right, so journeying to Kadesh, we have those instances.

And now after a few days, the Israelites reach Kadesh and set up camp. And now we encounter one of the most recognized events, I think, in the book of Numbers, the sending of the spies. So God instructs Moses to send out spies to evaluate the land of Canaan, which God had already promised to give Israel.

Israel, and a representative of each tribe is appointed to go to Canaan to check things out for 40 days. And at the end of the 40 days, the spies return to the camp and give their report.

They say, there is no way we'll be able to overtake the people residing in Canaan. They're so scared of what they saw that they actually deliberately overstate their observations.

[16:42] They cite Canaan as a land that devours its inhabitants with people who are of great height. They even reference the legendary Nephilim in Genesis.

So in short, the people hear the report of the spies and they rebel against Moses and God by seeking to return to Egypt for safety.

And God sentences the current generation to die in the wilderness. He says, only your children will receive the promised land, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

So again, we have another event failing to trust in the provision and protection of the Lord. And we have a consequence and a resolution.

And what's interesting about this passage is that the consequence of wandering and death in the wilderness is actually the result of God's mitigated wrath. In this result, we're told that God pardons the unfaithful generation, again, at the behest of Moses.

[17:45] And he does this according to his steadfast love. By pardoning their iniquity, he reduces their sentence, again, from utter destruction to a delayed entrance into the promised land.

This is in chapter 14. So now, sorry, we're here. There's some law giving, but there's still a narrative here. So in this narrative, we see the consequence of sin, but the resolution, so to speak, is that the faithful few of the nation are preserved according to God's promises, and they're raised up to inherit the land.

God is keeping his promises, and he's sovereignly maintaining his people in the process. So lots more happens in Kadesh, much of which mirrors the events that are already described.

We see Levites paying the price for their arrogance, and we see people suffering a plague that's halted after some dramatic intercession from Aaron. And then Israel picks up to move on to Moab. So now we're going to continue our journey onto the plains of Moab. So during this journey, we see that even Moses, despite his unique standing with God, is not exempt from sin and its devastating consequences.

[18:59] After another episode of grumbling by the Israelites about a lack of water in the wilderness, God instructs Moses to speak to a rock to bring forth water.

Moses, however, stands at the rock and speaks to the nation. He says, Hear now, you rebels. Shall we bring water for you out of this rock?

And he strikes the rock twice to bring forth water. God ends up sentencing Moses and Aaron to die in the wilderness with the rest of the nation because they, quote, Did not believe in him and did not uphold him as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel.

There are various interpretations around what exactly Moses did wrong here. It's not exactly clear. It could just be a simple failure to follow the instructions.

I think it's more likely that there's a heart level issue here with Moses when he says, you know, Shall we bring forth water? He may be kind of elevating himself to God's level here.

[20:12] It could be the angry outburst that did it. It's not exactly clear. But I think the summary here, again, we see in God's mercy in Deuteronomy 34, that God still allows Moses to see the promised land from afar, which is a mercy that the rest of the first Exodus generation didn't have.

So we also know that God is, again, he's keeping his promises to Israel. And we see also that he's raising up Joshua to take Moses' place to lead them into the promised land.

So again, the thread here is God dealing with sin and keeping his promises to carry his people through the wilderness to the place that he promised to deliver them.

And again, in yet another instance of grumbling, the Israelites complain about a lack of food and water, which was, again, abundant in Egypt.

So this time, God sends fiery serpents that bite and kill the people. And the key difference in this passage is the reported repentance of the people.

[21 : 30] They go to Moses and they say, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord that he takes away the serpents from us.

After Moses' intercession, God doesn't grant the exact nature of their request by taking away the serpents, but rather he makes a way for them to be delivered from the effects of the bite by having Moses set up a bronze serpent on a pole.

And this bronze serpent is the object of God's deliverance. If anyone bitten by a snake would look to the bronze serpent in repentance and faith, they'd be saved from death.

And importantly, this looks forward to Jesus as the one who would be lifted up on the cross so that anybody who would look to him in faith and repentance would receive eternal life.

That's in John chapter 3. So again, there's sin in grumbling. There's consequence. This time it's fiery serpents. And there's a resolution.

[22 : 42] There's healing and restoration following repentance. And we see, again, God is keeping his promises. And now we're also seeing that God desires to forgive his people and to restore his people.

Okay, so now we've reached the plains of Moab. And the Israelites are overlooking the promised land. And we reach the final major set of narratives that describe God's faithfulness to preserve the Israelites.

And he does this through a pagan seer named Balaam. So at this point in the story, the king of Moab is scared of Israel because of their size.

And recently they've had military success against the Amorites. And so he's feeling concerned that they're going to overtake him as well. So he hires Balaam to come over and curse the nation of Israel.

So God tells Balaam that he shouldn't go to the king, but he eventually allows it after a second petition, only on the grounds that Balaam will do what God tells him to do.

[23 : 55] So Balaam hitches up his donkey and he makes his way to the king. And the king asks him to curse Israel. So this part of the story also, I think, is a little funny to me.

We see Balaam saying, he says, the word that God puts in my mouth, that must I speak. But he tells the king, you can go ahead and build an altar anyway, and we'll kind of see what happens. So it feels a little bit like almost biblical sketch comedy here.

You can see it coming that the king is driving towards something that's obviously not going to happen. And indeed, on three separate occasions, each at a different location, Balaam is pronouncing blessing on Israel instead of a curse.

Each blessing gets better and better and makes the king more and more angry. He says, you know, what are you doing to me? And he even gets tired of the antics. And he says, stop cursing them. Don't even bless them.

Just stop what you're doing. So there's a little bit of humor in this. But the humor, I think, is there because it illustrates this kind of nonsensical human approach to try to control or change outcomes that God has already ordained.

[25 : 12] So God has said, and we know this from the entire Pentateuch, that he's made this promise, and he's God, and he's going to keep it. And God is using this pagan seer to announce to the world this very fact that he is preserving the nation of Israel, and he's doing it despite the best efforts of the nations in Canaan.

We even see statements about God's character and plan of salvation from Balaam's blessings. He says things like, God is not man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind. And he says later, his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. Again, beginning to point forward to Jesus and his forever kingdom.

The sadness of the story here is that while Balaam is delivering his final blessing at Peor, Israel is in the plains of Moab, continuing to sacrifice to other gods.

But ultimately, I think we see over and over again that despite Israel's unfaithfulness, and despite our unfaithfulness, God is there keeping his promises, protecting and preserving and purifying his people.

[26 : 32] And he's carrying forward his gospel narrative through redemptive history here in the book of Numbers. So that's a select number of the narratives in Numbers.

That takes us to the end of chapter 25, and the rest of the book is a final census of the new generation and some additional laws and regulations that are required for the Israelites before they enter into Canaan.

So I think as we zoom out from the particular narratives, there are a few important overarching themes to consider that connect the book of Numbers to the rest of the gospel narrative.

Numbers serves as a key part of the redemption story by illustrating God's fulfillment of his covenantal promises to his people despite our unfaithfulness.

Numbers also points forward to Jesus as the culmination and fulfillment of his ultimate promise. And lastly, I do think Numbers serves as an exhortation to the people of God to be on guard against a prideful and rebellious heart.

[27 : 45] All right, so first, Numbers is an important part of the Pentateuch in that it clearly connects to the fulfillment of God's specific promises to Abraham.

So again, recall from Genesis 12 that God made a covenant with Abraham in which he promised four things. He promised a covenantal relationship.

You will be my people and I will be your God. He promised land to Abraham's descendants. He promised that Abraham's descendants would be numerous.

And he promised blessing and redemption to Abraham's descendants as well as those who blessed his descendants. So first, God's covenantal relationship with Israel is illustrated, I think, clearly and physically through the tabernacle.

This was a place where God desired to dwell with his people. And it required purity, which is the basis for many of the narrative results that we just discussed.

[28 : 46] And a covenantal relationship here means an unbreakable promise. And we see this play out in that God never leaves nor forsakes his people despite their continued rebellion against him and despite the need to continue purifying the camp so that he can do as he desires and dwell with his people in the wilderness.

We also see God's faithfulness in keeping his promise to provide land to Abraham's descendants, a land that was intended to be a place of rest for his chosen people.

We don't see this promise play out directly in the book of Numbers because of the response of the spies and the people when they scouted out the land. God is very clear that he will keep his promise to Abraham and that the next generation will still inherit the land.

And this promise is so secure that God goes ahead with delivering the rest of the relevant sacrificial and civil laws that they need to keep when they enter the land.

The promise also is so specific that God goes ahead with prescribing the division of the land for the individual tribes of Israel.

[30 : 05] So it's not like God is saying, I'm going to send you into Canaan and then if you obey and you do all the things that I ask and you accomplish it, then we'll talk about what you do when you get there.

He's saying, no, we're going. I'm taking you there and when you get there, here are the things that you need to do. So God is keeping his promises to provide land and we see that even in the giving of the law here.

We also see God's faithfulness in keeping his promise to number Abraham's descendants, as numerous as the stars in the sky. The very first chapter of Numbers includes a census that counts 603,550 men aged 20 to 60.

That's men of fighting age. Some historians have noted that the estimate of total Israelites, when you extrapolate these numbers to include women and children and elderly men, you arrive at something like 2 million people, which is a clear and tangible display of God's faithfulness in this specific promise.

We even hear Balaam affirm this in one of his oracles. He says, who can count the dust of Jacob or number of the fourth part of Israel? And again, even in the midst of these displays of unfaithfulness, God's promise does not waver.

[31 : 32] We fast forward to chapter 26 for the second census after the Exodus generation has died, and we see nearly the same number of men of fighting age, 601,730.

So despite the fact that God sentenced the Exodus generation to die in the wilderness, he continues sustaining the Israelite nation by raising up another generation that would enter Canaan by faith.

It's probably, it is worth noting here that there's some scholarly debate around the actual numbers that are reported here. I won't get into all the details. There are logical, archaeological, mathematical concerns that some people raise, and the solutions to these problems are many. I cannot claim to know enough to come to a firm conclusion on the matter, but I think the message we're intended to receive here is the same in any case, specifically that God is faithful to grow and bless the line of Abraham.

So it doesn't matter if it's 20,000 people that he's sustaining in the wilderness or 2 million people that he's sustaining in the wilderness. He's sustaining them, and he's doing it faithfully and miraculously.

[32 : 47] All right. So lastly, the promise to bless. We can look to the New Testament to understand how the book of Numbers fits into the historical picture of God's redemptive plan for his people.

The failings we see here in the Israelite nation are kind of clearly contrasted against the perfect life of service, obedience, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ when we look to other places in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

So we see Jesus portrayed as our great high priest and being greater than Moses. Moses was the man with such a unique standing with God that he was able to behold the form and figure of God himself.

And yet, his standing before God cannot compare to that of Jesus. Hebrews 3.5 says, Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

So we see over and over in Numbers how Moses is interceding with God on behalf of the Israelites, and where the faithful servant Moses intercedes on behalf of the Israelites, God's own son and our perfect Savior, Jesus, intercedes on behalf of us with God, and he does this based on his own righteousness and his own merit.

[34 : 20] But Moses' responsibility didn't end at a simple verbal intercession, but rather required detailed attention to ritual sacrifices intended to cleanse and purify the nation before a holy God.

We see another parallel and contrast here because where Moses and the priests offered continual sacrifices to atone for sin, Jesus fulfills God's plan by suffering the agony of the crucifixion as the perfect and sufficient and final sacrifice to atone for the sin of all who by faith place their trust in him. So God delivered the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, but in Numbers we see clearly that they were still in bondage to sin and to death and that no mere ritual sacrifice could free them from that.

And Jesus willingly offered himself up as the once and for all sacrifice so that we could be permanently cleansed of our sin and saved from death and restored to life with our creator.

So in this, Jesus was the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise of blessing to all the nations. So lastly, we see God keeping and fulfilling his promises through the book of Numbers, and I think it also serves as an important exhortation against sin that's picked up in the rest of Scripture.

[35 : 59] Throughout the book, what we see is a God who, of his own volition, commits himself to his people and desires to fulfill his promises to them.

But he's continuously sort of confronted with the lack of faithfulness of his covenant community. So Psalm 95 says, This passage is quoted and discussed extensively in chapters 3 and 4.

Hebrews, which clearly illustrates the relevance of the passage for us today, I think. Hebrews 3.12 says, Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

And the implication here is that we, just like the Israelites, are bent towards sin and need constant reminding that God is where we find our rest.

There are many things that we could say about this, but there's one particular exhortation from the book of Hebrews that I think is relevant as we sort of pull everything together here.

[37 : 29] It says, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

So Numbers tells us that God is faithful to forgive the repentant heart, like those who looked upon the bronze serpent, and now those who fixed their eyes upon Jesus.

And it also points to the fact that he's sovereign over his creation and faithful to complete the good work that he has begun in us. This is a promise that we can only claim because of the faithfulness and obedience of Jesus, and in this God has committed himself to us and he's made us his people, and he sustains us in our spiritual life by his spirit, and in part also through his people, hence the encouragement to continue meeting together.

So John Hinkson shared with me a really wonderful illustration of what it means to wander in the wilderness together, a Puritan writer named William Bridge.

You know John is always good for a quote from a Puritan writer. He describes a concept of digging pits in an arid climate such that in the rare moments that it rained, the pits would be filled with water and provide the nourishment and refreshment that the wanderers so desperately needed.

[39 : 12] So if indeed we continue in faithfulness, digging these pits together in our modern day wilderness, through prayer and reading, through service, and through meeting together, we may not feel the refreshment right away, but when the rains of God's grace inevitably come, we'll be all the more refreshed.

So as Hebrews says, let's not neglect meeting together, but continue encouraging one another and spurring each other on in our walks with Christ. All right, so to summarize, numbers is good.

It's sometimes funny. There are lots of other themes that we could have drawn out from numbers, but hopefully this helps us appreciate numbers a little bit more, a little bit differently, and so I'd encourage you, if you have time, read through the whole book.

I hope that you'll find great joy in God's faithfulness to his people and his sovereignty over his creation. So that's all I have.

We're good on time if there are questions or comments. So when God talks about this new generation that is going to enter the promised land, so are these kids born in the desert, or is it possible that they were born in Egypt but they thought they were little kids when they left?

[41 : 09] Yeah, that's a good question. So the new generation that's entering the promised land, the original census in the beginning of the book is taking the census of men aged 20 to 60, and they've been at Mount Sinai for about a year, so in theory there's lots of kids who were probably, I don't know this, this is my guess, but probably some kids who were born in Egypt and made their way along the journey to Sinai, and those that are below 20 I think are part of the next generation that's raised up to enter into Canaan.

Hey. Maybe you guys all know this already. I always wondered why it was a bronze serpent. Hmm. Why a bronze serpent? Just the two.

Because I'm like, bronze, why bronze? A white serpent. Why serpent? Cool. But why serpent? Because that would remind me of the serpent in the body of the human. So those are great questions.

I'll preface with, I don't know the answer. I could, you know, venture some guesses, at least with the serpent, because in that narrative it's serpents that are coming to bite the Israelites.

It's kind of a, makes sense that you would choose, it's just the focus of the story. You might choose a serpent to be lifted up in the midst of this event where there are serpents crawling around and biting everybody.

[42 : 58] there's probably lots of significance there that I don't understand or know how to tap into. Certainly, I would expect that there's some significance to it being bronze as well and I just don't know it.

Somebody else might know. I've got an idea. Okay. So, if this is pointing forward to Christ and our sins are nailed on the cross, therefore the serpents would be that piece, could be, that piece of symbolism.

Bronze is a, like, why bronze, why not gold? They had a bunch of gold. Mm-hmm. However, bronze is a combination of copper and tin and thinking maybe would that possibly refer to Christ's dual nature of humanity and deity.

Mm-hmm. I don't know. That's a maybe. I just worked up copper. Or bronze. To see what, what it was, what it was made of.

Mm-hmm. That's what impressed me. Mm-hmm. I couldn't tell you, you know, whether there's good reason for believing that but it makes sense to me.

[44 : 15] Yeah. Yeah. It, it makes sense to me too. That's a, that's really interesting to know. I wouldn't have thought of that. So the, what, what were the, it was tin and, uh, copper? It's bronze.

Okay. Yeah. Interesting. Um, yeah. Something to go look up. I'm sure somebody somewhere has written a thesis on that.

I think I think recently. Any other questions or comments?

I guess I have kind of a comment. It seems like in numbers in Exodus Friday that sets up a pattern of, you know, overly, orderly, um, tyrannies that, um, require kind of liberation into a, kind of chaotic wilderness.

And, and then later on, they, you know, that Israel has kind of established imperfect settlements and cities, which would seem to be a pattern of kind of overly, orderly, tyrannical cities and, um, wildernesses and exiles and that there needs to be some kind of resolution to that, kind of a third option to the kind of order of tyranny and the chaos of the wilderness.

[45 : 37] that's, that's a, kind of a comment but, uh, yeah, no, that's really interesting. So this, this idea, I think if I'm understanding you correctly, so Egypt would be the example of this, what you're calling an overly, orderly, tyrannical system under which, uh, the, the Israelites were enslaved and, um, then they're released in, into the wilderness, uh, that you're saying is, is chaotic and I think, um, what that makes me think of is that the, the chaos, uh, is, is there, um, when there's demonstrated lack of faith in, in God, right?

Like God, God is a king who, he is the king who has a perfect and righteous kingdom in stark contrast to the kingdoms like Egypt that are enslaving its people and we are called to be slaves to Christ but, but in being a slave, uh, to Christ and a slave to God's kingdom, um, there is much greater freedom in, in the order that God has, has, uh, ordained for our lives rather than, as you say, the chaos of the wilderness and sort of doing things our own way, uh, which certainly is chaotic um, so that's a great thought, yeah, thank you.

I've been thinking a lot recently about the, the nature of faithfulness and human flourishing that was just like completely designed and built in from the beginning, that like, even, uh, as a person in their 40, just like consistency, which is, in my mind, I'm like starting to see the relationship between consistency and faithfulness, that like, I physically flourish, I spiritually flourish through like, consistency towards God and towards his way and how he made me, even in the like, exercising and eating vegetables sort of consistency, like, there, there is just a showing up and being future leaning, like, that, it, that verse you picked up, it was a Hebrew source, um, it just really speaks to that, I think, for us to live our life in a forward, toward God consistency, you know.

Yeah, that's, that's a, a great word, I think, the, I totally agree, you know, the, the spiritual disciplines, it makes me think, too, of, of John's, uh, example, that a lot of those, a lot of those rhythms and those patterns and investing in the future feel like digging those pits in the wilderness sometimes, right, like, I don't want to eat my vegetables every day, I'd rather have the mac and cheese or whatever, I don't want to exercise, sometimes I don't feel like reading my Bible or praying or doing all of those things, but God is faithful in those moments where we, we engage in those spiritual disciplines and, uh, when we have that, as Beth is saying, kind of forward-facing or future-facing perspective where we're looking toward God and toward his ultimate fulfillment of redeeming and restoring creation, um, there's blessing in that, um, even, even, uh, in those exact moments, uh, sometimes he's, he's gracious and doesn't make us wait for the, for the joy that, that comes with those spiritual disciplines, so that's a great word.

Thanks, Beth. All right, well, we're at about 10 till, so, uh, why don't I close us in prayer so we have a little time to, to get down to the service.

[49 : 36] Um, thanks everybody for, for joining today. Uh, let's pray. Father, we, um, we thank you again for your word, uh, today and the truth that it brings to our lives. We thank you, um, Lord, that you are pure and holy, um, God, that you're faithful, um, that you're, that you're merciful and gracious, uh, and abounding in steadfast love.

God, we thank you for, um, everything, uh, that you've revealed to us in the book of Numbers, God. We pray that, um, that you would bring a fresh joy to our hearts in your word, um, Lord, that these, uh, this discussion, uh, today would, would rest on our hearts and minds and that you would, uh, be encouraging us in our walks as we move forward together, um, in the rest of the week.

Uh, we thank you, um, for Jesus, and it's in his name we pray. Amen. All right, thanks everyone.