

# Intro to Numbers

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Date: 04 September 2014

[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Hey, please turn with me to the Book of Numbers. We'll turn the Book of Numbers and our time that we have left together.

We're going to look at an introduction to the Book of Numbers. We're there. Thank you for that song. A lot of you don't know, but the Pearson sisters got their singing talent from their dad, Brother John. Every time he would sing, they chose to sing louder.

So it really helped them practice together in the cars, going places. But, oh, what a Savior. We're going to look at the Book of Numbers, but we're not going to get very far into it. Pastor, we'll start the series.

This is just to try to help prepare us as we get into the Book of Numbers. I hope when you came in, you got a cheat sheet given out to you here to help you. That's what I want to do tonight is help prepare your heart and your mind so that after our missions conference, when we jump into the Book of Numbers with both feet, you will be ready.

We had Genesis, then we had Exodus, and now we know the next book that we would study would be Leviticus. Good, all right, that was a test. But we've already been to Leviticus a few years ago.

[ 1 : 04 ] But as we're in the wilderness, wandering in Exodus, Leviticus would get into worship, what God would want from us, very specific desire in our worship and obedience there.

But then we get into Numbers, and so we kind of rewind a little bit, and we keep ourselves in the wilderness. And I promise you that the pastor is not going to keep us in the wilderness as long as the children of Israel.

But there's things in the Book of Numbers that we need to look at. And I want to encourage you. I was on the phone today with AT&T; Customer Service. God bless me, right? And this lady, I was talking to her, and I said, we're in the Book of Numbers in our church.

And she said, do you serve coffee at your church? And I said, yeah, sometimes. Well, she said, well, you better start doing it if you're going to go through the Book of Numbers, because it is boring. Like, come on, lady, you don't know what you're talking about.

But I didn't argue with her. But I would argue with you, because I know you. The Book of Numbers is definitely not boring, given to us of God. It has some crazy stories in it, and we need it as we get into the New Testament.

[ 2 : 05 ] We're going to need a solid understanding of what takes place during this wilderness. And I hope to help you as we go through it. I'll look through this book, see that it makes much of Jesus Christ. It's going to help us understand what the wilderness is, helps us understand ourselves better.

It's a very helpful book in sanctification. During these times of doubting and pulling ourselves out, because of unbelief, they were not able to enter in. That's basically it.

They're not able to enter into the promised land, the victorious Christian life. As Pastor preached so well on Sunday morning, I got to listen to that today about doubting and not being able to claim the victorious Christian life, because we're in that time of doubting.

Well, that's what they have. They're stuck in the wilderness, and we don't want you stuck in the wilderness. I do not want to be stuck in the wilderness in our lives, spiritually speaking. So let me help you with some cheat sheets here.

I made it through college. Well, I didn't make it through college, but the parts that I did make it through college, my brother-in-law back there, Stephen, would give me these cheat sheets. He would charge me a dollar for them, but it would help me prepare for a test or a quiz.

[ 3 : 06 ] Well, you're not going to be tested or quiz on it during the service, but in life you may be. So I want to help you as we kind of look through the book of Numbers. Let me give you an outline before we read any of our passage.

36 chapters, 1,288 verses. The first nine chapters covers 20 days. This is helpful to know when you're reading. Genesis is like this as well.

A large portion of the Bible covers a small amount of time, and then sometimes small amounts cover a big part. So our first nine chapters covers 20 days, and then 10 through 14 is going to cover several months.

But the four chapters or five chapters, 15 through 19, covers about 37 years, and then our last 20 through 36 covers an area of about 10 months.

So you can hide this in your Bible and think about that as we're going through this. It kind of gives you some context of framing your thoughts. In the New Testament, Numbers is referenced some 73 times.

[ 4 : 01 ] The training center students at Iowa Health today, but we tried to find all 73, but we didn't get very far today. The people that know more than we do say there's 73 references. Any kind of talking about the wilderness wandering or the brazen serpent in John 3 would be coming there from Numbers, and we'll look at two of those Hebrews in 1 Corinthians 10 tonight.

Then you have a list of some important events, and then a handy-dandy map. If there's a place you need to go, I'm the one you need to know. I'm the map, all right? So you have your map on the back here. That will help you.

So put that in the back of your Bible, and as we're going through the book of Numbers, I think I might have said Exodus. As we're going through the book of Numbers, maybe this will help you, because there are some wonderful truths in here that you do not want to miss out.

But let's get started tonight working backwards. In 1 Corinthians chapter number 10 and verse number 11, we're going to read some of the verses there. When I played basketball many, many moons ago, we would start basketball practice, and for the first several weeks, we would never get to touch a basketball.

Well, tonight we're going to talk about Numbers, but we're not going to get to touch the book of Numbers. We're going to work our way backwards, looking at 1 Corinthians and what the New Testament says about the Old Testament.

[ 5 : 13 ] What's the best commentary for the Bible? It is the Bible. And so when you're reading through Old Testament Scripture, the best thing you can do is look for a cross-reference and say, is there some light that Jesus Christ shines upon this passage for us?

And we're really fortunate that the Apostle Paul breaks down the book of Numbers for us in 1 Corinthians chapter number 10. I'm going to read for you a lengthy portion of Scripture here that every bit of it is relevant to our study tonight.

1 Corinthians chapter number 10, verse number 1 through 11. Would you follow along with me here? 1 Corinthians 10 verse 1. Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud and passed through the sea.

This should let you know that we're talking about the Exodus coming out through the sea and the cloud above their heads. And they were baptized in the Moses in the cloud and in the sea and did all eat the same spiritual meat and did all drink the same spiritual drink.

For they drank of the spiritual rock, capital R there, that followed them and that rock was Christ. So if you didn't catch it in the book of Numbers, you ought to be catching it now, that that rock that will be hidden twice by Moses and the water springs forth of it is a type of Christ here.

[ 6 : 23 ] Verse 5. But with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples to the intent that we should not lust after evil things.

Also they also that lusted. Skip with me down to verse number 11. I'm going to read to you 6, 7, 8, 9 in a second. Verse number 11. Now all these things happened unto them for examples and they are written for our ammunition upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Wherefore let him that thinketh he stand to take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you, but such is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above it that you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it.

The book of Numbers is going to give us an incredible example of us in our Christian life and we're going to see temptations that they fall into that we ought to beware of and we ought to look at their lives and say, I want to make sure that I don't stay in this wilderness.

I want the work of sanctification to take place. I want to enjoy the joy that is there. I want to enjoy Canaan and the victorious Christian life. We're going to see a man named Moses in Numbers. We get more details about his life and we see him as a leader and all of you in here lead.

[ 7 : 34 ] You have levels of influence that vary and change what every one of you are given him. And we're going to watch Moses as he struggles with obedience and unbelief and we're going to see his times of doubting, not just John the Baptist or Thomas, but Moses as he doubts.

We also see his family pains. In Numbers chapter number 12, verse number 1, it says, And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married, for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Has not he spoken also by us? Could you imagine the heartache here? Here Moses, the God-chosen leader of Israel, has his brother and sister turn against him?

They say, Is God just speaking through him? What about us? And verse number 1 even says what their real problem was. What did they really have a problem with Moses? They didn't like his wife. So before you think that Moses has it easy and he lives his life in a vacuum without anything pulling on him, we see a guy named Moses that deals with real family problems.

He has a brother and sister that despise him and that says, We don't like your wife. I won't ask you to raise your hand in here because some of you families are interconnected. So I will not ask you if any of you have stopped having fellowship with a family member because you don't like their spouse.

[ 8 : 49 ] But Moses, he deals with that. We also find in verse number 3, it says of 12, And now the man Moses was very meek above all men that were upon the face of the earth. That he needed to be meek to lead.

He needed this meekness. Assertive enough to make a decision, but also humble enough to know that he shouldn't make any decision without falling on his face in front of God.

And meekness is a powerful thing. Robert likes to make fun of me because he played football for a big school, public school in Ohio, and I played basketball for a Christian school my last two years.

And one of our saying was, Meekness is power under control. And so we would jump up and hit the backboard and we would say, Meekness is power under control. And Robert thinks that's soft because it's Bible.

But there's nothing manlier than Bible. That's not really Bible, that expression. But meekness, all right? And so that's what the coach was saying. Be powerful enough to move, but be agile enough to know how to use your strength.

[ 9 : 47 ] And we find that in Moses. And so every one of us in here watching as you lead moms, dads, and in your places of work, we look at a guy like Moses, we see all the tension on him, but we find that he's meek.

But then we get down to the children of Israel and we should really see ourselves in these people. The Apostle Paul is telling us, you the history of Israel in the wilderness as an example to you as believers. And there is something that you're supposed to learn as a Christian from the history of Israel in the wilderness.

The Apostle Paul is telling that in 1 Corinthians 10. If Moses was to write this just as a historian, he probably would have said, Ah, let's go to 40 chapters. Let's give 10 years. We'll give it a chapter or a piece and let's divide it up.

But I already told you that some sections get a lot of emphasis and some get a smaller amount. But through inspired by God, God was telling him what we needed to know about that journey because we know that we relate with it and we can see what they're learning.

So he doesn't write as a historian trying to fill our minds with information about Hebrew history. He writes as a pastor knowing that you and I deal with these issues in our own sanctification and the here and now and it's supposed to help us.

[ 10 : 54 ] Apostle Paul says, you know, you need to take heed of what's going on and you're going to need to know this as you go through that. So what was these five areas? You probably caught it. It was just an outline. Verse number 6, it says, To the intent we should not lust after evil things as they had lusted.

We're going to find these people here in Numbers 11. There's a mixed multitude among them that fell lusting and the children of Israel wept and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish that we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic.

And so we're going to find these people who look back at their old life and they're like, Man, I missed that. And you're told, don't look back at those things and say, I really missed that.

And the next verse it says, But now our soul is dried away. There's nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes. We're going to see a group of people that miss their old life and they despise the provision of God.

You hear what they said? There is nothing at all to eat but manna. What? That is bread from heaven. There's nothing here but God's provision. There's nothing to satisfy us but God's provision.

[ 12 : 01 ] And we look back on it and say, What is your problem, people? And we're told, We better be careful. If we're going to do that, we're going to lust just like that. We're going to have the provision of God, but we're going to lust at all the things we could have had without the provision of God.

And we're going to say that and he says, Beware, my children, that you don't fall into the same trap. These people did unhappy with the provision of God. The next one in verse number 7 of 1 Corinthians 10, Neither be idolaters as some of them as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

This came after Exodus 32. Aaron had made the idol and they sat down and they ate and they drank and they got up and played. And how much playing has been disguised as worship.

We see the immaturity of these people as they just guide up and play. And we look back on these people, not only are they playing, but they're playing in their worship, they're taking things in their own hand, they're not following God, and there's so much that could be said about worship as play.

And we're reminded here that we ought to be aware of idolatry in our own lives, that we just live and consume for ourselves. Verse number 8 says, Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed and fell.

[ 13 : 12 ] One day, three and twenty thousand, twenty-three thousand people die when fornication takes place. There's a plague happening in Numbers, chapter number 25, and it's happening because they're taking of these Moabite women, and it's got to stop.

And it even goes to the point here where Phineas runs in, there's a man and a woman, I won't get into detail, but a javelin goes through both of them, and he stops the plague to say that this is serious business.

And God does not just talk to them about this physical idolatry, but he talks about their heart. And he says, Your heart is divided against me. There's a spiritual and physical, and they always seem to go hand in hand.

These people, their hearts move the way from God, and as their hearts move the way from God, they begin to go after the things that God had forbidden of them. And we're told to be aware of the fornication, and we're told to protect our hearts.

If not, we will begin to become idolatrous and adulterous in our actions. Verse 9, Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed as serpents.

[ 14 : 15 ] What kind of tempting of Christ is this? You know, what's going on? Are they in front of trains? No, because there's not trains. But also, are they jumping off of mountains and saying, we're tempting Christ? This is how they tempt Christ, we'll see in chapter number 21.

And the people spake unto God against Moses, wherefore they brought us out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness, for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loathed as the light bread. They're complaining and they're murmuring.

Verse number 6, And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much of Israel died. As they're complaining, we saw one time that they're complaining and he sends manna from heaven.

This time they're complaining and he sends fiery serpents, because he knows that they are tempting Christ, and that their heart needs to change. But even in that punishment of the fiery serpent, we're going to see the bronze serpent, that they can look and they can live and they can see that.

So we're told in verse number 9 that we shouldn't tempt Christ here and are complaining. So we're not only not to crave the wrong things that we've craved, we're not only to recognize that history and example to us, we're also not to put the Lord to test or the grumble like the Israelites did.

[ 15 : 24 ] Verse 10, And neither murmur ye as some of them also murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer. And it's really neat in the wording there because in number 16 they're complaining and they're saying Moses and Aaron is doing this and God makes it evidently clear that it's not Moses and Aaron but it is the God of heaven that is doing this but Moses is there as a servant, as a mediator.

So 1 Corinthians chapter number 10 is giving you five things that as we go through numbers and when you see it, you ought to say, yeah, that's me. That could be me on every one of those accounts.

Then in Hebrews chapter number 3, turn over there real quickly, Hebrews chapter number 3, we are going to find that we learn of the wilderness and what's happening. Hebrews chapter number 3, verse 16, For some, when they had heard, did provoke, howbeit not all came out of Egypt by Moses, but with whom was he grieved 40 years?

Was it not with them that he had sinned his carcasses fell in the wilderness? So in Hebrews 3, we're going to have a large portion of scripture here about 12 verses that's going to really deal with it and show us that God had brought the people out of Egypt.

In Egypt, they were slaves, they were overworked, they were underfed, they were regularly beaten, they were delivered by Egypt by the blood of the land and by the power of God. They were taken to the, they were headed to the promised land.

[ 16 : 39 ] Canaan is not heaven, but it's an abundant, fruitful, fruitful, godly life, and there they would have houses they didn't build, they'd enjoy fruit. From the harvest, they didn't work, and the promised land was flown with milk and honey, but they chose to doubt him and his power.

They hardened their hearts and they faced trials and temptation. 12 spies went in, 10 came out and they said they doubt that this could happen. They saw the problems in receiving what God had for them rather than trusting in his promise and his power, and they were condemned to live and die in the wilderness, still the people of God, but not living up to the potential that they had.

But you'll notice they didn't lose their salvation, they were not taken back into Egypt, rather they were disciplined and they were punished and they lived out this ordinary, routine, day after day existence instead of enjoying all that God had for them.

And so we watch a people that are kind of up and down. There's good moments and then there's bad moments and they're just wandering around and then we look at our own lives and we look at the sanctification process and Trent looks at his own life and he sees this up and down, this constant going, trying to figure out things, coming to a crossroads and saying, should I go right or should I go left?

How do I manage the outcomes? And God says, you don't look right, you don't look left, but you look up. If they kept punching into their GPS, which way should we go? And the answer would be repent. It would just keep flashing on the screen.

[ 18 : 00 ] Don't go right, don't go left, don't stop at the 7-11 and ask your direction, talk to me. I'm the only one that can get you out of this wilderness and there's no reason. It is comical and it's just amazing, isn't it, that in such a small area that these people could get lost for 40 years.

If you've ever been lost on the road as some of us have been, you think you understand, but if you look at a map like on the back of this, you wonder, how in the world did that happen? Because God says, I love you too much that will let you go into this land unprepared.

And I want you to learn something in all of this. And we see how God deals with this in forgiveness. We really see a living out of Romans 11, 22 that He is severe, but He's also forgiving. And in Numbers, we see that He hates sin because He loves us.

And because He loves us, He hates sin. And we see it. And so we're going to read through the Bible so we learn about ourselves, we learn about the wilderness, but most importantly, we learn about a God, who He is, and what He's like.

We see that He's patient. We're going to get tired in Numbers of their bad behavior. And when we get tired of this, let me remind you of two things. Just think about how tired God was of their bad behavior.

[ 19 : 10 ] Think about how tired God is and how patient He is with our bad behavior. So when you get through Numbers and then you get to Psalms 103, verse 8, and it says, The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow the anger and plenteous in mercy, your mind's going to go back to Numbers and say, He sure is.

Then your life's going to go to your own life and say, He sure is. 2 Peter 3, 9 is going to say He's long-suffering, and you're going to say, No doubt He was. Look at the children of Israel and what He has done.

And then we're going to see our Christ. We're going to be told that the Messiah will be king in chapter number 24. We're going to learn about the bronze servant there in chapter number 21, that in that, as they have made a choice and they have sinned, yet God has made a provision for forgiveness and for healing.

And then we'll see that spiritual work, that rock that will satisfy, and only that will satisfy them as the water will come from it. In verse number 12, chapter number 20, it says, And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, because you believe me not to sanctify me, to set me apart in the eyes of the children of Israel.

Therefore, you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah because the children of Israel strove with the Lord and He was sanctified in them.

[ 20 : 21 ] Sanctified in them that He was supposed to be set apart, made precious, seen as holy, not as trite, not as something that could be altered, not as something that a golden calf could compete with, not as somebody they could ignore, but to be set apart and to worship.

And in doing that, we will be sanctified in ourselves as we look at a God who is set apart, who is precious, who is holy. And so the book of Numbers is going to help us in this area of sanctification because what does this community and this world need more than anything?

It needs us to look more like Jesus. What does your family need more than anything out of you? It's not a 10% raise in that. It's not anything else that you could provide for them. They need you to look more like Jesus.

And so you're going to have to take responsibility for yourself. The way you treat Numbers is going to be a good way to start, is to say, I'm not just going to accept this as life as itself. We've been in the wilderness for a long time.

This is just kind of where I'm at spiritually. Let's just get used to it. You know, some people probably started a business there selling travel gear. You know, nobody was saying, let's sell you fabricated houses you could build.

[ 21 : 27 ] Everybody was selling tents. They're like, we're going to live here our whole life. Lifetime warranty on this stuff. And hopefully you'd be saying, I don't need a lifetime warranty on this stuff because we're not going to live our whole lives camping in this wilderness.

But as Christians, we ought to understand that. How many of you have just gotten to a point in your life and like, this is just how it is. There's this area of sin that I deal with, but I'm never really going to get victory over it.

There's this attitude that keeps creeping up in my life, but come on. We're all guys and that's just how it happens. How many of you have been stuck in that wilderness and that trap? You need to bust out of it.

You need to claim the promises and claim the joy that is there. This book is given to us for a purpose and that purpose is to help us with our time in this wilderness wandering.

God will use this book in his work of sanctification if you will allow him to do so. This is not a history book about some other people. This is a God-preserved story for your benefit.

[ 22 : 23 ] So this is your prayer. You're not going to, we're not going to have an invitation, but in your seat, I want you to decide today that you will become more serious about being sensitive to what God wants you to do in your life during this series.

Say, God, search my heart and see if there will be any wicked way in me. Lay your finger on my heart on these verses and numbers and say, that's who you are. That is why you're stuck in this wilderness.

You're stuck in the wilderness for the same reason they're stuck in the wilderness in chapter number 10. You're stuck in this wilderness for the same thing because of why they're stuck in it in chapters number 17.

And just lay your heart out before God and say that. And we're going to be reminded as we are today in our time of wondering, we should spend less time trying to figure out what our next turn is, managing outcomes, and turn to God.

Trying to fix ourselves, trying to find our own way out of there, and we just turn to God and say, God, if you don't get me out of this rut, out of this wilderness, I will live and die and I will never see the promised land that is for us.

[ 23 : 25 ] Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for the book of numbers. Thank you as you took them through the wilderness and it was a time of example for them and learning. It's now a time of ammunition to us that we should learn and be encouraged.

And I pray that my brothers and sisters in here and myself included will come to the book of numbers with great reverence and respect and asking you to search our heart and to show us what keeps us from claiming the promises and the joys that are available to us as your children.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. For more information, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com) where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.

Thanks.