

The Numbering

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[0 : 0 0] 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. Please turn with me to Numbers 1 as we get into looking at this. It's a Sunday afternoon. We've already joked about being tired.

That's a good thing we're an exciting book of the Bible. We're in the book of Numbers. If you love the book of Numbers, you're probably going to count it. If you love Numbers, this is your book. And as the pastor said today, it's appropriately named because there's numbers all over.

We start with the census. We end with the census. But I have found the study in Numbers 1, which you always find when you study the Bible, that it is way more exciting than you would ever imagine.

That there's always something that Jesus did not waste. One ounce of ink in the writing of our Word that everything matters in it. And I'm excited and hope I can convey that to you tonight as we look at it.

As the lady said on customer service, she said, Do you serve coffee in your church? And I said, sometimes, she says, You better when you go through the book of Numbers. Because she says it wasn't very exciting, but I disagree. And I'm going to call her up after the service and tell her.

[1 : 0 0] So about a week ago, we did an introduction to the book of Numbers. And I showed you in 1 Corinthians chapter number 10. I showed you what the Apostle Paul had to say to us. If he knew we were going to go into the book of Numbers, he says, Let me tell you what you need to be looking for.

Because it's a group of people. You're going to see them in a wilderness journey. You're going to see them stuck in something that they could get out of. That is very much there. But they don't need to look to the right or to their left. They need to repent and look to God and say, God, we have placed ourselves in this.

But only you can give us the victory that is found in Christ Jesus. We also find Jesus in the book of Numbers. We see him as a rock. We see him there throughout the book. We see him as the brazen serpent.

But we're told in 1 Corinthians 10 that we shouldn't follow after the lust of the evil things. And in Numbers, we're going to see that they do that. We also see in 1 Corinthians 10, 7 that we shouldn't be idolaters as they were.

They made this molten idol. They also were fornicators and committed these types of sin. And we learn in Numbers that that's rampant and it's happening. There's a spiritual and a physical adultery going on.

[2 : 0 0] We shouldn't tempt Christ through our murmuring. And we see that among them. And we see so much about ourselves. So even though we may never ride a camel or pinch a tent or visit a tabernacle, we found that we have a lot of things in common with this ancient nomadic group of people and their relationship with God.

In a few days, Brother Johnson will be in Tunisia and he's going to ride a camel. And he's going to send us a picture of him with his turban on his head. There, we're hoping he'll see Miss Beth, his daughter. But most of us don't live a life like that.

But we can see ourselves in these people and we're supposed to see ourselves in these people. Warren Wiersbe says this, Unless by faith you enter into your spiritual inheritance in Christ, you will wonder in unbelief and rob yourself of the blessings God has planned for you.

We have been there and we have met person after person who has spent too much of their life in this wilderness wondering when God has so much in store for them.

Brother Jim says it so well that serving Jesus is fun. You can have your boring life, but I'll take the one serving Jesus. And he's saying that I wouldn't want to just wander around without purpose and meaning because Jesus has given us such purpose and meaning.

[3 : 14] And in this chapter, he's telling them to get ready, that God is going to do something there in their lives. So why is there a list? Why is there a census? Why is there a roll call? I'm going to give four reasons.

Why is there a numbering of all the males of fighting age according to the genealogies of the different households of the tribe of Israel? What in the world is the significance of that? Why in the world would you spend a precious chapter of God's holy word writing this down?

And I want to show you four reasons, I believe. First of all, and always first of all, we see the faithfulness of God in chapter number one. We find a God here that counted his people.

When they go into the land of Egypt, you're going to remember that some say there's 66 of them. We don't know, but we remember we were in Genesis at one time and Joseph is there and his brothers show up and he sends them off and he says, I've made provision for our family.

God sent me here in advance. And because of that, everybody is starving. There's a famine in the land, but I have saved food. And now God is going to take care of the people by bringing them to Egypt. And so a small group of people go in to Egypt.

[4 : 16] But now we find that they were numbered with over 600,000 people and that some of the tribes are over 75,000 fighting men. We see the faithfulness of God despite all the circumstances that was going on that God meant for them.

God does not ask us to count something for his sake. You know, if you ask a little kid to count something, it's not because you can't count it yourself. It's because you know they need to count it. So when God told them to take a census, it wasn't because he wasn't aware of how many people he has grown them to be.

He wanted them to be aware of the fact. And as they stood there and they said, Wow, 70,000 fighting men, 68,000, and all that going on and on. And their heart should have grew inside of them and said, Our God has been faithful to us.

We've been a rebellious people. The circumstances have been against us. But our God has been faithful to us. Also, we see that he's been faithful because that worship is a priority. You have to be 20 years of age to be a soldier in this time, 25 years of age to be a server, but you have to be 30 years of age to be a priest.

And why is that? It's because worship is a priority, and it demanded the highest level of spiritual maturity because it's our greatest responsibility towards God. Because he is faithful, everything he's going to do is going to center around his worship.

[5 : 37] Even in the layout, in the picture that we have there of where the tents are being laid, that in the middle there is worship is centered. And everything starts from that, and it works its way out.

And so as we think about that servant and as a soldier and a priest, I'd like to remind you in the New Testament that you're all three of those. That you're not picking between all three of those. That in 2 Timothy you're told, Ty, as a soldier, don't get entangled with the things of this world because you live for something higher.

In 2 Corinthians 6.4 we're told, But in all things of proving ourselves as ministers of God, as servants of God, in patience and afflictions and necessities and the stresses. And then we're told in 1 Peter 2.9 that we are a royal priesthood.

So as we look at these people, we know we have the responsibility and the role of a servant as a soldier and as a priest. And we get to see what each one of them looks like here in this story.

Deuteronomy 12.5 says, But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall you seek, and thither thou shalt come.

[6 : 41] He put a place in the middle there for them to come in and for them to worship Him. And even in the New Testament time, the Jewish people, they made Sabbath laws and they said you're only allowed to walk as far on the Sabbath as you would have walked to get to the tabernacle if your tent was towards the outside of the property.

Because it was made to gather people in towards worship. Because that was priority. Because God was faithful. The hero of this story is God. And it always is. And what is the main thing we see about our God is that He is faithful to these unfaithful people.

Lots of people are involved in activity. A lot of people out there fighting the battle. Another level of those are served. The highest level. And those that brought people to worship God. And we see all three of those roles here in the story.

And before they even take possession of Canaan, God is already fulfilling His promise. Before they even get into the promised land. And what is that promise? That He gave to Abraham a man and a woman that couldn't have children.

And He says I'm going to multiply your sea as the stars in the sky, as the sands of the sea. And He says it ain't going to happen. Before they've even entered into Canaan, into that victorious life, God has already shown them how incredibly good He is to them.

[7 : 55] Let me tell you about another family. If you have that picture. There was a couple. I didn't know that Jim and Miss Sandy would be here the night. But there was a couple. And there was two of them. Two knucklehead kids. And they went to India a little over a year and a half ago.

And they went there. And they were small in number. But now they continue to grow. And God shows Himself faithful. A small group of people go into a country. And this family continues to grow and to grow.

And we pray someday there will be 600,000 of them. We'll need a bigger camera. And you won't be able to see Jim in it. And he'll be okay with that. Because he doesn't need to be seen in the picture. But it's going to continue to grow.

And it's going to grow there. Because God is faithful to us. And before they even got into there. They should be excited. So as they're gearing up. And they're going forth to war. And they're saying, am I going to be able to go into Canaan?

Is God going to do great things? He's saying, look how good I've been to you already. As you were servants in Egypt. As you've been in the wilderness wondering. I love how Calvin Miller says it like this. He says, the world is poor.

[8 : 55] Because her fortune is buried in the sky. And her treasure maps are of the earth. That we are rich beyond measure. But it's in heavenly things. But our treasure maps have us looking here on earth.

As you look at a picture like that. And your heart leaps out of your chest. And you say, God, you have been so good to us. Despite ourselves. When we think about world evangelism. And how much he's allowed us to see.

And how good he's been to us. And we think about how unfaithful we have been to him. And how little we have invested of our lives. And how much of a return we've already seen. We ought to know that the evangelization of the world.

Is very much possible. And only our disobedience would render it. Not happening in our generation. He has been good to us already. We look at how great he has been to us already.

As David sung this morning. We're not for grace. I hug my wife and I say. I really thank God for grace. Because I'd be a lot worse husband. If it wasn't for it. And she laughed kind of awkwardly.

[9 : 54] There. But I think about how good God's been to me. And despite all that. How often times. I have been a scoundrel. And I have not appreciated the grace that God's given. But I couldn't imagine where I would be.

Today without him. So first of all. The faithfulness of God. And then secondly. The carefulness of God. Not careful as in an accident. But taking great care of the people. He is counting his sheep.

To show particular care. That God as a shepherd. Takes over his people. You know. Even shepherds. Count their sheep. The other night. We were at Stars and Strikes. With the teenagers. And there's only about 20 of us.

But I kept counting the teenagers. Over and over. Because we're about to go through a line. And we're going to buy us some tickets. And I don't want to buy too many. So I spent the first 30 minutes of the night. Going 1, 2, 3, 4.

1, 2, 3, 4. Kind of like brother Jeff. Out in public with his kids. You know. Keep counting the kids. Make sure none of the little chicklings run away from them. There. Because you care for them. You count for them.

[10 : 49] There. God's reminding them. He doesn't need them to count. He knows how many of them. But he says. You matter to me. Every one of you matter to me. And I don't know about you. But that encourages me greatly.

We are not Israel. We are the church. But we serve the same God. Here. A God that counts us. That even knows the hairs upon our head. That he counts us. Meaning every one of you. You cannot believe that God does not care about you.

Because he even cares about a sparrow. That would be sold for two pennies. He knows about you as well. So this passage. Is a gigantic megaphone. Where God says right into our ear.

He says. You are my people. I care about you. I know where you come from. I know your name. And I know how many you are. So in all the excitement going on here.

If Satan has pulled up beside you. And said. There is a lot of exciting things going on. And you may not be part of it. And your problems may not matter. Because you are not on the front line. Or somebody like that.

[11 : 46] Allow God to speak into your ear right now. And say. You matter to me. I know who you are. And I count you. Those wonderful things for us there.

Then going on. Knowing who is in. Is of super importance. To be counted. Means being identified as part of the people of God. With all its responsibilities. And privileges.

There wasn't an unclear line. You were either part of it. Or you weren't part of that family. Sociologists tell us. That groups come together like that. You have one group of people. That they are center focused.

And then you have an edge bound group. The center focus. The people that have the same common hobby. People that like to hunt together. They come together based upon hunting. And they have clubs together. And they do that. But that group of people.

The outside line is not very clear. I am not really a UGA fan. A football fan. Alright. I want to be really bad. But I am just too spastic. To watch a whole game of anything.

[12 : 40] But as I am there. I would be kind of on the line. But the more involved you would be in college football. The closer group that would be. But then you have an edge group. That would say that you are in.

Regardless if you want to be or not. Like family. It doesn't matter how different you are than me. That's your. It doesn't matter how weird you are. You are always going to be my son. And you are always going to be part of that.

But the wonderful thing about these children of Israel. About us in the church. That we are both. That there needs to be a clear distinction. Between who is in. And also that we are around the same thing. And so they are gathering data there.

Which is so important. They are gathering data. They are counting. They are naming who is in. Who is part of this family. Who is. And we also identify as who is not. And because of that.

They have the privileges and responsibility. Of being the children of Israel. And it is the importance here. Of identifying. With God's team. You know in the time that we live in.

[13 : 34] Concerning the church. People seem to go off the ditch. On one of two ways. There is the wrong view of the church. Which would be held by. The orthodox. Or by Catholics. That say the church is everything. And as long as I am in it.

And my name is on a roll. I am okay. My membership is going to take care of it. And there is also a belief today. That I am spiritual. And because I have the same interest. Of the things of the Bible. It doesn't really matter.

That I am committed. To the church. And it is a ditch on both sides. One says that. My individual responsibility. Doesn't really matter. As long as my name is on a church roster. And another one says. It doesn't matter if I am involved in a church.

As long as I am individually doing well. And that is what neither one of us should be involved in. That we are individually trying to live out holy lives. But we are united together. As a team.

That God counts us. That He sees us as a body. He saw the children of Israel. He knew who was part of it. And there was a count there. And we shouldn't be on the edge of this thing. But we should be in the middle of all that is going on.

[14 : 31] And God is not haphazardly looking at the church. And your personal involvement. He is looking for people with a perfect heart towards Him. Whom He can show Himself strong.

So when God looks at us collectively as a church. And He says. This is what this church is going to do in world missions. Don't think you can hide out in the corner. Because He just looks at us. Just as one. He is also looking at you individually.

And He is looking for people with a perfect heart. Because wherever you go this week. There are some people that He needs to show Himself strong to. There is somebody on Wednesday morning. That really needs to see a strong God.

They need to see a powerful God. Because somebody in their family is going through cancer. They are going through the worst financial situation they have ever been. Their teenagers are giving them trouble. And they need a big picture of God.

And you are going to bring it to them. As you have a complete and yielded heart to them. And you come there. And you show them that. And then thirdly here we see. The selection by God for their service.

[15 : 28] God here. Election to service is not to the neglect of the rest of the people. If you read after some commentaries. You would find that they would believe that God loved the children of Israel.

And He hated everybody else. That He called them to salvation. And that He did not care about the other ones. We do see that God called these people here. But He called these people to a service.

And it was not to the neglect of the other people. But it was for their good. Because God loved the Amorites. He invested and showed love upon the children of Israel.

And through those people. They were supposed to be a blessing to all the people of the world. We find in Genesis chapter number 15. And verse number 12. For time's sake. I'll just read down to verse 16.

And in the fourth generation. They shall come hither again. For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. As they were in Egypt. And now they're in the wilderness wandering. God said all the way back in Genesis.

[16 : 23] Why that is happening. My wrath toward the Amorites are not yet full. And I'm giving them more time. I'm being long suffering towards those people. God demonstrates His compassion towards the nations of the world.

He commanded us to love internationals in Leviticus 19. He says the stranger that comes in. There's foreigners that come and live among them. We'll find in a little bit. We'll learn about Rahab.

And how they come to her. And she says I've heard about you already. And I want to worship your God. As they were obedient to God. God used them to call the other nations to them.

So by electing them and calling them to service. He is doing what is best for all the nations. And so God is doing some choosing here. He goes ahead and chooses all the assistants.

In the first three verses there. He names these people and He says Moses I don't want you to choose. I'm going to choose these people for you. God is choosing people now. Who has God chosen to use to be a blessing to all the nations of the world?

[17 : 24] He's chosen believers. If you are born again He's part of God's plan. Are there people smarter than us? Yes. Are there people wealthier than us? Most definitely. But God says my plan and this time is that I will choose you to be a channel of blessings to the whole world.

And He chooses believers. Not to the neglect of unbelievers. But for their sake. He wants to work in and through our lives. God's provision for His people was for His great name.

1 Samuel 12.22 2 Kings 19.3 says that He even defends.

He says I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake. He says I'm going to provide for you so that everybody watching will know that I'm good. I will defend you so that everybody watching will know that I'm a defender of my people.

And His name will be known as renowned throughout all the lands. We see it in Nehemiah. We see it in Daniel. And this will lead other people to want to worship our God.

[18 : 27] And if God does mission for the sake of His own glory. Then we do err to find ourselves laboring for lesser passions. And He's saying guys I've chosen you. Not because you're special.

But because I'm special. Not because I only want to save you. But because I want to save the whole world. And through you I want to be a blessing. And that's a reminder to all of us in here today.

That we are the people taking the gospel to the other side of the world. And the other side of this town. We're not the people waiting for the gospel. Which brings a great privilege and responsibility upon our lives.

And if you say that's because we are great. It's because we're special. No it's because He deserves to be famous. It's because He deserves to be loved. And now we have this responsibility upon us.

And then lastly here. God is preparing His people for battle. Turn back again in chapter number 1. You're going to find 13 times in this passage. In verse number 20.

[19 : 24] It says all that were able to go forth to war. Verse 22 at the end. All that were able to go forth to war. 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34 and so on.

13 times it says all that were able to go forth to war. As He's counting the people. And He's saying some 13 times. As they're able to go forth to war.

It ought to be a clear indicator to these people. What type of people they are. These are warrior people. That God is meeting their needs. And He's providing for them. But they should know what's about to come.

It's amazing. Our pastor preached a phenomenal message. About sitting out to battle. Not being ready for war. It's mind boggling to me. That these people would ever forget. That they are a warrior people.

And that God was not preparing them for battle. Because when He starts this whole thing off. He counts them according to the amount of men. That were ready for battle. And we are a warrior people as well.

[20 : 19] I told you I wanted to go to a Christian school. When I was in high school. I looked in a phone book. One school was an eagle. And one school was the warrior. I said I don't want to be an eagle. I want to be a warrior. So I called the place.

And I got to Christian school. And became an Eastwood warrior. And I love my time there. Because it's inside of us. We know that there's something wrong with this world. And God has given us a picture of what it looks like.

Perfected and complete. And because of that we're going to fight until the very end. And the church is more like an army than a sales force. Or a retail company seeking customers. But we are the army of God moving forward.

Every one of them. Men over the 20 years of age. A couple of observations about that. Here were men who were natural born soldiers. And then there were men that were made from other pursuits.

But here is the point. Every one of them had to be prepared to fight in this army. Some of them looked like Sergi. And some of them looked like me. Some of them looked prepared for battle.

[21 : 16] And some of them looked like they were fit to do analysis on the battle once it was over. But he called every one of them regardless of their making. And he says you are called into this battle.

He didn't have a fitness test. He says all of you. Every one of you are called into this battle to be a warrior of our God. At the point of salvation you were drafted. At the moment you were born again you were enlisted into this army that you belong to be part of.

To become a Christian is to become a soldier. Patrick Clapp is up at North Georgia College. He's in their program up there. And I was talking to Brother Jonathan this week. And he said yeah he's waiting to get his hair privileges.

Once he gets his hair privileges he can cut his hair however he wants. And I said he can really cut his hair however he wants. He says well not really. He can either have a crew cut or he can have a flat top.

But he gets to decide if he has that haircut or the other. He can't make it longer. He can only make it shorter. So he has a hair privilege. And that's an extreme version.

[22 : 17] But soldiers live with a responsibility to alter their lives. And say whatever needs to be done for the battle I'm willing to do it. And as soldiers of the cross we are people that should live the same way.

The world needs Christians to demonstrate their convictions are worth surrendering their freedoms and pleasures for. And that will impress pagans again as it did in the early centuries.

If people saw us as warrior people they'd be more interested in knowing why we are taking this gospel to the other side of the world. And we don't have to have our hair cut like Patrick Clapp and I'm glad for it.

But we do have to make hard decisions. We do have to limit some privileges that we have for the furtherance of the gospel. To become a Christian is to join an army with all that it entails.

And every one of you you have been counted in here today. Our faithful God he sees you. And he's careful and he makes sure he doesn't overlook you. And all the plans the church has.

[23 : 12] He has an individual plan for you as well. And we are a warrior people that are being prepared for that day of battle. Christians should see ourselves as citizen soldiers of the kingdom of God.

Under orders and fulfilling our calling only to the extent that we are serving the greater interests and purposes of the church of God. We move forward as a battalion in this community.

They were put together in a group and they're working together and they are a warrior people. And we should be reminded today that we are now the ambassadors of Christ. And this time and this dispensation not as Israel but as a church.

But it was still his plan that we would fight side by side and shoulder to shoulder. And he has something for every one of you. And none of you get to be draft dodgers. He knows where he's at.

But he's done something. He has placed in your heart a desire to serve him. That screams out as it has over the last four days. That says I want to do something great for the God of heaven.

[24 : 18] He has placed that in there. And he's going to equip you to do it. And we're at a wonderful place in history in Numbers 1. And we're at a wonderful place in our history in 2014.

With so many lands that are still left that need to be invaded by people like us. Heavenly Father I thank you for your word. I thank you for the book of Numbers. I thank you that you count people when they go into the wilderness.

And when they come out. And you never lose them in the wilderness. Often God we feel like you have forsaken us. We feel like we have gotten so far away from you.

That you could never put us into the army once again. But I thank you for a reminder that you don't lose your sheep. That you would leave the ninety and nine. And you would come find us.

And you would place us back there. Shoulder to shoulder with this warrior people. I thank you for the church Lord. I thank you for your plan. I thank you for the churches that are being started.

[25 : 13] All around the world. For your name's sake. 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 Where you can find our service times.

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