

Key to NUMBERS

1. STATISTICS:

Moses is the writer; Numbers is fourth in his series of five books; written about 1500 B.C.; covers approximately 40 years; key verse 33:1; takes its name from two numberings of the people; tells of progress from Sinai to borders of the Promised Land.

2. THEME:

Numbers is a book of instructions and action; its instruction is like Leviticus, its action like Exodus. Essentially, it tells the story of the journeyings of the Israelites from Sinai to Kadesh and after 38 years of useless wanderings, on to the plains of Moab by the borders of the land.

3. OUTLINE:

Three main divisions: (1) Laws given while at Sinai (1-10); (2) Journey to Kadesh (11-21); (3) Camping at Moab (22-36).

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Numbers tells of a 11-day journey which took 40 years.

It is a book of "numberings" but also "murmurings" (7 times). Our admiration of the man Moses rises to great heights. Here is truly a spiritual giant (14:11-20).

This was a case where the majority were dead wrong (13:26-33).

Two census counts were taken, one at the beginning of the 38 years of wandering and the other at the close. Result: no gain whatsoever. 1200 men died monthly in the wandering years.

Balaam's doctrine (Revelation 2:14; Numbers 25:1-8) of fraternization with the world is exceedingly dangerous to the people of GOD. Here GOD slew 24,000.

5. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

The 38 years of shame GOD counts a blank. There is no record, no progress, no increase. GOD passes them by.

GOD was grieved at the unreasoning unbelief of the people (Psalm 95:10), but nevertheless turned the years into preparation for the future. Boys grew to men, ready and trained for the rigors of war.

One of the greatest types (object lessons) of the Bible is in 21:5-9. Our LORD used this as an illustration in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:14).

The command to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan was a divine one (33:51-56). GOD's love has teeth in it. It would have been impossible for Israel to be pure in the midst of such wickedness.

Balaam was an example of a servant of GOD among the Gentiles. His life was a warning to others of GOD's servants. For the love of earthly gain, he sold out. Our book records his untimely death (31:8).

It pays to serve GOD faithfully. Consider Caleb and Joshua who were allowed to live while 600,000 others died.

6. INTERESTING FEATURES:

A beautiful intercessory prayer (14:11-20).

One of the loveliest benedictions in the Bible (6:24-26).

GOD keeps books (14:22).

Word "number" used 125 times in this book.

Israel wins a battle with Midian without a single casualty.

A lot of quail in 11:31.

A miracle in the botanical realm (17:8).

7. KEY TO UNDERSTANDING:

You could change the whole miserable character of this disappointing book if you could substitute "trust" for unbelief. Let this be a lesson to all of us.

~ end of Numbers ~

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