

“In The Wilderness!”

I. **INTRO:**

- A. Why study the Book of Numbers? 1 Cor.10:11 [1st Slide - Intro]
1. You may never ride a **camel**, pitch a **tent**, or visit a **tabernacle**...**Yet** I believe you'll find *kinship* with these **ancient nomadic Israelites**.
 2. You will find just how often **your** spiritual journey mirrors their pilgrimage!
- B. **Egypt** was a picture of our lost condition of bondage to the world; **Canaan** illustrates our claiming our inheritance by faith & enjoying the fullness of God's provision;
In the Wilderness pictures carnal Christians whose belief & disobedience prevent them from entering into all that God has for them.
1. While it may be necessary to **pass through** wilderness experiences, one **does not have to live there!**
 2. For Israel, an **11 day journey** became a **40-year agony!**
- C. **Genesis** pictures God's people as pilgrims & strangers, looking for their inheritance. **Exodus & Leviticus** depicts Israel as a holy nation of priests, worshiping the Lord. **Numbers** emphasizes God's people as **warriors**, *overcoming the enemy & claiming the promised inheritance*.
1. Theme of **Leviticus** we are **Worshippers**; in **Numbers** we are **Warriors!**
- D. Panoramic View of Numbers: [Advance Slide(#2) - Map]
1. Mount Sinai [1 year] {Census, Organization; Sanctification} ch.1-9
 2. Kadesh-Barnea [several months] {Complaining, Doubting; Promise Land rejection} ch.10-14
 3. Wilderness Wanderings [38 yrs] {Wandering, Old Gen Dies; New Census} ch.15-36
 4. **Note also:** How close they were to Canaan.
- E. Christ seen in Numbers as:
- Manna** (Jn.6)[*Bread of Life*]; **Water from Rock** (1 Cor.10:4)[*Water of Life*];
Bronze Serpent (Jn.3)[*Jesus on cross*]; He's also our **city of Refuge**; **Star out of Jacob**.

II. **IN THE WILDERNESS! (CH.1)**

A. **WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

B. (1-4) Why is it called *Numbers*?

1. The Name **Numbers**: comes from the 2 *numberings*/census' that are taken.
 - a) 1 census was for the **old** generation; numbered at **Mount Sinai** (ch.1-4).
 - b) 1 census was for the **new** generation; numbered in the **plains of Moab** (ch.26,27).
 - c) Specifically the # of the men able to fight in war (**14 times in this chapter** "all that were able to go to war").
 - (1) God didn't ask for **volunteers**. When you enter the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, you *automatically* become one of His soldiers!
 - (2) We are all soldiers, either a **good** one or a **bad** one!
 - d) **He numbered them exactly**: what **sweetness & dignity** - to be recognized by God & drawn to His side. (**see 1:18**)
 - (1) **We may boast we're not into numbers!...But God's always been!**
 - (a) God always keeps inventory of all his Jewels!
2. The **Septuagint** gave it this name. (*arithmoi*)
3. What was it in the **Hebrew** Bible originally?
 - a) **Bemid-bar** - *in the wilderness/desert*. {which better indicates what the book is about}
 - b) Also been called *Book of Journeys*; *Book of the Murmurings*; *4th Book of Moses*.

C. It's a book of **Transition**: setting aside the **old generation** because of **unbelief** (ch 1-20); **Then** preparing the **new generation** to inherit **the Promised land** (ch.21-26).

- #### D. It's a book of **Wanderings**: for God made His people wander in the wilderness for 40 years. [Till, the old generation, 20 yrs & older, died off]
1. **Application**: "Unless by faith you enter into your spiritual inheritance in Christ, you will "wander" in unbelief & rob yourself of the blessings God has planned for you." (Warren Wiersbe)

E. What would God teach them/us in the wilderness?

1. How to be wholly dependent on Him for food, clothing, health, protection, & all things.
2. So we can learn what **He can be** to *the heart that trusts Him*.

F. **THE TRIBES!**

G. (5-46) The army was organized, each tribe with its leaders & its standard. *Unity in diversity.*

1. Perhaps this pictures the **Church** today. **We have different tribes & standards, & different leaders; but its one army, following one Commander & fighting one enemy!**
2. 1 John 5:4 **this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith.**

H. **603,550 able fighting men** - so all together at least 2 1/2 million.

1. **Can you imagine the logistics of moving an entire nation to another country today, even with our help of computers & excel spreadsheets?**
2. And they did this over & over again...dismantle, pack up, the tabernacle, move, re-set up camp somewhere else. And then be ready to do it again!

I. **LEVITES!**

J. (47-54) The **Levites** are not to be included in the *regular* census, for God has especially adopted them & made them supervisors over the Tabernacle.

1. They are counted at **one month** of age; the begin serving at **age 25**; & must retire at **age 50**.

III. **SETTING UP CAMP! (CH.2)**

A. [Show 3rd slide - Encampment] - Explain/pointer.

B. **Key:** Tabernacle(the very dwelling of God) was always at the **center**, both when “*camped*” & when “*on the march*”!

1. See **2:31,34**.

C. **Tell me this book won't apply to us:** By its end we will cover 38 years of...
“grumbling & judgement, sinning & punishment, repenting & forgiveness,
warring & deliverance, attitudes of ingratitude, self-absorption, fear & desperation.”

D. **Where are you in your spiritual journey?**

1. **At the base of Sinai** marveling at God's holiness & soaking in His word?
2. **Are you** perched on the edge of the **Promise Land**, eager to push ahead & take possession of all God has promised you?
3. **Maybe** you're in some **Wandering times**, taking the *long way home*, the *hard way* to God; the trip lengthened by your disobedience or desire for something besides God?
 - a) **Good news:** God has signed on for your **whole trip!**

- b) He doesn't abandon us just because we wander.
- c) He's with us in our wanderings: guiding, prompting, disciplining, sustaining, forgiving, & renewing us.
 - (1) What seems like ***aimless wanderings*** to us has **purpose & direction** if God is in it.

E. Where are you in your spiritual journey? - Sitting under Sinai? Poised at the Promise Land? Or Wandering in the Wilderness?

1. Do you sense that **God is with you** on the journey?

2. What **evidence** do you have of His presence?

- a) Deut.31:6 **Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.**

F. [Show 4th slide - End] - Next Wed Full Worship Night.

G. Invite up for prayer!