

The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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Listen to PROVE ALL THINGS on 730 AM WKRE, Sunday mornings from 8:15 to 8:30

Numbers

by Dempsey Collins

TITLE

The title to this book was affixed to it by the Septuagint (LXX) translators. The title is given in view of the two numberings of the Israelite people. One was taken at Sinai in the second year of the Exodus and recorded in Chapter 1 and the other was taken at the end of their journey in the fortieth year and recorded in Chapter 26. Perhaps a more appropriate title would be one given to it by the Hebrews themselves, Bemidbar, which is the fifth word of the opening verse, and means “In the wilderness.” It is certainly more representative of the contents of the book as a whole.

AUTHOR

The writer of the law, five books of the Old Testament (Pentateuch) is Moses (John 1:17, 45; Luke 24:27 cp. Acts 8:28).

PURPOSE

In the book of Genesis we learned of the fall of man, the consequences of sin, promises given to Abraham, Joseph and Israel in Egypt. In Exodus, we learned about the bondage of Israel, their redemption, establishment as a nation, the construction of the tabernacle and the establishment of the priesthood. In Leviticus, we learned how Israel, once redeemed, could draw nigh unto God in worship. In the book of Numbers we see Israel, especially the Levites further readied for service and then service carried out.

“Israel as a nation is in its infancy at the outset of the book. There are only eleven months between Exodus 19 and Numbers 10:11. In Numbers, Israel goes through the painful process of testing and maturation in which God teaches His people the consequences of rebellion and the rewards of trust. The forty years of wilderness wandering transform them from a rabble of slaves into a set apart nation ready to take possession of the Promised Land.” (Nelson)

THEME

The wilderness wanderings of Israel. Israel learns once again that progress and blessing only come when God’s people walk by faith. Disobedience, murmuring, etc. brings punishment.

SCOPE

From Israel's encampment at Mount Sinai to their journey in the plains of Moab by the Jordan opposite Jericho. About 40 years.

Comparison of the Two Numberings

"Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families by their father's households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head from twenty years old and upward whoever is able to go out to war in Israel..." (1:2-3).

If we compare together the results of the two numberings in the 2nd and 40th years of their march, we shall see a considerable increase in some of the tribes and a large decrease in others. The number of men 20 years old and upwards in the different tribes was as follows:

TRIBE	FIRST NUMBERING	SECOND NUMBERING (Chapter 26)
Reuben	46,500	43,730
Simeon	59,300	22,200
Gad	45,650	40,500
Judah	74,600	76,500
Issachar	54,400	64,300
Zebulun	57,400	60,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500
Manasseh	32,200	52,700
Benjamin	35,400	45,600
Dan	62,700	64,400
Asher	41,500	53,400
Naphtali	53,400	45,400
TOTAL	603,550	601,730

By the second numbering, Dan had increased 1,700; Judah 1,900; Zebulun 3,100; Issachar 9,900; Benjamin 10,200; Asher 11,900; and Manasseh 20,900.

On the other hand there was a decrease in Reuben of 2,700; Gad 5,150; Ephraim 8,000; Naphtali 8,000; and in Simeon of 37,100. The tribe of Levi appears very small in comparison with the rest of the tribes. Levi – first census 22,000 males of a month old and upwards (3:39); second census 23,000 (26:62). The Levites were not numbered among the others because their task was to take care of the tabernacle (1:47-54).

News and Notes:

Old Testament Class begins Tuesday, September 21 at 11 a.m. in Numbers

Romans class on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m.

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

"...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16