

The Greek name for the fourth book of the Bible is "Arithmoi", from which we get our word,

"Arithmetic". The title of the book in Latin is the word, "Numeroi", or in English, "Numbers".

Now, if you're squirming in your seat – worried that this is going to be a Math lesson, and you didn't do too well with Math in High School – then take heart – there's much more to Numbers than just numbers.

In the Hebrew Bible the book is more aptly entitled, "In the Wilderness", and that's what the book describes – the children of Israel's wilderness wanderings.

Introducing... The Book of Numbers

In fact, there's another title for the book. I like to call it, "How to Turn a Fifteen Day Walk into

Forty Years of Wandering." Numbers reveals the reasons why the Hebrews failed to enter the land God promised them, and died in the desert.

And this is why the book abounds with lessons for us. Spiritually speaking, we've been delivered from the Egypt of sin, and promised a place of rest and blessing – but in order to enter in, we like the Hebrews, need to have faith. If we yield to doubt and fear, we too, can end up dying in a wilderness of frustration.

What's So Spiritual About A Census?

Numbers begins with the Lord speaking to Moses in verse 2, "Take a census of

all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above - all who are able to go to war in Israel."

Recently billboards have been popping up in major US cities. The billboards are simple - black backgrounds with white letters – and they consist of quotations attributed to God. Here's a few examples, "Let's meet at my house Sunday before the game." "C'mon over and bring the kids." "What part of "Thou Shalt Not..." didn't you understand?" "We need to talk." "Loved the wedding, invite me to the marriage." "That "Love Thy Neighbor" thing... I meant it." "Big bang theory, you've got to be kidding." "My way is the highway." "Need directions?" "You think it's hot here?" "Have you read my #1 best seller? There will be a test." "Do you have any idea where you're go-

ing?" "Don't make me come down there..." There're all signed "God".

But there's one quotation that I think fits the book of Numbers. It says, "I love you and you and you and you and... -God."

While in bondage the Hebrews where a nameless, innumerable band of slaves. In Egypt, the individual was expendable. But now the Hebrews belong to God. They're His people - and each person matters to God. Thus, God orders a census to make that point to Israel.

It was Augustine who said, "God loves each one of us as if there's only one of us to love." Nobody gets lost in the crowd with God. Don't misunderstand, you are more than a number to God. He knows your name. He knows everything about you. He loves you, and numbers you among His people. I love the saying, "Whenever God counts people it means that people count to God."

Devotion Box - Moving with God

Numbers 9:22 tells us the Hebrews were willing to wait two days, a month, a year if necessary - until God was ready to move!

We need the same attitude – let's not move, until we're sure the Lord says, "move". Let's learn to wait on God. Where would you want to go without Him anyway?

The Vow of the Nazirite

The vow of the Nazirite in Numbers 6 was a Jewish rite with extreme spiritual significance. The word “*Nazir*” means “*to set apart*”. And the vow of the Nazirite was a special act of devotion to God. There were two kinds of Nazirites: temporary and perpetual. Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist took lifelong vows.

For the duration of his vow the Nazirite agreed to abstain from 3 contacts – the fruit of the vine; no wine, no grapes – no razor was to touch his head; his hair always looked knotty and nappy and unkept – and he could touch nothing dead.

In 1 John 2:16 the Lord sums up the world system that opposes the values of God – call it the worldwide web - “*For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world.*”

Notice the 3 temptations - the lust of the flesh; the desire to feel great - the lust of the eyes; the desire to look great - and the pride of life; the desire to be great.

Guys, this is how a world without God operates. Everyone wants to *feel great* – “*Obey your thirst!*” – no, obey God. Everyone wants to *look great* – “*Image is everything!*” – but what about character? And everyone wants to *be great* – “*You deserve a break today!*” – you deserve a break all right, but a painful break.

The *vow of the Nazirite* though, was the antithesis to the *values of the world*. The Nazirite was a walking billboard for the values of God. His joy was not derived from physical, but spiritual sources. His identity was not based on external, but internal beauty. And his ambition was not for temporal, but eternal glory.

You and I need to be spiritual Nazirites – walking advertisements for the values of God. We need to demonstrate to the people around us that real life is found in *the spiritual, not physical – the internal, not external – the eternal, not temporal!*

Devotion Box - Repentance & Restitution

Numbers 5:6-7

Whether you’re living in Old Testament times or New Testament times, if you sin against another person it’s not enough to give a glib apology. Real Repentance wills concerning yourself with the damage you’ve caused.

When Jesus forgave Zaccheus, his first reaction was to repay four-fold the people he had cheated.

It’s interesting, the Law required a person pay back the cost of the damage, plus 20%. The love of Jesus caused Zaccheus to pay back cost plus 400%. Wow, which is the most powerful motivator - the Law, or the love of Jesus Christ?

Where’s the Faith ?

In the end the Hebrews *feared the obstacles* more than they *feared the Lord!* Their chronic complaining was a smokescreen for a greater evil – a lack of faith.

It’s been said: “*Our problem is not the greatness of our troubles, but the littleness of our spirits.*” Only Joshua and Caleb focused on the *opportunities* rather than the *obstacles*. Only these two men saw the *grapes* rather than the *giants*. When we’re facing the giants in our lives we need to fix our eyes on God!

This is what David did when he faced another giant. The Israelite army looked at Goliath and said, “*He’s too big to hit*”, but David, looked at the giant and said, “*He’s too big to miss*”. Let’s go forward in faith, not grumble in unbelief!

This is how a two week fun-run turned into a 40 year death march! Guys, the longest detour you’ll ever take is the fork of unbelief. *Doubt and disobedience always creates the longest detours.*

Devotion Box - Too Little, Too late

Numbers 14:39-45

The victory God promises us over our enemies – victory over sin, lust, worry, temptation – is not the result of our resolve.

I don’t care how determined you are, if you go alone – as Moses said, “*this will not succeed*”. Victory comes when faith transforms your meager effort into a conduit for the presence and power of God.

Devotion Box - Positioning the light

Numbers 8:1-2

Aaron is told to position the lamp stand. The only light allowed in the Tabernacle was the lamp stand, but the light is useless unless it’s positioned so it can shine.

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus instructed us, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*” God wants us to shine, but at times we need to be positioned so we can shine where the light is needed most. Our High Priest, Jesus, moves us into a new position at work, or crosses our path with a new group of people. This is all the High Priest’s way of positioning our lamp so it’ll shine the brightest and where needed most.

Manna Again ?

In Numbers 11, the menu grows old to the Hebrews. This was miracle manna - but even *miracles* can get *monotonous*. Each morning when they gathered the manna, they grumbled, "Oh, not the same thing again. Manna bagels, manna burgers, manna casserole, manna cookies, manna soup, manna sandwiches, manna waffles - God give us a break - we're tired of manna - how 'bout some meat and potatoes."

And God has such a sense of humor. Moses tells the people, "Okay if it's meat you want, then it's meat you're going to get!" He says in verse 18, "Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall eat, not one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days, but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you..." or until it comes out your snout, and you hate it.

Hey, Satan loves to breed discontent. All's fine with the Lord's manna until the enemy plants a suggestion, "if only you

were driving a new car - or if you had just married her - or if you could just get out of your dead-end job - or if you could move to another town."

This is how the advertising works. It creates discontent. Watch TV for an hour and you come away thinking, "Wow, I thought I was happy!"

It reminds me of the two tomb stones side by side. The first one read, "She died of want for things". The second read, "He died trying to give them to her."

I read where 100 years ago the average man had 70 wants. Today his grand-son has 500 wants. We live in the *gimme generation!* Everyone wants more and more and more.

Real faith is learning to be content with God's provision. Matthew 6:8 tells us, "Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him."

I believe God deliberately made the manna a little bland tasting, just to remind the people that real fulfillment comes not from satisfying a physical hunger, but a spiritual hunger. Jesus is the bread of life. He alone brings contentment!

A Gift for Everyone

In Numbers 11 Moses gathered all but two of the 70 elders, and stood before the Tabernacle. And just as God promised the power of the Spirit was poured out upon them. But verse 26 tells us that two of the men stayed in the camp. They too were filled with Spirit and prophesied. Joshua was appalled that Eldad and Medad were filled with the Spirit while still in the camp - among the common people. Here was his concern, "What if everyone thinks he can receive supernatural power and spiritual gifts?" Joshua wants Moses to stop them.

I love Moses response, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the LORD'S people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" Rather than view the power of the Spirit as the exclusive property of an elite few - Moses longed for the day when all God's people would be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Moses was way ahead of his time. In the Old Testament select people at select times were empowered by the Spirit, but in the New Testament all God's people can be filled with the Spirit. The *wish of Moses* became the *promise of the Father*.

Cross & Camp

The Tabernacle was the hub, and out from it came four spokes of three tribes each. It's interesting what the camp of Israel looked like from heaven. From an aerial view the tribes of Israel camped in the shape of a cross. Whenever God looked down on His people He saw a reminder of the means by which He would redeem them - the event of which all their sacrifices spoke - the cross of Jesus Christ.

Devotion Box - Stepping Up In leadership

Numbers 11:14

The problem for a leader is finding people who will share the burden. It's easy to find warm bodies to whom you can delegate tasks and assign duties. It's harder to find people who'll assume responsibility.

Moses needs more than *glorified gophers* - he needs men who'll think the way he thinks - care the way he cares - sacrifice the way he sacrifices. Moses needs men who'll see the big picture, catch the vision, shoulder the responsibility.

Our church - in fact, every church - needs men and women who'll take the next step in leadership. Who'll go from "doer" to "coordinator". Who'll not just take a job, but who will take some responsibility.

Devotion Box - The Humility of Moses

Numbers 12:3

Here's an amazing statement, "Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth."

No one had more authority among men, or clout with God, than Moses. Yet, he never forgot where he came from - without God he was a failed deliverer, a simple shepherd.

What does this tell us about real humility?

Bible Scan - Numbers 1-14

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - November 7, 1999

Café Calvary - Wednesday, 7:30 - this week: Pastor James and Three Last Words

Horizons - fellowship for young adults - meets at Steve Lee's house - November 12, 7:30.

Please pray for our fact-finding mission trip to Haiti. Sandy and Kevin will be gone November 15-19.

Newcomers Reception - November 21, after both morning services

Ladies' Christmas Tea - Saturday, December 11 @ 2:00 pm.

Every Wednesday - Café Calvary @ 7:30, Senior High Youth Group @ 7:00.

For more info on all the Calvary Chapel activities pick up a *Communicator* in the foyer

Next Bible Scan - November 21 - Numbers 15-36

"So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them." - Numbers 6:27

Bible Scan Memory Verse

All the details given us in the book of Numbers – speaks of the value God places on organization.

Throughout the Bible, God places a premium on effective utilization of our time and resources.

When Jesus fed the 5000 He first arranged the people in groups of 50 and 100. Then as He broke the bread He gave it to the disciples to serve the people. Jesus didn't do it Himself. In other words, He was good at organization and delegation.

I run into believers in Jesus who are opponents of what they call "*organized religion*". They assume the more organized you are the less spiritual you are – and I admit, it's possible to organize out the work of the Holy Spirit. I've seen it done. Church leaders become so dependent on their management of a ministry they don't allow room for God to work. They trust in the flesh, not the Spirit.

But you really can't read through the book of Numbers without concluding that the worship of God was intended to be "*organized*". In 1 Corinthians 14:40, the Lord commands the

DON'T AGONIZE. ORGANIZE !

Church, "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*"

Don't think it's more spiritual to meet together without a plan and purpose. Numbers 1:3 calls Israel the army of the Lord - just as you and I are soldiers of Christ - and no army goes into battle without a strategy, an organization.

Too many churches are weakened by a lack of organization. No one knows their roles and duties. There's wasted time, and a duplication of effort. Ministry is done sloppily rather than with the excellence the Lord deserves.

It's been said, "*Don't agonize. Organize.*" That's a message for the Church. Remember in Romans 12:8 one of the gifts of the Spirit is that of *leading*, or *spiritual management*. We need people with this vital spiritual endowment.

All life has structure. Take away the skeleton from which your organs hang, and over which your skin is wrapped - and you'll become nothing but a mound of goo. Spiritual life also needs some structure, and organization.

PREJUDICE IN THE CAMP ?

of racial prejudice - they objected to him marrying a black woman. Racial prejudice is awful, and needs to be busted. Verse 10 says, "*suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow.*" Moses intercedes for his sister - but the point gets made - racial bigotry is a leprous spot on the body of Christ.

But the church is threatened by all kinds of prejudice and pettiness. We've had people leave the church because my wife and I didn't say "*hello*" on a Sunday morning. We had a person walk out when they saw me wearing blue jeans. Guys, it's your duty to criticize a church leader when he violates Scripture, acts immorally, or behaves unethically – but when it's a personal preference - support him, don't criticize him. If you've got a personal prejudice – get over it. Let's pull together behind our leaders, and be the church God intends for us to be.

What constituted Aaron and Miriam's complaint against Moses we're not sure. Numbers 12:1 implies it had something to do with his marriage to an Ethiopian woman. It could be they were guilty