



# NUMBERS

**NOVEMBER 2018**

Read on your own or with others,  
which ever you prefer.

This leaflet is just a brief overview of the 'big picture' of this book. If you have been reading the Bible for some time you will be aware there is much more to it than you'll find here.

If you are new to reading the Bible don't worry too much if there are details you do not quite get at the moment - focus on the 'big picture'.

## INTRODUCTION

Numbers is the 4<sup>th</sup> book of the 5 books of Moses. These 5 books tell us how God called the nation of Israel to be his people, brought them through the wilderness and into the Promised Land.

Numbers covers the 40-year period that the Israelites spent in the Sinai Desert. It starts with the people ready to enter the Promised Land. They fail, but God is not to be blamed. By the end the Israelites are getting ready to enter the land of Canaan again.

## OUTLINE

### 1. THE PEOPLE OF GOD: NUMBERS 1-6

Numbers begins with a snap shot of the nation of Israel in the desert. The census of fighting men shows that they have become a formidable force to be reckoned with (Chapter 1). A family goes into Egypt. A few generations later a fully-fledged nation returns to Canaan. God has preserved his people.

However, Israel's primary calling was not to fight, but to serve God. We see this in the layout of the camp in chapter 2; what's at the center? God was to be at the heart of their lives.

This section ends with a glorious promise from God. *'I will bless them'* (Chapter 6:27). That promise is the hope of the church through the ages, Old Testament and New Testament. God will bless his people.

### 2. THE PROVISION OF GOD: NUMBERS 7-10

These chapters deal with the provision of God for a sinful people. They begin with the dedication of the Tabernacle (Chapter 7). The Tabernacle was the place of sacrifice. This was vital as the people waited for the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ and the forgiveness he would earn.

The Passover is again stipulated as a yearly festival. (Chapter 9) This was to be an annual reminder of their salvation from the slavery of Egypt. It would point them forward to the coming of Jesus who would die so his people could be set free from the slavery of sin (Matthew 1:21).

The Tabernacle also reminded the people of the presence of God. This is how this section ends as God leads and guides his people towards the Promised Land (10:33-36).

### **3. REBELLION, CONSEQUENCES & GRACE: NUMBERS 11–25**

The central section of the book deals with the rebellion of Israel. It is filled with complaints against God and his leaders, Moses and Aaron.

The sin of the people often has tragic consequences as they come to learn the holiness and power of God; Fire, plague, exile in the desert and death by snakes all make an appearance. However, it is God's grace that takes center stage.

God speaks about a priesthood who will stand between the people and God (Chapter 18), provides life giving water from a rock (Chapter 20), gives them a bronze snake to look at to be saved (21:4-9) and gives them victory over their enemies (21:21-35). All of these are pictures of what God will do in Jesus.

Towards the end we read about Balaam (Chapters 22 – 25). He is a strange character who sometimes seems to be a true follower of God. Yet, the testimony of the Bible is generally negative towards him. God prevents him from cursing the people directly so, at the instigation of Balaam (Revelation 2:14), the people of Moab go for a subtler plan

### **4. READY FOR HOME: NUMBERS 26–36**

In the final section of Numbers the people of Israel are found again on the verge of entering the Land of Canaan. Another census is taken so that the land will be divided fairly (Chapter 26). Everyone has his or her allotted place. What a preview to the words of Jesus in John 14:2?

Israel is given a new leader (27:12-23). Moses won't be entering the land with them because of his sin (20:12). Instead, Joshua is chosen. Joshua is the Hebrew version of the name Jesus. Is God telling us something?

God again reminds the people of the festivals they are to celebrate (Chapters 28-29). Each of these are reminders of God's saving grace and provide anchor points from which they will look to the coming of Jesus.

The book ends on the shores of the Jordan as the people look longingly to the Promised Land. One final message from Moses (Deuteronomy) and then they will be ready to enter.

## **ASKING THE QUESTIONS THE BIBLE WANTS YOU TO ASK**

What does this book teach you about Jesus? (Luke 24:45-47)

What does this book teach you about yourself? (James 1:23 & 2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you encouraged? (2 Tim 3:16-17)

How were you corrected? (Romans 15:4)

What difference do the truths of this book make in your life (Matthew 7:24-27)