

Reading time for Genesis: 2 hours 45 minutes.

# An Outline

*of*

## The Book of Numbers (God's Patience in Government)

Please contact MET for further information on over 100 Bible themes and subjects, covering:

- Bible and book outlines
- Christian living
- Related subjects
- New Testament assembly doctrines
- Satanic influences
- The Personages of the Trinity

These are all in short paper and many in powerpoint presentation format.

Into the fourth book of Moses and we notice, first of all, that there are a number of types used of the Lord Jesus:

Numbers 1	Star	Revelation 22
Numbers 5,19, 20...	Well of water	John 4
Numbers 11:	Manna	John 6
Numbers 19	Red Heifer	Hebrews 9
Numbers 20:	Rock	John 7/I Corinthians 10
Numbers 21:	Serpent	John 3
Numbers 17 and 20	Rod	Hebrews 7

**Figure 1: Types of the Lord Jesus in Numbers**

(For a further understanding of how the Old Testament 'types' are fulfilled in the 'antitypes' of the New Testament, please see our paper on 'Prophecies and Types'.)

Yet despite the profusion of these types and metaphors, the overarching story of Numbers is that of disobedience by the people of God leading to their discipline through the patient and paternal leadership of God.

Moses wrote this book with one major lesson in mind for the ‘second’ generation (the one that would enter the promised land after their parents had wandered the wilderness post Egypt): they must leave behind the sins of their fathers (chapters 10:10 – 22:1) if they were to enter in and conquest the promised land (the story of which we can read in the book of Joshua).

If we want to ‘enter into our rest’ as described in Hebrews 4, then Numbers has much to teach us.

To reach the full promise of God, three stages needed to have been reached;

- The man of flesh had to perish
- There had to be a new birth
- There had to be a submission to God’s leading

This can best be appreciated by looking at Figure 2, where due to sin the first generation wandered for 38 years and eventually perished, due to unbelief (Hebrews 3:17-19; 4:6,11), before the new generation would be in any fit state to enter (chapters 22:2 – 36:13).

Numbers 1:1 – 10:10:	Preparation to enter the land by the old generation
Numbers 10:11 – 22:1:	Wanderings for 38 years by the old generation due to disobedience
Numbers 22:2 – 36:13	Preparation to enter the land by the new generation

**Figure 2: The two generations of Numbers**

Therefore, the first simple gleaning from this book is the importance of obedience to the wise counsels of God. Figure 3 shows that discipline is as a direct result of the peoples’ disobedience.

Reference	Where	When	What
Numbers 1:1 – 10:10:	Sinai to Kadesh-barnea	2 years	God speaks: blessing and progress through obedience
Numbers 10:11 – 22:1:	Kadesh-barnea to Moab	38 years	Israel speaks: discipline and aimlessness through disobedience
Numbers 22:2 – 36:13:	Moan to Jordan	weeks	God speaks: blessing and progress through obedience

**Figure 3: The importance of obeying God’s word in Numbers**

There is a further division for chapters 1:1 – 10:10, which helps to establish this important issue of obedience by God’s people, which helps us translate it to our lives as Christians today: in Figure 4, we notice that the warnings of Numbers can equally be applied to the New Testament church.

Reference	Break-down	New Testament Reference
Numbers 1 – 4:	God’s order for His people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Their walk (chapters 1,2)</li> <li>- Their Work (chapter 3)</li> <li>- Their Worship (chapter 4)</li> </ul>	I Corinthians 11 - 16
Numbers 5 – 8:	The Peoples’ sanctification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Their purity (chapter 5)</li> <li>- Their dedication (chapter 6)</li> <li>- Their liberality (chapter 7)</li> <li>- Their cleansing (chapter 8)</li> </ul>	I Corinthians 1 - 10

Numbers 9 – 10:10: Movement: }  
- Their walk

II Corinthians

**Figure 4: Division for Numbers 1 – 10 in comparison to the Corinthian letters**

So if in Numbers the attitude of God's people is obedience, what then is the overriding attribute of God Himself?

For this, we would need to go to the three key passages which refer to Numbers in our New Testament, namely, I Corinthians 10:1-10:11, Hebrews 3:7-4:11 and Revelation 2:12-17.

In I Corinthians 10, we see our waywardness towards idolatry emphasised, which requires God's patience to be exercised. In Hebrews 4, we see our sins of the flesh emphasised, which requires God's righteousness to be applied. In Revelation 2, we see our lack of separation from the world emphasised and God's judgment threatened.

Thus, due to the Lord's people following after the world (Revelation 2), the flesh (Hebrews 4) and the devil (I Corinthians 10), we see God's just, righteous and patient government over His people.

What a contrast we are to the Lord Jesus, Who learned what obedience meant through the things that He suffered (Hebrews 5:8). Those sufferings were never as a result of personal disobedience, whether as regards to the world, the flesh or the devil, but rather because of His utter obedience to God's will!

Numbers has got to do with God's righteousness and patient governance over His people. He has no favourites but will judge sin from whatever quarter, even as He brings 'many sons to glory' through obedience of His blessed Son!

It seems that the key verse must therefore be Numbers 10:29,

*"We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you.'... the Lord hath spoken concerning Israel."*