

## Bible Study Lesson Summary, May 24, 2020

*Today's lesson includes Days 68-74 on your reading guide.*

### BOOK OF NUMBERS

*The book of Numbers is a combination of history and law. It continues the story of the Jewish people as they continued their journey through the desert. It also contains more laws. The main thing that you need to recognize as you read this book is the amazing fact that they kept track of all of this. I'm sure that one of the reasons that God chose the Jews to be His Chosen People is that they were geared toward documenting all of this. It is hard for us, as the internet generation, to realize how amazing this was. Everything we ever put on the internet will be floating out there in the cloud for a long time. It is there for us to access at any time. Back then, there doesn't seem to be any other group of people that kept such detailed information on their lives. Some countries keep record of their laws, or who their rulers were; but this goes way beyond that. So the question remains for us to explore; what does God want us to learn from this information that He felt needed to be documented. The answer is that it foreshadows His Son. Creation itself tells us about its creator, but the Bible gives us way more pointed signs of who our God is and what He has in mind.*

**Num. 1:** This book starts with a census. Yes, it is mind numbing, but they so is my family genealogy to anyone but my family. But it proves my point about how attentive to details the Israelites are. This adds to the credibility of the other writings. The last part of the chapter lets us know that the Levites, or priestly clan, was not a part of this military census. God did not have Moses count them yet because the count was about how many were ready for military service. The priestly clan obviously had a different job in the eyes of God.

**Num. 2:** This is really set up like a military operation in that even the placements of the tents of the different tribes is organized.

**Num. 3:** Now we have to count the Levites. In vs. 11-13 God explains how the Levites replace the first-born who had been the ones that were dedicated to God. "The Lord said to Moses, "It is I who have chosen the Levites from the Israelites in place of every first-born that opens the womb among the Israelites. The Levites, therefore, are mine, because every first-born is mine. When I slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I made all the first-born in Israel sacred to me, both of man and of beast. They belong to me; I am the Lord." Now, the Levites are the ones who are sacred, dedicated or set aside for this special work or worship. This is how important our worship is to God. It makes me proud to be a part of it.

**Num. 4:** This gives us more information about the work of the Levites. Knowing how many Levites there were, was not of primary importance. God sees them important for what they will do. Tahash skins as mentioned in vs. 11 has different translations; dolphin, mink, ermine or giraffe skins. One rabbi says it is unlikely that it is dolphin in the desert. Otherwise the only clarification that Jewish writings give is that it was pleasing and colorful. Notice that service age

mention in vs. 23 is between 30 and 50 years old. This seems to be for Levites who don't serve at the meeting tent, so it is not high level work as priests.

**Num. 5:** Vs. 1, "The Lord said to Moses: "Order the Israelites to expel from camp every leper, and everyone suffering from a discharge, and everyone who has become unclean by contact with a corpse." This continued to the time of Jesus. Vs. 8 gives an idea of how confessors came up with the idea that if a person stole and now can't return it, that it is possible to give a compensatory amount to the church. The rest of the chapter is about the test to see if a woman, suspected of adultery, is truly adulterous. It is a strange test but would surely make women nervous of messing around, which would slow down adultery. Rape would have a different punishment and that would be for the man. Remember, women have the power to change the scene from adultery to rape with one word, no. They must hold onto that power.

**Num. 6:** The Nazirites must have been amazing. My footnotes say Samson, Samuel and John the Baptizer were members. It was a tough vow and tougher dedication. I love the priestly blessing of vs. 24-26, "The Lord bless you and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!"

**Num. 7:** In vs. 12 you hear of Nahshon, son of Amminadab, prince of the tribe of Judah. He is also mentioned in the genealogy in Matt.1:4.

**Num. 8:** This chapter is a repetition of previous chapters. Vs 24-25 again gives the age limits of 25-50 years old for Levitical service. But notice that this is for those who serve at the meeting tent. This seems to be the higher level service. John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, would have been in this group serving in Jerusalem when the temple was built. So he might have been 50 years old but not older when the Archangel showed up. So unless Elizabeth was significantly older than Zechariah, which is unlikely, she would have been about 50. Since 30 was the average life span until the 1800's, Zechariah and Elizabeth being 50 would not be as old as Abraham and Sarah, but still past child bearing age.

**Num. 9:** This chapter gives instructions for the annual Passover observance. Notice that vs. 1 lets us know that this is only the second Passover. All of this law giving was to have happened in the first year in the desert. All of these laws were given as the Israelites and Moses were at Mt. Sinai. In vs. 21 we start hearing more about the cloud that guided them. Please realize just how amazing it was to have a cloud in the desert.

**Num. 10:** In vs. 1-10 the trumpets are their civil defense sirens. In vs. 33 on the Ark of the Covenant, the word of the Lord, goes with them when they leave the mountain of the Lord.

**Num. 11:** In vs. 15 Moses wants God to do the favor of killing him, because he can't stand the complaining. This time it is for meat. God answered in vs. 31, "There arose a wind sent by the Lord, that drove in quail from the sea and brought them down over the camp site at a height of two cubits from the ground for the distance of a day's journey all around the camp." Two cubits is about three feet. I would guess a day's journey to be from 5-10 miles. That is a lot of meat, but in vs. 20 we found out that God wanted it to come out of their nostrils and become loathsome to them. I think of this as the OT reason why we don't eat meat during the 40 days of Lent.

They complained and did get meat when they were going through the 40 years in the desert but this complaining did not make God happy. So, we deny ourselves and hopefully don't complain. Notice that back in Vs. 10 "Moses heard the people, family after family, crying at the entrance of their tents..." Each by themselves, they could do nothing about their problems so God had Moses bring them together then he appointed 72 elders to help solve problems. This is God's version of community organizing. Vs. 26-27, Eldad and Medad didn't show up for the meeting but still were able to be a part of the 72. They had been on the list but didn't come, so I presume it is a sign that God can work through anyone who is open to his call even if they are not perfectly in alignment with God's orders. After experiencing God's wrath at the quail feast, I don't think those two missed any other meetings.

**Num. 12:** This is another lesson not to mess around with God's anointed. Miriam becomes a leper because she and Aaron are jealous of Moses. Besides being jealous they seem to be prejudiced. Moses had contracted marriage with a Cushite woman. Cushite means black and in this context that isn't just race, for it is also in the area that is now called Ethiopia. Miriam and Aaron have a problem with this. Vs. 10 says that Miriam became a snow-white leper. Some scholars believe this was God's way of saying, you want white, I will show you white. This would be God's way of telling us that prejudice against races would not be according to His will.

**Num. 13:** Scouts are sent to the land of Canaan and generate fear in the Israelites who still don't trust God. Like Jesus, Moses intercedes by invoking God's mercy. Notice that Caleb is the only one who is willing to follow the Lord and that he is the scout from the tribe of Judah, vs. 6. That will continue to be significant.

## **The Book of Psalms**

**Psalm 70:** A short prayer of Jesus during His passion.

**Psalm 71:** Twice the psalm mentions old age (vs. 9 + 18). Back then the average lifespan was about 30. A big part of that figure came from the very high rate of infant mortality, but there were some who did live into their 70s and 80s. Jesus might have felt like an elder at 33 as He was facing His death. But like many of these psalms, this is a prayer that most of us can relate to. Vs. 6, "On you I depend since birth; from my mother's womb you are my strength;" seems to foretell that Mary was sinless or Jesus would not have been able to totally depend on her, but it also reminds us that life begins at conception. Vs. 9, "Do not cast me aside in my old age; as my strength fails, do not forsake me." This is the prayer for God's help and the answer to this prayer is summarized in Lk. 1:46-55, the Magnificat. That is where we hear the words of praise from Mary who feels that God has answered all the requests of this psalm.

**Psalm 72:** This psalm of petition to the Lord, to help the king and the king's sons, is Jesus asking for help for Himself and for His spiritual family. He asks that as king, He was visited by the kings of the East, like Tarshish, Arabia and Seba, who would offer gifts. (vs. 10 + 15) This mentions gold but does not name the other gifts. Three countries might be a reason for thinking

there were three kings. Because of the way it is written, it also makes me wonder if Jesus would have been praying this while He is still in the womb?

**Psalm 73:** In this psalm Jesus is talking about the ways of the wicked and how they seem to succeed. He even gets to the point in vs. 22 of saying: “I was stupid and could not understand; I was like a brute beast in your presence.” So, this seems to be a prayer of Jesus as He went through the temptation with the devil after His forty days in the desert.

**Psalm 74:** This is in the plural so it seems to be Jesus’ prayer as He is in the Garden of Gethsemane and taking on our sins and all that goes with them. With our sins we have no chance with God but Jesus stands with us and prays for our salvation.

**Psalm 75:** In vs. 2 of this psalm Jesus starts out by thanking God for us and then in vs. 3-4 speaks for the Father who reaffirms Him. Then in vs. 5-9 Jesus speaks to the sinners and warns them. But the psalm ends with the joy of Jesus as He praises the Lord.

**Psalm 76:** Jesus is praying about God’s terrible and awesome justice. This is what the King of Heaven must do to keep the Kingdom safe for those who are good.

## ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

**Acts 8:25-40:** The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch is really awesome. The Holy Spirit is giving instructions. Then in vs. 31 there is a critical line, “He (the eunuch) replied, “How can I, unless someone instructs me?”” This is the flaw in Protestant thinking that the Bible can be adequately understood by each person, without the help of the Church. Their idea depends on the Holy Spirit being able to totally enter into each individual. Most of us are too stubborn. But the Holy Spirit has been able to totally guide the Church teachings from being erroneous.

**Acts 9:** The conversion of Saul is interesting. There is no mention of him on a horse, so he wasn’t really knocked off his high horse. Having his name, Saul, mentioned twice by Jesus is a sign. King Saul tried to kill David the Anointed One. This would not have gone past Saul. He would have figured out that he was doing the same as his namesake. Vs. 18-19 are the cure of blindness and baptism. It is important that it was in this order. Saul starts preaching about Jesus right in Damascus but then after a long time (vs. 23) he wore out his welcome, vs. 25, and had to escape in a basket. In Jerusalem they have not yet gotten to the point of trusting Saul and so feared him. Luckily Barnabas was there to vouch for him.

Vs. 31 shows that the church is at peace and growing. Peter is in Joppa, a seaport town west of Jerusalem by the Mediterranean Sea. This is also where Jonah ended up when the whale spit him out.

**Acts 10:** God is working to get people together. First, he gives a vision to Cornelius in vs. 1-8. Then he gives one to Peter in vs. 9-16. Of course, Peter was clueless until he found out about Cornelius' vision. If he was going to be a good Pope, he had to be open to all the people who accepted God into their lives, even those Gentiles, vs. 24-43. Notice the prejudice that the Jews had against the Gentiles. This came from God, but is now being reversed because prophecy said that the king of the Jews would be a universal king. Before that it was a protection system for the Israelites, from mixing with those foreign neighbors and their gods.

**Acts 11:** Back in Jerusalem the Jews still had to be taught this lesson of accepting Gentiles. Vs. 19-26, some of the people in Jerusalem had gone north to Antioch or modern Turkey. Barnabas was sent to give them encouragement. He also was looking for Saul. Vs. 27-30 is a mission relief trip by Saul and Barnabas.

**Acts 12:** Herod Agrippa, son of Herod the baby killer and brother of Herod Antipas the Baptist killer, also becomes a killer and beheads James. What a nice family. This is about ten years after the crucifixion. Pleased with the response he got for killing the brother of John, Herod arrests Peter. Just like in Acts 5, an angel gets Peter out. In vs. 17 this other Mary, mother of John Mark, thinks Peter is a ghost because they felt Herod would have killed Peter. This Herod died unpleasantly.