

11-2017

Article 4: Numbers at a Glance

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/owners_manual



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), [Practical Theology Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Article 4: Numbers at a Glance" (2017). *The Owner's Manual File*. 42.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/owners_manual/42

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Theological Studies at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Owner's Manual File by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

This book records Israel's final weeks at Sinai, the taking of the first and second census (separated by some four decades), the journey from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea, where the nation refused to enter the land resulting in nearly 40 years of wilderness wandering. As the book closes Israel has arrived at the eastern bank of the Jordan River overlooking the city of Jericho.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

THIS IS THE SAD, STRANGE STORY OF A LOST GENERATION.

It is sad, for all spiritual failures are tragic. It is strange, for here the failure involved the older and not the younger generation. Thousands of moms and dads who had successfully escaped Egypt would now die in the desert.

The divine command in Exodus is, "Get out!" In Leviticus it is, "Get right!" Here in Numbers it reads, "Get going!" But the lost generation said no when God said go.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Moses.** He was the older brother of Aaron and Miriam (Ex. 6:20; Num. 26:59) who led his people Israel out of Egyptian bondage (Ex. 5-14) and gave them the law of God at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 20).
2. What? The books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
3. When and Where? 1450 B.C., from the eastern bank of the River Jordan in Moab.
4. Why?
 - a. Genesis. To record the origin of the world and the nation Israel.
 - b. Exodus. The supernatural deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage.
 - c. Leviticus. The purpose and functions of the tabernacle.
 - d. **Numbers.** The failure of Israel to enter Canaan.
 - e. Deuteronomy. The review of the Law for that generation about to enter Canaan.
5. To whom? Israel in particular, all believers in general.

KEY EVENTS

1. Taking of the first census
2. Giving of Nazarite vow
3. Beginning of trip from Sinai to Kadesh-barnea
4. Judgment upon Moses' sister Miriam
5. Unbelief at Kadesh
6. Korah's rebellion
7. Aaron's rod that budded
8. Ordinance of the red heifer
9. Sin of Moses, deaths of Miriam and Aaron

10. Serpent of brass incident
11. Appearance of the false prophet Balaam
12. Second census
13. Joshua succeeds Moses

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Moses:** Israel's great lawgiver
2. **Aaron:** Moses' older brother and Israel's first high priest
3. **Miriam:** Moses' older sister
4. **Joshua:** great military leader and Moses successor
5. **Caleb:** faithful scout who gave a good report regarding the Promised Land
6. **Korah:** Influential Levite leader who led a rebellion against Moses and was killed by God for this
7. **Eleazar:** Aaron's third son and Israel's second high priest
8. **Balak:** Moabite king who hired a false prophet in an attempt to curse the people of Israel
9. **Balaam:** false prophet who unsuccessfully attempted to curse Israel
10. **Phinehas:** son of Eleazar and Israel's third high priest

KEY PLACES

1. **Kadesh-barnea:** where Moses sent the twelve tribal leaders to scout out the Promised Land
2. **Mt. Hor:** where Aaron died and was buried
3. **Pethor:** homeland of Balaam, near the Euphrates River
4. **Acacia (or Shittim):** Israel's final camp on the east side of the Jordan River where 24,000 died for the twin sins of idolatry and immorality

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Exodus records Israel's wilderness experience, while Numbers relates the tragic years of wandering. It is vital to note that the first (wilderness event) was all a part of God's perfect will for Israel, but decidedly not the second. This fact is strongly emphasized in at least four New Testament books (see Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-13; Heb. 3:7-19; Jude 5).
2. Israel's actions as recorded in Numbers are aptly summarized in Galatians 5:7: "*Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*"
3. In spite of Israel's terrible sin, God's grace and love shine throughout Numbers. It is estimated that it would have taken at least 50 railway boxcars of food per day and over 12 million gallons of water per day to provide food and drink for the multitudes. This was faithfully performed for the entire 40-year duration.
4. Numbers records the second of three biblical examples where a brute creature speaks.
 - A serpent speaks in Genesis 3:1
 - A donkey speaks in Numbers 22:28
 - An eagle speaks in Revelation 8:13

5. One of the prophecies uttered in Numbers probably brought the wise men to Bethlehem over 13 centuries later. (Compare Num. 24:17 with Matt. 2:1-2.)
6. A change of commanders takes place in Numbers. Joshua replaces Moses as the political leader and Eleazar succeeds Aaron as the religious leader (27:15-23; 20:23-29).
7. The first reference to the Nazarite vow (6:1-21) and of the silver trumpets (10:1-10).
8. The actual formula to be used by the High Priest in blessing the people (6:22-27).
9. The intimate ministry of the Glory Cloud to Israel (10:34-36).
10. The first (Miriam) of but two Old Testament people to be healed of leprosy (12:13-15). The other was Naaman (2 Kings 5:14).
11. Israel's most serious sin which would eventually destroy an entire generation and keep that nation out of the Promised Land for nearly 40 years (14).
12. One of scripture's most frightful examples of God's judgment upon personal rebellion—Korah's revolt against Moses (16:31-33).
13. Two events that would foreshadow Christ's death (the brazen serpent) and His resurrection (Moses' rod that blossomed (21:5-17:8). Jesus would later refer to the first in the conversion of Nicodemus (Jn. 3:14-16).
14. Only biblical chapter describing for us the ordinance of the Red Heifer (19).
15. The treacherous and tragic account of scripture's most grievous false prophet—Balaam (22-24).

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

The 31st chapter of Numbers should be contrasted with the seventh chapter of Revelation.

- The first chapter is historical, describing how God once sent out 12,000 Israelite soldiers to consume their enemies.
- The second chapter is prophetic, describing how God will send out 12,000 Israelite missionaries to convert their enemies.

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. Aaron's Rod (17:1-11). See also Mt. 28:5, 6.
2. The Red Heifer (19:1-10). See also 1 Jn. 1:9.
3. The Serpent of Brass (21:5-9). See also Jn. 3:14, 15.
4. The Angel of the Lord (22:24).
5. The Star of Jacob (24:17a).
6. The Scepter of Israel (24:17b).