

Note

Numbers – Part 1 to 2

Era	Characters	Chapters
In the beginning	God create world	Gen 1
Before 4000 BC	Adam Eve	Gen 1~5
Before 3000 BC	Cain Abel Seth	Gen 4~5
Before 2500 BC	Noah	Gen 5~10
About 1500 BC Era of Patriarchs	Abraham Isaac Ishmael Esau Jacob Joseph	Gen 11 ~50
	Moses Aaron Joshua	Exo Lev Num☑ Deu

Summary

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The laws and their significance:

The laws point to carefulness, cleanliness and costliness which God's Holy presence required. Jesus cleansed us with his blood and paid the costly price on the cross so that we can now enter God's presence.

The 6 lessons to learn from the Book of Numbers;

1. Worship - we are to worship God everyday, everytime and in everything we do. The Israelites had nothing to work or toil for in the wilderness. All they had to do was to worship God all the time.
2. Separation - As Christians, we are to be separated from this world. The Israelites took 40 years to get rid of Egypt's influence on them.
3. One God; there is no other God but one. The Israelites had to witness that their God was different in contrast with the Egyptians who had multiple gods.
4. Daily dependence on God - manna was provided each day to show that our dependence on God has to be a daily affair and not an occasional occurrence.
5. To be witnesses for God - the Israelites and their tabernacle became the witness for God among the surrounding tribes. Similarly our lives have to be the witness of God's presence.
6. the promised land for Christians is to be in God's will, enjoying the rest, the peace and the victories over sin and the closeness to God.

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Lessons to learn from Numbers.

1. We can refer to non-Christian sources which are useful as long as we know how to distinguish the difference between sound teachings from bad ones. (Moses pleads with his father-in-law Hobab, to follow them in their journey, as Hobab had great experience living in the wilderness and his expertise will be of great help to the Israelites).
2. Set your heart right with God. Do not complain, be contented. (We see the Israelites complain about food and water; judgement is brought upon them - the attack of the snakes) .

3. Christian leaders should delegate responsibilities to others and work as a team to avoid being burnt out. (God commands Moses to appoint 70 elders to help him)
4. Do not be envious. (Miriam and Aaron envied Moses and later Korah, the Levite falls into the sin of envy too)
5. Leaders have a greater responsibility of obeying God accurately. (Moses was denied the entrance to the promised land for not carrying out God's order accurately).
6. You cannot serve God when you have love for money (Balaam, the sorcerer).
7. To approach the holy God we worship, we need to be Careful and Cleansed.

Transcript

Numbers – Part 1 of 2

Today we will study the book of Numbers.

Most Christians who have been Christians for a while will say yes, I have read through the book of Numbers. But if you ask them, what can you tell me or what do you remember about the book of Numbers, most of them will have very little to tell you. Now actually, this book is a little difficult to read and I will explain why.

But there is probably one verse you heard from the book of numbers, and probably did not know it was from the book of Numbers. And that is the benediction that is very commonly given in churches at the end of the service. The pastor will stand up and say, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee and give you grace. The Lord lift his countenance upon thee and give thee peace." You have heard that all along but never knew that was from Numbers. That was given by God to Aaron, to bless the people before they went on their journey after Sinai.

Now actually the gospel is in this benediction. The Lord give you grace. That is the beauty of our faith. Grace, the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Grace is giving you something you do not deserve, graciously given to us, Jesus

Christ. And when we have Christ, we have peace.

For most religions, their god did not give them grace, their god gives them some laws, some rules to fulfil and hopefully they will try to fulfil it in their lifetime. And at the end of it all, they can never be sure, and they can never have peace. They neither have grace nor peace.

So, this benediction is a beautiful encapsulation of the gospel, the good news.

Now, why is the book called Numbers? Because there are a lot of numbers in the beginning of the book and at the end. Numbers come from a census that was taken just as the Israelites were about to leave Mount Sinai to the promised land, and then the next census taken at the end of the book of Numbers was taken almost 40 years later. We do not realize that there was that gap and that was just before they entered the promised land.

Now when you see these numbers in the census - males over 20 years old and that is called a Military census. It is very common in those days; they do not count women and children, because they do not really matter. In most census in those days they took the able-bodied men, 20 years old and above, and that is called a military census. So, a military census was taken at the beginning. And at the end, you will see the numbers are almost the same. A slight drop in the population. You will see after 40 years, instead of being much more, they were just about 2000 less than the original census. So, every tribe was more or less the same if you have time to compare.

But what does this tell us? Normally the blessings of God in the Old Testament are counted in terms or measured in terms of fruitfulness. Your cattle will have more, sheep will be more; your

fruits will be more, your children will be more. So, the fact that they did not grow more or less probably says that God did not bless them in these 40 years.

I hope that gives you an idea of why the Book is called Numbers and remember these two censuses had a 40-year gap.

Now, if you remember reading Leviticus, it only covered a period of roughly a month. The children of Israel were camped at Sinai and received the law from Moses who got it from God. Leviticus covers just a period of one month.

Numbers on the other hand covers a period of 40 years. So, sometimes we do not grasp this. And furthermore, if you take your Bible now, and you look from Exodus 19, that is the second half of Exodus (The first half is about how they got out of Egypt with a lot of action, action, travel, travel, travel), they reach Sinai, Mount Sinai. The whole of Exodus 19 right through Leviticus, right through Numbers, Chapter 10 - So you see half the Book of Exodus, the whole book of Leviticus, and the beginning part of the Book of Numbers actually, is all one continuation at Sinai. They were in the same place. The period was not long between Exodus 19 and Numbers chapter 10. But from Numbers 10 onwards to the end of Numbers, it is almost 40 years. So, Exodus 19 onwards to Numbers 10, a lot of chapters, is just a few months but Numbers 10, till the end of Numbers , is 40 years.

So, I hope you get the picture there. So, if you see, they were actually at the same place in Exodus 19, same place in Leviticus, same place in the early part of Numbers listening to “and God said to Moses”, “and God said to Moses”, “do this”, “do this”. Nothing

more than laws, laws, and rules. You say, “why so many laws and rules?” Wow, it is cumbersome. It is so much about laws and rules, so little about people, why?

Well, it is because of God's presence. You see, God was going to be in the midst of His people. It began at Sinai; they saw the Lord come down in a cloud. The whole of Mount Sinai caught fire as if the mountain were burning, and they heard God's voice booming out of the heavens. Oh! God is that near, on the top of Mount Sinai. And then later after that, God tells them at the end of Exodus to build a tabernacle. And a tabernacle was built, right where they stayed in the midst of them. A tabernacle was built, and God's presence came down in a cloud.

Imagine from heaven, this massive cloud comes down and stays on top of the tent of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies. Whoa! God's presence right there. At night that pillar of cloud became a pillar of fire. Imagine, like fire coming down, never burning the tent, providing light for 3 million people. Wow! God's presence was with them. The problem with that is that when God's presence is with you, day in day out, 40 years what happens? You get presumptuous. We say familiarity breeds contempt. You get used to something you live with. Let us say your father is the King. You live with him all your life. You probably do not look at him as a king. He is just an ordinary guy. So, the same way, God is there, but because He is so close to them, there is a tendency to be presumptuous and to take God carelessly, frivolously, and not reverence God. You see, this is the balance we need. As our faith tells us, we have a relationship with God. He is my God, I am His child. He lives in me; he never leaves me. But on the other hand, that close relationship can result, instead of having a wonderful relationship with God, it can result in pride and presumption in me to take God frivolously. So, I hope you understand why all these

rules were given to them. It's because God's presence was so close to them. For 40 years they had that presence. Every night they see the fire, and every day they see the cloud, and instead of saying 'That's God', they are seeing just fire and cloud. So, I hope you understand why so much... from half of Exodus, the whole of Leviticus and one part of Numbers is just legislation and laws to tell them, "do not be presumptuous!"

Now if you look at the laws, you can roughly divide them into three categories of law. When we see the laws, what we can say are, No. 1, they were Costly. Sacrifices all the time, morning evening. Cow or a bull is slaughtered. Endless sacrifices daily, weekly, monthly, yearly. Every time you go to the tabernacle, to the altar, some animal is being slaughtered. That costs money, lots of money. Imagine you are in the wilderness, you have cattle, which you brought out of Egypt. But each person may have a couple of cattle, you slaughter it and you offer it. So, it tells us that the laws that are enacted and given to them were costly laws.

What is the purpose?

Also, they had to support the priests and one whole tribe. So, basically, it costs them to approach this God. It is to remind us that while we are saved so freely by Jesus Christ through trusting in Him, do not forget that Christ had to pay a great price for our salvation. Imagine the Son of God had to leave heaven for 33 years for us, and then die on the cross for us. So, while our salvation is free, a gift, don't forget the costliness of it.

Second thing about the law is Cleanliness - A lot of laws about how you clean this, you touch a dead body this is what you do, if you have a menstrual period this is how you do it. We call these ritual

cleansing to make yourself fit to approach God. A lot of it was ritualistic and not all of it is hygienic. In fact, the laws always say, "Oh, you can eat this, you can't eat this". Is it because it's nutritious? I do not think so. If there is, it is a side reason; it is not the main reason. The main reason is to tell us that we are to approach God clean. Though I may be saved, yet as I come to God, if I have any sin in my life, I am unclean. I have to confess that sin and ask the blood of Jesus to cleanse me that I can now come into fellowship with God. God is my God, just like my father. That relationship between my earthly father and me can never be broken. Whatever I do, even if I change my name, I change everything, he's still my father, that cannot be changed. When we receive Jesus, God is our God. But my fellowship with my earthly father depends on my behaviour. If I do not do right by my father, he will ignore me. Fellowship is broken, not relationship.

So, cleanliness makes up a lot of the laws.

3rdly, Choice.

The food laws - A lot of people think the food laws are for hygiene and health. No, the Bible is not primarily a medical book or nutritional book. The laws of food are there to tell the Jews to be very careful to choose what is acceptable to God and what is not.

So, every time the Jew/Israelite looks at his food, he has to ask, "can I or can I not, "Will God be pleased or not pleased if I eat this?". This is like us as Christians, "should I do this, or should I not do this?" Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference. But I have to discern, and say, "No, I don't think it would please my God if I did that".

The laws were there to teach them how to approach God. They had to be very careful. Not just clean, but careful, for example, the tabernacle was right in the midst of the 2 to 3 million people. They could see the tabernacle, but nobody could touch it. The screen,

nobody can touch it. Around the tabernacle, the Levites were posted. On the front of the entrance of the tabernacle, Moses and Aaron were there. The tents were built away from the tabernacle. Nobody could touch that tent under the threat of death. If you took a helicopter and you flew over the Israelites in the wilderness, you will see the tents, and the tabernacle in the middle and all of them very properly situated around the tabernacle.

There were 12 tribes. Three tribes were on one side, another three tribes to the other side. Another three tribes to another side and the other three tribes to the other side; carefully positioned. Interesting, we always see the tents built as if they were made of canvas, white in colour. Likely, the tents of these people were black because generally these tents were made with the hair of black goats because it was very good to keep warm in winter, keep the sun out, and even the rain. Amazingly, this black hair, woven, becomes very good tent material.

So, if you look down from the helicopter, you see this white tent in the middle and then all black tents around it very orderly, and every time the cloud lifted up they moved on. So, when the trumpet was blown, they had to move. The priests were the only ones who were allowed to go in and touch the tabernacle and the furniture and the utensils. And then they were the only ones who could wrap it. And then the Levites, each one doing his role would pick up what was there and carry it very careful. And nobody could come within 1000 cubits (one thousand cubits is almost half a kilometre) from the tabernacle as it moved, and they moved in perfect order.

Judah is the first tribe in the procession. Judah means praise. And this tabernacle was in the middle. All of them knew their rightful position. They moved with carefulness.

As Christians today, one of our biggest sins, I believe, is the sin of Carelessness.

Modern language, casualness, “anything will do”. Let’s worship God anyway we like, dress any way we like. Do what we like and worship God. I am afraid these are sins we do not realize. We always think of sins as something you know you should not do. Sins of commission - taking drugs, getting drunk, committing adultery, practicing homosexuality.

I think most of our Christian sins are Sins of presumption - lack of reverence.

I hope you understand these laws were meant to prevent carelessness coming to God, presumption in coming to God.

I always believe, sins of commission we often do not commit because people can censure us when we do that but sins of omission, we do a lot because nobody censures you. You are supposed to make disciples, you do not. Nobody is going to scold you for that. Supposed to evangelize, you do not, nobody is going to say anything. You are supposed to read your Bible, you do not read, nobody knows. And then the sin of casualness has become so normal today. Everything is so casual. But if you see the laws, you understand God that God is a God of order, and carefulness. So, I hope this gives you a better understanding of the character of God. If your father is a very careful person, then you better behave in a way that pleases him. And so is our God. He is clean. He is careful. That is why these laws are repeated over and over again to help it sink into our heads.

Now, let us see what other lessons they learnt in those 40 years in the wilderness.

What were they doing all time? 40 years is a long time. It is their whole adult lifespan. What were they doing?

You know what they were doing? Nothing. They did not have to work. Manna dropped from heaven.

Bible says, in the sweat of our brow you shall eat bread, but they didn't have to sweat. Outside their tents, they picked up manna. And that became their total nutrition. They could bake it; they could fry they could do whatever they wanted with it and it was all nutritious. So, they never had to do a day's work. The clothes never wore out so they never had to sew their clothes. The same thing they had was good to last forever. Amazing! So what were they doing all the time for 40 years?

Everyone worshipped, that's it. There was no entertainment. The only thing they could see was the massive cloud over the tent as Moses was going in. See people carrying sheep. That was their entertainment every day. All they saw was the tent, the centre of attraction, all the activity was around the tent. And it was just 24/7 worship.

What's the lesson we have to learn from this? No. 1 - Worship is not what you do on Sunday for two hours, and then you do whatever you like after that. In the New Testament 1 Corinthians 10:31 it says whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God. Everything we do should be God-centred, for God's glory. So, they were taught this lesson that the most important thing in life is to be God-centred.

No. 2 - for 40 years, they were in the wilderness. Nobody around. Literally nobody around. Maybe the closest to them were 30, 40 kilometres away, some town. They never got near them. They

were separated from the world. Someone said this very, very nice statement. The Israelites took 40 days to leave Egypt to go to Sinai. But then they needed 40 years to get rid of Egypt from their lives. They could leave Egypt. But Egypt did not leave them. What does that mean?

Egypt was in their lives and hearts. They were there 300- 400 years. They thought like the Egyptians and was inundated with their pagan gods and immorality. So, God had to separate them to get Egypt out of them. Interestingly enough, once they crossed into the promised land, we never see them look back on Egypt. It was forgotten stuff. Not even in the history after that. But up to this point, all the time they looked back. "How we miss the fish, the leeks, the onions of Egypt. Let's go back to Egypt." Separation from the world - is this Old Testament, is this only for the Israelites? What does Romans chapter 12:1,2 teach us? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, And be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." We are supposed to separate from the world too, but I do not see Christians doing that. Maybe for two hours on Sunday but for the rest of the time I can't tell a Christian by his behaviour , by his talk, by his likes and dislikes from a non-Christian, almost impossible.

No. 3 - All their needs were provided by one God. Do not forget they came from Egypt. And all the needs in Egypt were provided by different gods. There was a god of the field. There was a god of the rain, there was the god of crops, there was a god of the cattle. Every time they wanted something there was a god for it.

And now everything is provided by God; water, food, protection, health, their clothes, everything was provided by one God.

You say, oh, they needed to learn that you know. Because they were in Egypt and there were so many idols. You know, Christians need to learn that. Have you thought about it? We say, yes, God will get me to heaven, I trust God to get me to heaven.

But in our happiness, I got to look out for that myself. God give happiness? I think food will give me happiness, I think holidays will give me happiness, I think recreation... You know, truly the one that makes you really have joy and peace is God.

After I became a believer, whatever food He gives me, it tastes really good. Wherever holiday I go with my family or my wife, it is great. Why? Because that one God of mine makes everything good. One God touches every part of my life: my social, my emotional, my mental, my spiritual - one God.

No. 4 - Manna was provided for one day only. Except on the sixth day they had to collect two days for the Sabbath.

What is the lesson?

We need to depend daily on God. Not really....I've got a job; I get my monthly salary...

from there... you know. But you could lose your job tomorrow. Like now we have this virus and a lot of people are losing their jobs. You see, my point is this - In the New Testament Jesus taught them to pray this prayer- Give us this day our daily bread. Wow, daily bread. I like that. Not by the month, or for life. No, no, no, every day you need God. For your health you need God every day. You cannot say, "I am a healthy guy, a strong guy, I don't get sick". No, no no... one virus and you are down. Emotionally you cannot say, "I have a happy family" , an event can happen and turn your

life around. You need daily dependence on God. Give us this day our daily bread.

No. 5

Interestingly enough, many people never think about this - Can you imagine 2 to 3 million people in the middle of nowhere? You think people will not recognize it? I am sure all the tribes around were talking about that. "Hey, do you know this

massive multitude of people out there. They have a building and there's a fire all night, every night. Wow! And every day there is a pillar and when they walk, this pillar goes with them. You know what? They do not have a lot of gods. They have just one God: one temple. They have one God, one tabernacle. "They were actually demonstrating, without realizing it, to others around them, who the true and living God is.

Do you know that is our role as Christians every day? People look at our lives and say, ' that guy is amazing... His God seems to give him joy, give him peace, give him calmness, give him patience.' You know people do not see God in a trance, in a dream, neither do they read the Bible, you have to live Christlike lives. We are ambassadors for Christ.

All these 40 years they were learning these lessons, maybe not consciously, but God was teaching them and I think these are lessons we need to learn. Now the irony of it all is that out of the 2 to 3 million, only 2 of them entered the promised land. 2 to 3 million came out of Egypt, 2 entered the promised land. The others wandered for 40 years. They were neither in Egypt, where they could have some pleasures like the fish, the leaks, the delicious food of Egypt, but neither were they in the promised land. They

were in limbo, wandering. Actually you thought they walked a lot. No, they actually were in about 40 different places. That's all, 40 years, 40 places roughly. Basically, they stayed one year at one place, hardly doing anything, just worship. All the way learning the five lessons I just mentioned.

Why? Because God said to the rebellious generation ' You will not enter the promise land'. So God was letting them die one by one first so that by the time they moved into the promised land, not one of them went in, except Joshua and Caleb.

What is the lesson really, for us as Christians? We got saved because we trusted in Jesus, but how many of us will enter the promised land. The promised land is not heaven. Please do not confuse it. The Promised Land is not Heaven. Let me repeat that. When they entered into the promised land after this, in the next book of Joshua, they had to take possession of the land, they had to fight. That cannot be heaven. But when they entered the promised land, they realized, We have arrived home, we are now in the place God wants us to be, like being in the will of God. The promised land speaks of the victorious Christian life. What is the victorious Christian life? You know you are in the will of God and you conquer sin, conquer sin, conquer sin. And then your life gets better and better. As the Israelites conquered this town, the city, this tribe, their lives became better. They were already in a place God wanted them to be. Ask yourself, as a Christian, are you in limbo for 40 years, neither enjoying the pleasures you used to, all the sins you used to, but neither enjoying the rest, the peace and the victories over sin and the closeness to God -that peace and joy that surpasses all understanding. Are you there? I hope more than two out of 2 million Christians will find this rest in God's promised land here on Earth.

Numbers – Part 2 of 2

We continue on our study of the Book of Numbers by trying to pick up some useful lessons as we look down the chapters.

In chapter 10, we find that, as Moses was about to depart from Sinai, he pleaded with his father-in-law, Hobab, “Please join us on our journey.” And he said, “You will be eyes to us.” Hobab had lived all his life in this wilderness. And Moses knew that he knew this wilderness inside out. So, really, he needed his help, as they navigated their way around.

Now, what lesson can we learn from this? The lesson is this: we can get help from non-believers. A lot of us, as Christian leaders, are often very fearful to learn from non-Christian sources. So often, we are so narrow in our thinking, so backward in new things we don't know, simply because we're afraid to learn from non-Christians. Now, I've always believed in this principle, that when you learn to eat a fish, the first thing you must do is to learn how to spit out the bones. Otherwise, you can't eat good fish. So, that's what I mean when we learn from people who are not Christians. There are some things they are going to teach us that aren't good. We go to school, for example, our teachers are not Christians. Sometimes, they say things we shouldn't believe. But we go to school and we don't say, “Oh, I won't go to school unless my teacher is a Christian.” Or “I wouldn't listen to my boss's advice unless he's a Christian.” So, number one: learn from the world but learn to spit out things. Worldliness is different. Worldliness is not learning from the world, but wanting to be like the world.

So, in chapter 11, we see the Israelites starting to complain about food. And one of the biggest problems throughout their journey was complaining. Now, the commonest sin, I think, among Christians - besides presumption, sins of omission - the commonest committed sin, sin of commission - is complaining. We complain so frequently and it's acceptable among Christians. It's quite sad, that Christians are big complainers. So, you'll find that often their problem in the wilderness was complaining. Complaining needs no character, needs no talent, needs no skill, needs no effort. It's so natural. So, please be careful about complaining. And, you'll often find their complaints about food, not lack of food, but food that don't suit their taste. Food becomes like an idol. See, we eat to live, but most Christians live to eat. They find that eating is critical, very important to them. We should eat to live, and not live to eat, but live to God.

You might say, "But what about my satisfaction? I don't get satisfaction." I remember Jesus when He was sitting down, talking to the Samaritan lady, and his disciples came back with food and said, "Jesus, eat." This is John chapter 4, and Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me. I have meat to eat that you know not of." They brought back food, thinking that He is hungry but Jesus said, "I'm so satisfied." What did He do? He just shared the truth with the Samaritan lady. You know, when you're full of joy, it's like someone in love: no need to eat so much, and even if the food is not so tasty, it's ok. Why? Because there is a satisfaction in us.

Often, for missionaries, their biggest problem is they cannot serve in certain countries because they can't eat the food there. They struggle to eat the food of that land. We've made our taste buds our gods. Be careful about that. So, don't make eating such a big deal. Eating can be pleasurable. It is a pleasure. But I tell

you, when your heart is right with God, all kinds of food taste good.

Then, in chapter 11, Moses was so tired of the complaining, he says, “God, I can't take this anymore. Help me, God.” And God said, “Appoint 70 elders. And I'll put My spirit upon them. And they will help you carry burdens.” Most times, Christian leaders burn out because they don't work with a team. They carry everything; they want to do everything, and they burn out. If you have a team, you don't get burned out; you get encouraged, you get excited to work together. So, though Moses and Aaron were the key people, yet they had 70-elders helping them.

Then, in chapter 12, we see another problem. Miriam and Aaron envied Moses, “How come, every time, God talks to Moses? He's the “spokesman” for God. Why not us?”

Envy is a huge problem among Christian leaders, that's why Christian leaders often will never cooperate with one another, especially the little churches who need help from the big churches. They don't want that help because they envy. “How come that church is so successful? And I am not successful.” So, they envy the other person. Be careful, Christian leaders. When you see God blessing someone more, God using someone more, don't be envious. It's not easy because of human nature and the pride of man.

We see that repeated in chapter 16, with Korah. Korah and 250 men came to Moses and said, “We are also children of God. Why do you make yourself greater than us?” Moses never made himself greater than them. It was God, who called him. But yet

they felt that Why should Moses have the limelight? Why should Moses be the star? Why should Moses be our chief? And they rebelled, they protested against this. For that, 14,700 Israelites died.

For Miriam, she was made leperous for a while, like if she had total leprosy. So, again, two stories of envy here, both by leaders. Miriam and Aaron were in the same family as Moses, they were siblings. Korah and his 250 men were Levites, chosen by God, but not the stars. So, please, all of us, be careful of the sin of envy, it always creeps up. And learn to be thankful that someone is better than you. Esteem them better, learn from them, help them. Because, at the end of it all, we are doing God's work. Don't build your little kingdom; build God's kingdom. There are over 40,000 Christian denominations, each one wanting to be stars in their own denomination. Most of these churches did not break away because of doctrinal issues. They broke away because of personalities who could not stand that they were number 2, not number 1, so they broke away and formed another church.

Now, in chapter 20, a very strange thing happened. They were short of water. Throughout the wilderness experience, it was marvellous: they had water all along. The Bible says, “and the water came from a Rock and that Rock is Christ.” That’s said in the New Testament. It’s very interesting. I don't know exactly what it means; commentators have different meanings. But the point is they needed 2 to 3 million gallons of water every day! How did they get it? What about the cattle, the sheep? Some people asked, “What did the cattle eat?” Well, I guess, they ate the manna too. What else was there to eat? There was no grass there, not for all their sheep. So, probably, the people picked up the manna and the cattle ate the manna that was left behind, and

they were well. But they needed water. Manna provided their bread, not their water. And, somehow, God provided them water throughout. I don't know how, I'm not sure. But I know Jesus later said He is the Fountain of Living Water. You drink the water in the wilderness, you get thirsty. But you get from Me, you have a Spring in you, flowing out to life everlasting. That's in John.

In chapter 20, there was no water. For some reason, there was no water at this time, God said to Moses, "Go and speak to the rock." In Exodus 17:6, when they lacked water, God said to Moses, "Strike the rock" and water gushed out. But this time, He said, "Speak to the rock." But Moses was so angry with the people who were complaining, he couldn't take it anymore. He took his rod, and he struck the rock twice; he struck it twice. And water came out. But do you know what God said to Moses? "You disobeyed me. You will not enter the Promised Land."

Wow! He led them for 40 years in the wilderness to go into the Promised Land, but he could not go in until thousands of years later on the Mount of Transfiguration. But he did not, in his physical body, enter the Promised Land. Why was God so angry with him for striking the rock twice? That's a huge punishment, not to enter the Promised Land. My thinking is: the Bible says, "the Rock is Christ." In the New Testament, Christ was struck once. He suffered once for our sins. And then, the second time, when God instructed Moses, "Don't strike. Just speak to the rock." But he struck it again. I think, it's a type of Christ. Christ suffered just once. Commentators don't say so, that's my speculation. But God seemed very, very strict. I guess God is always more strict with His leaders. If we, as leaders, don't obey God, how do you expect others to? We have to be role models. We are kept at a higher standard as leaders.

Chapter 21 - They complain about their food. They're sick and tired of manna and they complain about their food. God is so tired with them. God is so angry with them about their complaining. Be careful of complaining. He sent fiery serpents, poisonous vipers that bit them. And then they pleaded to Moses, "Moses, Moses, please pray to God. Ask God to remove these serpents, they're killing us, they're killing our children." Do you know what God said to Moses? "Make a brass serpent, nail it to a pole and lift it up among the people." "What? What kind of cure is this? They're biting us, they're killing us. Lord, can't You just say, "serpents die?" But God didn't say that. God said Make a serpent and lift it up. And whoever is bitten has only one chance to survive. He has to immediately look up. Wherever he is, in the camp, he has to look up at that pole. And at the top of the pole was this serpent. Brazen, bronze serpent.. What in the world is this? You won't know what it's all about until John chapter 3.

Remember, John chapter 3 is our famous chapter on John 3:16, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son - John 3:16. But have you read John 3:14, two verses before that? John 3:14 (KJV) says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Now, you realize what that serpent was, it was a type of Christ. The Israelites in the wilderness were bitten by poisonous snakes. They had poison in them that would kill them in seconds. Once the poison reached their heart, the heart stops, they're dead. But, if they immediately looked at this brass serpent lifted up, they would live. What's that got to do with us? We also have a poison. This poison is not from vipers, it's from sin. We have a poison in us that guarantees will kill us unless we look up at the Cross and say, "I believe that Jesus died

for my sins and rose again on the third day for me.” Wow! When you say that, you live. Forever.

So, now, when you see John 3:16 and then you go back to John 3:14, then you link it up to Numbers 21, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man (Jesus) be lifted up on the Cross.” Interesting, huh? Many people don’t know that John 3:16 is linked up to Numbers. But the Numbers story in chapter 21 is a type of Christ on the Cross. Have you ever noticed that almost all medical associations have a serpent on a rod? The Singapore Medical Association has that. That is the serpent that healed the people of poison. It’s the symbol of doctors today.

Chapter 22 has a very interesting story about a guy called Balaam. Who is this guy, Balaam? He was called by the king, Balak, to put a curse on the Israelites. The Israelites were coming through his land and they were all afraid of the Israelites. There were 2 to 3 million; no tribe was that big then. They were coming and he was afraid of them. And he called for Balaam. Who is Balaam? Balaam was famous as a kind of sorcerer, who could put a curse on people. So, in those days, when kings went to war, before they went to war, one of the things they did was to get a sorcerer to curse the enemy. Now, Balaam, it appears, to me anyway, that he had a direct communication with God Almighty, with Jehovah God. I think, he was truly a prophet of God, who knew God, but he was a prophet who loved money. And so, when Balak offered him money to curse the Israelites, he took that, even though God said, “Don't curse them.” Later, he bargained with God, and God said, “Okay, go ahead, do it.” Balaam is a type, I believe, of many men of God - good men of God once upon a time, who, because of the love of money, will do things that are against God for the love of money. There are

many, many chapters on Balaam. I wonder why? Why is this silly story is so long? Who in the world is this guy anyway? He's mentioned several times in the New Testament. I believe, it's God telling us, there are Balaams today - many Balaams, who once knew God, who were children of God, and yet, who love money. But one thing Balaam said when he was asked to curse, but he didn't. His mouth couldn't do it because God was controlling it.

In Numbers 24:17, he predicted, "A star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel." Balaam made a prophecy about a star coming out of Jacob, and a scepter coming out of Israel. And I think, when the wise men saw the star, they may have linked it to Balaam's prophecy about the star. I don't know, possibly.

Then lastly, we see, in chapter 25, a guy called Zimri. He is mentioned by name, along with the Midianite woman he fornicated with, near the Temple, in front of the Tabernacle - both of them are named clearly, God asked the people of Israel to thrust him through with a spear, and the woman too. Sounds so fierce. Why? Why is this mentioned at Chapter 25, just before they entered the Promised Land? The Promised Land was full of fertility "religions" where prostitutes were in the Temple. Zimri had the audacity to bring this Midianite woman and have sex in front of the Tabernacle. God was warning them, My Tabernacle will be different. Once they entered into Canaan, the Promised Land, they would see temple prostitutes everywhere, fertility cults, phallic symbols everywhere called Asherah poles.

These are some of the lessons we can learn from Numbers. Then, from Numbers 26 onward, they were just at the border of the Promised Land, and rules were given to them right through

Deuteronomy, preparing them, reminding them for what they must do, when they enter the Promised Land.

The Book of Numbers is very messy.

Exodus is very simple: the 1st half is their journey; the 2nd half are rules and regulations, law Numbers is all mixed up: travel here, then rules; then travel here, then rules. But I hope, after the study of Numbers, you'll see the big picture and the beautiful picture.

Why did they live there?

What were they learning? How's that got to do with us?

What is the character of God?

Is He a God that is careful?

Is He a God that doesn't like us to be irreverent?

Who is this God?

How to come to this God? Wow! So many sacrifices!

You need Christ.

And then, even if you have Christ, you need to be Clean.

And then, you need to be Careful to approach this God we worship.

God bless you.