

Numbers 1:1-10:10
“Israel’s Faithfulness at Sinai”

I. **General Information:**

- a. Characteristics: Numbers begins thirteen months after the exodus from Egypt and recounts the move from Sinai, the people’s disobedience in refusing to enter the Promised Land, and the wandering in the wilderness.
- b. Purpose: To warn the generation of Israelites born in the wilderness to flee the apostasy of their parents, and to call this new generation to arms as God’s *holy army*.
- c. Themes:
 - i. **Numbers**: Two important themes emerge from the book of Numbers—God’s gracious faithfulness in spite of man’s faithlessness and God’s sovereign power over every circumstance.
 - ii. **Numbers 1:1-10:10**: If God’s people are to conquer, they must go forth in *purity*.

II. Chapters 1-2—Preparation for War

- a. (1:1,19) *Then the Lord spoke...as the Lord commanded Moses so he numbered them.*
 - i. If the people are to be holy the leaders must be holy.
- b. (1:2-46) The census focuses on males who are able to serve in the army.
 - i. Israel is to be the army of God—purifiers of the land.
- c. (1:47-54) As priests, the Levites are exempt from the census.
 - i. Responsible for the care of the tabernacle (1:50; 3:7)
 - ii. Camped around the tabernacle (1:53)
 - 1. The Levites are the guardians of Israel’s purity.
- d. (2:1-34) The tribes are positioned according to God’s instructions.
 - i. Four camps; three tribes each; distant; facing the tabernacle.
 - 1. *The tabernacle sits in the center of the camp* (2:2).
 - ii. The marching order is given to God’s army.

III. Chapters 3-4—The Duties of the Priests

- a. (3:1-10) The Levites are set apart for the service of the tabernacle (v.7).
 - i. They are to safeguard Israel’s holiness before Yahweh.
- b. (3:11-13) The Levites are the *redemption* of the firstborn.
 - i. God demands the firstborn in Ex 13:2, 11-16; 22:29-30; 34:19-20.
 - 1. Israel was not exempt from the sentence of death on the firstborn (Rom 6:23).
 - 2. They were spared only through the blood of the Lamb, and thus God purchased them and laid claim to the first fruits (I Peter 1:18-19).
 - 3. Future generations must also be redeemed (Rom 3:10, 23).
 - ii. (44-51) Those not redeemed by the life consecration of the Levites could be redeemed for the redemption price of five shekels.
- c. (4:1-49) The orderliness and holiness of God and His people.
 - i. Order (1 Cor 14:33): Yahweh is a God of order.
 - ii. Holiness (Lev 11:44): God’s people must *go forth in purity*.

- IV. Chapters 5-6—Purification of the Camp
- a. Israel is preparing to depart, and must therefore be purified.
 - i. (5:1-4) Purification of the camp: focus on the **LORD** (v.3).
 - ii. (5:5-10) Repayment of debts: focus on the **LORD** and **neighbor**.
 1. Restitution
 - iii. (5:11-31) Marital unfaithfulness: focus on the **family**.
 1. Important for the social well being of the community.
 - iv. (6:1-21) Nazarite vow: focus on **individual Israelites**.
 1. Voluntary—heart devotion
 2. Separation from the vine—abstention from pleasure
 3. Hair uncut—abstention from human adornment
 4. Separation from death—focus on purity
 - v. (6:22-27) Aaronic blessing: focus on the **community**.
 1. God pours forth blessing on a *pure* people.
 - b. *Every part of the nation must be pure: neighbors, family, individuals, and the community.*
- V. Chapter 7—The Worship of the Community
- a. (v.1) Moses consecrates the tabernacle and all its furnishings.
 - i. **When:** First day, first month, second year (Ex 40:17)—continuation of the narrative
 - ii. **Why:** The house of the LORD is to be set apart for the worship of Yahweh.
 - b. (vv.2-88) Offerings of the leaders—focus on the **worshipping community**.
 - i. God is concerned with *every* aspect of our worship.
 - ii. The *leaders* must first bring their offerings to the LORD.
 - iii. Romans 12:1
- VI. Chapter 8—Purification of the Priests
- a. (vv.5-7) The priests are to be cleansed—focus on the **spiritual leaders**.
 - i. If the leaders are impure what will become of the people?
 - b. (vv.14-19) The Levites serve as the redemption of the firstborn.
- VII. Chapters 9-10:10—Preparation for Departure
- a. (9:1-14) Observance of Passover—God’s people are called to remember His faithfulness.
 - i. (6-14) New legislation prepares them for departure.
 1. If you are unclean or on a journey during Passover you may postpone for one month.
 2. Male sojourners who wish to participate must be circumcised (Ex 12:48).
 - b. (9:15-10:10) The guidance of God.
 - i. (9:15-23) The Lord guides them in the cloud
 - ii. (9:23-10:10) The Lord guides them through Moses and the silver trumpets.
 1. It is God who determines *when* and *where* His holy army will go.
- VIII. **Conclusion:** *The army of the Lord must be pure and always on the move.*