Introduction:

The book of Numbers is about Israel’s journeys through the Wilderness. This story actually begins in Exodus 19:1 as the children of Israel had left Egypt and came to the wilderness of Sinai. The book of Numbers received its name because of the numbering of Israel. God had instructed Moses to number all the eligible men from twenty (20) years old and up that would be able to fight in war. This instruction came two (2) years after the children of Israel had left the land of Egypt, and so was the first numbering made—chapter 1-4. The second numbering came approximately 38 years later as the “New Generation” was about to enter into the land of Canaan—chapters 26-27. The first numbering resulted in 603,550 men, and the second numbering resulted in 601,730 men.

Theme:

Numbers is the “Wilderness” book of the Old Testament, and describes the failures of the nation of Israel at Kedesh-Barnea, and their wondering in unbelief until the old generation dies. The wondering in the wilderness of the children of Israel has been described as the longest funeral march in history. The events of which took place in the wilderness of Sinai covers 38 years, plus the two years they had already been in the wilderness equals a total of 40 years. There were only two people from the “Old Generation” that was allowed to enter into Canaan—that was Caleb and Joshua. Canaan is often thought of as being heaven or a type of heaven, but in all reality Canaan was not heaven, but a haven—a place of rest from wondering; and they had to fight for that. We do not have to fight to get into heaven—we trust in the Lord as our Savior.

To Whom Was The Book of Numbers Written:

There were at least two groups of people included in the Book of Numbers; they were (1st) the disobedient old generation of Israelites. This generation died in the wilderness because of their sin of unbelief and did not enter into Canaan. The (2nd) were the younger generation (20 years old) who grew up in the wilderness and later entered into the (promised land) of Canaan. The book as a whole reviews the sins of the fathers and stands as a message to the younger generation not to imitate the sins of their forefathers.

Leading Topics and Events in Numbers:

- Organization and legislation—chs. 1-9
- Leaving Mt. Sinai—ch. 10:11-12
- Mixed multitude loath the manna—ch. 11:4-6
- The discouragement of Moses—ch. 11:10-15
- The appointing of the seventy elders—ch. 11:16-25
- The quails sent—ch. 11:31-34
- The jealousy of Miriam and Aaron—ch. 12
Where were the children of Israel located?

“The overall location of the wondering Israelites was the Sinai peninsula. Most of their time however was spent in and around Kadesh-Barnea…” This was an oasis of sorts on the way to the Promised Land—Numbers 13. Ultimately the children of Israel found themselves on the plains of Moab, near Jericho, Numbers 35:1-36:13. Typically this trip would have only taken a few weeks took them 40 years.

Seven Murmuring in Numbers:

1. Concerning the way—ch. 11:1-3
2. Concerning the food—ch. 11:4-6
3. Concerning the giants—ch.13:33-14:2
4. Concerning the leaders—ch. 16:3
5. Concerning the divine judgments—ch. 16:41
6. Concerning the desert—ch. 20:2-5
7. Concerning the manna (2nd time)—ch 21:5

Christ in the book of Numbers—pictures and types

- The (ROCK) the people drank from is a picture of Christ—1 Cor. 10:4
- The (Serpent in the wilderness) is a picture of Christ’s crucifixion—John 3:14
- The (Daily Manna) pictures the bread of life which came down from heaven—John 6:32
- Balaam spoke of a (STAR) coming forth from Jacob—Num. 24:17
- The (pillar of cloud) pictures the presence of Christ

Spiritual Application of Numbers

The book of Numbers has a great spiritual lesson for the child of God today. The book of Hebrews 3-4 and 1 Corinthians explains this truth. God honors FAITH and punishes UNBELIEF! The old generation of Israelites wondered in the wilderness in the sin of UNBELIEF for 40 years—this was the root cause of their wondering. They did not trust God’s Word. Moses had faith in God and trust in what God told him, but it seems the old generation of Israelites only trusted what God said when they were following a spiritual leader. The result is at Kadesh-Barnea they doubted God’s Word and failed to enter into their inheritance. Instead of being able to claim Canaan by faith, they wondered in the wilderness. This is significant for the Christian today as it seems many of them are “in between” in their spiritual lives. They have been delivered from Egypt (type of the world) by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus), but they have not entered into their spiritual inheritance in Christ. Earlier I stated Canaan is not a picture of heaven (and it isn’t) rather it is an illustration of our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3), an inheritance that must be claimed by faith. The New Generation (that entered Canaan) found that it was a place of battles and blessings, as is the Christian life. Too many Christian today are in the wilderness of decision (their own Kadesh-Barnea), and instead of being CONQUERORS (as described in Joshua) they become WONDERERS as described in Numbers.
It is interesting to note that that nation did not grow during this time, in fact the second census showed 1820 fewer men of war. God’s people wasted 38 years, faced unnecessary afflictions, did not grow, and did not honor God while they were marching to their death. This is exactly what unbelief does to Christians; it produces wasted time, wasted energy, and absolutely so blessing. It is a sad thing for churches to fall into wondering, and fail to step out by faith and accomplish something for God.

Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe—suggests the following outline of Numbers:

I. **THE OLD GENERATION SET ASIDE—1-20**

   1. Counted—1-4
   2. Counseled—5-10
   3. Chastised—11-12
   4. Condemned—13-20

II. **THE NEW GENERATION SET APART—21-36**

   1. Their journeying—21-25, 33
   2. Their numbering—26-27
   3. Their offerings—28-30
   4. Their dividing of the inheritance—31-36