

Christ is the Center of the Old Testament

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK OF NUMBERS

Good morning.

What I'd like to do is to start a series of presentations on the Old Testament's Book of Numbers.

I doubt many Christians have EVER ventured into the Book of Numbers. What a DULL sounding book to our ears. We associate it with the dullness of the math class we struggled with, or perhaps the Income Tax. But as we're about to discover over the coming months, the Book of Numbers is *one of the most exciting and informative* of all the books in the Bible. And, the events in this book are often key to *understanding* some of the passages in the New Testament, especially in the Book of Revelation. And key to identifying false teaching that is present in the charismatic churches today. But its most valuable aspect is that **Christ is found throughout the Book of Numbers**

A second reason for reading the Book of Numbers is that **St. Paul recommended it** – he said that the events in the Book of Numbers were **recorded for our benefit.**

The Apostle Paul made abundant use of the book of Numbers in one of his greatest teachings:

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“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us in the last days (on whom the culmination of the ages has come.)” 1 Cor. 10:1–5, 11

All of these events that Paul listed are found WRITTEN DOWN in the Torah, mostly in the book of Numbers to be specific. Paul saw what we would see: that the Book of Numbers – while a record of history – is also prophetic. We will see the Messiah in the Book of Numbers, and we will see Him operating BEFORE He became a man.

The Holy Spirit sometimes has hundreds of years go by without any Biblical record of things that happened; from the end of Genesis to Chapter 1 of the Book of Exodus, 400 years of history in Egypt went by without any record of events – but, concerning the 40-year journey from Egypt to the

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Promised Land, God devoted 36 chapters of the Bible, obviously for a purpose.

SEEING CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Now, I am well aware of the reaction that many people have when they hear that the message will be from the Old Testament. Quite often, the reaction is:

- *“The OT doesn’t have much to offer to us on this side of the Cross”, or...*
- *“I’d rather hear about how we can live the Christian life better, rather than about events that happened to people operating thousands of years ago prior to Pentecost.”*
- *“We want to hear about a loving Jesus.”*

To this last point, I say “Amen” – and that’s what I intend to do – by the grace of God.

But, I believe the first part of the statement – *“the OT doesn’t have much to offer us”,* is mistaken – at least that was St. Paul’s inspired opinion in according to the passage that we just read. If you disagree, I’d suggest that you go and

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take it up with Paul, and if you convince him, come back and let me know.

I'm joking of course. Let me plainly state – You don't have to have read a lick about the OT or NT for that matter in order to be saved. **Jesus alone saves – and He has saved many people who can't read at all.**

- My point is that God the Holy Spirit – God Himself – evidently thought it helpful for us to have the OT written down, and that's why we're going to explore that.

I'm also well aware of that some people believe strongly that by studying the OT, we may **revert to trying to keeping the Law** instead of relying on Grace. Previous to coming to CCC, I was at a church in Sheffield MA. The church was an independent Christian church, made up of former Catholics and Presbyterians, but most of practices were Baptist

→ Of course, you know the definition of an “Independent” church = Baptist church with a funky website (ala Tim Hawkins).

We had a hour-long Bible Class at 9:30am before the Sunday Service, & we came to the end of one series and the class was considering what to tackle next. It came down to a choice between the Book of Genesis and the Letter to the Romans;

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the class took a vote (which is a very Baptist thing to do), and by one vote – my vote – it was for Genesis. One of the members of the class, the person who had volunteered to teach from Romans, had a strong reaction to the decision.

- He stood up and said: *"The purpose of Bible study is to bring people to Christ. Nobody ever got saved from reading Genesis or Exodus."*

This was very personal with him, you could see it. I never doubted his motives – he was a sincere Christian brother. He and his wife left the Church.

Was he correct in his opinion regarding the OT? Well, I totally agree that the purpose in *all* we do, including Bible study, is to bring people to Christ or closer to Christ. If that's not our intention, we have no business being here. But what about the statement: *"Nobody ever got saved from reading the OT."* Is that true?

I'm going to read from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 24 and the Road to Emmaus incident after Christ arose:

"And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was [d]about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing

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Him. And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad... <sup>25</sup>And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

**Beginning with Moses!** – Moses wrote the Book of Numbers, and he wrote about Christ! And then, in the very same chapter of Luke, the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples and says

<sup>44</sup> ... "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day

This is striking – the RESURRECTED Christ is still pointing them to the OT Scriptures. This is not Christ before His crucifixion pointing them to the OT Scriptures, here's the Risen Christ pointing them to the OT Scriptures in order that they understand what the Messiah had to do and Who He is.

And their "hearts were burning" inside of them (John Wesley said that at his conversion, his heart was "strangely

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warmed"). They were saved by Jesus as He was revealing what He had done, and He used the OT scriptures to do it.

So, some people have been saved while studying the OT – the key, of course, is that the HS is the teacher.

- If both the Risen Jesus and the Apostle Paul recommended that we read a book, it's probably a good book.

**Don't be intimidated by the OT.** I've personally found the OT to be somewhat like the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. You sometimes have to push yourself past the coats of ancient history and confusing passages, but you eventually find yourself in a fabulous land where there are signs all around you of the Messiah.

And, don't let anyone lead you to believe that because they know some historic details in the Scripture that you don't, or they can understand Greek or Hebrew – that they're more spiritual than you are, or they're closer to God.

- If at the end of any presentation or discussion, you find yourself looking at the presenter rather than at Christ, then quite likely that's a person who either has excessive pride, or there's a struggle going on in their

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life that they aren't handling very well and need a shot of self-esteem.

Never get discouraged with the OT. Remember that God wrote it for a purpose. Go to the Author for an explanation.

BRIEF INTRO – 'Covenants'

OK – There are a couple of preliminaries to deal with before we get into the Book of Numbers.

1st – **the issue of Covenants.** A covenant is an agreement, sometimes between men and sometimes between God and men. Now, when we're dealing with the Israelites in the Book of Numbers, we're dealing with a people operating under the Mosaic Covenant, sometimes called the Old Covenant. This is the covenant made between God and the Israelites at Mount Sinai after God rescued them from Egypt. It involves the sacrificial system, laws of cleanliness and holiness, dietary laws, etc. – we'll look at that briefly in future weeks. The Mosaic Covenant would fade away as the New Covenant made by Christ unfolded, but not until it fulfilled its purpose.

God made other covenants with the Hebrews, and they still continue today in one degree or another. For example,



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He made a covenant with Noah & with the animal kingdom after the Flood where He promised that He would not destroy the world again by water.

I mention this because (MAYAN CALENDAR PROPHECY, December 2012. Many people don't know that the Mayans predicted the end of the world would be by water. So, don't be worried about world ending in 2012 by water – Mayans probably just ran out of room on the rock to make additional predictions.

God also made other covenants prior to Mt. Sinai: with Abraham, then Isaac and then Jacob. Bless and curse, many children like number of stars. These earlier Covenants were one-sided – God said He would do these things – period. Abraham was not required to do anything, only to have faith that God would do it. Some of the promises were made to Abraham's physical offspring and some to his spiritual offspring – us.

The difference between the earlier covenants and the covenant at Sinai is that the covenant at Sinai was not one-sided: Both parties made promises. God promised to dwell in their midst and be their God, and the Israelites promised to keep the Torah. AND, blessings and curses (penalties) for not keeping up your side of the bargain were also agreed to.

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DWELL IN THEIR MIDST – that's a KEY to understanding what's going on in the entire Bible. We should write that on our hand like we sometimes did in high school to pass an exam. In the earlier covenants, God had promised would be their God, but He did not dwell in their midst – that intimacy ended in the Garden. At Sinai, God takes a major step in restoring that intimacy & begins a process by which His covenant people can gain an understanding of what it takes for Him to dwell in their midst.

- What does it take for a human being to dwell in the presence of a Holy God AND LIVE? This question echoes down through history – what does it take for the Holy Spirit to dwell in our midst – and it echoes into eternity: what does it take for a human to dwell in the presence of a Holy God for all eternity and SURVIVE?

THE CURSE OF THE LAW

One more preliminary: the Bible refers to "the Law". What is it? Remember what Jesus discussed with the disciples on Road to Emmaus:

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He (Jesus) explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

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*"And beginning with Moses"* refers to the five books of the OT written by Moses. These are *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. Taken together, these five books are called the Torah, which is often – but somewhat inaccurately – called “the Law”.

'Torah' means “teaching” or “doctrine”. The term comes from a Hebrew root that was used in the realm of archery, *yareh* (ירה). *Yareh* means to shoot an arrow in order to hit a mark.<sup>1</sup> The mark or target, of course, was the object at which the archer was aiming. Therefore, Torah is the arrow aimed at a target – the truth about God and how we MUST relate to Him if we want to do so.

➤ The Torah is, therefore, God’s instruction on how to relate to Him in truth.

Because it contains 613 commandments from God on how to do that, the Torah *contains* the Law.

Now – please make sure your seatbelts are buckled and your tray is in the upright and fastened position, because I want to address two common misunderstandings that many Christians have picked up over the years – OK?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/torah.html>

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The first concerns what we understand when we hear the statement *that "Jesus saved us from **the Curse of the Law**".* Let me begin by agreeing 100% with that statement. It's absolutely True. Jesus – and Jesus Alone – saves us from the curse of the Law. That's a quote from Paul's letter to the Galatians Chapter 3:10

"For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, " CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." ... <sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us— for it is written, " CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE". "

*For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse.* What was *"THE CURSE"*? The curse was the PENALTY you received for not keeping the Law – which was death, hanging on a tree, in the context of Paul's statement.

The **misunderstanding** that many Christians believe is that the phrase "the Curse of the Law" is saying that **the Law ITSELF was the curse**. That's NOT what Paul was saying – the curse is the penalty that comes with not keeping the Law.

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- For example: we're speeding and get a traffic ticket. The curse, as some of us here know from recent experience, is NOT the fact that there's a 35 mph speed limit – **the curse is the \$300 traffic ticket** we get for going 65mph in the 35mph zone.

Are we OK? The Law was *not* the curse, the curse was the penalty for not keeping the law.

Now –for the 2nd concern: The Torah contains 613 commandments. I want to make this clear – please hear me now if you don't remember anything else I say today:

- **The 613 commandments of the Torah were NOT manmade – they were God-DICTATED COMMANDMENTS.**

Don't confuse the man-made commandments of the rabbis and Pharisees with the 613 Torah commandments. The rabbis and Pharisees added a whole bunch of extra rules to the Torah – these additions were man-made and it was *these* that Jesus criticized – but the 613 commandments of the Torah were God-dictated. Christians tend to lump all of them together and see them all as primitive man-made rules and restrictions – that is absolutely a false picture of what happened.

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I'm sorry to admit that this was my attitude for the first 30 years of my Christian life. I'm really trying to tread softly here, because this is a sensitive subject area. Most of Christianity has historically mischaracterized – and much of it unfortunately was purposely mischaracterized because of anti-Semitism in the Church beginning with the time of the Emperor Constantine. The result is that Christians often misunderstand the purpose of those Torah commandments and also get the wrong impression of why Jesus was criticizing certain practices of the Pharisees.

We have to realize that **Jesus kept the Torah**, He fulfilled the Torah's requirements of what the Messiah must do – in fact, if He didn't satisfy the Torah requirements, He would have been disqualified to be the Messiah. **Jesus was a Torah-observant Jew**, and we'll miss a lot of what went on in the NT if we forget this.

As a Torah-observant rabbi, He criticized both the man-made additions to Torah as well as the arrogant pride of those who boasted on how well they kept the Torah. Jesus never – never – criticized the Torah – the Law.

In fact, He stated "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:18

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Why were the 613 Torah commandments given? Their purpose was to show how Holy God is by showing how Holy a person had to be in order to ENTER into His presence & SURVIVE. Modern Christians tend to think about those 613 laws of the Torah as being about US – things we're to do and NOT to do. But, **in reality, the commandments inform us about HIM.** They tell us how immeasurably Holy and Just is the God of the Bible. They tell us what holiness amounts to and what it looks like.

- Whether or not we admit it, we all share a basic human weakness: pride, and thus we are vulnerable to the Satanic lie that we can be like God based ON OUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

But the Torah YELLS at us – You Can't be Holy enough on your own! We can never keep all of the 613 commandments all of our life. We speak about breaking the Law of God, but **in reality, they break *us* and our pride.**

The penalty for not keeping the law is that we are excluded from God's presence – until we turn to His established remedy – the sacrificial system (then) and Christ (now). These rituals for the ancients were *like our going to the movies today* – a visual element is a needed and desired

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aid for understanding truth. They visually dramatized the very essence of our relationship with God.

And what did it show the Israelites? It showed their absolute need for an innocent spotless substitute, an innocent, to be a stand-in for our death penalty. The Law was a shadow and a type that pointed forward to the work and mission of the Messiah. Its purpose was to **drive us to Christ** for our Righteousness – the Law **displayed the degree of Holiness needed to stand in His presence**. It demonstrated that we can't SURVIVE by ourselves in that presence, therefore the death of an innocent substitute was needed. It all points to Christ.

- I say again: The Law itself was not the curse; **the curse was death – the penalty for not keeping the Law.**

The commands of the Torah were God-dictated. If a person does not realize this and criticizes the OT rituals and commandments as a form of old fashioned voodoo based on man-made superstitions, **they will find themselves in the unenviable place of criticizing as *unnecessary* what God declared *WAS necessary*.** I do not want to be in that position any longer.

- Are we OK?



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**B'Midbar - "In the Wilderness"**

Finally – we come to the Book of Numbers – that's a strange title for a book to have. It got its name from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament known as the Septuagint (supposedly by 70 scholars in Egypt about 325 BC because most Hebrews in Egypt no longer spoke Hebrew, but most did speak Greek). Those translators gave this particular book the name of '*Numbers*' – because there are four 'numberings' or censuses of the people in this Book.

ARITHMOI

So, the Greek name for this Book was *Arithmoi* ... from which we also get the word *arithmetic*. The name 'Numbers' comes from its Latin translation – *Numeri*.

For us in our day, the word "numbers" is associated with accounting and records keeping, math; income tax returns (due next month – by the way), and so on. To us, numbers are impersonal, the substance of digital tracking of our lives. **But long ago numbers were magical.** They were mysterious and portended good things and bad. They were symbolic for portended future events. Pythagoras, that famous ancient mathematician, actually was a cult leader. Numbers were awesome, welcome, and at times fearsome. They were also

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were powerfully important to the Hebrew people right on through Jesus' era and into today.

Let's start in Numbers Chapter 1, verse 1:

"Then ADONAI spoke to Moses **in the wilderness** of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt..."

As you may know, the Hebrews named the books of the Torah after the first words of the Book. The Hebrew name for the Book of Numbers is "B'Midbar" – *In the Wilderness*. It is here that we find the story of the 38 years that the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness of the Negev, the Sinai, and probably for a short time the Arabian Peninsula. Numbers is really a misnomer and the amount of actual "numbers" and lists is quite small. The vast bulk of this book consists of stories and narratives of those formative 38 years that our Lord apparently thought important for us to know about (as Paul forcefully points out to his readers).

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The Concept of Patterns

What we're going to find throughout this book are patterns. Now, I mentioned last time that Patterns run throughout the Bible because that's the way the Hebrews thought in their eastern mindset. When we Westerners come up against something unexpected, we tend to ask the question "why". Hebrews tended to first ask the question "is this part of a pattern that can show us how God is acting or will-be acting?" If they could recognize a pattern, they could expect certain things to happen, and then pray for or against that action.

And why did they approach life that way (notice I'm asking "why" they didn't ask "why" first? Because many times, God didn't tell them why He acted as He did. They were supposed to figure it out based on knowing His character and holiness. Then - maybe - they might understand "why"").

**When you stop and think about it, patterns foretelling the future are not entirely strange to us.** For example, once you reach a certain age, we find that when all our joints ache, it usually means that a storm is coming.

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- Another pattern -> when I have a day off from work, usually a honey-dew list will magically appear on the kitchen counter.

**Biblical Patterns are like prophecies.** When my joints ache, a storm is coming. When Jesus said that at just before His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming,

Matt. 24:37-38: "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark."

Recognizing a Pattern helped the Hebrews anticipate what is or soon will be happening, and maybe also let them peek at what is going on behind the curtain.

There's a pattern being set up right here in the Book of Numbers. The Israelites were "baptized into Moses" on crossing the sea – they then heard God's voice **out loud** on Mt. Sinai – he said that they were His people and He was pleased with them; they were then led by the Pillar of Cloud into the Wilderness for 40 years, and they would face a series of tests – some human, some from Satan – but they would fail miserably when they took their eyes off of Him and forget their promises in the Torah.

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Now – fast forward 1400 years to Luke's Gospel and Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus and God the Father speaks audibly that this is His son in whom He is well pleased. Jesus is then led by the Spirit into the Wilderness for 40 days. Jesus, the True Israelite, the Israelite without guile, would face tests of an exactly similar nature as the Israelites did in the Wilderness – only this time, the Devil was not lust behind the scene but right out in front of the camera. The difference was that Jesus would pass the temptations. He fulfilled all requirements of the Torah, quoting it in its proper context when answering Satan's temptations, and He could do this because He kept His eyes on His Father.

- It's like God the Father saying to Israel – **I'm giving you a Do-Over** – if you recognize what's happening.

The point here is that we are going to see these patterns and principles appear in the New Testament. Paul speaks on them and uses the incidents recorded in Numbers, especially, to make his point that Jesus fulfilled the patterns and principles of the Torah.

But... and this is so essential to grasp... Paul also makes the point that if the already redeemed Israelites rebelled and got punished for it in ancient times (as told of in the Book of

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Numbers), why would a Believer redeemed by the blood of Jesus think he or she could be rebellious and escape God's harsh hand of discipline? Not damnation – *discipline*.

OK – we've read that the Hebrews are camped at Mt. Sinai, and it's the 2<sup>nd</sup> month of the second year after leaving Egypt – early April on our calendar. So, they've been there for a little over a year – 13 months to be exact.

- What would have been the mental and physical condition of the people – the Israelites?

STATE OF ISRAELITES WHILE IN EGYPT

Before the Exodus, Israel was in Egypt somewhere between 350–400 years. The original group of Hebrews came to escape a terrible famine that gripped the region – the group consisted of Jacob (whose name was changed by God to Israel), his 11 sons, their wives and children, one daughter we know of (Dinah) – for a total of about 75 people

Their sponsor and caretaker was none other than the Grand Vizier of Egypt: Jacob's very own son, Joseph (who Jacob thought was dead). Joseph was the savior not just of Israel but of Egypt as well; because just as God had a purpose

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for Israel, *He had a purpose for Egypt. Egypt was to be the womb* in which Israel would gestate until it was God's appointed time to birth them as full-blown nation, set-apart for service to Him.

At the time of the Exodus, a score of generations had passed, and the Hebrews numbered approximately 3 million people.

Think of how long the Hebrews were in Egypt – somewhere between 300 and 400 years. If 400, that's nearly twice as long as America has been a nation! Try to put yourself in their sandals... not much over 200 years ago....only half the amount of time Israel was in Egypt..... George Washington became the 1st President of the newly formed United States of America. And think how hard it is for us to relate to those Colonial days.

- We have a Supreme Court that today cannot agree on the intent of the men who penned our Constitution barely over 200 years ago.

How much the current batch of Israelites knew of – let alone believed in – God's Promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would be difficult to assess; except that – like us – the Israelites were just people trying to live life, and the day to

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day challenges they faced were enough to worry about without thinking of themselves as some important piece of an unfolding prophetic puzzle.

At the time of the Exodus, the Israelites were the slave labor force of Egypt. The promise of their own homeland was a long-distant memory. In reality, the Israelites were now more Egyptian in their thinking and beliefs than they were Hebrew. **I doubt Abraham would have recognized them.**

So there were the Israelites, just living life (albeit a miserable one) -- when suddenly -- a **man named Moses shows up**, and says that God sent him. The Hebrews said, "yeah, right" and went on about their business. Well – after all those years of mere existence, hundreds of years of sitting on the sidelines – suddenly the prophetic dominoes began to fall at a breathtaking rate, and the Hebrews find themselves on the center stage of history.

Moses informs the elders of Israel of his mission, then he immediately goes to Pharaoh with his message from God to let His people go; the Pharaoh refuses and God sets about to change the Prince of Egypt's mind through devastating plagues.



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- 10 Miracles... including Passover and the death of the firstborn, then the great Exodus, being trapped at the end of the Red Sea by Pharaoh's army, the Great Cloud by Day (Fire by night) leading them through the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army.

They journey to Sinai, the Cloud rests on the peak of the Mountain, fire and thunder, everyone hearing the voice of God and are scared spit less – and then Moses begins to receive a long series of commands and ordinances **directly from the mouth of Yehoveh.**

Although they are called a nation of priests, a separate Priesthood is established by means of the family of Moses' brother, Aaron. God's principles were made visual by means of rituals and celebrations and holy days and the construction of the all-important earthly dwelling place of God Almighty, the Wilderness Tabernacle. This was to be constructed according to minute instructions given to Moses by God Himself. It is a physical earthly model of God's **Heavenly throne room.**

Things happened quickly. It was only one year's time from Passover night & the death of the firstborn in Egypt to Numbers Chapter 1 Imagine if you were one of those ordinary Hebrews, how your head must have been swimming.

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- To the ordinary Israelite, this was happening too fast. Everything that you thought was of great value God now says is worthless. All that you thought was worthless God says is priceless. Could you or I have made this transition in one year without the Holy Spirit?

This is the situation as we begin the Book of Numbers.

THE FIRST CENSUS

OK. Let's continue with verse 2 of Numbers Chapter 1:

He (ADONAI) said (to Moses): <sup>2</sup> "Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families, listing every man by name, one by one. <sup>3</sup> You and Aaron are to count according to their divisions all the men in Israel who are twenty years old or more and able to serve in the army. <sup>4</sup> One man from each tribe, each of them the head of his family, is to help you. <sup>5</sup>

(skip down to verse 20)

<sup>20</sup> From the descendants of Reuben the firstborn son of Israel: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army

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were listed by name, one by one, according to the records of their clans and families.<sup>21</sup> The number from the tribe of Reuben was 46,500.

<sup>22</sup> From the descendants of Simeon: All the men twenty years old or more who were able to serve in the army were counted and listed by name, one by one, according to the records of their clans and families.<sup>23</sup> The number from the tribe of Simeon was 59,300

... and so on for the other 10 tribes.

- Gad
- Judah
- Issachar
- Zebulun
- Ephraim
- Manasseh
- Benjamin
- Dan
- Asher,
- Naphtali

Dropping down to verse 44...

<sup>44</sup> These were the men counted by Moses and Aaron and the twelve leaders of Israel, each one

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representing his family.<sup>45</sup> All the Israelites twenty years old or more who were able to serve in Israel's army were counted according to their families.<sup>46</sup> The total number was 603,550.

So, there were 603,500 men 20 years and older registered from 12 tribes for the purpose of establishing the order of Battle. These were the fighting men, the army. Now, if we give each a wife, a couple of kids, and include the men too old to be in the army, we are looking at to between 2–3 million Israelites. That's not counting the "*mixed multitude*" (as the Bible calls them) of non-Israelites that tagged along with them when they left Egypt. These were non-Hebrew slaves and even some Egyptians, and some tagged along because they thought Yahweh may be a safer bet than the old Egyptians gods were, and others came with the purposes of greed (escape debt, finding new fortune in a new land, and so on).

Note that each person was counted by name.

- I can see the scene now: name? – Lyle Hadley – OK Lyle, next?
- Jack Petroski – Hi Jack – a phrase you will not be able to say at an airport in about 3500 years.

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- Next: Gary Hamm – Hamm ... hum... Gary – *you do know, don't you, that this is a Jewish army? Oh – Hamm is spelled with 2 m's. OK – you're kosher.*

Now – Purpose of this Census is to prepare the army for war. Every male 20 years and older was counted, and the army was organized by tribe, clan and so on under a particular standard or flag so that it could be seen on a battlefield and enable the individual units to move together. (Just like today (army, corps, division, regiment, battalion, company, etc.) The general (Joshua) would give an order that would be relayed by horns, and the subunit commanders would relay that command by horns and the men would follow their standard to the intended part of the battlefield. Each tribe would be given a specific place to camp, and when they traveled, they had to be in formation.

- For those of us who look toward retirement, notice that there is no upper age limit for the Army!

Then, in verse 47, God addresses the tribe of Levi.

<sup>47</sup> The ancestral tribe of the Levites, however, was not counted along with the others. <sup>48</sup> The LORD had said to Moses: <sup>49</sup> **You must not count the tribe of**

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**Levi or include them in the census of the other Israelites.** <sup>50</sup> Instead, appoint the Levites to be in charge of the tabernacle of the covenant law—over all its furnishings and everything belonging to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they are to take care of it and encamp around it.

Notice: the passage just said that God said **NOT** to count the Tribe of Levi in this Census of the Army.

Now a puzzle: when you count up number of tribes counted for the army in Numbers 1, it totals twelve tribes – but how are there twelve tribes w/o the Tribe of Levi? Remember, the tribes were named after the sons of Jacob (Israel). The book of Genesis that says Jacob had *twelve* sons. The answer lies back in Genesis 48 – brief explanation would be helpful to set up rest of the OT from here on.

**<SLIDE> GENESIS 48:5**

Remember, Joseph was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt and he rose to the position of the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest official in Egypt. Because of a famine in Canaan, his father Jacob and the rest of the family come to Egypt for food (Joseph's 11 brothers, his sister Dinah and rest of household – 75

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people in all) journey to Egypt and are reunited... They settle in the land of Goshen and prosper and multiply.

Time passes, and in Genesis 48, Jacob was nearing his death and almost blind; he calls for his son Joseph and Joseph's two sons – Jacob's grandsons. Joseph had married an Egyptian princess while in Egypt and had two sons born: Ephraim and Manasseh.

Now, according to Jewish tradition, the mother's status initially determines whether a child is Jewish or not. If mother is Jewish, child is Jewish. If the mother is non-Jewish, the child becomes Jewish only after undergoing a formal conversion – even though the father may be Jewish.

- Daniel Pearle before being beheaded: "My name is Daniel Pearl... My father's Jewish, my mother's Jewish, I'm Jewish."

Here, Joseph's two sons come from his Egyptian wife and there is no evidence in Scripture that she had converted before having the boys, and no evidence that the two sons had themselves formally converted by this point in the lives. So, technically, the kids are probably considered *non-Jewish* when they come to see their grandfather.

<SLIDE> Look at vs. 5: Jacob says to Joseph:

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"Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned **as mine**; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon **are mine**. "

Think about what has just happened. Jacob did NOT simply make these boys Hebrews. He didn't just recognize them as his grandchildren (which they were). Ephraim and Manasseh became Jacob's sons, EQUAL to his other 12 sons

- It would be like Bill formally adopting his grandson Jonathan away from Steve and Jenifer and having him become another son – thereby gaining **another tax exemption!**

**<SLIDE>** This means that, at that moment, there were **14 tribes** of Israel – the 12 original sons of Jacob plus the two new additions – Ephraim and Manasseh! Win at Bible trivia. We are not specifically told why Jacob did this. Several possibilities have been advanced but nothing conclusive. A strange thing indeed and we're left to ponder its meaning, but we'll see this pattern occur again.

- So – Jacob has now **14 sons** in Genesis 48.



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However, it appears that Joseph didn't have any additional son, or at least sons who survived when the new Pharaoh came to the throne, so the tribe of Joseph – meaning the tribe made from sons *other than* Ephraim and Manasseh – did not continue. (you will later see the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh sometimes referred to as the tribe of Joseph for specific reasons, but purposes of the physical number of tribes, they were separate).

- So, when Israel *came out* of Egypt hundreds of years later, **THERE WERE 13 TRIBES.**

<SLIDE> OK – Back to Numbers Chapter 1.

At Mt. Sinai as we have just read, we find that GOD does largely the same type of thing to the tribe of Levi that Jacob did: He adopts away from Israel the entire tribe of Levi to be His own special servants. Levi from here on is no longer to be counted as a tribe of Israel. Sounds strange, doesn't it. But it is true. Levi has been removed as a tribe of Israel and is now the tribe of God so to speak. Whenever you hear of the 10 lost tribes of Israel, Levi is not one of them. Levi would receive no large tract of land as inheritance in the Promised Land (“poor Levites”) – God would be their

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inheritance. This event is important in deciphering all that happens from here forward in the Bible that we recognize and understand the impact of this separateness of Levi from Israel.

But these adoption events are part of another Pattern that occurs throughout history: Non-Israelites are adopted away from their natural family into the family of God by decree of the Head of the family and it is not based on any merits of those being adopted. Sound familiar?

Listen to Paul's letter to the Ephesians chapter 1:

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for **adoption** to as children<sup>1</sup> through Jesus Christ, **in accordance with his pleasure and will**— to the praise of his glorious **grace**, which he has freely given us in the One he loves In whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of his **grace**.

**Adopted away** from the world by the **grace** of God, no merit of any kind on our part, we become sons and daughters of

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the God of the Universe through the redemption of the blood of Jesus.

### ARRANGEMENT OF THE CAMP

Now, I want to quickly look at how God ordered the tribes to camp around the Tabernacle – this will give us a glimpse of how the great Plan of God is really unstoppable – and how things may be in plain sight or behind the scenes and how you and I often miss seeing them. Then, all of a sudden, Jesus shows up where you never expected Him.

HEAVENLY PICTURE – Moses was told by God to make the tabernacle and layout of the camp **exactly as he was shown by God on Mt. Sinai.**

- Acts 7:44 <sup>44</sup>“Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, **according to the pattern he had seen.**”
- Hebrews 8:5: “They (Levites) serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the

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tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the **pattern** shown you on the mountain."

- Exodus 25:9 God tells Moses": <sup>9</sup>Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the **pattern** I will show you... <sup>37</sup>"Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it. <sup>38</sup> Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold. <sup>39</sup> A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lamp stand and all these accessories. <sup>40</sup> See that you make them according to **the pattern** shown you on the mountain.

The layout is described starting in Numbers Chapter 2. We find a very specific order that each of the 12 tribes is to camp around the Tabernacle; further, the Levites are to camp BETWEEN the 12 tribes and the Sanctuary..... acting as a defensive barrier.....in order to fulfill their new role as guardians of God's earthly dwelling place.

Numbers Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: <sup>2</sup> "The Israelites are to camp around the tent of meeting some distance from it, each of them under their standard and holding the banners of their family."

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<sup>3</sup> On the east, toward the sunrise, the divisions of the camp of Judah are to encamp under their standard. The leader of the people of Judah is Nahshon son of Amminadab. <sup>4</sup> His division numbers 74,600.

<sup>5</sup> The tribe of Issachar will camp next to them. The leader of the people of Issachar is Nethanel son of Zuar. <sup>6</sup> His division numbers 54,400.

<sup>7</sup> The tribe of Zebulun will be next.

And so on.

<SLIDE> -LAYOUT OF THE CAMP. Here's a rough approximation of the layout. The Camp was a vast tent village around the Holy Sanctuary. A kind of square formation would be set up with each division consisting of three tribes assigned a particular place. The tabernacle would be in the center and opening faced EAST. The Levites & priests camped just outside the Tabernacle to protect it from the rest of the people encroaching on God's holiness.

Each of the four subdivisions of the tribes had a lead tribe – the tribe mentioned first. In this case, it was Judah on the East, Reuben on the South, Ephraim on the West and Dan to

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the North. Each tribe had a standard; we don't know exactly how the standard looked, but we know from Jewish tradition that the tribe's symbol would have been on their flag. Here are the four symbols of the lead tribes. Here are the four symbols of the four lead tribes:

<SLIDE> IMAGES

Even the layout of the camp = Model of Jesus: **LION** of Judah (kingship), **OX** (the most expensive sacrifice – servant Mark 10:45 ransom/exchange – Bill read this last week.), **MAN** (Christ's humanity), and **EAGLE** (Christ's divinity – fly into the heavens)

*The Book of Hebrews* (8:5) in the NT tells us that the Tabernacle was a model of heaven – “a copy and shadow of heavenly things.” The layout of the camp sheds some light on two strange verses of Scripture, one from the OT and one from the NT. Let's look for a moment at a incident in *the Book of Ezekiel* that describes an encounter that Ezekiel Chapter 1 had with God:

<sup>4</sup>“I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north—an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, <sup>5</sup> and in the fire was what

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looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was human, <sup>6</sup> but each of them had four faces and four wings. <sup>7</sup> - (skipping down to verse 10)

<sup>10</sup> Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a human being, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. <sup>11</sup> Such were their faces.

Face of a man immediately in front, face of a Lion on the right side, an Ox on the left. Ezekiel was evidently seeing a model of heaven as if he was viewing it from the south side - this may be symbolic of Israel's then poor state of holiness (-> layout of Jerusalem, dung gate for trash heap on **south side** of City -that's another story).

<SLIDE> Then, in REVELATION 4:7, we have a picture of what the Apostle John saw in his vision of heaven:

"In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle."

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<SLIDE> The perspective now is *from the East* – and East is very significant, holy, in the Scriptures. The Tabernacle and Temple faced east – in the direction of Judah. The Mount of Olives is directly east of Jerusalem in line with Temple entrance and that's where Jesus will touch down at the 2nd coming. (Zechariah 14:4). John here is able to enter God's throne room in heaven from **the East** because of Christ's death & resurrection.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be." —Matthew 24:27

Notice John sees the image of the Ox right *after* the Lion. The Ox (tribe of Ephraim) was opposite Judah – Judah on the east, Ephraim (Ox) on the west. **It's like John is able to see right thru the temple clear to the west.** Remember at Christ's death on the cross, the veil in the Temple was ripped wide open; here, John is symbolically seeing through the temple all the way through to the West. As far as the East is from the West...

So, the layout of the Israelite camp in the wilderness was a model of heaven. Is this a *literal* layout of heaven? We don't know for sure but probably not – we do know that God was revealing heavenly realities to Ezekiel and John. The



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symbolism expressed on how God ordered the Israelite to be laid out, but it probably was not obvious to the Israelites,

- However, it certainly would not be lost on Satan – who was, as you remember, a former resident of heaven. It must have infuriated him, just as we do now because we're Tabernacles of the Holy Spirit.
- **THE UNSTOPPABLE PLAN OF GOD – HIDDEN HERE RIGHT IN PLAIN SIGHT!**

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