

Lessons from Numbers

Many people avoid reading the book of Numbers because it seems like a repeat of Exodus. However, 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," meaning both Numbers and Exodus are in the Old Testament for a reason, and both of them require our attention.

Numbers might reinforce some of the teaching of Exodus or they might shine a light on each other, helping readers to absorb something new about certain texts. But scholars also argue that the central theme of each book is different, and there are powerful lessons to be learned from reading Numbers. Here's a more detailed breakdown:

- 1. God's Faithfulness and Provision:** Despite Israel's constant murmuring and rebellion, God consistently provided for their needs, demonstrating His covenant faithfulness. This includes physical provisions like manna and water, as well as spiritual guidance and protection. This lesson reminds us that even when we fail, God's love and provision endure.
- 2. The Consequences of Sin:** Numbers vividly portrays the consequences of sin, both for individuals and for the entire nation. Rebellion, disobedience, and idolatry led to judgment and hardship, including the deaths of many Israelites in the wilderness. This underscores the seriousness of sin and the need for repentance.
- 3. The Importance of Trusting God:** The book repeatedly shows the Israelites struggling to trust God's leadership and provision, often leading them to doubt and complain. This serves as a cautionary tale, urging us to trust in God's plan and His ability to guide us through difficult times, even when we don't understand.
- 4. Humility and Preparation for Service:** Moses' journey, from being raised in Pharaoh's court to leading the Israelites, highlights the importance of humility and preparation for service. His time in exile, though initially a consequence of his actions, became a period of growth and refinement, preparing him for his future leadership role. This teaches us that God may use challenging circumstances to prepare us for His purposes.
- 5. God's Justice and Mercy:** While Numbers shows God's justice in dealing with sin, it also reveals His mercy and willingness to forgive and restore. Even after severe judgments, God continued to offer opportunities for repentance and reconciliation, demonstrating His enduring love.
- 6. The Importance of Counting Our Days:** The phrase "teach us to number our days" (Psalm 90:12, referenced in the Sabbath School lesson), which is related to the Book of Numbers, encourages us to be mindful of the brevity of life and to live with purpose and wisdom, seeking to honor God in all that we do.
- 7. Lessons from the Exodus Story:** 1 Corinthians 10:11 reminds us that the events of the Exodus, which are central to the Book of Numbers, are recorded for our instruction. These stories, while ancient, offer timeless lessons about God's character and our relationship with Him.

In essence, the Book of Numbers provides a rich tapestry of stories and lessons that encourage us to trust God, learn from our mistakes, and live lives that are pleasing to Him.