

# Introduction to Numbers

## I. Background and Context

**A. The title** is based on the censuses that are found in the beginning and near the end of the book (1-4 & 26). The Hebrew title for the book “in the wilderness” probably gives a better handle on the book.

- i. The timeline is after the exodus but before entrance into the promised Land.
- ii. The route is just 200 miles, but the narrative spans 40 years.

**B. Redemptive Historical Context:** Previously in the Pentateuch...(Gen. 17:4-8)

**C. Theme:** “God’s faithfulness to his promises even when his people are unfaithful.”

### D. Outline of Numbers

#### i. Lessons from a Faithless Generation (1:1-25:18)

1. First census and preparing the camp (1:1-6:27)
2. Preparing the tabernacle (7:1-10:10)
3. The need for the right ruler (10:11-12:16)
4. The need to be a faithful people (13:1-15:41)
5. The need for the right priesthood (16:1-19:22)
6. A taste of victory (20:1-21:35)
7. A faithful God despite a faithless people (22:1-25:18)

#### ii. Lessons from a Faithful Generation (26:1-30:16)

1. Second census and preparing the camp (26:1-30:16)
2. A taste of settlement (31:1-32:42)
3. Looking back and looking ahead (33:1-36:13)

## II. Overview of Numbers

**A. God’s Prepares the People (1-10:10)**

**B. The People Do not Trust God (10:11-19:22)**

- i. “Complain,” “grumble,” and “rebellion” appears regularly (11:1, 4; 12:1).
- ii. In 13 we see the greatest rebellion when the people show direct disbelief towards God’s promise.

**C. Yet God Perseveres with the People (20-36)**

- i. Location/setting: After about 40 years of wandering, just outside the Land.
- ii. Moses will not be able to enter the Land (20), Joshua will lead them (27).

## III. Why Study Numbers?

**A. First, we need to learn from the Israelite’s failures (1 Cor. 10, Ps 78).**

**B. Second, we learn about Jesus by seeing shadows of him in the OT (Luke 24:27).**

- i. A Prophet greater than Moses is needed (Heb. 3:1-6, Acts 3:21-22)
- ii. A Good Shepherd is needed (Num. 27:17 cp. John 10)
- iii. A salvation from judgment is needed (Num. 21 cp. John 3:14)