

WEEK NINE INTRODUCTION

Week 9 continues Act II Scene 3, Covenant and Law, as we traverse Numbers 6-28 with Psalm 90 and 95 as supplements. Numbers delves into the pilgrim nature of the people of Israel in the wilderness. They are a people *delivered* but they have not yet *arrived*. Bound between God's miraculous acts behind and His promise ahead they journey on. In Numbers, we see Israel balk at God's character and word. Grumbling and complaining saps their spiritual vigor preventing them from stepping in faith and obedience into God's future. In significant ways their pilgrim journeying points ahead to the pilgrim nature of the church between Jesus' ascension and His second coming, so much so that the Apostle Peter describes the Christians to whom he writes as "elect exiles."

KEY SCRIPTURE

The LORD bless and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

– Numbers 6:24-26

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

James Hamilton notes, "There is a census taken in Numbers 1, and another in Numbers 26. Between these two a generation dies in the wilderness. After the second, no Israelite deaths are recorded in the book of Numbers." Why did the generation which came out of Egypt die in the wilderness (see Num. 14:22 and the events which led up to that verse)? What was the *core* issue with the Israelites? How does it appear with/in the church today?

Moses seems overwhelmed by the people's complaining in Numbers 11, so much so that he's prepared to die. He says in Numbers 11:14-15, "I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once..." How has Moses' leadership been tested to this point? What principles for leadership in the church do we find in this episode? What is God's solution to Moses' problem (v. 17)? How does God's provision in v. 17 point ahead to a greater gift in the New Testament? How does leadership work in the New Testament church? Read Ephesians 4:1-16 as a reference.

What issue drives the rebellion of Numbers 16? How do you reconcile this chapter's teaching on leadership with the picture you see in the NT? What are the similarities? Differences? Consider Hebrews 13:7, 17.

Summarize the events of Numbers 20:2-13. What does Moses do? Why is that such a big deal? What is the consequence for Moses?

Numbers 21 marks a shift in the story. Tom Schreiner comments, "A new day in which Israel would enter the land was coming. Hence, Israel conquered Arad (21:1-3), Sihon (21:21-30), and Og (21:31-35) and was on the move to Canaan in fulfillment of the promise (21:1-20)." God keeps His promise through and despite His people's faithlessness. What does that teach us about God? List out some ways that God is the hero of the story.

Chapter 21 also contains another moment of poignant complaint from the people. Look at verse 5. Against whom did they speak? What is the implication of their complaining? What is the result? How does God's mercy meet the sin of the people here? How does this point to Jesus? Read John 3:14-15, how does God provide for us in our sin now?

What is the sin of Numbers 25? Perform an autopsy of the Israelites fall here. *How* did they fall into idolatry? What are some ways the same pattern appears today?

What is Moses' prayer in Numbers 27:15-16? What is God's answer? What leadership applications can you draw? Who are you leading? Influencing? Who is next in line behind you? How can you prepare them?

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

“[Moses prays,] Please pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your steadfast love”
-Numbers 14:19a

Who is far from God but near to you? Commit to pray for them. Pray for God to save them. Pray for opportunities to invite them to worship. One invite can change a life! Pray that God would help *you* be the one to tell them of the life-giving message of Jesus Christ.