

Numbers 1

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[0 : 00] Go with me to the book of Numbers. We are through with the book of Leviticus and now we are ready for the book of Numbers. The book of Numbers is continuing on our course on Sunday night, making our way through the Old Testament.

It's amazing to me that we have now come to the book of Numbers. It's taken us almost four years, four full years, right? Yeah, almost four years. I think my timing is right. It was 2016, so almost five years to get to this point.

We have made our way from Genesis 1 to Numbers 1, but still, I'm excited to get there. I don't think that I have to preach a long time on Sunday nights before we get to the end of the book of Revelation, just going at this pace.

But still, I'm excited for it. So we will be in Numbers 1 tonight and we will actually look at all of Numbers 1 because, as is the case most often with major portions of the Old Testament, we need to look at it in its entirety to get it in proper context. We could probably put Numbers 1 and Numbers 2 together, but I was afraid that I would probably go just a little bit long if we did that.

So we're going to try to limit ourselves to just Numbers 1. We want to understand things in our context, so we'll set all that up in just a moment. Let's open up with a word of prayer and then we'll get started.

[1 : 24] Lord, we're so thankful just to have this opportunity to gather together. And Lord, we just continue to rejoice. Lord, what a privilege it is to open up your word.

And God, what a privilege it is to read your word and to study it. So God, I pray tonight as we slow down just a little bit and we open up the word of God together. Lord, that you would enlighten our eyes.

Lord, that you would help us to see the truth that it contains. And Lord, that you would help us to be moved by that truth for your glory. Lord, in all things we ask that you would be exalted.

Lord, even in these Old Testament passages, may we see the exaltation of Christ. And may we see it for your glory and yours alone. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. The book of Numbers is one of the books written by Moses near the end of his life.

Many people believe we want to take this in proper setting, right? We'll take it in context, just as we said this morning. The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, all penned by the hand of Moses. The thought there is that they were penned by the hand of Moses in one sitting.

[2 : 27] So he sat down and God just began to speak to him and he began to pen the Pentateuch. That is Genesis through Deuteronomy. And if you think about the weight of that, it is really a major undertaking.

But God was really speaking through him and moving his hand as he wrote these books. And he wrote them as one volume divided up into five sections, five books that we have it in Scripture. And he would have written them in the last year of his life immediately before the nation of Israel went into the Promised Land. The Jewish title for the book of Numbers is actually taken from the very first verse where it says, In the Wilderness.

So the Jewish title can be translated in English, In the Wilderness. Because this is a writing of what happened with God's people in the wilderness. When the Septuagint came about, if you remember the Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Which would have been just a little bit before Christ, after the Babylonian captivity. If you have followed the reading plan, you have just finished the book of Ezra.

[3 : 32] Ezra is seen as one of the founders of the scribal Bible translators, right? So when the people would come out of Babylonian captivity, Ezra would have been one. Many people say the Septuagint finds its roots in the scribes of Ezra's descent.

Anyway, when the Jewish people began to leave Babylon and they were dispersed abroad, they needed a translation of scripture which they could understand. Because much like the problem

today, the Jewish people who were living in Egypt were having children who were growing up speaking Egyptian, not Hebrew.

People who were living in various parts of the world were speaking that dialect, not the Hebrew dialect. So they could no longer read the Hebrew scriptures for themselves. So they translated it into a modern current language, much today would be English.

That seems to be the language that would transcend it, but at that time it was Greek. So they took it to Greek, which is the Septuagint. When they did that, the Jewish translators changed the name from in the wilderness to the word which we have that translates into English, numbers.

Because of the countings, you find two censuses in the book of Numbers. And it is the numbering of God's people, one here at the very beginning in Numbers chapter 1. So yes, you will have to bear with me just a little bit as I read names.

[4 : 49] And later on, near the end of the book, the second counting of the people of Israel. Many Bible scholars will tell you you have the counting of the old generation and the counting of the new generation.

And what transpires between those two countings, if you were going to divide the book of Numbers up, you would have to divide it in the old generation and the new generation. And what transpires in the midst of those countings is the 38 years of wilderness wanderings.

It takes 11 days to get from Mount Sinai to Kadesh Barnea. Okay, 11 days travel. It takes 11 days to get to that region where they failed to go into the Promised Land.

They wandered around. Now, if we want to give them a little bit of time for all their stopping, because as you'll see in just a moment, it's numbering somewhere between 2 to 3 million people. So just trying to wrap your mind around this, okay?

Numbers 2 gives us the encampment of the nation of Israel. And I love how Bible translators and Bible scribes will tell you that that encampment probably spanned a region some 12 miles in circumference.

[5 : 52] Okay, so when you're on the mountaintop looking down, like Balaam was when he made this prophecy, he's looking at only a portion of it because God's people, I mean 2 to 3 million people camped around the tabernacle.

Okay, this is a mark. Many people, by the way, have tried to shrink that number and take that number down and try to say, well, it doesn't mean numbers, it means clans. And you just need to know this part of it, that there is no feasible recounting of that number to make it coincide with what Scripture says.

And I've always found it best to just take God's Word literally, okay? When it says this is the number, then this is the number. And so we just accept that. That's how I take it.

But anyway, you have the first counting of God's people. You have their denial to go into the Promised Land. And then you have 38 years of wandering until those that were 20 years and older perish, including Moses.

Probably, J. Sidlow Baxter says the most important date in the book of Numbers is the date of Aaron's death. It is recorded for us here because that closes the 40-year wandering.

[7 : 01] Two years and then 38 years of wandering. The day Aaron dies ends that season. And then you have the counting of the new generation, which would be the people who go into the Promised Land.

I know I'm throwing a lot of information at you, but I want you to be excited about the book of Numbers. The first counting says the census was about 603,000 valiant soldiers. You see the number there in Numbers chapter 1, 603,550.

The second counting would be like 600,000. So 601,000 and some change. So a difference of about 2,000 warriors. Okay, we'll make sense of all this in just a moment.

It is an exciting book. I know it seems to scare us a little bit because it gives us names and accounts and things like that. This is the book in which Paul references in the book of 1 Corinthians.

That says all of those who walked under the cloud and under the fire, all those who went through the wilderness, that they were set forth as an example unto us so that we would take heed to our walk so as not to fail to enter in in unbelief as they did.

[8 : 09] Now that's Billy Joe's paraphrasing, right? But you go back and you read that in 1 Corinthians where Paul says that the book of Numbers or the record of what happened in the wilderness was put forth for us as an example of how to live our lives and how to make sure we're living in faithfulness.

J. Sidlow Baxter, by the way, if there's any other book that I would recommend apart from or to put along beside, if I could only tell you to buy one book to put alongside your Bible.

Billy Graham recommended this one. This one was one that was given to me very early in the ministry, one that I have gleaned a lot of information from. But if there is just one book, if you didn't have a library shelf full of books and you didn't, you weren't, I know, I know, okay, I'm old school. I'm not talking about downloading PDF files. I'm not talking about e-books. And that's good if you want to do that stuff. I like holding books in my hand and highlighting them and then going back and wondering why I highlighted it, okay?

I'm just kind of an old school guy. But if there is one book that I could say, get this, and you don't have to, I'm not going to say you don't have to have any other book, but if you only wanted to buy one, it would be a book by J. Sidlow Baxter called Explore the Bible.

[9 : 18] It's a very thick book, but what Baxter does there is he is kind of a student. He's taking you through lessons of Scripture. Many great pastors and preachers have said if they could only have one book on an island besides the Bible, it would be J. Sidlow Baxter's Explore the Bible or Explore the Book.

And he gives a number of lessons on each portion of Scripture. He gives the theme for the book of Numbers as God's goodness and the goodness and the severity of God.

The goodness and the severity of God. The goodness of God being extended to the new generation and God staying faithful to his promises and allowing them to follow him into the promised land and the severity of God being shown to the old generation who failed to enter in because of unbelief.

That God in his severity will be true to his self and his character and his holiness, which if you deny me and you do not completely obey me, then you will perish. But his goodness allows for grace and mercy for those who were of the younger generation to walk and to go into that promised land.

He will stay true to his purposes. I warn Wiersbe gives the theme of the book as man's failures and God's faithfulness. So in either way, when we take this, no matter who we look at, no matter how we read it, we will see that the book of Numbers reveals for us how God is good, but also the standard he sets is right, and how even though man fails, God stays faithful.

[10 : 43] The key verse is probably found, and I'm going to get to the message in just a moment. I'm just trying to set the platform from which we will stand on. The key verse will be found in Numbers 14, verses 8 and 9.

You don't have to turn there. If you want to mark them, you can, because everything you read kind of revolves around these two key verses. Numbers 14, verses 8 and 9 says, If the Lord is pleased with us, then he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord, and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them. That's kind of the theme.

If we trust God to do what God says he will do, then he will do it. Don't live in fear. So that's kind of the theme of the book of Numbers. I was asked just a moment ago if I ever, in reading scripture and making my way through Bible reading plan, ever stumble across something new, something I did not see before, and I say yes, every time.

Every time I read through scripture, I see something new. And this passage and studying it today had one of those moments where I just got super excited because I saw something for the first time that I had never seen. So you'll have to kind of bear with me in my excitement a little bit this evening because I was like, wow, these are the things that get pastors excited.

[11 : 59] Like, wow, I've never seen this. I never understood this. This is so amazing. This is so cool. But we'll just read Numbers chapter 1, and you'll bear with me as I completely butcher these people's names, right?

And if you know how to pronounce them better than I, then we can have a discussion later, and you can help me so that in a few years, if I ever preach this again, I'll do better. But I don't know. Their names are very difficult.

I do want to point out that you have a descendant of Jesus Christ in this naming, by the way. You have a descendant of Jesus Christ. I'll ask you in just a moment if you know who he is, okay? You'll take notes because he is mentioned in the book of Ruth as a descendant of Christ.

He's actually the father, I think, of Obed, if that tells you anything, okay? Numbers chapter 1 says, Then the Lord 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.

Just stop right there. That's why there's 38 years of wilderness wanderings recorded because this is the second year, right? So they'd already been out two years. So it was in the first of the second month and the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt.

[13:05] Same. Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel by their families, by their fathers' households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head, from 20 years old and upward.

Whoever is able to go to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies. With you, moreover, there shall be a man of each tribe, each one head of his father's household.

These, then, are the names of the men who shall stand with you. Of Reuben, Elizur, the son of Shador. Of Simeon, Shalemiel, the son of Zerushaddai.

Of Judah, Nahshon, the son of Aminadab. Of Issachar, Nathaniel, the son of Zor. Of Zebulun, Eliab, the son of Helon. Of the sons of Joseph, of Ephraim.

Elishamah, the son of Amihud. Of Manasseh. Gamaliel, the son of Padehazor. Of Benjamin.

Abaddon, the son of Gideonah. Of Dan, Ahazai, the son of Amishadai.

[14:05] Of Asher, Pajil, the son of Ocran. Of Gad, Elisaph, the son of Dul. Of Naphtali, Ahirah, the son of Enon. These are they who were called of the congregation.

The leaders of their father's tribes. They were the heads of divisions of Israel. So Moses and Aaron took these men. Who had been designated by name.

And they assembled all the congregation together. On the first of the second month. Then they registered by ancestry. And their families. By their father's households. According to the number of names.

From 20 years old and upward. Head by head. Now the sons of Reuben.

Israel's firstborn. Their genealogical registration. By their families. By their father's households.

According to the number of names. Head by head. Every male. From 20 years old and upward.

Whoever was able to go out to war.

[14:59] Their numbered men. Of the tribe of Reuben. Were 46,500. Of the sons of Simeon. Their genealogical registration. By their families. By their father's households. Their numbered men.

According to the number of names. Head by head. Every male. From 20 years old and upward.

Whoever was able to go out to war. Their numbered men. Of the tribe of Simeon. Were 59,300. Of the sons of Gad.

Their genealogical registration. By their families. By their father's households. According to the number of names. From 20 years old and upward. Whoever was able to go out to war. Their numbered men. Of the tribe of Gad. Were 45,650.

Of the sons of Judah. Their genealogical registration. By their families. By their father's households. According to the number of names. From 20 years old and upward. Whoever was able to go out to war.

Their numbered men. Of the tribe of Judah. Were 74,600. Of the sons of Issachar. Their genealogical registration. By their families. By their father's households. According to the number of names.

[15:55] From 20 years old and upward. Whoever was able to go out to war. Their numbered men. Of the tribe of Issachar were 54,400. Of the sons of Zebulun, their genealogical registration by their families, by their father's households, according to the number of names from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Zebulun were 57,400.

Of the sons of Joseph, namely, of the sons of Ephraim, their genealogical registration by their families, by their father's household, according to the number of names from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Ephraim were 40,500.

Of the sons of Manasseh, their genealogical registration by their families, by their father's households, according to the number of names from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Manasseh, were 32,200.

Of the sons of Benjamin, their genealogical registration by their families, by their father's household, according to the number of names from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Benjamin were 35,400. Of the sons of Dan, their genealogical registration by their families, by their father's household, according to the number of

names from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Dan were 62,700. Of the sons of Asher, their genealogical registration of their families by their father's household, according to the number of names from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Asher were 41,500. Of the sons of Naphtali, their genealogical registration by their families, by their father's households, according to the number of names from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war, their numbered men of the tribe of Naphtali were 53,400. These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, 12 men, each of whom was his father's household. So all the numbered men of the sons of Israel by their father's households from 20 years old and upward, whoever was able to go out to war in Israel, even all the numbered men were 603,550.

The Levites, however, were not numbered among them by their father's tribe. For the Lord had spoken to Moses saying, only the tribe of Levi, you shall not number, nor shall you take their census among the sons of Israel. But you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony and over all its furnishings and over all that belongs to it. They shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings and they shall take care of it. They shall also camp around the tabernacle. So when the tabernacle is to set out, the Levites shall take it down. And when the tabernacle encamps, the Levites shall set it up. But the layman who comes near shall be put to death. The sons of Israel shall camp each man by his own camp and each man by his own standard, according to their armies. But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony so that there will be no wrath on the congregation of sons of Israel. So the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the testimony. Thus the sons of Israel did according to all which the Lord had commanded Moses. So they did. Numbers chapter one.

[18:58] Anybody pick up the descendant of Jesus? Should be very easy for you because he's only one of the leaders who is of the tribe of Judah. There's only one, right? If you read there, his name is Nishan, the son of Aminadab, who is of the tribe of Judah. If you go to Ruth chapter four, the end of Ruth chapter four, you'll see that Nishan is mentioned there as being of the descendant of David, who is the descendant of Jesus. So what you have is one of the leaders, one of the 12 men chosen happens to be a descendant. Well, we'll say happens to be because it's divinely appointed to be a descendant of Jesus Christ. One thing that's always amazed me is just kind of a side note.

And I don't think that it's coincidental. I don't think that it just happens to be happenstance. But one thing that we see here is the preeminence of Judah. Judah begins to rise to the first place. Judah is always the largest. Judah always has the most warriors. And Judah is always first place throughout the book of Numbers because it is from the tribe of Judah that will bring forth our Savior, who is Jesus Christ. So we see here the counting. I want you to see tonight the numbering of his people, the numbering of his people. And we'll try to make our way through it. I'll try not to bore you with the details, but I want you to get as excited about it as I am, because here we have a clear command of God to count his people, to number his people. And we'll kind of break out how he counted them and why they counted them. One thing that I love about the writing of Moses is that when he sat down and he wrote in one setting, he was writing for an intentional purpose. As we always say, he wrote for a reason, right? But Moses did us a great favor in recording the time frame of these events. And we see them recorded all throughout this book. But we need to understand that the purpose of Moses is not to write how things happen in chronological order. I'll get you there in just a minute. Do not let it upset you at times when the Bible does not run chronologically. Okay? As Americans, we tend to think in chronological fashion, which means that something happens first, something else happens next. And we need to know that things happen in order, right? We try to judge things based on time of happening and when it happened and tell me what happened first and tell me what happened next and tell me what happened there. In scripture, things are not always, and even around the world, things are not necessarily put in chronological order because it focuses on people. It focuses more on people than on time. And it focuses more on what is taking place to fulfill the purpose of the writing. And here, Moses is writing to show God's faithfulness and man's failure to show how the old generation failed and the new generation entered in by faith. What amazes me is that those who were born into captivity and released from captivity failed to walk in faith through the wilderness. But those that were born and raised in a wilderness of wandering and saw the provision of God, saw the man of

God, one thing that some scholars argue, and I don't say Bible scholars, I say scholars argue that the number could not be two to three million people is because when you go to the wilderness, it is a very barren wilderness. And it says there's no way that these people, that two to three million people could survive in this wilderness. And as someone says, the scholars do a great disfavor to themselves when they always do not count in or factor in the God factor, that they could not provide for themselves. But that does not mean that God could not provide for them there, right? There's no place so barren that God cannot provide. And if we look at that land, even though many people, historians and even archaeologists will tell you that that wilderness was probably a lot more lush in that day, it probably would not have sustained two to three million people, but God can sustain his people anywhere he has them.

And I don't think it's coincidental that those who saw the provision of God from very young age to a very mature age were able to walk in by faith. But those who had got accustomed to living in Egypt could not walk in in faith, right? Because the faithfulness of God, here I raise mine Ebenezer, right? We set up those stones of help that show us where God has helped us and where God has helped us.

And in the 38 years of wilderness wandering, they set a lot of stones up, right? And those that were once kids could look down and go, you know, I've been walking in those rocks for 38 years and my sandals have not worn out. God must be up to something here. Surely I can trust him to cross the Jordan and take the promised land, right? So Moses in writing this is setting the scene or the theme around the people. So he introduces us first to the people who will fail. And then later we will be introduced to the people who will have faith to enter in. But we see when this event took place, it says the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. Well, let's just go ahead and lay out the outline. That way I don't get ahead of myself. There's three things I want you to see. The second one will take us a little time to flesh out. But three things I want you to see. The first one is I want you to see the place of the count, the place of the count. Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai. So we want to be here at this place. We want to know what's going on, right? [24:03] They are at Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai should all of a sudden pique your interest because this is where God gave forth the Decalade, the 10 great sayings. We call it the 10 commandments. It was here at Mount Sinai that the people of God had already seen God lead them through the Red Sea. He'd already seen God make the bitter waters clean. They'd already seen God bring meat in the middle of the wilderness and they had heard the voice of God. Remember that it wasn't just Moses who heard the voice of God.

Some of the leaders had been invited to fellowship underneath the feet of God. They were overwhelmed with the glory of God over them and they had a meal about halfway up the mountain. And then Moses had went up there. They had also failed God, okay? So they'd also, Moses had went up the mountain 40 days and he had been up there and they built a golden calf and they worshiped the calf and he came down, broke the tablets and he went back up the mountain for 40 more days. So what we see here is they're witness, they had seen this and they had made a covenant with God because the Bible tells us that they all heard God speak and they all responded and they were all moved by the holiness of God. Moses, while up there, had received the instructions for the building of the tabernacle.

He had come down and they had built the tabernacle. I'm just trying to set the scene for you, okay? And it tells us, well, I don't have to tell you this. You turn with me. Go back one book. Go back to the book of Exodus, okay? In the book of Exodus, we are told that he erected the tabernacle, that he completed the tabernacle. And it says, let me see if I can get it here for you. In verse 17 of Exodus 40, okay? In verse 17 of Exodus 40, now in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. Did you see that? Now in the first month of the second year, the first day, Moses erected the tabernacle. Now we don't skip over scripture. God did something in a month. And in a month, what he did is he gave them the book of Leviticus, okay? Everything that it took us probably well over a year to go through, God gave them in a month. Because it says in Numbers chapter one, in the second month, in the second year, after they had come out of the land of Egypt.

So one month later, God speaks to him. So think about this. They have just completed the tabernacle. In the first month, on the first day of the second year, he completed the tabernacle. They built it.

[26 : 31] That's why they hung out at Mount Sinai so long. They were there building the tabernacle, building the furnishings, being reconciled. God spoke to them for a month on the holiness of God. He spoke to them. I mean, think about this in time frame. If you had a month of being in school with God, and God could talk to you for a month, he could reveal a lot to you, right? So they're there for a month, and God is showing them the book of Leviticus, the holiness, the sacrificial system.

And then, one month later, on the second month, the same year, God speaks to Moses, still in that same place, and he tells him to take a census. So we're looking at the place here, right? Take a census.

So he is still there. The Shekinah glory of God has just filled the tabernacle. Remember that in the book of Exodus? We can't go into the tabernacle. God's glory is there. So he gives them Leviticus. This is how you approach me in all of my glory and splendor. All of these events are going on. He's inviting the people to worship him. And one month later, he's like, all right, Moses, take a census. So we see the place. It's in Mount Sinai, right? He is in the tent of meeting. He is here in the presence of God. So this command comes from literally the face of God. Because Moses is in the tent of meeting. It was in the tent of meeting that when Moses left, the glory of God would be radiating from his face, and he would have to veil his face when he went before the people, right?

[27 : 49] And they would see the radiance of God's glory on the face of Moses, and then he would put the veil back over his face so that they wouldn't see the disappearance of that radiance until he went back into the presence of God. So what we see here is that God has said in this place, at this time in history, for Moses to take a count of his people. So we see first and foremost the place of God's counting. After they had come out, after they had seen God move, after they had seen God deliver, but before they were in their biggest trials, before they were to go to the place of battle, God was calling him to number his people. We see the place of the count. The second thing I want you to see is the people of the count, right? We want to see the people that this entails. First and foremost, we see he was commanded to take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel.

Take a census, pay attention to the wording, of all of the congregation of the sons of Israel. And it says down in verse 18, and we're still in Numbers 1, and they assembled all the congregation together on the first of the second month. Then they registered by ancestry in their families by their father's household according to the number of names. So what is he saying here?

First and foremost, this census was for those who were of the nation of Israel and could prove it.

You had to be able to prove your ancestry. You had to register by your father's household.

Why is that important? You remember when they left Egypt, there was this other group that comes with them. It's called the mixed multitude. Because, I mean, hey, if you're an Egyptian and all of a sudden, he who you thought was the biggest God in the land that is Pharaoh has just been defeated.

Well, that God's bigger than my God, so I'm going to go with those people, right? So there was a mixed multitude. There's always, by the way, there's always people who want to travel in on the believers' blessings, right? We understand that. They want to be united to that, that prosperity gospel type of thing. Like, oh, God's blessing them. I'm going to go with them.

[29 : 58] There's this mixed multitude. They didn't get counted. You know why that's important? Because just a little bit later on in the book of Numbers, we'll find that the mixed multitude causes problems. They cause big problems. They're those who lead to the grumbling and the, and kind of the complaining and the questioning. Because the reality is this, those who are just along for the blessings are never really numbered with God's people. God says, count my people and only my people. Warren Wearsby said, I wonder if we had to prove in our churches today, if we had to prove our lineage, would we still be able to fail, fill every position to say, well, I'm a part of the family of God, and this is how I know I'm a part of the family of God. This is the lineage. This is my spirit. This is the Holy Spirit speaking in me. So we see the, first of all, as far as the people that are counted, it's only the nation of Israel. God was concerned only for his people. The mixed multitude was left out. One thing that amazes me, it says here in verse four, with you moreover, there shall be a man of each tribe, each one of his father's household. These are the names of the men who shall stand with you. God gives the name of 12 men who will stand with Moses and Aaron. It says in verse 17, so Moses and Aaron took these men who had been designated by name. God gave the name, right? In the tent of meeting, God says, these are the men I want with you. I'm about to show you what got me so excited this afternoon and probably will not get you nowhere near as excited as it got me, but it got me excited, okay? Because God had particular people he wanted to stand beside

Moses and Aaron. He had people he wanted beside them. Now, I remember as a new believer, okay, I did just about what every new believer did. I kind of saturated myself in the Bible and I said, well, I want to know everything

Jesus has told me and I want to know everything that Jesus says. So I went to the gospels. I came to faith through reading the book of Romans. I came to faith in reading of the writings of Paul and I was so excited about the writings of Paul. And then I got into the gospels and I started, hey, where'd the gospels start, right? Matthew. You got Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So I'm going to start in Matthew.

And so I was reading in Matthew. This is, by the way, where we get in trouble thinking things are in chronological order. And I read in Matthew where Jesus calls his disciples to himself. He calls the apostles. And I remember such conviction fell upon me. And I kind of had this guilt complex. Satan was using this and I don't say this to excuse anything, but hear me out. I remember that when Jesus saw Peter and John fishing and it's recorded in Mark as well, did he walked upon them and he said, follow me. And there's this word in Mark where it says, and immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Now Mark's favorite word is immediately. He loves the word immediately or straightway. Everything's happening fast in Mark. I didn't know that, but there's such conviction fell upon me. It's like, man, all they did was hear Jesus speak and they followed him. That's all they did. Why am I so reluctant to hear Jesus command me and me just leave everything and follow me? I wrestled with that for so long.

Now, again, I'm not using this as an excuse, but you want to take the Bible in context because to get, as what Paul Harvey would say, the rest of the story, you got to read the gospel of John because in the gospel of John, Jesus had already taken Peter, James and John and Andrew to a wedding before they issued this call. He had taken them to a wedding in Canaan. They had seen the water turned into wine. They had hung out with him for a little while. Then they went back to fishing.

[33 : 44] And the next time they saw Jesus, Jesus said, follow me. And they left their nets and followed him. They knew who they were following. Now all of a sudden I realized it's not a matter of guilt.

It's grace and compassion. Christ revealed himself to them before he called them to sacrifice and follow him. And that's exactly what he does, right? I mean, God calls us to make sacrifice, you know, to live sacrificial lives, but he never calls us to live sacrificially without compassionately showing his worth, without compassionately showing he is worth following and he is worthy of our sacrifices. And he had done that.

And then when I read that, I was like, wow, it makes so much more sense now. No wonder they left their nets behind because they had already seen he could provide. They had already seen, they had already heard him preach. John the Baptist had already said, that is the lamb that takes away the sin of the world.

They had already heard that long before he had given that. They were waiting on that command. You know how that, that comes to me. Long before you responded to Christ, he was already showing you he was worth it.

He was wooing you and drawing you and moving you and leading you and calling you. And then there was that day where you finally heard that call and come follow me. And you said, yes, Lord, I'll follow. And that's, that's compassion. But what I see here, and let's go back to numbers, right? You have these 12 men. Like, man, how did God know these are the 12 men I want?

[35 : 10] The, I mean, God knows because God is God, but did God just randomly pick 12 names out and say, get these? One of them we know is a descendant of Jesus, but there were 12 leaders of the nation.

There are 12 leaders of each of the 12 tribes minus the tribe of Levi. We'll get to that in just a moment. Okay. So you had 12 men of the tribes and did God just pick these 12 and say, take these 12?

The answer to that is no. Don't let this blow you away. But the events we have recorded in Numbers chapter one, come after the events we have recorded in Numbers seven, eight, and nine.

Okay. Now I didn't preach it in this order because God wrote it in this order, but turn with me to number seven. Okay. You can turn with me. Now keep in mind this date. It's Sunday night. It's okay.

If we get a little deep and, and we can go back. Numbers one says that it was on the first of the second month in the second year that they had come out of land of Egypt, right?

[36 : 09] So the first of the second month of the second year, we have recorded for us in Numbers chapter seven, Numbers chapter seven, verse one starts with, I'm not preaching these because we will come to them in time. But number seven says this now on the day that Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle. Remember Exodus 40 verse 17. That was the first day of the first month of the second year. So a month prior to the command given in Numbers one. Numbers chapter nine tells us that the Lord had spoke to Moses. Thus the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness.

This is number nine, one in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt. So the events we have recorded in seven, eight, and nine are the events that happened as soon as the tabernacle was completed. Numbers nine is the observation of the Passover. So they had that.

The reason they had it set up on the first day, I'll give you a good chronological view on the first day of the first month of the second year, Moses completed the tabernacle. Now the first month, there's a very important day that happens in the first month. It's the 14th day. The 14th day of the first month is the Passover, right? So what happens in Numbers nine is the 14th day. They take the Passover. Well, what was going on in seven and eight are the things that happened on day two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Twelve days. Numbers chapter seven tells you what is going on for 12 days before they observe the Passover. Stay with me. I'm gonna tie it all together.

I got excited. Maybe you don't, maybe you can just say, well, does that really matter? But it does. You're keeping in mind those 12 men God called to stand beside Moses and Aaron for 12 days. People come and bring an offering. Now, when we get to number seven, you will be tired of hearing the repetitive offering because each day, one man for 12 days brings the same offering. Numbers seven, verse two says, then the leaders of Israel, the heads of the father's households made an offering. They were the leaders of the tribes. They were the ones who were over the numbered men. Verse 10 and chapter seven says, the leaders offered the dedication offering for the altar when it was anointed. So the leaders offered their offering before the altar. That's all I'm going to read for you in number seven. What happens is the 12 men you have in Numbers chapter one, as soon as the tabernacle was completed, they bring carts and oxen, six carts, 12 oxen, two oxen for each cart. There's one car for every two men and one oxen for every man. Those carts and oxen are the ones that are used to move the tabernacle. And then for 12 days, they bring an offering to anoint the tabernacle that leads up to the observation of the Passover. All I'm saying is that when God gave

Moses on the second month, the names of the people he wanted to stand beside him, they were men who had already sacrificially given and worshiped him. God was calling those who were already worshipping him and giving to him to stand beside them. He wasn't just picking names out of a hat.

[39 : 41] God said, these men have proved they desire to be in my presence. They have come and they have given sacrificially. They have come and they have provided for my tabernacle. These are the men I want beside you. God was calling the worshipers to be the leaders. By the way, their names will be mentioned again in Numbers 2 because they are those who are leading each army camp. Numbers marries for us, worship in war. I know it's hard to do it. It's the same marriage we have in Revelation, right? You worship him while he's at war with the world. And Numbers shows us that these 12 men God called by name because Moses and Aaron took the men whose names had been given to them were men that had already given to God. They were men who were already setting the pace of worship for the nation of Israel.

They were the men who for the 12 days between the erection and the building of the tabernacle to the keeping of the Passover. Each day, one of them had been there giving to the tabernacle to anoint and to sacrifice. It'll be a number of bulls and a number of rams and a number of silver dishes and all the fine flour. Everything that is needed were provided by these 12 men. These people are the leaders.

And by the way, none of them are from the tribe of Levi. Levi. Because the Levites are the servants. These are the laymen who are leading. These are the laymen who are there. See the people of the count.

These are the ones who are going to count. And then finally, in this people of the count, we see the tribes that are counted. The tribe of Levi is excluded, right? The tribe of Levi does not get counted. We don't count the Levites from 20 years old and upward. As a matter of fact, we count the Levites from a month old and upward. We get the count of the Levites in Numbers chapter 3. And the reason we get the count of the Levites is because they were those who were taken in place of every firstborn male child of the nation of Israel. They were those who were given, dedicated to God. The Levites are counted later. But the Levites are excluded from this because those counted do not include those who were given to God. These counted here are 12 tribes because Joseph takes the place of two, right? The sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. Now all of a sudden we begin to see Joseph's name not being mentioned, but we see the descendants or the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh being mentioned again.

Let us stand astounded at how God works because Joseph was sold into slavery and sent to Egypt for 30 shekels of silver. And he was sent to a most desolate place and held in captivity, but God worked things out for his glory. It was a Gentile wife that Joseph had, right? As a matter of fact, his wife was the daughter of a priest in Egypt. And that word priest does not mean one who was serving God, right? So a Gentile, non-Jewish wife, but there were two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, that God in his redemption and reconciliation now puts to a place of prominence. So we see the people of the count. Third and finally, and we end with this, and I know I've thrown a lot of information at you, but third and finally, we will end with this. We see the purpose of the count. Why did God call Moses to number his people?

[43 : 06] It's repeated over and over again, so we do not want to lose it. It is repeated. It says that it will be those who are 20 years old and upward, whoever is able to go out to war. God was calling him to number those who were fit for battle. This was a count ordered by God so that the nation of Israel would know how strong their army was. You say, why? Because God is going to use the nation of Israel as his instrument of judgment upon the inhabitants of Canaan. Sometimes we have a hard time reconciling how can a loving God bring such warfare and calamity upon the Canaanite people when he called them to go into the promised land. Doesn't that just seem vengeful? Well, it does until you read all of the Old Testament, and you see the sin of Canaan recorded for us in the descendants of Noah, right? You see the sin of Canaan, and then you read of that Canaanite genealogy, and you see their wickedness, and you see their desperation, and then you're reminded that Abraham pitched his tent and proclaimed, called on the name of the Lord, which is just another word for he began preaching the message of God, and yet he was doing all this in the land of Canaan, and they rejected that, and then for 400 years God was patient and gave them the opportunity to repent while his people were in captivity in Egypt, and they only got progressively worse, and God in his holiness finally brings a day of reckoning, and he brings that day of reckoning with his people.

The Canaanites will be judged for their sin. That's the same thing that's going to happen in the end times here, right? That God will judge people for their sin, and he's using the nation of Israel for that, but God is calling Moses to count his people so that they will know that they have an army sufficient for the task ahead of them.

603,550. That one tribe, the sons of Gad, everybody else rounded their number off to the nearest hundred. The sons of Gad rounded theirs off to the nearest fifty. I don't know why they wanted their men to be counted. I don't know. Everybody else is 46,500, 59,300, 74,600. Gad says, no, we're 45,650.

They wanted to round theirs off, so we have this 603,550 number. God says, these are your warriors. I'm equipping you with enough to take the land. That land is yours. I'm going to give it to you.

Remember, Numbers 14, if we'll trust what he says, if we'll accept it by faith, he has taken their strength away and given it to us. We are a multitude. We are 603,550 warriors.

[45 : 49] Yet, they lacked the faith to see what God was calling them to do. And in their eyes, they would always be weak slaves. In their eyes, they would always be nothing but brickmakers. And God could never call them to be something else. He gives them the land with a little bit fewer than this. Because the second census, they don't have this many. Because God is reminding them here, I'm going to let you count how many warriors you have. I'm going to let you see how big your army is. Sometimes God opens our eyes and shows us how much he has done for us. He shows us how sufficient he has provided for us. He shows us just how strong and mighty he has been in our lives.

And he does it before he calls us to step out on faith on him in that strength. And here, he's going to show them how large the army is. And then, about a year later, he's going to call them to trust him to use that army. And they're going to say, nah. Of that 603,550, only two go into the promised land. Two.

Joshua and Caleb. Everybody else dies in the wilderness. Because they didn't believe God was strong enough. Let's pray. Lord, I thank you so much that you've allowed us to open up this portion of your word. And Lord, I pray that it would captivate our hearts and our minds. And Lord, call us to live a life of faith for your glory.

We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen.