

Episode: Promised Land Series No. 09

Narrator: Caleb

Primary Scriptures: Numbers 1-24

Story Summary: Census, regulations, dedication of Tabernacle, spies to Canaan, wander in the wilderness, travel to Moab

Location: Desert of Sinai, wilderness, Moab

Time: c. 1526 BC Birth of Moses
c. 1446 BC The plagues and exodus
c. 1445 BC. The Ten Commandments
c. 1406 BC The Israelites enter Canaan

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Numbers 1:54; 11:1; 12:3, 6-8; 13:30; 14:8-9, 29-30, 33; 20:12

The book of *Numbers* starts with a seemingly mundane event: God ordering the census of the Israelites. One purpose of the census is to count the fighting men over twenty years of age. The unspoken message in the census is that Moses can either depend on his fighting men or he can depend on God. Years later, King David takes a similar census not commanded of God, and it is a great sin.

The census is followed by instructions about how the tribes are to be arranged when camped or moving, and more instructions about the priests and regulations for the Israelites.

Numbers 7:89 imparts a little tidbit of information. Whenever Moses met with God in the tent, he heard the voice of God speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the ark of the covenant.

The Israelites finally left Sinai and were on the way to occupy Canaan. At the Lord's command, Moses sent out twelve tribal leaders to explore the land. Their job was to gather information. When they returned, ten of the twelve men not only reported on what they saw, but also incited the people to refuse to go to Canaan because of the potential danger. Only Caleb and Joshua insisted that the Israelites should go to conquer the land.

God was so angry about the Israelites' rebellion that he threatened to extinguish them. Moses talked God out of doing so, but God found another punishment. The Israelites were sentenced to forty years of wandering in the desert. This was the amount of time it would take before the death of all of the fighting men whose names were taken in the census.

The remainder of *Numbers* speaks of Korah's Rebellion, more priestly duties, the water from the rock at Kadesh, and the death of Aaron. It is hard to see in the passages, but the end of *Numbers* talks about the preparation to enter Canaan after wandering for forty years. This includes the trip around Edom and Moab, the defeat of kings, and the actions of Balaam. After this, the Israelites are on the Plain of Moab, ready to enter Canaan.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why might have God wanted Moses to take a census of the Israelites?
2. Why didn't Moses include the Levites in the census?
3. What was the Nazirite vow?
4. What was one purpose of the cloud above the Tabernacle?
5. About how many months after leaving Egypt was it before the Israelites left Sinai?
6. Why did Aaron and Miriam oppose Moses?
7. Who wanted to send the twelve spies into Canaan to scope out the country?

1. For Moses to know how to allocate resources and jobs, and know how many fighting men were available for battle. 2. They were appointed to serve in the Tabernacle (Num. 1:50). 3. According to Numbers 6, it was a special vow of dedication to the Lord. 4. When the cloud lifted and moved, the Israelites were to follow; When it stayed still, the Israelites were to stay encamped. 5. About fourteen months. 6. They complained about his Cushite wife, but mostly they seemed to have been jealous of his power and gifts. 6. According to Numbers 13:1-2, God instructed Moses to do it.

Application Questions:

1. Numbers 13 tells the story of the twelve spies. In 13:27, the spies report about how good the land is. In 13:28, they quit giving the report to Moses, and start scaring the people with the strength of the inhabitants. Despite the urgings of Moses, Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, the Israelites rebel and refuse to enter Canaan. Do you ever behave as if the power of worldly things is more than the power of God? What blessings have you missed out on because of that?
2. After the report from ten of the spies, the Israelites refused to enter Canaan. Their rebellion caused God to declare that he had had enough of their disobedience, and that they would have to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Do you perceive God will forgive you no matter how often you sin, or will there come a day when he says enough is enough?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Numbers 14:39-45 tells the story of what happened after the Israelites found out their punishment for rebelling against God. Their punishment was so harsh they wanted to have a second chance and tried to force God into giving it to them. Do you believe you should have to obey the first time you are told something, or do you rely on second chances? Is it unfair when you don't get a second chance?
2. Numbers 15:27 talks of the sacrifice that had to be given for unintentional sins. Do believe God should automatically forgive your unintentional since since it is not your fault?