

**October 25, 2020**  
**Following the Lord**  
**Numbers 1-10**  
**FOCUS: Numbers 9:15-10:36**

**BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN**

Oct 25 Luke 4-5	Oct 29 Luke 12-13
Oct 26 Luke 6-7	Oct 30 Luke 14-16
Oct 27 Luke 8-9	Oct 31 Luke 17-18
Oct 28 Luke 10-11	Nov 1 Luke 19-20

**Overview of Leviticus 24-27**

- Numbers 1** Census of the people  
**Numbers 2** Arrangement of the camps  
**Numbers 3** Calling of Levites and Priests  
**Numbers 4** Responsibilities of 3 tribes of Levi  
**Numbers 5** About defilement and adultery  
**Numbers 6** Nazarite vows and Aaron's blessing

**Key verses:** <sup>22</sup> *Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,*  
<sup>23</sup> *"Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:*  
<sup>24</sup> *The Lord bless you, and keep you;*  
<sup>25</sup> *The Lord make His face shine on you,*  
*And be gracious to you;*  
<sup>26</sup> *The Lord lift up His countenance on you,*  
*And give you peace.'*  
<sup>27</sup> *So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them."*

- Numbers 7** Tribes take turns presenting offerings  
**Numbers 8** Setting the Lampstand and Cleansing the Levites  
**Numbers 9** Celebrating the Passover again Following the Cloud of God's Presence  
**Numbers 10** Trumpets for Assembly and Alarm Setting out from Sinai

**Lesson Idea: People of God follow God's Presence.**

**Background:** The book of Numbers details the journeys of Israel after leaving Mount Sinai, as they headed for the land God promised to give them. The bulk of the book deals with their failure to trust God and their refusal to enter the promised land resulting in 40 years of wilderness wanderings. The end of the book shows the second generation of Israel preparing to go in and conquer the land.

The first ten chapters of Numbers deal with the organization of the people of Israel into a nation that

could move together under the direction of the Lord. A census is taken at the beginning of the book to find out how many men could serve in the military as they proceeded into warfare. It is interesting to note that after Israel failed to enter the promised land because of their fear of the inhabitants, a second census would be taken towards the end of the wilderness period. The numbers of military-aged men were roughly the same as the earlier census indicating that the earlier generation had sufficient numbers to conquer the first if they had just trusted the Lord.

Before leaving Sinai, the first few chapters direct the order of campsites for the tribes, the assignments of the Levites, and how the Tabernacle and its holy items were to be handled. The Tabernacle was dedicated with offerings from each of the tribes and the Levites were cleansed. In Numbers 9 Israel observed their second annual Passover celebration. This indicates that they had been at the foot of Mount Sinai for a year. Our lesson today will focus in on parts of Numbers 9 and 10 to observe how God led His people to begin their next journey towards the Promised Land.

**Numbers 9:15-23 Following God's Presence****Questions to Ponder:**

- **Why did a cloud and fire cover the tabernacle?**
- **How would the people decide when to move out and when to stay in place?**
- **Why does v 19-22 emphasize the amount of days they would camp in one place?**

**The Cloud on the Tabernacle**

<sup>15</sup> *Now on the day that the tabernacle was erected the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony, and in the evening it was like the appearance of fire over the tabernacle, until morning.* <sup>16</sup> *So it was continuously; the cloud would cover it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.* <sup>17</sup> *Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp.* <sup>18</sup> **At the command of the Lord the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the Lord they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped.** <sup>19</sup> **Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the Lord's charge and not set out.** <sup>20</sup> *If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, according to the command of the Lord they remained camped. Then according to the command of the Lord they set out.* <sup>21</sup> *If sometimes the cloud remained from*

evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or if it remained in the daytime and at night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out. <sup>22</sup> **Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out.** <sup>23</sup> **At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out; they kept the Lord's charge, according to the command of the Lord through Moses.**

#### **NOTES:**

God's presence was not only powerful with His people, but at this point it was also visible. A cloud covered the Tabernacle by day and fire appeared over it by night. This physical manifestation of God's glory became the beacon that would guide the people in their travels. But even though they followed the cloud and the fire, verse 18 indicates that they really were being obedient to **'the command of the Lord'**. They would march when the cloud moved forward and camp when it settled, but all the time acknowledging that it was actually God who guided them in their journey. They were practicing national obedience by staying put as long as God's cloud lingered, but moving immediately whenever the cloud proceeded.

Verses 19-22 emphasize that sometimes the cloud would settle down for days, so the people would as well. But there were other times when the cloud just remained overnight, and so the people would travel again the next day. Verses 22-23 sum it up well:

<sup>22</sup> **Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the tabernacle, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out.** <sup>23</sup> **At the command of the Lord they camped, and at the command of the Lord they set out; they kept the Lord's charge, according to the command of the Lord through Moses.**

There are several applications for us in this pattern.

- 1) **We need to constantly stay in the presence of the Lord.** Even though we don't see a physical manifestation of God in a cloud or a pillar of fire, we know that our Lord promised to never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6-8; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5-6). Psalm 145:18 says: *The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.* Hebrews 4:16 says that we need to *draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may*

*receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us as well to allow us to maintain that constant presence.

- 2) **We need to move or stay as soon as God directs.** It has been said that "delayed obedience is disobedience." In the same way doing things "for" God when He has not directed us is presumption. Obedience to the Lordship of Christ is not secured by a one-time prayer for salvation—it is a constant commitment to following Him by faith. Luke 9:23 says: *If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up His cross daily, and follow Me.*
- 3) **Sometimes following Christ may be inconvenient.** The tribes of Israel were nomadic at this time. That means every time they had to move, they would have to pack up their tents and belongings and carry them. Once the cloud settled in a location, they would have to set up their tents and prepare their campsites. Verse 21 says that occasionally the cloud would stay at a site for just one night. There would be a lot of work in that quick of a transition. That also meant that if God left them in the same place for a long time, they would need to embrace that as well. We need to learn to be grateful and faithful to stay where God places us and do whatever He calls us to do. We also need to be ready to move to a new location or a new job or a new ministry if God calls us to it, but only if God calls us to it.

#### **Numbers 10:1-10 Called Together**

In Numbers 10:1-10 God instructed Moses to make two trumpets to use for summoning the people. It demonstrated God's continuing care for His people by providing a means of communication. They would use the trumpets to call the people or leaders to assemble or to sound an alarm or a call to war. The trumpets would be used to call the people to times of feasting and celebration. They also sounded the trumpets when it was time to break camp and proceed forth in an orderly fashion. But the trumpets did not truly direct the people—the second half of chapter 10 reiterates that they were following the Lord.

#### **Numbers 10:11-36 Time to Move**

##### **Questions to Ponder:**

- **How did the tribes of Israel move out and why did they proceed that way?**
- **Why did Moses invite his father-in-law to come with them?**
- **What did Moses promise his father-in-law?**

- Why was the ark of the covenant in the front of them?
- In v 35-36 what did Moses' prayer/charge mean?

### **The Tribes Leave Sinai**

<sup>11</sup> Now in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth of the month, the cloud was lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony; <sup>12</sup> and the sons of Israel set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai.

Then the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran.

<sup>13</sup> **So they moved out for the first time according to the commandment of the Lord through Moses.** <sup>14</sup> The standard of the camp of the sons of Judah, according to their armies, set out first, with Nahshon the son of Amminadab, over its army, <sup>15</sup> and Nethanel the son of Zuar, over the tribal army of the sons of Issachar; <sup>16</sup> and Eliab the son of Helon over the tribal army of the sons of Zebulun.

<sup>17</sup> Then the tabernacle was taken down; and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who were carrying the tabernacle, set out. <sup>18</sup> Next the standard of the camp of Reuben, according to their armies, set out with Elizur the son of Shedeur, over its army, <sup>19</sup> and Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai over the tribal army of the sons of Simeon, <sup>20</sup> and Eliasaph the son of Deuel was over the tribal army of the sons of Gad.

<sup>21</sup> Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy objects; and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival. <sup>22</sup> Next the standard of the camp of the sons of Ephraim, according to their armies, was set out, with Elishama the son of Ammihud over its army, <sup>23</sup> and Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur over the tribal army of the sons of Manasseh; <sup>24</sup> and Abidan the son of Gideon over the tribal army of the sons of Benjamin.

<sup>25</sup> Then the standard of the camp of the sons of Dan, according to their armies, which formed the rear guard for all the camps, set out, with Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai over its army, <sup>26</sup> and Pagiël the son of Ochrân over the tribal army of the sons of Asher; <sup>27</sup> and Ahira the son of Enan over the tribal army of the sons of Naphtali. <sup>28</sup> This was the order of march of the sons of Israel by their armies as they set out.

<sup>29</sup> Then Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, **"We are setting out to the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you'; come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord has promised good concerning Israel."** <sup>30</sup> But he said to him, "I will not come, but rather will go to my own land and relatives." <sup>31</sup> Then he said, "Please do not leave us, inasmuch as you know where we should camp in the wilderness, and you will be as eyes for us." <sup>32</sup> So it will be,

**if you go with us, that whatever good the Lord does for us, we will do for you."**

<sup>33</sup> Thus they set out from the mount of the Lord three days' journey, with **the ark of the covenant of the Lord journeying in front of them for the three days**, to seek out a resting place for them. <sup>34</sup> The cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they set out from the camp.

<sup>35</sup> Then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said,

**"Rise up, O Lord!**

**And let Your enemies be scattered,**

**And let those who hate You flee before You."**

<sup>36</sup> When it came to rest, he said,

**"Return, O Lord,**

**To the myriad thousands of Israel."**

### **NOTES:**

Verse 13 says that the sons of Israel **moved out for the first time according to the commandment of the Lord through Moses**. The pattern that had been explained in chapter 9 begins to be followed. From verses 14-28, the details of their marching assignments are explained. Each tribe had a certain leader who brought his army (and their families) forward in a particular order. The tribes marched out, three tribes at a time, followed by one of the clans of the Levites carried their portion of the Tabernacles and its worship essentials. Verse 21 notes the logic of the order as the Tabernacle was carried out first, so that it could be set up by the time the Kohathites arrived with the *holy objects*. Verse 33 says the ark of the covenant went in front of them *to seek out a resting place for them*. God had told them that He would allow His presence to occupy the Mercy Seat on top of the ark. This shows again that they were seeking to follow God's guidance as a nation.

Even though they trusted God's presence to guide them, Moses invited his father-in-law to come along as a resource as well (he is called Hobab in v 29 but Reuel in Ex 2:18 and Jethro in Ex 3:1). Apparently Hobab was familiar with the wilderness and would know where to locate good camping places. This brings up the question of should we just trust the Lord completely with blind faith, or is it okay to utilize the resources we have available to us (like common sense, science, friends and family, history, experience, etc.). We often quote Proverbs 3:5-6 which reminds us to:

*5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart*

*And do not lean on your own understanding.*

*6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,*

*And He will make your paths straight.*

*7 Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.  
8 It will be healing to your body  
And refreshment to your bones.*

But we often neglect the verses before that passage, Proverbs 3:1-4, in which Solomon receives this instruction:

*1 My son, do not forget my teaching,  
But let your heart keep my commandments;  
2 For length of days and years of life  
And peace they will add to you.  
3 Do not let kindness and truth leave you;  
Bind them around your neck,  
Write them on the tablet of your heart.  
4 So you will find favor and good repute  
In the sight of God and man.*

God has given us many good resources that help us in discerning His will and in determining our behavior. We should not ignore these; but at the same time, they should not compete with or take the place of God's Holy Spirit leading us to walk in His presence and obey His Lordship. Even with the help of Hobab, the Israelites put the ark of the covenant in front to guide the way (v 33). We can receive counsel from godly people and study, but we must ultimately depend on the Lord for proper guidance.

Moses promised Hobab that if he came with them, he could share in the blessings of God. Moses knew that God would bless His people as they walked with Him. He also understood that those who walk with the godly are blessed by the presence of God that surrounds them. God's initial covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 included that his descendants would be a blessing to others. God told Him: *"I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."* The prophet Zechariah 8:22-23 prophesied about a future when *"ten men from different nations and languages of the world will clutch at the sleeve of one Jew. And they will say, 'Please let us walk with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"* As the people of Christ, should we not be that same kind of blessing to those around us?

In v 35 we hear the prayer that Moses uttered before the ark set out in front of the people.

***"Rise up, O Lord!  
And let Your enemies be scattered,  
And let those who hate You flee before You."***

Moses prayed for the protection of the Lord as they traveled. He asked that God would scatter **His** enemies. Notice that Moses did not pray against the **nation's** enemies but viewed all the enemies they might encounter as being **against God (those who hate You)**. As believers, we receive the same instruction from the Lord Jesus. In John 15:18-19 Jesus said: *If the world hates you, understand that it hated Me first. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

Paul reminds us that our battle is not with other humans. Ephesians 6:12 says: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* When we walk in the presence of the Lord, we will sometimes meet up with God's enemies; but we do not need to fear for *if God is for us, who can stand against us* (see Psalm 118:6; Romans 8:31ff).

When the cloud settled and the ark came to rest, verse 16 says Moses would cry out:

***"Return, O Lord,  
To the myriad thousands of Israel."***

Moses never felt like God's presence just belonged to him or he had unique access to God. Each time their journey paused, He prayed for the Lord to stay with the people. He asked for God to be present with the whole assembly which probably numbered in the millions (since the census counted about 600,000 men of military age, see Numbers 1). Later, when God's Spirit was placed upon seventy elders to help lead Israel, Moses expressed his wish that *"all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit on them"* (Numbers 11:29). As believers in Christ, we should remember that we have direct access to God like the people in the old covenant could never have through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson by Bro Stan

By the way: here's the plan for our study of Numbers:

**Numbers - God's Presence in the Wilderness**

27-Oct	Numbers 1-10	Following the Lord
1-Nov	Numbers 11-12	Dealing with Complaints
8-Nov	Numbers 13-14	A Bad Report/Failure of Faith
15-Nov	Numbers 15-19	Korah's Rebellion
22-Nov	Numbers 20-21	The Bronze Serpent
29-Nov	Numbers 22-25	Balaam's Talking Donkey