

# Numbers

Part 1 – Numbers 1 – 20

The trial, failure and punishment of the old generation that left Egypt

## Storing Up Treasures:

Discovering The Rich Teaching Of Scripture



### The Name

The book takes its name from the two numberings of the men of war in chapters 1–4 and 26–27 (“Numbers” comes from the Greek word *Arithmoi*, from which we get our English word “Arithmetic,” and is the title for the book in the Greek Septuagint). The first census

3 1 4 2 5  
**Numbers**

was made the second year after the nation had left Egypt, and the second was made thirty-eight years later when the new generation was about to enter Canaan. It is interesting that after almost 40 years the second census records 1,820 *fewer* men than the first census, and that number tells the story of the book. The book of Numbers describes Israel’s time in the wilderness, an unfruitful time of decay for the people of God because of their faithless complaining against God’s will. For this reason the Hebrew name is probably a better description of the book’s content, *bemidbar*, which means “in the wilderness.”

**The Spiritual Significance Of The Wilderness.** If Genesis describes the formation of the nation of Israel; and Exodus, the salvation of the nation; and Leviticus, the sanctification of the nation; then theme of the book of Numbers is the education of the nation. And God educates them, where He educates all His people, in the wilderness. The journey from Egypt to Canaan is a journey every believer must take. It doesn’t take 11 days, it takes years. It doesn’t take place in the comfort of a palace, but in the dust of the wilderness. The wilderness is a place where you feel all alone with just you God and the devil, and you have to make the decision, “Who am I going to follow? Who am I going to trust? Am I going to lean on self, or am I going to lean on the Lord?” This is why God leads His people in the wilderness.

*“Remember how the Lord your God lead you all the way in the desert these forty years to humble you and to test you, in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands.” Deuteronomy 8:2*

The roots grow deep where the winds are strong. God often allows test in order to mature us. Peter said in his first epistle, chapter 1, That *“for a little while we might have to suffer grief and all kinds of trials, but that these come in order that our faith may be proved”* (1 Peter 1:6-9).

**The Practical Significance Of The Numbering.** The numberings of this book also had a practical significance. They were meant for the organization of the people for two purposes. The first purpose to march. To get over a million people to march in the same direction at the same time takes leadership and organization. Numbering the

people, identifying their leaders, organizing them into sections was essential to get the people to move forward. The second purpose of the numbering was *to fight*. These numberings were not of the entire nation, but only of the men able to fight. Canaan was only going to be gained through conflict, and to be successful in battle they must identify leaders and soldiers, and create organization. In spiritual Israel God still wants His people to experience unity in their march, and provides organization for accomplishing His purpose.

## The Outline

There is no consistent outline strongly discernable in the book of Numbers, but most see the book as the story of one generation's demise and a new generation's rise. For this reason I present an outline based on Sidlow Baxter's work on Numbers.

<b>The Book Of Numbers</b> <i>The Price Of Disbelief &amp; Disobedience</i>		
<b>The Old Generation</b> (Sinai to Kadesh)	<b>The Transition Era</b> (In the Wilderness)	<b>The New Generation</b> (Kadesh to Moab)
A few months	37 years	A few months
Numbers 1-14 (14 chapters)	Numbers 15-20 (6 chapters)	Numbers 21-36 (16 chapters)
The Numbering (1-4) The Instruction (5-9) The Journeying (10-14)	The Wandering	The New Journeying (21-25) The New Numbering (26-27) The New Instruction (28-36)

One spiritual lesson that can be gleaned from the outline of the book of numbers is the need for regeneration. The old man must be put to death, and a new man must take it's place before the blessings of God's inheritance can truly be enjoyed by God's people. This transformation is a major theme in the writings of Paul who describes the Christian pilgrimage like this, *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* (Ephesians 4:22-24; see also Colossians 3:5-15, *"Put to death your members which are on the earth...the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience in which you also once walked...put on the new man."*).

It is significant to notice how little time is devoted to describing Israel's time in the wilderness wandering. This indicates that the purpose of the book was primarily to show how God dealt with the Israelites as they anticipated entrance into the Promised Land. It was not to record all the events, or even most of the events, that took place in Israel's history. It is meant to show us God's desire for His people to enjoy the Land He promised them.

## The Purpose Of Numbers

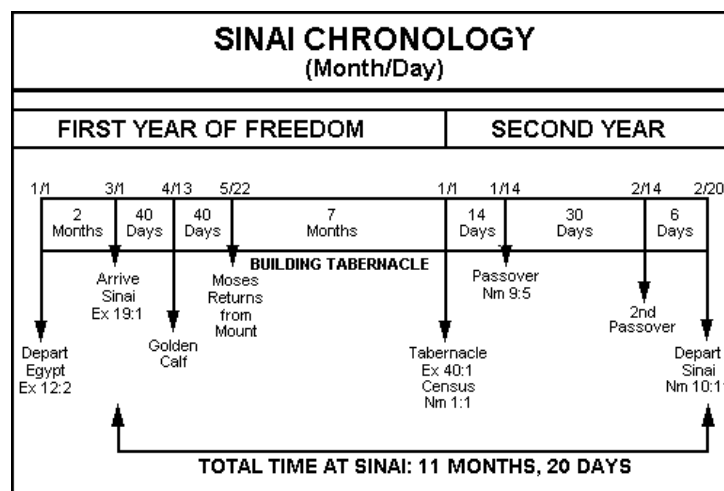
The New Testament gives a divine commentary on the purpose of the book of Numbers in two main text, 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 3-4. The two lessons compliment each other, one giving the positive, one giving the negative.

From **1 Corinthians 10** we are instructed to see the message of the book of Numbers as, do not test God. Paul recounts all the blessings God had given Israel, a miraculous deliverance from Egypt, a mighty leader in Moses, extraordinary water from rocks, and yet, *“with most of them God was not well pleased; their bodies were scattered over the desert”* (10:5). They continued to test God’s patience and grace by their idolatry, their sexual immorality, and their complaining. And Paul’s conclusion is, *“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup>So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”* (1 Corinthians 10:11-12). There is no room for spiritual arrogance, to think that God will turn a blind eye to our persistent sin. God will not be mocked, what a person sows is what they will reap. Over a million rotting corpses speak from their graves in the wilderness, “Do not test God with your persistent sin. Repent and obey.”

# Do Not Test God!

From **Hebrews 3-4**, the divine commentary tells us the lesson of Numbers is to trust God. He summarizes the book by saying, *“So, we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”* (3:19). God honors faith and punishes unbelief. At the root of all of Israel’s sins in the wilderness was unbelief: they did not trust God’s Word. At Kadesh-Barnea they doubted God’s Word and failed to enter into their inheritance. Instead of claiming Canaan by faith, they wandered in the wilderness in unbelief. Many Christians today are “in between” in their spiritual lives. They have been delivered from Egypt by the blood of the Lamb, but they have not yet entered into their inheritance in Christ. Canaan is not a picture of heaven. Rather, it is an illustration of our spiritual inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1:3), an inheritance that must be claimed by faith. Canaan was a land of battles and blessings, as is the Christian life today. Alas, too many Christians come to the place of decision (their own Kadesh-Barnea), and they fail to enter into their inheritance by faith! Instead of being conquerors (as described in Joshua), they become wanderers (as described in Numbers).

# Do Trust God!



From "Pentateuch"  
by James Smith

## Israel's Complaining

### A Theme Of Numbers

One of the most definite characteristics of the rebel generation that so often aroused the anger of God and did not enter the Promised Land, was their complaining spirit. God recorded so many instances of their grumbling heart so that we might learn from their example the debilitating consequences of a bitter, complaining mindset in the midst of one's pilgrimage.

<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Complaint</b>	<b>Sin</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>11:1-3</b>	<i>The Hardships Of The Wilderness</i>	Failure to trust in God's ultimate goal	Thousands of people died in a fire that came from the Lord
<b>11:4-34</b>	<i>The Lack Of Meat</i>	Coveted things they didn't have	God sent quail, but as the people began to eat, God struck them with a plague that killed many
<b>12:1-16</b>	<i>Miriam And Aaron Wanted Authority Like Moses</i>	They spoke evil about God's delegated authority	Miriam was given leprosy, and the whole nation could not move for seven days
<b>14:1-4</b>	<i>They Could Not Conquer Canaan</i>	Failed to trust in God's promises	All who complained were not allowed to enter the Promised Land, being doomed to wander in the wilderness until they died
<b>16:1-40</b>	<i>Korah And Others Wanted Authority Like Moses</i>	They were greedy for power and authority	Their families and possessions of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed up by the earth. Fire then burned up the 250 other men who rebelled.
<b>16:41-50</b>	<i>Moses And Aaron Killed Korah And His Conspirators</i>	Failed to recognize God's discipline	God began to destroy Israel with a plague. Moses and Aaron made atonement for the people, but 14,700 of them were killed
<b>20:1-5</b>	<i>The Lack Of Water</i>	Refused to believe that God would provide as He had promised	Moses sinned along with the people and Moses was barred from entering the Promised Land
<b>21:4-9</b>	<i>The Hardships Of The Wilderness</i>	Despised God's provision, and failed to recognize their circumstance was the result of their own disobedience	God sent poisonous snakes that killed many people and seriously injured many others

Greatly modified from Tyndale Charts & Maps

Add to this list the complaining of Israel immediately after their deliverance from Egypt in the book of Exodus.

<b>Complaining From The Beginning</b>		
Exodus 15:22-27	Complained about bitter water	God made the water sweet, testing the people's obedience
Exodus 16:1-36	Complained about food	God gave them quail and manna, the people test God's patience
Exodus 17:1-7	Complained about water	God gave them water from a rock, the people doubted God's provision

## Consider The Following Problems With Complaining.

### **Complaining Is Usually Contagious.**



Complaining seldom stops with one person. The negative report from the spies at Kadesh-Barnea immediately got the rest of the camp grumbling. Through this episode and others, attitudes of ingratitude, self-absorption, fear, and desperation soon infiltrated the Israelites' ranks. So focused on themselves, they forgot God's goodness and their purpose as His people. The complainer always seems compelled to share his displeasure with others, poisoning yet another mind to look disdainfully on work done in Jesus' name. The problem

with the sin of complaining is that it can destroy a whole community. The tragedy is that it often destroys the members of one's own family. How can a child who grows up listening to a mother and father continually complaining about God's people ever have much passion for being apart of God's church, and loving His people? (Korah and his whole family perished for a father's grumbling (Numbers 16).) Let us remember that a positive trust in God, and a loving encouragement for God's workers can be equally infections, and create much better results.

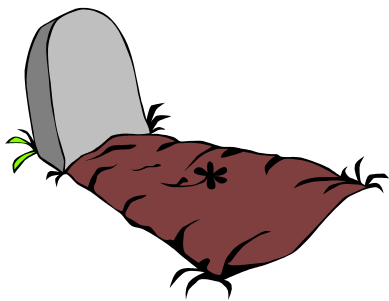
### **Complaining Is Against God.** *"You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord"*

(Exodus 16:8). God is the one who lead them into the wilderness, to complain about their circumstances was to complain against God. Now, they thought they were just complaining against Moses and Aaron, but they were complaining against God. When we complain and criticize, speaking harshly about the people of God, God takes it personally. The church is the body of Christ, and some people thrill in focusing on it's blemishes. There may be many great parts of the body that God has made beautiful, but they seem to be preoccupied only with it's blemishes—that's all they think about; that's all they talk about—but those people are part of Christ's body as well. They are complaining about people God is working on and through, and God takes that personally (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).



### **Complaining Is Personally Destructive.**

A grumbling, untrusting, divisive spirit is what kept an entire generation of Israelites from her beautiful inheritance. When the people complained about their hardships, God's fire raged. When they complained about their food, God struck them with a plague. Each event was a warning to stop the complaining spirit. When their complaining persisted God's righteous anger made the promise that they would not enter the Promised Land. We try to minimize



the heart of complaint saying that we just have good discernment, we have an ability to see things that need to change. Numbers teaches us that grumbling is serious. It keeps many, many people out of the promised land. Complaining is not just a bad habit, it is a sin.

**"Do everything  
without complaining  
or arguing,"**  
(Philippians 2:14).

**Complaining Is Discouraging.** Complaining discourages those who are trying to do God's work. Usually those who complain are those who are not doing much anyway, and their complaining drains the enthusiasm and desire from those who are trying to serve God. Satan uses the voice of the complainer to get the worker to give up, or at least slow down. In Numbers 11 when the people complained about their diet, Moses passionately prays that God might just take his life. Moses is so run down and discouraged by the continually criticism of his leadership, he wants to just give up. How much service in Jesus' name has been stalled or stopped because God's workers were discouraged by those who complained about the work?

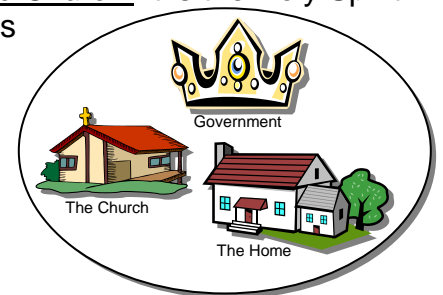


## Respect God's Appointed Authority

A Theme Of Numbers

One of the consistent, powerful lessons of the book of numbers is the need for God's people to respect God's appointed authority. Miriam and Aaron became jealous of how God was using Moses and they found some reason to speak bad about him (Numbers 12). However, God saw through their nit-picking and gave Miriam leprosy for her complaint against God's worker. Her sin stalled Israel's progress for seven days, because such jealousy hurts the whole of God's people. When Korah, Dathan, and Abriam, along with 250 others, took it upon themselves to dispute the appointed civil and priestly authority of Moses and Aaron, they were destroyed by the Lord. The earth opened up and swallowed them alive (16:1-35). One would think that Israel might have been humbled by such an awesome display from God, but instead they accused Moses and Aaron of murdering Korah and company. Therefore, God sent a plague that killed 14,700 more people (Numbers 16:41-50). God is teaching His people that they must respect those who are acting by the duly appointed authority of God.

Government. God has given authority to human government to be His minister for the good of society. Therefore He calls us to "**submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake**" (1 Peter 2:13; see also Romans 13:1-7). The Church. It is the Holy Spirit that has appointed elders to shepherd the church of God (Acts 20:28), and therefore elders are to be respected and appreciated for their work sake (1 Thess. 5:13). The way the church reacts to them is to make their work a joy not a drudgery (Hebrews 13:17). Paul told Timothy and Titus that people were not to despise the work they did, because it would seriously undermine any power the gospel could have among them. The Home. In the home husbands are to be responsible, loving leaders in the family, and children are to obey their parents (Ephesians 5:22-6:4). Whether it is in government, the church, or the home, God has identified leaders that serve for the good of those they lead. Loving them, supporting them, will only bring a blessing to those they lead.



**The problem is jealousy** (Numbers 12:2; 16:3)! Where love seeks to put others higher than self, jealousy is anti-love, seeking to put self equal or above others. It was jealousy that was destroying the church in Corinth. Some wanted to do the work others were doing. They thought they could do it better. They wanted the prestige. So, they determined they would complain, and if that didn't work they would just not do anything to help at all, and jealousy grind the church at Corinth to a jolting halt (1 Corinthians 12).

## **There Are Two Bad Responses To Authority.**

- ★ **One Is To Abuse It!** This is seen in the person of **Diotrephes**. He rules by intimidation. He only knows rule by coercion, mandate, force, and exclusion. He loves to have a position of prestige, and he will reject everyone who does not fawn over his power, *“he does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.”* (1 John 1:9-11)
- ★ **Another Is To Distain It!** This is seen in the person of **Korah**. This is a jealousy of how God is using others, but the motivation is the same as with Diotrephes, they want to have the power. Responsibility in the kingdom of God is not about power, it’s about service. *“In the very same way, these dreamers ... reject authority ... Woe to them! ... they have been destroyed in Korah’s rebellion.”* (Jude 8-11).

### **The Longest Funeral Procession**

*A Theme Of Numbers*

God promised that not one person twenty years or over would be allowed to enter Canaan. *“For forty years—one year for each of the forty days you explored the land—you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.”* (Numbers 14:34).

During the next four decades Israel was to linger in the desert until the last person twenty years and older died and was buried. Think about what that must have meant each day for the people of Israel. If you assume 1,200,000 people were over the age of twenty (600,000 men and women), and they all died within 38 ½ years (14,508 days), that means that about 83 people a day died. If you figure 12 hours a day maximum for funerals, there would have been seven funerals an hour for 38 ½ years—a continuous, foreboding reminder of Gods’ punishment on them.



### **Majority & Truth**

*A Theme Of Numbers*

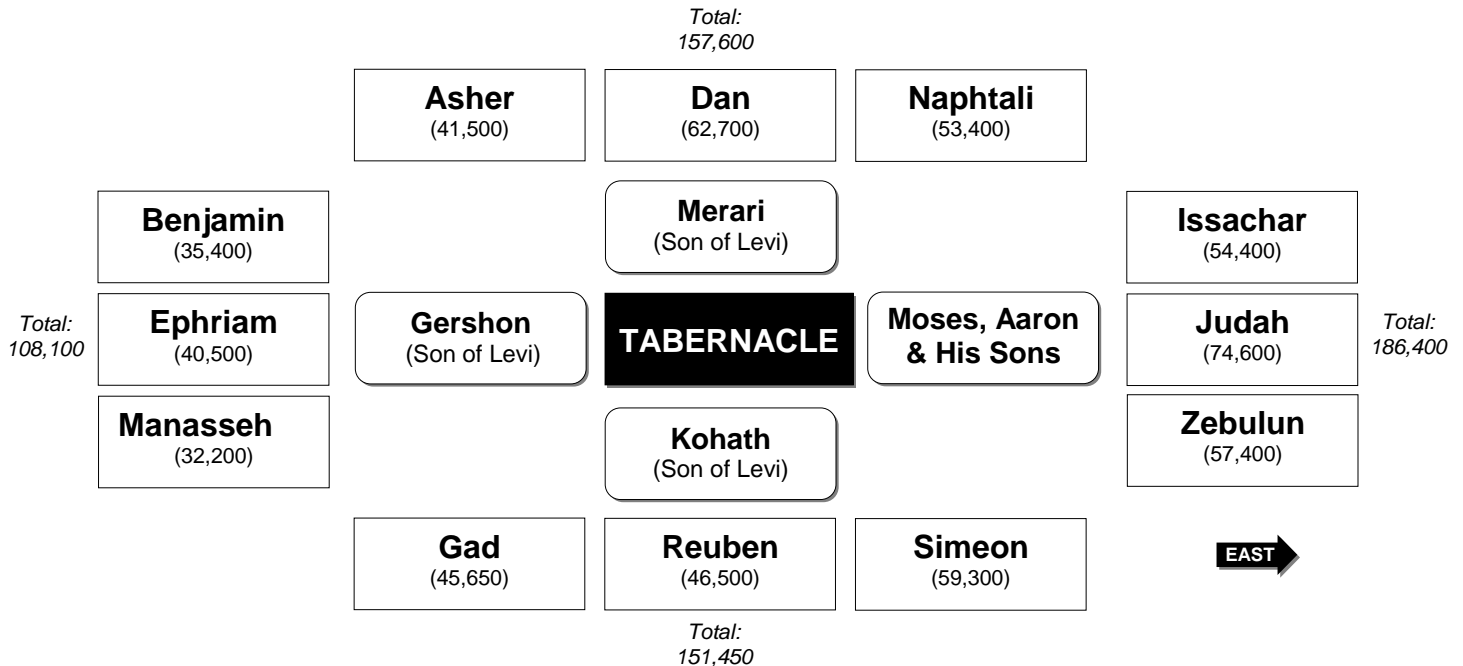
The book of Numbers illustrates the Biblical principle that the majority opinion does not determine truth. This principle is seen as early as the flood, where God saved eight righteous souls from a world full of sin (Genesis 6). And it’s a principle that will be seen at the Judgment seat at the end of time. Broad is the way that leads to destruction and many will enter by it, but narrow is the way that leads to life and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13-14).



When the 12 spies were sent to view Canaan, tragically, only two of them, Joshua and Caleb had confidence that with God’s help they could take the land (14:9). The others felt they were but grasshoppers compared to the enemy (13:33). The ungodly suggestion was even made that they select a new leader and return to Egypt. After all, the report was ten to two against attempting to take the land. God did not call for a vote, He called for obedience. *One of the saddest days in Israel’s history was the acceptable of that “majority report,” and the result was a barren wilderness became their cemetery.* The majority is generally in route to destruction (Exodus 23:2; Jeremiah 9:3; 1 Peter 3:20)

God arranged the camp of Israel so that His presence, symbolized by the tabernacle, would be at the center. This was to remind Israel of the preeminent place God was to have among them. He was the Creator and Deliverer of the nation and therefore deserved the nations affection and allegiance (See Numbers 2:3-29).

The organization of Israel’s camp is a vivid, physical illustration of the desire of God’s heart since creation, that He might live with His people. The sin in the garden interrupted that fellowship, but throughout history God has left a testimony that intimate, uninterrupted fellowship among His people is His ultimate desire (reconciliation). The tabernacle, and it’s arrangement at the center of His pilgrim people in the wilderness, is one of the most vibrant testimonies.



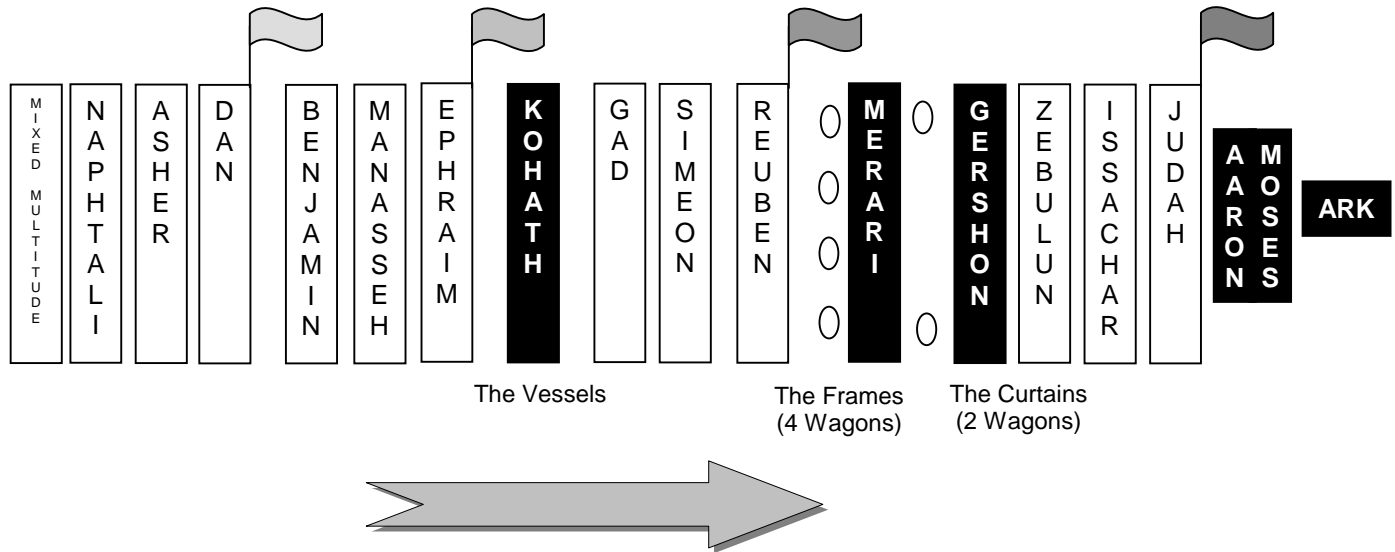
However, an even more brilliant testimony to God’s desire to dwell among His people is seen in the coming of Jesus, who came with the name **“Immanuel,”** which means **“God with Us”** (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14). This time God lived among His people, not in a tent of cloth, but a tent of flesh, coming as a man. **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** (John 1:14). The word **“dwelling,”** is the same word used in the Old Testament for the Tabernacle. The incarnation was the most loving, tangible evidence of God’s desire to live with His people.



The Tabernacle was a symbolic and temporary testimony of God’s presence. The Incarnation was a physical but temporary testimony of God’s presence. But through the death of Jesus, God’s desire to dwell among His people could be spiritual and eternal. This is the very mystery of the gospel, **“Christ in you, the hope of glory”** (Colossians 1:27). **“God with us”** is a present reality and a eternal certainty, **“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”** (Revelation 21:3).

## Tribal Marching Order

Textual Highlights: Numbers 10



**God Leads The Way!** While the camp of Israel shows God’s desire to dwell among His people, the marching order of Israel shows God’s authority over His people. The Ark which represented God’s presence for the people was out front. The people were following God. Even their leaders, Moses and Aaron were following the Lord.

In the same way, God through His word must always and only lead the church today in the way we should go. Our marching orders do not come from the mind of men, but from God.

*“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)*



# Numbers

Part 2 – Numbers 20 – 36

The trial and preparation of a new generation to enter the Promised Land

## Storing Up Treasures:

Discovering The Rich Teaching Of Scripture



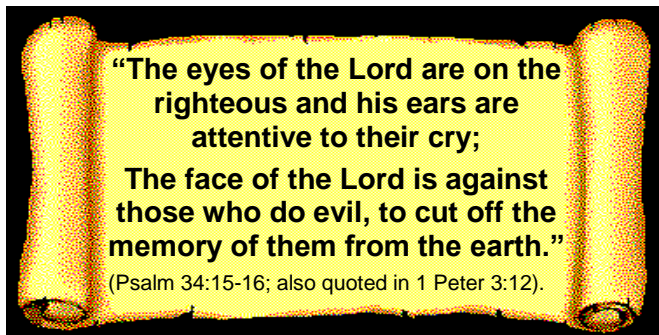
### A Serpent Problem Solved

### Textual Highlights: Numbers 20

#### **New Generation – New Help**

The death of Aaron at the end of Numbers 20 marks the end of the old generation, and chapter 21 picks up the story of the new. With the old rebellious generation gone, once again *“the Lord listened to Israel’s plea.”* (21:3). Jehovah became Israel’s help. During the wandering God did not listen or give the people success. In fact Moses said, *“The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. <sup>45</sup>You came back and wept before the Lord, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you.”*

(Deuteronomy 1:44-45). As long as Israel stayed in the will of God Jehovah would be their ever-present help. This story illustrates well the Biblical principle of God hearing the prayer of the righteous (James 5:16). Those who come into Christ but continue to walk in the ways of the old man of sin deprive themselves of God’s help, however, those who walk according to the new man have the undefeatable help of Christ.



#### **New Generation – New Victory**

With the help of the Lord victory was inevitable. *“The Lord ... gave the Canaanites over to them. They completely destroyed them and their towns, and the name of the place was Hormah.”* (Numbers 21:3). Hormah was the place of the humiliating defeat at the beginning of the wondering (14:45). Now, at the end of the wandering, as Israel sets herself to God’s purposes, there is victory in the place of the old defeat. Staying in the will of God is the secret of triumphant progress.

#### **New Generation – Old Problem**

Israel had a new help from her God, and as a result a new victory over her enemies, but she fell into the same old problem—complaining! And this after their recent victory! We need to be watchful in times of victory lest we suffer depressing reactions (see also, Elijah in 1 Kings 19). Israel became impatient and complained against God and His leaders about their food and surroundings. The Lord sent venomous snakes among the people to punish them. When they confessed their sin, Moses, at the instruction of God, raised a brass snake upon a pole, and anyone who looked at it was healed.



Oh, the awful pain and suffering that complaining reaps among God’s people! The new generation falls into the same trap that snared their fathers! It is frightening how difficult

it is for children to raise above the spiritual example of their parents. From this terrifying story comes a beautiful picture of salvation.

## The Progression Of Salvation



From  
Numbers  
21

From  
Acts 2

Sin	Suffering	Supplication	Salvation
<p><sup>5</sup>they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" (Numbers 21:5).</p>	<p><sup>6</sup>Then the Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died." (Numbers 21:6).</p>	<p><sup>7</sup>The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people." (Numbers 21:7).</p>	<p><sup>8</sup>The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived." (Numbers 21:8-9).</p>
<p><sup>36</sup>"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36).</p>	<p><sup>37</sup>When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart." (Acts 2:37).</p>	<p><sup>37</sup>When the people heard this, they ... said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).</p>	<p><sup>38</sup>Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38).</p>

The story of the bronze snake is an example of the progression every soul must go through to find the salvation offered in Christ. First, it is *sin* that *separates* us from our God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Since we are separated from the Source of life the corruption of death begins to set in, and *suffering* is the result. We then cry out in confession and repentance in recognition of how our selfish actions have been done against God and people, *asking God to save us* from our hopeless, terminal condition. Finally, God in grace provides the means of *salvation* to anyone who looks to it alone.



**The Obedience Of Faith!** Also revealed in this story is the necessity of obedient faith to our salvation. God provided the means of salvation to anyone who looked to it, but He forced no man. If a person wanted to be saved they needed active obedience by responding to the Lord's method of deliverance. No one could assume that a wood snake would be just as healing as Moses' bronze snake. No one could assume that thinking about the bronze snake in their tent would be just as effective as looking to it. God said, "**look at it and live.**" His method of healing may seem strange, but it required the active obedience of genuine faith (see also a parallel with Naaman in 2 Kings 5).

**The Disobedience Of Idolatry!** Years later in 700 B.C., King Hezekiah destroyed this bronze snake, because the people were worshipping it. *“He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)”* (2 Kings 18:4). Man has a propensity to worship the created rather than the Creator. We tend to be more impressed with the physical than the spiritual; the material more than the eternal. And as a result we put undue significance on things rather than on God; more emphasis on places rather than people. Israel turned the implement of God’s salvation into an idol. We do the same today when we must kiss a piece of metal in the form of a cross, rub a pin of an angel on our lapel, grasp to an icon of a saint. Whatever comes between us and worshipping God directly is an idol.

(See *“Picture Of Salvation—Lifted Up!”* Page 116, for Messianic significance!)

## A Perverted Prophet

Textual Highlights: **Numbers 22-25**

Of the thousands of characters in the Old Testament, surely Balaam is one of the most mysterious, and in some ways, the most tragic. He was apparently of a heathen nation, yet he knew the true God. He was a soothsayer, yet was able to predict the future of Israel. He listened to God’s Word and faithfully proclaimed it, yet turned right around and led Israel into sin and judgment.

**Balaam’s Visits From Balak (Numbers 22).** Balak was the king of Moab who sees that the Israelites are numerous and powerful (Numbers 20-21), so he fears for his kingdom. He sends for a prophet named Balaam to come and curse the Israelites, offering him much wealth if he will consent. But God told Balaam, *“Do not go with them”* (Numbers 22:12). Balak is desperate so he sends a second, more prestigious envoy with greater wealth. When Balaam sees them and their money he makes a very godly sounding statement, *“Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the Lord my God.”* (Numbers 22:18). God had already given Balaam a “No,” on going. But here Balaam wavered. Having said the right thing he then does the wrong thing, he asks the dignitaries to stay the night to see if God would change His mind on the matter. God allows Balaam to go, but while he’s riding his donkey on the way God’s anger is aroused against Balaam and He sends an angel to destroy him. The donkey saved his life by avoiding the angel, but Balaam could not see God’s messenger and beat the donkey mercilessly. Then God opened the mouth of the donkey to open the eyes of the prophet to see the sword wielding angel in his path. God said plainly, *“Your path is a reckless one before me”* (22:32), so there was no reason for Balaam to say, *“Now if you are displeased, I will go back”* (22:34). Balaam was playing with God’s will, seeing how far he could go. The main lesson here is to find the will of God and obey it, regardless of personal desires or subsequent circumstances.



**Balaam's Visions Of Israel (Numbers 23-24).** Balak wanted Balaam to curse Israel and in this way protect Midian and Moab, but every time Balaam opened his mouth, he blessed Israel instead! It is interesting to notice the preparation Balaam made to receive the word of the Lord.

<b>Preparation For Prophecy</b>				
	Sacrificed on seven altars, seven bulls, seven rams.	Balaam separated himself to work sorcery	The Word Of The Lord Came	Balak Response
1 <sup>st</sup> Prophecy	☑	☑	☑	Indignant! And changed location
2 <sup>nd</sup> Prophecy	☑	☑	☑	Frustrated! And changed location
3 <sup>rd</sup> Prophecy	☑		☑	Angry! Maligned God, as One who kept Balaam from getting rich.
4 <sup>th</sup> Prophecy			☑	Change Of Tactics

Some of Balaam's preparation seems to be very godly, for example the use of sacrifices, which is something very common before one would approach God. However, then we have this strange mixture with pagan practices such as sorcery. Later when Joshua described the death of Balaam he described him as one *"who practiced divination."* (Joshua 13:22), which was something detestable to the Lord (Leviticus 19:26). Perhaps this is why he gave up on the worthless sorcery after the second time.

Even more important than how Balaam spoke for the Lord is ***what he said for the Lord.*** He was hired to curse, and all he could do is bless. God is in control. Even though the prophet's heart was only on profit, God controlled the message. This may give some comfort as to the accuracy of Biblical inspiration. The following chart summarizes Balaam's four prophecies, what they tell us about Israel and God, and how these same blessings are enjoyed by spiritual Israel today.

<b>Content Of Prophecy</b>			
	<b>Israel</b>	<b>God</b>	<b>Spiritual Israel</b> (The Church)
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Prophecy</b> Numbers 23:1-13	<b>Calling of Israel</b> - To be separate - To be fruitful	<b>Power Of God</b>	<i>Live as pilgrims</i> (1 Peter 2:11-12)
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Prophecy</b> Numbers 23:14-26	<b>Victory of Israel</b> - God's presence - Their power	<b>Faithfulness of God</b>	<i>Faith is the victory</i> (1 John 5:4-5) <i>Lead in triumph</i> (2 Corinthians 2:15) <i>More than conquerors</i> (Romans 8:37)
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Prophecy</b> Numbers 23:27-24:13	<b>Beauty Of Israel</b> - Her blessings - Her power	<b>Goodness of God</b>	<i>A glorious church</i> (Ephesians 5:27) <i>Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places</i> (Ephesians 1:3)
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Prophecy</b> Numbers 24:14-25	<b>Future of Israel</b> - Brilliant King - Conquering King	<b>Salvation of God</b>	<i>The Morning Star rises in our heart</i> (2 Peter 1:19) <i>The Bright, Morning Star</i> (Revelation 22:16) <i>"We have seen His star"</i> (Matthew 2:2)

I don't believe it's too much of a stretch to see a progression in the message of these prophecies. The first stresses Israel's separation by God (Exodus 19:5-6) to be His holy nation, a special treasure above all the people of the earth. Because of this calling God gave them victory over their enemies. As a result, Israel enjoyed the beauty of the land God had promised her. And one day God would send a brilliant, conquering King, typified by David and fulfilled in Christ. Balaam gives a wonderful history of Israel in these four visions, all the way from their election as a nation to their exaltation in the kingdom. We may apply these truths, of course, to the New Testament believer, who has been chosen of God, justified, given a rich inheritance in Christ, and promised future glory.

***Balaam's Victory Over Israel (Numbers 25).*** Had Balaam stopped with his visions from God, he would have been safe, but he wanted the money and the honor that Balak promised. So he told the king how to defeat Israel. His plan was simple: invite the Jews to share in the heathen sacrificial feasts and corrupt them with idolatry and lust. The ceremonies involved in Baal worship were very wicked, and Balaam knew that the Jewish men would be tempted to join with the Moabite women (Numbers 31:16). This is exactly what happened. In fact, one Israelite was bold enough to bring a heathen woman home right in the sight of Moses (v. 6). What the armies of the other nations could not do, the women of Moab and Midian were doing. If Satan cannot overcome God's people as a lion (1 Peter 5:8), then he comes as a serpent.

Aaron's grandson Phinehas took a definite stand for the Lord and opposed this compromise of God's people with the heathen (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). A plague from the Lord had already begun. When Phinehas killed the guilty man and woman, the plague stopped, but not before 24,000 people had died. We need more courageous men like Phinehas who will take a stand for separation and holiness (Numbers 25:1-18).

## Balaam's Variety Today!

Balaam is mentioned three times in the New Testament by three different writers, and each author exposes a different deficiency in his character.



**The Way Of Balaam.** *“They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.”* (2 Peter 2:15). Peter emphasizes the greed of Balaam. This tells us why Balaam remained open to Balak’s constant invitations. Balaam could have just said, “No, I’m not going. God said “No!”” But Balaam kept looking for a way to help Balak because he wanted the money. And when he couldn’t get the money through prophecy he secured it through counsel (Numbers 31:16). Balaam teaches us the bitter results of choosing to live for things. Paul wrote, *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”* (1 Timothy 6:10). Balaam’s love for money literally pierced him through, for when Israel took vengeance on Midian’s seduction it says, *“They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.”* There is nothing that impairs spiritual vision like greed. I don’t care how astute a man may be, the words that come out of his mouth may be the words that sound like they came straight from God, that’s exactly what it sounded like when you listened to Balaam’s prophecy. But, he was not a man of God, because all he wanted was the profit. Balaam wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he loved the wages of unrighteousness (Numbers 23:10).



**The Error Of Balaam.** Jude talks believers who had listened to *“the error of Balaam.”* (Jude 11). Jude is dealing with some teachers who were turning the grace of God into a license to sin. They dealt lightly with sin. Balaam certainly did that when he advised Balak to tempt Israel with harlotry. Jude is also dealing with teachers reject authority and speak slanderously of others. This too was Balaam’s error, he rejected God’s authoritative word and did what he wanted. But ultimately, Balaam did what he did because of profit. Putting it together the error of Balaam is to teach men to take sin lightly by rejecting God’s word so that you may receive some personal benefit. At heart, Balaam error is not seeking God’s glorification but our own.



**The Doctrine Of Balaam.** Jesus writes of the doctrine of Balaam in Revelation 2:14, writing to the church in Pergamum, He writes, *“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.”* (Revelation 2:14). Even though this wicked prophet failed in his attempts to curse Israel, his corrupt and clever suggestions that God’s people mix with the Moabites was highly successful. Before it was all over, this perverted preacher would cause the death of 24,000 Israelites, resulting from the punishment of God (Numbers 25:9). All this not by swinging one sword, but by subtly, sowing sin in the midst of God’s people. And the devil still works in the same way (Jude 3). He works to destroy God’s people not just by the head-on attacks from the outside, but he works from within, slowly, seductively to steal our devotion away from Christ. The doctrine of Balaam in one word is “compromise!”



**Balaam’s Way, Error & Doctrine**

- ❖ Love Of Money
- ❖ Love Of Sex
- ❖ Love Of Praise

**Balaam’s Method**  
*Compromise Though Subtle Corrosion From Within!*

## Numbering Again

It is interesting to notice which tribes grew and which diminished. The strange drop in some tribes may be accounted for by the plagues which fell in judgment. It seems that Simeon figured prominently in the Baal-Peor sin and plague, and thus suffered loss (Numbers 25:14)

Textual Highlights!  
**Numbers 26**

<b>CENSUS FIGURES</b> Numbers 1, 2, 26				
TRIBE	BEFORE THE WANDERINGS	AFTER THE WANDERINGS	DIFFERENCE	%
REUBEN	46,500	43,730	-2,770	-06%
SIMEON	59,300	22,200	-37,100	-63%
GAD	45,650	40,500	-5,150	-11%
JUDAH	74,600	76,500	+1,900	+2.5%
ISSACHAR	54,400	64,300	+9,900	+18%
ZEBULUN	57,400	60,500	+3,100	+5.5%
EPHRAIM	40,500	32,500	-8,000	-20%
MANASSEH	32,200	52,700	+20,500	+63%
BENJAMIN	35,400	45,600	+10,200	+29%
DAN	62,700	64,400	+1,700	+2.5%
ASHER	41,500	53,400	+11,900	+28%
NAPHTALI	53,400	45,400	-8,000	-15%
<b>TOTALS</b>	603,550	601,730	-1,820	-.3%

## Number The Sacrifices

Textual Highlights! **Numbers 28-29**

The book of Numbers once again outlines the sacrifices and feast days for Israel. This has already been done in Exodus and Leviticus, but the importance of these events must not be overlooked. In Numbers 28 – 29 we are given a precise counting of the sacrifices. The special offering for the Sabbath is ordered here for the first time, as is also the new moon sacrifices. When one considers the *immensity* of these sacrifices throughout the year they are impressed with the amount of death and blood, and they are to see a picture of the awfulness of sin. In their *frequency*, we are to see the sheer number of the best man had to offer and realize they were not sufficient, but the one sacrifice of Jesus was once and for all sufficient for every man's every sin.

<b>Required Offerings For Israel</b>				
Occasion	Burnt Offerings			Sin Offering
	Bulls	Rams	Lambs	
Daily			728	
Sabbath (weekly)			104	
New Moon (offered quarterly)	8	4	28	4
Unleavened Bread (7X)	14	7	49	7
Pentecost	2	1	7	1
Trumpets	1	1	7	1
Atonement	1	1	7	1
Tabernacles	71	15	105	8
Annual Totals	97	29	1035	22
<b>Total = 1183</b> (# of animals / year)				

Numbers 35 establishes six cities of refuge. Leviticus 24:17 says, *“If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death.”* That was simple and could not be misunderstood. But, the Law of Moses made a very important distinction between murder and manslaughter. There is a difference between deliberate and accidental death. Those who killed through premeditation and intention were to be considered murders and punished accordingly. However, those who accidentally killed someone were to be treated differently. Thus the cities of refuge. The cities of refuge were not set up to help a murderer escape justice, but to help the man who was guilty of manslaughter escape injustice.

**The Value Of A Person.** God places a very high value on a person’s life. In the Old Testament capital punishment was prescribed, not because life was considered cheap. It was prescribed because life was considered sacred. And the Bible’s great outcry against the murderer was, “You have slain an image-bearer of God.” Any view that diminishes the high and holy sacredness of life is not of God. These cities of refuge provided a place for justice to be honored, and thus life to be valued.

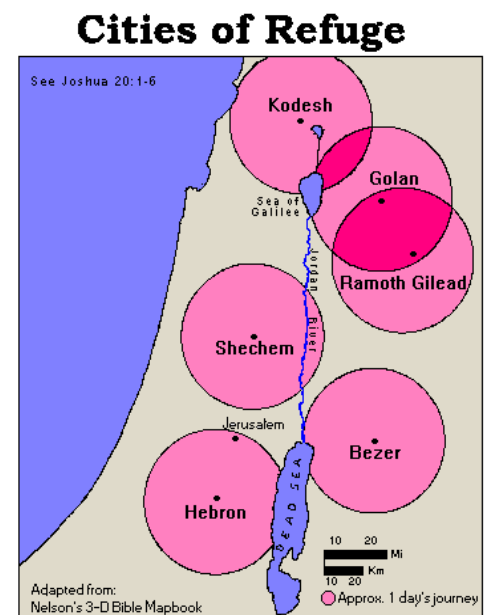
**The Nearness Of Help.** God planned it so that two cities would be east and west of the Jordan to the North; two cities would be in the Central part of the nation; and two cities would be in the South. Why? So that no matter where you lived, on either side of the river, you were always close to refuge! Refuge was always near. It reminds the student of what Paul told the Athenians in Acts 17:27, *“God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.”* (Acts 17:27; also Romans 10:8).

**The Pursuit Of Refuge.** Refuge must be sought. It doesn’t matter how close it is. That doesn’t make refuge automatic. You don’t get refuge until you fled to the proper place. This describes the flight of faith. God provides salvation in Christ, but we must flee to Him for refuge. The despite, conscious stricken sinner must run in faithful obedience to the cross of Christ, and fulfill it’s demands to faithful repentance, baptism and living.

**The Fulfillment In Jesus.** The cities of refuge foreshadow the saving work of Jesus, who would become a lasting place of refuge, since as High Priest He never dies. In Christ God shows His love for mercy and justice, therefore His is our city of refuge. It is this that the Hebrew writer has in mind in Hebrews 6:17-18,

*“<sup>17</sup>Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, <sup>18</sup>that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”* (Hebrews 6:17-18).

For those in Christ, there is now no condemnation. None can make a charge of sin that can stick (Romans 8:1,33). He has become our place of refuge from the consequences of sin.



# Seeing The Savior

Hearing The Message Of The Bible



## The Nazarite Vow Numbers 6:1-21

This vow was a voluntary vow a person would make who desired to consecrate himself to the Lord in a special way, either for life or for a certain period of time (Numbers 6:1-21). The rules were:

*He could not taste the fruit of the vineyard in any manner.*

*He could not cut his hair.*

*He could not come in contact with any dead person.*

The most famous Old Testament Nazarite was Samson (Judges 13:7). It is very possible that John the Baptist also took the Nazarite vow to dedicate himself to the task of preparing the way of the Lord. It is possible that Paul voluntarily took this vow himself (Acts 18:19; Acts 21:23).

The Nazarite vow may be an illustration of a Christian. It is a voluntary vow one makes to consecrate their life to God's work. When one becomes a Christian they present their bodies as instruments of righteousness to be used in God's service (Romans 6:1-23). What is to typify Christians is seen in perfection in Christ, *"Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."* (Hebrews 7:26).

## The Priestly Blessing Numbers 6:24-26

The Priestly Blessing, which is utterly fulfilled by our High Priest, Jesus!

*"The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;  
The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."*

*(Numbers 6:24-26).*

## Picture Of Salvation – Lifted Up! Numbers 21:4-9

Most significant about the story of the bronze snake is how it pictures Christ's work of salvation on our behalf. Jesus, Himself saw this story as a type of the salvation He would make available through His death. Crucifixion as a means of Jesus death was foreshadowed a thousand of years before the

*"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." (John 3:14-15).*

*"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die." (John 12:32-33).*

gruesome method of execution was even invented! There suspended between heaven and earth, hanging from that cross Jesus became the means of salvation to all those who would look to Him. The shadows, types, and lessons in this short story of sin and salvation are so numerous that we'll just make a list of them below under three main categories.

### **It's Appointment**

- 🌀 ***It Was Prescribed By God.*** So the cross of Christ is the divinely appointed means of salvation.
- 🌀 ***It Was The Only Divinely Appointed Remedy.*** So *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12).
- 🌀 ***It Was Conspicuous.*** It was erected high in the center of the camp. Even so Christ is lifted up in clear view on the cross, and through the teaching of His word, and His people.

### **It's Adequacy**

- 🌀 ***It Healed Wherever A Man Was Bitten.*** So there is provision in the cross of Christ for all manner of sin.
- 🌀 ***It Healed However Serious A Man's Condition.*** So the cross saves the worst of sinners (Hebrews 7:25).
- 🌀 ***It Healed Whoever Was Bitten.*** Young, old, priest, slave, all has equal access to healing. So also is the cross for all, “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature!” (Mark 16:15).
- 🌀 ***It's Healing Was Complete.*** There is no hint of any case in which it failed. The cross never fails those who live by faith in it's healing power.
- 🌀 ***It's Healing Was Instantaneous.*** No hint of any gradual or delayed cure. So the cross brings immediate justification.

### **It's Appropriation**

- 🌀 ***It Was Accessible.*** Life came simply by a look, and all were capable of that. So, salvation in Christ is within the reach of all those who look to Jesus.
- 🌀 ***It Was Improbable.*** Healing through looking at a bronze snake seemed improbable. It necessitated an act of faith. So, in faithful baptism one has faith that God is doing a work to heal their sins (Colossians 2:12-13).
- 🌀 ***It Was A Lesson.*** The bronze snake looked like the snakes that were destroying the camp. By looking to it they were reminded of their sin, and at the same time it provided their healing. On Calvary we see, as nowhere else, the awfulness of our sin, and at the same time our salvation from it.
- 🌀 ***It Was Individual.*** Each person must look for himself. So the cross must be individually appropriated.

**The Name Illuminates His Character.** A star is used to depict the brilliance and the glory of the Lord Jesus. In Luke 1 when Zacharias is singing a song of praise to the Lord at the birth of John the baptizer, he calls Jesus the *“Dayspring from on high.”* (Luke 1:76-79). The Jews view “star” as a Messianic title. They did that because of the prophecy of that wicked prophet named Balaam. Every time he tried to curse the people of God, blessing came out of his mouth from the Lord God. And one of those prophecies is found in Numbers 24:17 when he said, *“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel”* There are probably two ways to look at this symbolic message. Certainly King David fits the description, since he did defeat the Moabites, Edomites, and other peoples (see 2 Samuel 8:2, 14). But the greater fulfillment is in Christ, the Messiah, the *“Star of Jacob and Scepter of Israel.”* Balaam was prophesying of Messiah. Messiah will be a Star out of Jacob. And the light, and reign of Jesus would be greater than any star that has ever shown. It was a coincidence that God appointed a divine star as the messenger that announced the birth of Jesus. Do you remember what the Magi said? *“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him”* (Matt 2:2).



**The Name Illuminates His Coming.** In fact, the last picture we have of Jesus in all the Bible is this that He is a like a star. *“I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”* (Revelation 22:16). It is Jesus’ very last name in Scripture. He, like the morning star, speaks of the dawning of a new day. As quickly as the morning star fades and the new day breaks, He has promised to come again to takes us to be with our Father. This name is His way of encouraging us to live in the future tense. Everyday we need to get up and look at bright morning star and understand that Jesus is saying to us, “If the day is so close, why would you be saying what you’re saying? And why would you be doing what you’re doing? Why would you be going where you’re going? And why would you be buying what you’re buying? And why would you be thinking what you’re thinking? —If the day is so near?” It’s Jesus way of saying to us, “Don’t let the externals, override the eternal. You were not made for this temporary, dark place. You are people of the day.” The star heralded His first coming, and He is the star that heralds His second.

**The Name Illuminates Our Future.** Jesus writing to the churches in Revelation 2 is given them encouragement to keep their faith. And He says in verses 26 and 28, *“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end,.. and I will give him the Morning Star.”* (Revelation 2:26-28) The new day is going to be nothing less than enjoying Christ forever. That’s why the new day has to be an eternal day—it’s going to take forever to enjoy all there is to enjoy in Christ.

