

Lesson Twenty-Three: *Preparations for Battle*
Numbers 1:1-10:10

Themes:

Numbers: Despite Israel's rebellion, God raises up a new generation to accomplish His ordained purposes.

Numbers 1:1-10:10: To be victorious in battle, Israel must advance in purity.

I. **General Information:**

a. Characteristics:

i. Numbers begins thirteen months after the exodus from Egypt and recounts Israel's departure from Sinai, her rebellion and the wandering in the wilderness, and the preparation for entering Canaan.

1. Two major census: Numbers 1 and 26 – delineates two generations

a. (1-25) The wilderness generation – defeat

b. (26) The new generation – conquest

i. Remnant: Joshua and Caleb link the old and the new

b. Purpose:

i. To warn the new generation to flee the apostasy of their parents, and to call them to arms as God's holy army.

c. Themes:

i. Judgment: demonstrated by the death of the first generation

ii. Faithfulness: demonstrated by the raising up of a new generation

iii. Sovereignty: demonstrated by God's use of Israel's circumstances for His glory

iv. Purity: demonstrated by the requirements for Israel's holiness

v. Order: demonstrated by the placement and functions of the tribes

vi. Conquest: demonstrated by the picture of Israel as an advancing army

1. Obedience brings victory and blessing.

2. Disobedience brings defeat and curses.

vii. Perseverance: demonstrated by the example of the first generation

II. (1-2) **Preparation for War**

a. (1:1) The voice of the Lord:

i. Timing: the formation of a kingdom

1. Covenant

2. Preservation

3. Redemption

4. Constitution

ii. Faithfulness: the Lord speaks despite Israel's rebellion.

iii. Presence: the Lord will lead them through the wilderness.

b. (1:2-46) The census:

i. Highlights the importance of individuals

1. God's faithfulness to His covenant

ii. Focused on males who are able to serve in the army

1. Underscores the purpose of Numbers

c. (2:1-32) The tribes:

i. Four camps, three tribes each, facing the central tabernacle

1. The centrality of God

2. The people's purity (...at a distance)

d. (2:33) The priests:

i. Narrative tension highlights a particular function (cf. 1:47-53)

- III. (3-4) **Priestly Duties**
 - a. (3:1-10) The Levites were chosen as the guardians of Israel's purity.
 - i. A vital mission: holiness is paramount to victory
 - 1. Responsible for the care of the tabernacle (1:50; 3:7)
 - 2. Responsible for the purity of the tabernacle (1:53)
 - 3. Responsible for the movement of the tabernacle (1:51; 4:1-33)
 - ii. Purity is linked to presence.
 - b. (3:11-13) The Levites were chosen to signify the need for surrender and substitution.
 - i. (13) Surrender: *For all the firstborn are Mine...*
 - 1. God demands the first fruits (Ex 13:2, 11-16; 22:29-30; 34:19-20).
 - ii. (12) Substitution: *I have taken the Levites...instead of every firstborn*
 - 1. The sons of Israel were purchased by the blood of the lamb (Ex 12:13).
 - 2. The sons of Israel are purchased by the life consecration of the Levites.
 - iii. God's army must be dependent upon Him.
- IV. (5-6, 8) **Purification**
 - a. Israel is preparing to depart, and must therefore be purified.
 - i. (5:2-3) Purification of the camp: focus on the Lord
 - ii. (5:5-10) Restitution: focus on the Lord and neighbor
 - iii. (5:11-31) Faithfulness: focus on the family.
 - iv. (6:1-21) Consecration: focus on individual Israelites (Nazirites)
 - v. (6:22-27) Blessing: focus on the community
 - vi. (8:5-7) Purification of the priests: focus on the spiritual leaders
 - b. The nation must be pure: neighbors, families, individuals, and leaders.
- V. (7) **Worship**
 - a. A focus on the worshipping community
 - i. The purpose of God's people
 - ii. God's concern for *every* aspect of our worship
 - iii. The importance of spiritual leadership.
- VI. (9:1-10:10) **Preparation for Departure**
 - a. (9:1-14) Passover:
 - i. A reminder of God's faithfulness
 - b. (9:15-23) Presence:
 - i. The Lord is with Israel
 - c. (9:23-10:10) Guidance:
 - i. The Lord guides them through the cloud and the silver trumpets.
 - d. Conclusion: Israel will be lead by a God who is vocal, powerful, reliable, sovereign, present, and holy (Raymond Brown).
- VII. **Applications for Today**
 - a. Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare (Eph 6:10-17)
 - i. Christians hear from God (preparation).
 - ii. Christians must be focused (preparation).
 - iii. Christians are a royal priesthood (priestly duty).
 - iv. Christians must be surrendered (priestly duty).
 - v. Christians have a substitute (priestly duty).
 - vi. Christians must be holy (purification).
 - vii. Christians receive their ultimate blessing in Christ (purification).
 - viii. Christians worship the Lord in spirit and truth (worship).
 - ix. Christians enjoy the presence of God.
 - x. Christians enjoy the guidance of God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Eph 6:10-11).