

## Reading Numbers (you can do it!)

### The Big Picture

#### **1-10 Israel prepares to leave Sinai**

- 1-2 Israel's Tribes and Camps
- 3-4 Israel's Priesthood
- 5-6 Laws Concerning Purity
- 7-8 Commissioning the Levite Priests
- 9-10 Preparations for leaving Sinai

#### **11-21 Israel Rebels in the Wilderness**

- 11-12 Israel grumbles and rebels
- 13-14 Israel refuses to go into the land
- 15 Laws about sacrifices

16-17 Rebellion against Moses and Aaron

18-19 Laws about priests

20 Grumbling against Moses

21 Israel battles Canaanites East of the Jordan

#### **22-25 Balaam Blesses Israel**

#### **26-36 Preparation for entering the land**

26 New Census

27-30 Laws regarding inheritance, offerings, vows

31-32 War with Midian

33-36 Laws about leaders, boundaries, and cities

### Key Themes in Numbers

1. Israel prepares to journey from Sinai to the promised land through the desert
  - Israel is numbered, organized, and ready to travel with the tabernacle: chs. 1-8
  - The people are guided by the pillar of cloud and fire and the trumpets: 9:15-23, 10:1-10
  - Israel leaves Sinai after a year: 10:11-36
2. Israel complains and rebels against God and Moses in the wilderness
  - Complaining over a lack of food and water: chs. 11 and 20
  - People rebel against Moses' leadership: chs. 12 and 16
  - Israel lacks faith and refuses to enter the promised land: chs. 13-14
3. Israel's rebellion provokes judgment and discipline from Yahweh
  - Fire from heaven: 11:1
  - Quail and plague: 11:33
  - Miriam's Leprosy: 12
  - People sentenced to wander 40 years: 14:26-34
  - Earthquake and fire: 16:31-35
  - Moses and Aaron denied entrance into the land: 20:12
  - Poisonous snakes: 21:6
4. Despite Israel's rebellion, Yahweh plans to bring **blessing** on them.
  - Yahweh compels Balaam to bless Israel instead of curse them: chs. 22-24
  - Yahweh grants Israel victory over their Canaanite enemies: chs. 20-21, 31-32

### Things to look for in reading Numbers

The stories in Numbers raise the question of whether Yahweh will remain committed to his covenant promises in the face of Israel's rebellion. Sometimes God brings judgment, other times he forgives, other times he brings a blessing.

While reading chapters 10-25, keep asking how each story addresses this question. How do these stories affect your view of God's grace and of his justice?