

Numbers

Introduction

The Greek name is based on two accounts of numbering or census taking recorded in the book, one at the beginning of the 40 years and one at the end. The other Greek names verses the Hebrew names are better chosen:

Genesis - beginnings

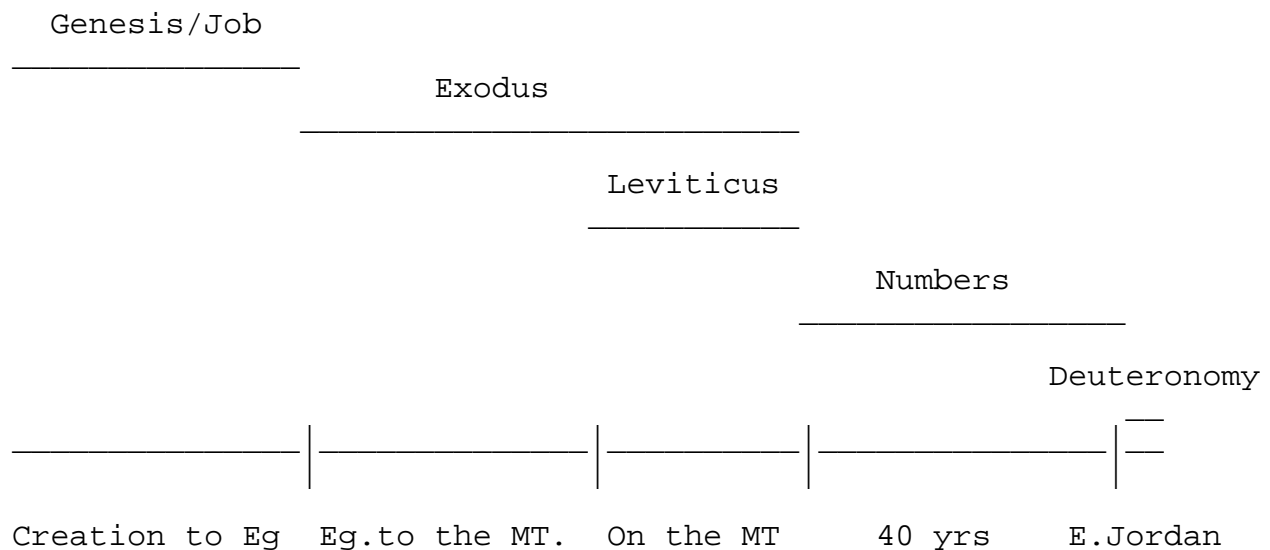
Exodus - exodus

Leviticus - Levites

Deuteronomy - second law

But Numbers is not as appropriate. The Hebrew name is a better reflection of the contents: "in the wilderness." Numbers highlights the wilderness journey from Sinai to the East of Jordan.

Note the following relation of books to time and location:



The history can be followed directly by reading Genesis to Exodus 20, then Numbers 10-36 followed by Joshua.

1A. Structure

IOT gives:

The End of the Old Generation of God's People (1-25)

The Birth of the New Generation of God's People (25-36)

2A. Contents

Numbers records "an important transition in the history of redemption" (IOT 88). There is death and replacement of the people of God in the wilderness. Thus, there is judgment for sin and grace to sinners.

As a whole the book can be called the murmurings in the wilderness. Upon leaving the mount (Num. 10:13), the people complain and Moses intercedes (11:1-2; then v. 4-6! ; 16:3,31 and 34! ; 16:41-42).

The theme is grace to murmurers on the journey from Sinai to East of the Jordan.

Especially central is the spy narrative (13:1,2; 26-30; 14:1-10; 14:27-30).

Moses' intercession appealed to God's covenant (14:16).

Israel's conduct is a "paradigm for every succeeding generation of God's people" to be like the new not the old generation (*IOT* 89). Thus, Numbers records the gospel of God's grace to rebellious sinners.

3A. Lessons

1) God's covenant keeping is gracious and continues through history in the family of Abraham in spite of the sinfulness of man. As Milgrom puts it "The principal actor in Numbers is Yahweh. Even under extreme provocation, he keeps his covenant with Israel, guides them through the wilderness and provides for their needs" (*IOT* 89).

2) Israel provokes the Lord to the very time of Christ when they receive not their own. But obedience is required for the people of God to live and not die in the wilderness lost outside Eden alienated from God. What Israel did not do in the forty years and what they did not do at the time of Christ, Jesus did in his life. His obedience was sealed through temptation in the wilderness 40 days. He obeys that we may inherit the land and not die in the wilderness.

3) Through Israel, God provides warning and encouragement

1 Cor. 10 is a commentary on the book of Numbers.