

## Numbers Chapter 1 Commentary

**1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, 2 Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; 3 From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies. 4 And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers.**

God tells Moses to count the number of people who have come out of Egypt. God will use these names for the assembling of the armies of Israel by choosing men, not children, and of the men only those able to do battle. This army is to be drawn from every tribe of Israel with the exception of Levi. **Nu 1:47 "But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them."** God has different duties for Levi.

As we read the next several verses, we are given many names and have put with them their definitions. I want you to see that almost all those names, which are named, are based upon a definition that is connected to godliness, which give us prophetic pictures, at least in some instances, which we may apply to our own lives as God's people. We should see pictures of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, godly attributes, characteristics and be enabled to make reflections of these images in our own Christian experiences.

**5 And these are the names of the men that shall stand with you: of the tribe of Reuben; Elizur the son of Shedeur.**

- Reuben means; *see you a son*; A picture of God the Son revealed in incarnation.
- Elizur means; *God of the rock*; A picture of Christ the rock, the foundation stone of the church, upon which our faith rest.
- Shedeur means; *spreader of light*; A picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ, from whose word is our light and life. Without light and life you cannot see.

**6 Of Simeon; Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.**

- Simeon means; *hearing, to hear intelligently*; A picture of being born again, and thus enlivened having eyes that see, ears that hear, and hearts that understand.
- Shelumiel means; *peace of God*; A picture of the peace and comfort we receive with the new birth, and the peace of confidence in the finished work of our Saviour in the salvation of our souls.
- Zurishaddai means; *rock of the Almighty*; A picture of the Saviour and His Word of Truth. The foundation rock upon which the church is established.

**7 Of Judah; Nahshon the son of Amminadab.**

- Judah means; *celebrated*; The lineage that leads us to Christ

- Nahshon means; *enchanter*; Our hearts and minds are enchanted (captivated) with the goodness, mercy, and grace of God.
- Amminadab means; *people of liberality*; We are given freedom from our sins, and the ability to be abundant in our work of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **8 Of Issachar; Nethaneel the son of Zuar.**

- Issachar means; *he will bring a reward*; A picture of the church coming to existence with the work of the incarnate Jesus Christ. The church is our gift here in time, and is coupled with the knowledge of salvation by grace, another great gift.
- Nethaneel means; *given of God*; A picture of the coming of the Holy Spirit that Christ sent to us.
- Zuar means; *to be small, be brought low*; How we should see ourselves in the presence of God

## **9 Of Zebulun; Eliab the son of Helon.**

- Zebulun means; *to inclose, to reside*; We see a picture of the Garden of Eden in which man in the beginning had communion with God. This is a picture of the church today. A garden inclosed and the place of residence for God's people, the Promised Land to us.
- Eliab means; *God of his father*; Christ is our God and he is of his Father. Christ is the one in whom God is well pleased.
- Helon means; *strong*; There is none that can compare to God who doeth what He will, both in time and eternity.

## **10 Of the children of Joseph: of Ephraim; Elishama the son of Ammihud: of Manasseh; Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.**

- Joseph means; *let him add*; Who has added to the number of God's people? Jesus Christ and he is still adding to that number, in time, every time a dead sinner is born again. Remember, Jacob (Israel) adopted the two sons of Joseph. Their names are used instead of that of Joseph. This made the division of the land into twelve parts, since the Levites did not get a particular section but many cities throughout Israel for the service of the priesthood.
- Ephraim means; *double fruit*; We see a picture of all God's people in time; those saved before Christ and those saved after. A picture of both Jew and Gentile being saved in this age of salvation by grace.
- Elishama means; *God of hearing*; A testimony of how God hears, sees, and knows all things. We are reminded that God the Father heard the prayer of god the Son and honored that prayer, which is why you and I have salvation and the church today.
- Ammihud means; *people of splendor*; The church is indeed a glorious thing in time and eternity. Why? Because it is robed in the righteousness of Christ and bears about in time the glory of the Lord upon the earth.
- Manasseh means; *causing to forget*; We see that because of the finished work of Christ on the cross, God hath forgotten or sins, in the eternal perspective. We must still, in time, bear the consequence of our sins but their remission is only in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.
- Gamaliel means; *reward of God*; God's work accomplishes God's will.
- Pedahzur means; *a rock*; Since we are in the eternal perspective let's stay there and just point out that Christ is the rock upon which our eternal salvation is established, forever.

## 11 Of Benjamin; Abidan the son of Gideoni.

- Benjamin means; *son of (the) right hand*; Where is God the Son right now? According to scripture this is the position of Christ at the right hand of the Father.
- Abidan means; *father of judgment, judge*; Christ our Saviour is Lord, King, and Judge over all things. Having returned to the eternal heaven He is today acting in the office of High Priest for all God's people. We understand that under the law covenants being given that the office of judge was assigned to the priesthood of the ceremonial law.
- Gideoni means; *war like*; Christ is at war with satan and evil; and we know from scripture that He, as King and Lord of God's people, is the one who wins that war. Praise the Lord for eternal salvation! We, as Christians, are also engaged in a warfare as seen in: **2Co 10:3-6; 3 "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; 6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."**

## 12 Of Dan; Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.

- Dan means; *judge, a straight course, sail direct*; A picture of Christ who is Judge and has set the pattern of a straight course for us to walk in life. When time is no more and the dead in Christ rise first; we shall sail directly to where that course has been pointing us all the time.
- Ahiezer means; *brother of help*; We are reminded of Christ in: **Mt 12:47-50; 47 "Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. 48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? 49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."**
- Ammishaddai means; *people of the Almighty*; The promise of God to us: **2Co 6:16 "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."**

## 13 Of Asher; Pagiel the son of Ocran.

- Asher means; *to be straight*; The way to God is through the straight gate, Jesus Christ.
- Pagiel means; *accident of God*; God doesn't do anything by accident so I can't say what this points us to. One thought is that we, in our weak mortal minds often attribute things happening by accident from their appearance. This then shows the weakness of our faith in the surety of our God.
- Ocran means; *muddler, to roil water, to disturb or afflict, trouble, stir*; We are reminded of the judicial consequence for our sins in time, through which afflictions, trials, and troubles, may be brought upon us. We are reminded also of the scripture in: **Ro 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."**

#### **14 Of Gad; Eliasaph the son of Deuel.**

- Gad means; *to crowd upon, invade, overcome*; Though satan may press hard upon us in this life, we shall overcome by and through the power of the Holy Spirit of God. We also see that if God does not crowd us into a corner; we will think we are self-sufficient and forget our need of him.
- Eliasaph means; *God is gatherer*; God tells us plainly that He will gather his wheat into His garner. *Lu 3:17 "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."*
- Deuel means; *known of God*; Scripture tells us plainly that Christ is the only one who knows God and that through Christ we are known of God. *Mt 11:27 "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."*

#### **15 Of Naphtali; Ahira the son of Enan.**

- Naphtali means; *my wrestling, to twine, to struggle*; Certainly, we see that the definition ascribes the wrestling to self, therefore, we see our own struggle with sin in this life.
- Ahira means; *brother of wrong*; We can ascribe all the wrong to ourselves. We know we are brothers with our Brother, Saviour, King, Lord Jesus Christ
- Enan means; *having eyes*; We are made alive in Jesus Christ and have eyes that see.

Maybe, you can, in your own time, look at each individual tribe of Israel and see how they are portrayed in scripture for us. Then make the comparison to our own lives as the people of God. This is a reminder to us to think about how others will define us when we have run out the race of life. When you are dead and gone; will anyone be able to look back upon your life, and give some godly attribute that you exhibited, in your walk as a child of God?

#### **16 These were the renowned of the congregation, princes of the tribes of their fathers, heads of thousands in Israel.**

Now we have been given the names of those who were the heads of the individual tribes.

- Renowned by definition means; to call out, address by name, that are bidden

Here are some other interesting facts of this lineage:

- Jacob's sons by Leah: Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim
- Jacob's sons by Rachel: Manasseh, Benjamin
- Jacob's sons by Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan, Naphtali
- Jacob's sons by Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad, Asher

It is by these names the tribes of "Israel", Jacob's name after God changed it.

**17 And Moses and Aaron took these men which are expressed by their names: 18 And they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month, and they declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, by their polls. 19 As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai. 20 And the children of Reuben, Israel's eldest son, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the**

names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 21 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Reuben, were forty and six thousand and five hundred. 22 Of the children of Simeon, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, those that were numbered of them, according to the number of the names, by their polls, every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 23 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty and nine thousand and three hundred. 24 Of the children of Gad, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 25 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Gad, were forty and five thousand six hundred and fifty. 26 Of the children of Judah, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 27 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Judah, were threescore and fourteen thousand and six hundred. 28 Of the children of Issachar, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 29 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Issachar, were fifty and four thousand and four hundred. 30 Of the children of Zebulun, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 31 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty and seven thousand and four hundred. 32 Of the children of Joseph, namely, of the children of Ephraim, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 33 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand and five hundred.

Adam Clarke's Commentary on verse 33: *The tribe of Ephraim-forty thousand and five hundred.] Ephraim, as he was blessed beyond his eldest brother Manasseh, Ge 48:20, so here he is increased by thousands more than Manasseh, and more than the whole tribe of Benjamin, and his blessing continued above his brother, De 33:17. And thus the prophecy, Ge 48:19, was fulfilled: His younger brother (Ephraim) shall be greater than he, (Manasseh.) No word of God can possibly fall to the ground: he alone sees the end from the beginning; his infinite wisdom embraces all occurrences, and it is his province alone to determine what is right, and to predict what himself has purposed to accomplish.*

34 Of the children of Manasseh, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 35 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Manasseh, were thirty and two thousand and two hundred. 36 Of the children of Benjamin, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 37 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty and five thousand and four hundred. 38 Of the children of Dan, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 39 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Dan, were threescore and two thousand and seven hundred. 40 Of the children of Asher, by their generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 41 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Asher, were forty and one thousand and five hundred. 42 Of the children of Naphtali, throughout their

generations, after their families, by the house of their fathers, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war; 43 Those that were numbered of them, even of the tribe of Naphtali, were fifty and three thousand and four hundred. 44 These are those that were numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers. 45 So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel; 46 Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.

Remember that 70 souls went into Egypt? We see here that in the course of the 400 years that number has increased dramatically. There came out of Egypt this multitude of 603,550 men over 20 years of age. This doesn't include those men under 20, women and children, nor the tribe of Levi. Again, we see that God is faithful in his promise to bless Jacob.

47 But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them. 48 For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying, 49 Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take the sum of them among the children of Israel: 50 But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. 51 And when the tabernacle setteth forward, the Levites shall take it down: and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death. 52 And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. 53 But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel: and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony. 54 And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.

The Levites will be numbered but not to go to war.