

**OLD PLACES,  
NEW FACES**

**Bible Places Illuminating  
Today's Christian**

**12 Studies Based on  
Numbers & Deuteronomy**

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## LESSON 1:

### LIVING WITH A COMMISSION

#### *Desert of Sinai*

The fourth book of the Old Testament is called Numbers because there are two censuses of the Israelites recorded in it. The first census takes place at Mt. Sinai where the Israelites were encamped after their escape from Egypt. The second census takes place after the Israelites had wandered in the wilderness for forty years. God commanded that each census take place, placing Moses and Aaron in charge of the task.

God's command to "Take a census..." in Numbers 1:2 is, outside of the exodus from Egypt, the most significant event of the Old Testament story since the twelfth chapter of Genesis. There God gave another command, this one to Abraham: "Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). These two commands are intimately connected, though they are separated by over five hundred years. The first involves a promise made by God, and the second is the fulfillment of that promise.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

##### READ NUMBERS 1:1-4, 17-19, 45-46

1. Who ordered the census to be taken? (vs. 1-2)
2. Who was to coordinate the census? (v. 3)
3. Who was counted? (vs. 3, 45)

**REREAD NUMBERS 1:46**

8. The number of fighting men proved the fulfillment of which promise made to Abraham and Sarah?

God had promised His people a place to live, a place which would be a permanent home for them. This promise had been a constant hope for Abraham's descendants. It had been the light that guided the direction of their lives. When God was finally ready to give them this land, the census was for counting the soldiers who, with God's help, would take possession of that land.

There are really two geographical places in today's story: the Desert of Sinai, where the Israelites sat dreaming about a better place; and the Promised Land itself, where they were promised a permanent home and provision for all of their needs. It was a great promise for those who sat in the desert where there was a scarcity of everything.

9. Metaphorically speaking, what is the Desert of Sinai in our lives?

10. What is our Promised Land?

**READ I THESSALONIANS 4:13-14**

16. How should the promise of life after death affect a believer when faced with the death of a loved one who was also a believer?

**READ GENESIS 15:1, 4-5**

17. Could Abraham count the number of his descendants who would one day be in the Promised Land?

**READ REVELATION 7:9**

18. In John's vision of heaven, he counted how many people in white robes (the saints who have died)?
19. Are the descendants of Abraham and Sarah (Israelites, Jews) the only ones who will be in heaven?
20. How is this image of a heaven filled with people of all nationalities a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, where He said, "all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you"?

## Leader's Notes

### LESSON 1: Living with a Commission

*Location: Desert of Sinai*

#### SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. To explore how the hope of heaven should positively affect believers in this life.
2. To remind participants of the great promise we as believers have of life everlasting with God after death.
3. To encourage participants to translate this hope of heaven not into passivity in this life, but into active and aggressive work for the kingdom of God and for the betterment of others.

#### GETTING STARTED (Optional Activity)

Tell participants, "Imagine that you are seriously ill and need to be hospitalized for many months. You are immobile and in pain." Then ask, "In that situation, what would be the difference between knowing you will fully recover some day and knowing your sickness is terminal and will end your life within a year?"

Allow participants to respond. Then ask, "If you had a terminal illness, would knowing you were going to heaven after death make a difference, versus not believing in an afterlife?"

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. God ordered the census to be taken.
2. Moses and Aaron were to coordinate the census.
3. All men who were twenty years of age and older and able to serve in the army were counted.
4. The total census was 605,550.
5. God promised He would make Abraham and Sarah into a great nation, He would bless them and make their name great.
6. God promised to give Abraham and Sarah the land of Canaan and also to give them more offspring than they could count.
7. The army, with God's help, was going to take the Promised Land.
8. The large number of men plus all of the women and children