

There are three reasons why the book is important for our study. First, it enables us to know the history of God's dealings with Israel at this vital stage of its ~~history~~ progress. We learn from it many important facts of history, and we come to understand something of God's methods as we see what He did during the forty years described in the book. Secondly, it gives us background for understanding the many allusions to its history and its laws which occur in later sections of the Bible. Thirdly, it is particularly rich in spiritual lessons for the Christian, who, as we have seen, in a stage of experience which corresponds exactly to that of the nation of Israel in the wilderness. The book is full of vital illustration and precept to guide the Christian in his journey. It presents the resources available to him, and shows the internal and external dangers which he must face.

Numbers contains three types of material: historical, describing events that occur; legal, presenting enactments that were intended to be observed by Israel throughout its history; and a third type, which stands between these two, consisting of regulations applying only to the wilderness journey, and statistical material of historical interest.

In the first part of the Old Testament, the tendency of the Christian student is to confine his attention to the narrative. Unfortunately, many readers fail to realize the great value of the narrative portion of Numbers because they become bogged down in the statistical section or in the detailed regulations for the progress of the march, a type of material which is preponderant in the first part of the book. These regulations were very important at the time, and are of much value for detailed study, but can easily give the student a false impression if they are studied before he has acquired familiarity with the later narrative material. It is therefore recommended that the student should first go through the book, skimming over the notes on the non-narrative sections, but carefully studying the narrative chapters themselves in the light of the notes. Going through