

Numbers of the Cross

By Jeremy Lucas

December 14, 2005

Note to Readers: You may want to have a paper and pencil nearby. Learn to write out this illustration so that you'll become a catalyst who may inspire friends and family members to pick up that dusty Bible and start reading again!

For the vast majority of us, the study of anything post-Moses-and-the-Exodus or pre-King-David is a culture of investigation that we're not familiar. And where we are not familiar, we often shy away. Part of what dispels our attention away from these interphased books and Scriptures is that they involve so much data, detail, and factual information that we're overloaded to the point of concluding, "Well, it doesn't relate to our life application, so what's the point of continuing the effort?"

Randomly, most of us will pull out an OT Scripture here or an OT Scripture there, but only to enhance a point we're trying to make with New Testament correlation. Especially among those of us who consider ourselves "grace believers," the use of Deuteronomy or Leviticus is simply an opportunity to exhibit how little we really know of Israel's history. This is not to say that there aren't a few here and there who truly thrive and enjoy a fervent study in the Old Testament Scriptures, but we're frequently so hesitant to study the fullness of Scripture because of our understanding and belief that application is all that matters. And hence, if application is all that matters, we should only look at Paul's letters.

Well sure, if application is all that matters, that would be true. But Scripture is full of SO much more than application alone. Surely we all know the following:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." II Timothy 3:16-17

The more we study and learn ALL of Scripture, the more we gain that is profitable for correction and for instruction. What I'm about to share with you tonight is certainly no where near shy of being profitable to your understanding of God's mysterious way.

One thing we all, for the most part, agree upon is that the "hidden mystery" that Paul speaks of is with regard to the Body of Christ and the unity of "one man." But one thing we often forget in our fearful attacks on those who use the Old Testament is that there IS one quite large and unavoidable mystery that WAS visible in the Old Testament, though not understood in the New. What was it?

The Cross of Christ.

An allusion to the cross is made in Deuteronomy, but not much more is mentioned in word:

"And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." Deuteronomy 21:22-23

Even in general terms, this is the only SPECIFIC reference we have to the "cross" of Christ in the Old Testament and it has more to do with the basic punishment given to any many deserving of death. As to the specific nature of that day, we have many other allusions and prophecies that address the nature of His experience in suffering. So what of the cross? If there is no prophecy that speaks to the specific tree that He would hang on, then how do we know, from the Old Testament that the cross was to have any significance?

I ask now, that you pull out a piece of paper, a pen or pencil, and open your Bibles to Numbers 2:1-34.

If you're thinking to yourself, "I'll just read along and not draw this out," I can assure you that it's only to your disadvantage. For even if I'm crazy, that which we're about to read will only be boring if you do not have reason to get involved.

So go ahead and do it. Get that piece of paper. Get yourself a pen or pencil. And if a Bible isn't handy, just have your paper and pencil nearby as we read together (I'll quote each passage).

Ready?

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house: far off about the tabernacle of the congregation shall they pitch." Numbers 2:1-2

First of all, turn your paper lengthwise so that the longest sides are going horizontally. Then, in the middle of your paper, draw a diamond shape with a dot in the center of it. For the sake of making it distinct, we'll call this the "tabernacle" or "tent of meeting." You don't need to label this unless you want to, but we need all the space we can for writing other factors.

What you've done, thus far, is place the tabernacle of the congregation in the center of Israel's camp. Right now, as you look at your paper, you're looking at it from above (as from the sky). In Numbers 2:1-2, God is beginning to give instructions to Aaron and Moses about how the Hebrew people should camp. As we dig deeper and deeper into this section of Scripture, we'll find that God not only organizes these people, but He organizes them in a specific manner and doesn't miss a single head in the process. He knows EVERY single man, woman, and child in the midst of the camp.

"Now those who camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah, by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Judah: Nahshon the son of Amminadab, and his army, even their numbered men, 74,600." Numbers 2:3-4

Go back to your paper and find the east. Remember that you're looking down from the sky at the tent of meeting (your diamond in the middle). Where does the sun rise? In the east. On your paper, the east will be to the right of the diamond. Just below the east corner of the diamond, write the name Judah.

Continuing on...

"And those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar, and the leader of the sons of Issachar: Nethanel the son of Zuar, and his army, even their numbered men, 54, 500." Numbers 2:5-6

After Judah, put a comma and write Issachar. By putting Issachar next to Judah, you're essentially still just drawing this out as it states above: "those who camp next to him (Judah)."

"Then comes the tribe of Zebulun, and the leader of the sons of Zebulun: Eliab the son of Helon, and his army, even his numbered men, 57, 400." Numbers 2:7-8

With four corners to fill in, I'm sure you can do some basic division in your mind and discover that with 12 tribes, 4 corners divided by 12 tribes equals 3 tribes on each corner. And in the corner of Judah (the lion), we have Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

This is the east. Toward the rising of the sun.

"The total of the numbered men of the camp of Judah: 186,400 by their armies. They shall set out first." Numbers 2:9

How do we get 186,400? We add 74,600 (v.4), 54,400 (v.6), and 57,400 (v.8).

Obviously that's a lot of people, but we're going to eventually draw out some very interesting simplifications.

Continue on in this same idea. The Scriptures will guide you clockwise around your diamond...

"On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Reuben: Elizur the son of Shedeur, and his army, even their numbered men, 46,500." Numbers 2:10-11

You should now be on the south end of the diamond, just to the left of the point. Write in Reuben as the head of the southern camp.

"And those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon, and the leader of the sons of Simeon: Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, and his army, even their numbered men, 59,300." Numbers 2:12-13

Just under Reuben, enter Simeon.

"Then comes the tribe of Gad, and the leader of the sons of Gad: Eliasaph the son of Deuel, and his army, even their numbered men, 45,650." Numbers 2:14-15

Just under Simeon, enter Gad.

"The total of the numbered men of the camp of Reuben: 151,450 by their armies. And they shall set out second." Numbers 2:16

To the left of the southern point on the diamond, write 151,450.

In verse 17, there is a break of description on the central diamond we've drawn.

"Then the tent of meeting shall set out with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; just as they camp, so they shall set out, every man in his place, by their standards." Numbers 2:17

This centralizes our diamond. Remember that the "diamond" is not significant, we've only just used it as an icon to represent the "tent of meeting."

Let's finish up the puzzle pieces before diving into anything deeper.

"On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud, and his army, even their numbered men, 40,500." Numbers 2:18-19

Enter Ephraim just above the west corner of the diamond.

"And next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the sons of Manasseh: Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, and his army, even their numbered men, 32,200." Numbers 2:20-21

Enter Manasseh beside Ephraim.

"Then comes the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the sons of Benjamin: Abidan the son of Gideoni, and his army, even their numbered men, 35,400." Numbers 2:22-23

Enter Benjamin beside Manasseh.

"The total of the numbered men of the camp of Ephraim: 108,100, by their armies. And they shall set out third." Numbers 2:24

Just below the west corner, write in the number 108,100.

"On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Dan: Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, and his army, even their numbered men, 62,700." Numbers 2:25-26

To the left of the north corner, write Dan.

"And those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the sons of Asher: Pagiel the son of Ocran, and his army, even their numbered men, 41,500." Numbers 2:27-28

Just below Dan, write Asher.

"Then comes the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the sons of Naphtali: Ahira the son of Enan, and his army, even their numbered men, 53,400." Numbers 2:29-30

Just below Asher, write Naphtali.

"The total of the numbered men of the camp of Dan, was 157,600. They shall set out last by their standards." Numbers 2:31

To the right of the north corner, write in 157,600.

I can assure you that seeing this on paper (that you can look down at) is much more effective (as we move forward) than looking at it from the screen. Whatever you've drawn thus far is going to be much easier to see than what I can draw technologically.

Now. Take a few moments to consider what it is that you're looking at before we continue. You can look above if you haven't drawn it, but I'll repeat that it is MUCH easier to follow along if you have something you drew yourself on a piece of paper below you. I encourage you to be the Berean.

There are a couple of things to note.

The display you're looking at gives away some very intriguing points, but there are really only two that are most fascinating. The first is historical and the second is visually numeric.

To briefly summarize the historical, I'm gonna leave it in your court (as Bereans) to study the phrase, "as far as the east is from the west." Study the east as it relates to Judah's history. Study the west as it relates to Ephraim's history. And then come again to the concept of something being "as far as the east is from the west." For not only will you discover the obvious (that east and west is infinite on a globe), but that the LITERAL east and LITERAL west of Israel were equally about as far apart spiritually as the obvious conditions.

But here's the visually numeric piece that we'll call, "The Cross of Christ."

Put a new piece of paper over top of the one you've been working on so that the diamond shows through to the new piece. Don't write anything just yet. Look at it dimly.

Now. On the new piece of paper, draw the circle (dot) that was in the middle of the diamond (but don't draw the diamond). After drawing this dot, step back and look at it again. You should be looking at a dot on the top sheet where you can also see through to the old sheet.

From that dot, make 18 dots to the right. And by "to the right," I'm suggesting that you make this 18 dots toward the rising of the sun. These 18 dots represent the 186,400 people from the tribe of Judah who are lined up to enter the Tent of Meeting (the dot in the center).

Now go back to the original dot and draw 15 dots to the south. These 15 dots represent the 151,450 people from the tribe of Reuben who are lined up to enter the Tent of Meeting (dot in the center).

Go back to the original dot and draw 10 dots to the west. These 10 dots represent the 108,100 people from the tribe of Ephraim who are lined up to enter the Tent of Meeting (dot in the center).

Go back to the original dot and draw 15 dots to the north. These 10 dots represent the 157,600 people from the tribe of Dan who are lined up to enter the Tent of Meeting (dot in the center).

"That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that [there is] none beside me. I [am] the LORD, and [there is] none else." Isaiah 45:6

It should be about as clear as day now. When the sun rises in the east and shines down upon the earth where Israel is encamped around the tabernacle, what image remains?

Here we are left to ask the final question:

Where was the Cross of Christ mentioned in the Old Testament? It wasn't. So how do we know that it was prophesied?

Because the Numbers of the Cross were always there.

NOTE TO READERS (June 7, 2007)

"Numbers of the Cross" was written after careful study of a casual statement that had been made during an Isaiah Commentary study by Chuck Missler of Koinonia House. His casual statement suggested that he had himself done more study on the organization of tribal camps, but I was unable to ascertain his studies on this matter. As a result, I engaged the Scriptures to "see if the things being taught were so" (even the casual comments that initially seemed irrelevant) and developed this presentation of greater detail.

However, it has recently come to my attention upon receipt of a small book entitled "Hidden Treasures in the Biblical Text," that Missler has indeed provided a much more thorough and substantiated study on the subject. All who have read this and found a curious desire to understand more or those who felt that my own written study left much to be desired are encouraged to pick up this small book directly from his online store for just \$5.95. You'll find his own, much more thorough version of the above study on page 63 in a chapter called, Signs of the Heavens (reflecting Psalm 19:1).
