

Numbers 1:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai.

Analysis

The phrase 'As the LORD commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai' demonstrates Moses' faithful obedience to God's instructions. The immediate execution of divine commands without delay or modification exemplifies leadership under God's authority. This verse establishes the pattern of exact obedience that characterizes Moses' ministry. The census occurred in the 'wilderness of Sinai,' the very place where God gave the Law—linking organization with divine revelation. Reformed theology emphasizes that God's people must be organized according to God's word, not human wisdom. The numbering served both practical purposes (military organization) and spiritual ones (demonstrating God's multiplication of Abraham's seed). This verse reminds believers that obedience to God's specific instructions matters, even in administrative details. Our service must flow from God's commands, not our preferences.

Historical Context

The census took place in the Sinai wilderness approximately thirteen months after the Exodus, during Israel's extended encampment at Mount Sinai where they received the Law and built the tabernacle. Ancient Near Eastern kings regularly conducted censuses for taxation and military purposes, but Israel's census had unique theological significance as commanded directly by God. The wilderness of Sinai refers to the broad desert region around Mount Sinai (modern southern Sinai peninsula), where Israel camped for nearly a year (Exodus 19:1; Numbers 10:11-12). Moses' exact obedience here contrasts with his later disobedience at

Meribah (Numbers 20:8-12). Archaeological surveys of the Sinai region confirm its harsh environment, making Israel's survival there dependent on divine provision. The numbering excluded Levites (Numbers 1:47-49), who were consecrated to tabernacle service.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What does Moses' immediate obedience 'as the LORD commanded' teach about faithful leadership and ministry?
2. How does conducting this census in the wilderness (where God revealed Himself) connect organization with divine revelation?

Interlinear Text

רְאֵשׁ תִּשְׁלַח אֶת־יִהְעָדָה מִשְׁנָה יְפָרַח וְ
commanded As the LORD Moses so he numbered

רְאֵשׁ תִּשְׁלַח אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִדְבָּר מִזִּים
them in the wilderness of Sinai

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