

“Levites Recognized, Separated and Purified for Service”

Numbers Chapter 8

The last verse of the last chapter says:

“Now when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim, so He spoke to him.”

Moses was in the tent of meeting speaking with God. Chapter 8 is what God said.

Num 8:1 1) Lighting of the Lampstand vs 1-4

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 8:2 "Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you mount the lamps, the seven lamps will give light in the front of the lampstand.'"

Num 8:3 Aaron therefore did so; he mounted its lamps at the front of the lampstand, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Num 8:4 Now this was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold; from its base to its flowers it was hammered work; according to the pattern which the LORD had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand.

- The camp of Israel is ready to move out. The tabernacle had been constructed and had been in use already.
- There is no natural light inside the tabernacle. It is the lamps on the lampstand that give the light.
- In Revelation 2-3 the Church is compared to lampstands. We the church do not have a natural light. Our light comes from the oil of the Holy Spirit and who gives light.
- It is also interesting that here we see God being specific as to how the light should shine. In front of the lampstand.
- Psalm 199:105 "Thy word [is] a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
- Our path being illuminated in front of tells us that He reveals where and how we should go and move. Also that we should be moving forward not being idle.
- Also, our path is illuminated by the "WORK" not by guess work, trial and error, my any other man made means.

Num 8:5 2) Levites Recognized vs 5-13

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 8:6 "Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel and cleanse them.

- Numbers 3:39 the total number of Levites available for service was 22,000
- The Levites are to be purified to serve as priests.

Num 8:7 "Thus you shall do to them, for their cleansing: *sprinkle* purifying water on them, and let them use a razor over their whole body and wash their clothes, and they will be clean.

- In Leviticus 8-9 the priests were purified for service. Here all the Levites needed purification to serve.
- Purification for them involved three activities.
 - Sprinkled with purifying water on them
part of the new covenant in Ezekiel 36:25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean."
 - Shaving entire body
Lepers were required to shave entire body as well in Leviticus 14:9. \ God seems to maintain humility in those chosen by Him by having them realize and experience the realm of the least among them.
 - Washing clothes

Num 8:8 "Then let them take a bull with its grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil; and a second bull you shall take for a sin offering.

- Num 8:9 "So you shall present the Levites before the tent of meeting. You shall also assemble the whole congregation of the sons of Israel,
- Num 8:10 and present the Levites before the LORD; and the sons of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites.
- This is not clear if this is a representative ceremony as far as the laying on of hands.
 - 22000 Levites
 - 603,550 Sons of Israel numbered for war (Chapter 1)
 - That is a lot of people in one place to hear and see and to lay hands on.
 - The point is that there was recognition of the men that will be performing the Lord's service before the people.
 - These Levites will be doing the "*behind the scenes*" work. They will be tearing down, setting up, maintaining and carrying the tabernacle.
 - God wants them recognized by the entire congregation.
 - **Why should they be recognized?**
 - To prevent jealousy
 - To cause them to know their service is honored by God and the people (not taken for granted)
 - That they would be more diligent and perform with excellence
- Num 8:11 "Aaron then shall present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the sons of Israel, **that they may qualify** to perform the service of the LORD.
- Num 8:12 "Now the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls; then offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites.
- Num 8:13 "You shall have the Levites stand before Aaron and before his sons so as to present them as a wave offering to the LORD.
- "that they may qualify" - the Levites do not automatically qualify to serve because they want to. They must meet the qualifications.
 - They themselves become the wave offering
 - A sacrifice
 - God's portion
 - Pleasing to God
- Num 8:14 **3) Levites Separated** vs 14-20
- "Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.
- Num 8:15 "Then after that the Levites may go in to serve the tent of meeting. But you shall cleanse them and present them as a wave offering;
- Num 8:16 for they are **wholly given to Me** from among the sons of Israel. I have taken them for Myself instead of every first issue of the womb, the firstborn of all the sons of Israel.
- Num 8:17 "For every firstborn among the sons of Israel is Mine, among the men and among the animals; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for Myself.
- Num 8:18 "But I have taken the Levites instead of every firstborn among the sons of Israel.
- After the Passover the firstborn belonged to God but in a legal transaction God exchanged the firstborn for the tribe of Levi. God numbered them (22000) and made the exchange with an exact accounting which required a redemption price.
 - The Levites are **WHOLLY** given. Meaning every person with no exception. Meaning entirely given without reservation
- Num 8:19 "I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the sons of Israel, to perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel, so that there will be no plague among the

sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary."

Num 8:20 Thus did Moses and Aaron and all the congregation of the sons of Israel to the Levites; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the sons of Israel did to them.

- The Lord gives His possession to the priests.

Num 8:21 **4) Levites Purified** vs 21-22

The Levites, too, purified themselves from sin and washed their clothes; and Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the LORD. Aaron also made atonement for them to cleanse them.

Num 8:22 Then after that the Levites went in to perform their service in the tent of meeting before Aaron and before his sons; just as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them.

- God wants these Levites who do the unnoticeable "behind the scenes" work of the ministry to be recognized, separated and purified.
- Acts 6:1-1-4,8 "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. ...And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people."
- 1 Timothy 3:1-7 "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil"
- Titus 1:7-9 "For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."
- Even in the New Testament - **Character Matters !**

Num 8:23 **5) Levites Span of Service** vs 23-26

Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Num 8:24 "This is what applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting.

Num 8:25 "But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work any more.

Num 8:26 "They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to keep an obligation, but they themselves shall do no work. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations."

- Numbers 4:3 states the term of service for the Levites was 30 - 50
- Here we see an apprenticeship that begins at 25 that lasts for 5 years.
- At 50 the Levite is to retire. But they can stay on, not to do work but help to disciple the apprentice.

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