

Numbers Lesson 08

Numbers Chapter 8

Distributed by: KJV Bible Studies
 Email: mail@KjvBibleStudies2.net
 Website: www.KjvBibleStudies.net

Memory verses for this week: *Heb 10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; Heb 10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*

Introduction: We continue our study on Numbers this week as we continue in Chapter 8. Last week we covered the sanctification of the people and the instructions God gave to Moses pertaining to the 12 tribes service of the tabernacle. Each tribe had a prince, and they were given instructions as to what offerings they were to bring for the priests to offer.

God had specific rules that had to be followed, and today in the church, God expects us to follow the rules he has laid down for the New Testament Church. Not just anyone could bring an offering and be accepted, and we as individuals can't change or make up new rules to follow in the church. God expects his people to be a people of obedience.

I. The Setting Apart of the Levites

*Num 8:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
 Num 8:2 Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.
 Num 8:3 And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the LORD commanded Moses.
 Num 8:4 And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the LORD had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick.*

The Lord again speaks to Moses in regard to the Levites. Moses was to tell Aaron some instructions regarding the lighting of the lamps over the candlestick. The purpose of the candlestick was more than ornamental. It was to give light.

Exo 25:31 And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same.

Exo 25:32 And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side:

Exo 25:33 Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick.

Exo 25:34 And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers.

Exo 25:35 And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick.

Exo 25:36 Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.

Exo 25:37 And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.

Exo 25:38 And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold.

Exo 25:39 Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels.

Exo 25:40 And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.

The candlestick had to be made of beaten gold according to God's pattern. We know as children of the Lord, we are to be instruments of light. And when we work as a vessel mete for the master's use, he forms us into a special instrument that God can really use.

Rom 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

Rom 9:22 What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

Rom 9:23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

Rom 9:24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

Perhaps the reason God inserted this information about the candlestick between the offerings to these Levites may have been to emphasize how the servants of God must depend on God's light to adequately perform His ministry. This typifies and points to Christ who is the Light of the world. Jesus Christ is our Light and we need to reflect that light to the lost of this world.

Mat 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Mat 5:15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Mat 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Mat 17:1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

Mat 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

John 1:5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

II. Consecration of the Levites

Num 8:5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Num 8:6 Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them.

Num 8:7 And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

Num 8:8 Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering.

Num 8:9 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together:

Num 8:10 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites:

The Lord speaks to Moses again about consecrating the Levites for service. They were to be cleansed by sprinkling water of purifying upon them. They were to remove all hair from their body by shaving their entire body and then were to wash their clothes and make themselves clean. The Levites were to take a young bullock to be offered with their meat offering, which was fine flour mingled with oil. Another bullock was to be offered, and these made up the sin offering.

Num 8:11 And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD.

Num 8:12 And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites.

They would bring the two bullocks and the meat offering of fine flour mingled with oil. One bullock would be offered as a sin offering, and the other as a burnt offering. This would make atonement for the Levites to God.

Matthew Henry made some good comments about the purifying of the Levites to serve the Lord.

We read before of the separating of the Levites from among the children of Israel when they were numbered, and the numbering of them by themselves (ch. 3:6, 15), that they might be employed in the service of the tabernacle. Now here we have directions given for their solemn ordination (v. 6), and the performance of it, v. 20. All Israel must know that they took not this honour to themselves, but were called of God to it; nor was it enough that they were distinguished from their neighbours, but they must be solemnly devoted to God. Note, All that are employed for God must be dedicated to him, according as the degree of employment is. Christian must be baptized, ministers must be ordained; we must first give ourselves unto the Lord, and then our services. Observe in what method this was done:

I. The Levites must be cleansed, and were so. The rites and ceremonies of their cleansing were to be performed, 1. By themselves. They must *wash their clothes*, and not only bathe, but *shave all their flesh*, as the leper was to do when he was cleansed, Lev. 14:8. They must *cause a razor to pass over all their flesh*, to clear themselves from that defilement which would not wash off. Jacob, whom God loved, was a smooth man; it was Esau that was hairy. The great pains they were to take with themselves to make themselves clean teaches all Christians, and ministers particularly, by repentance and mortification, to *cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, that they may *perfect holiness*. Those must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. 2. By Moses. He must *sprinkle the water of purifying upon them*, which was prepared by divine direction. This signified the application of the blood of Christ to our souls by faith, to purify us from an evil conscience, that we may be fit to serve the living God. It is our duty to cleanse ourselves, and God's promise that he will cleanse us. 1

1Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

Num 8:13 And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD.

Num 8:14 Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine.

Num 8:15 And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering.

God commands that the Levites be set before s and his son that they all might be offered as an offering unto the Lord. These were separated to service and were known to be God's servants. After that, the were to go in and do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and Moses was to cleanse them and offer them for an offering.

Before God uses a man or woman, he prepares them for service. When you look back in King David's life, he didn't go to battle with Goliath until he first fought the lion and the bear while tending the sheep. He didn't become the King of Israel before years of preparation and fleeing from King Saul. What God calls, he equips, just as he did these Levites.

III. Levites Become Replacement of the First Born

Num 8:16 For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me.

Num 8:17 For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself.

Num 8:18 And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel.

God replaced the first born as being the one dedicated to Him with the Levites. God had placed special significance to the first born of each family as the one given to the Lord, but at this time the Levites are now taking the place of the first born.

Num 8:19 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary.

Num 8:20 And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them.

Num 8:21 And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them.

Num 8:22 And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.

After being dedicated unto service to the Lord, God gives the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons that they might be used to make an atonement for the children of Israel. They were to do service in the tabernacle, and to make atonement for the 12 tribes. This was done that there might be no plague, no inflicted disease to the nation of Israel. The atonement offered a degree of physical protection.

This is similar to how salvation protects us today. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption we are told. And when we live by God's rules and commands, we avoid a lot of the harmful physical ailments that beset many in the world today. Many diseases are brought on by not using common sense and obeying God's laws. There are no grievous commandments, so all commandments are for our own good.

Verse 20 says that Moses and Aaron did all according unto what the Lord had commanded them about the Levites. They were purified (or 'de-sinned') in order to be ceremonially clean. They washed their clothes and were made pure before the Lord. Aaron offered them as an offering before the Lord and then made an atonement to cleanse them. And once this was done, they began to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron and his sons which were the priests.

IV. Age Limitations Repeated Concerning Service of Levites

Num 8:23 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Num 8:24 This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation:

Num 8:25 And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more:

Num 8:26 But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.

Not all Levites could serve in the tabernacle. God gave specific ages, and they had to be from 25 to 50 years of age. It appears that at age 25, they were taught as apprentices for five years, and then at age 30 became a full servant in the tabernacle. This continued until they reached 50 years of age and they then ceased their service. After 50, they could minister to their brethren, but could

not do service. We know this was hard work, and God wanted only those in the prime of their lives involved in this service.

J. Vernon McGee pointed out that as God chose the Levites, we have been chosen in Christ Jesus to serve.

Remember that we have mentioned before how our Lord, in His high priestly prayer, says of the believers, "... thine they were, and thou gavest them me ..." (John 17:6). The Lord Jesus Christ paid a price and redeemed us back to God by His own blood. Now the Father has given us a gift back to the Lord Jesus Christ. We belong to Him. Now service to Him does not rest upon rules and regulations and law. That is not the way to serve the Lord Jesus. We serve Him because we love Him. We are in a new relationship to Him. We have been joined to Him; we are a part of Him. What a thrill it is to know it is not a matter of following little rules and regulations. Instead it is a matter of wanting to please Him. How wonderful this is. 2

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

2J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.