

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 2

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

CHAPTER 5-6

INTRODUCTION

In the previous lesson (Numbers 1-4), God gave Moses and Aaron specific instructions concerning order and discipline in the camp. These instructions relate to the taking of a census that put the children of Israel on a “war footing”. The children of Israel were also told where each tribe should pitch its camp whenever they stopped at a place. Instructions were also given as to the formation of the tribes when they were on the move. Then the Levites were singled out to serve the LORD. The descendants of the three sons of Levi, namely, Gershom, Kohath and Merari, were assigned special tasks in assisting Aaron and his sons in the worship of the LORD and in serving Him. In this study, we learn about order and discipline within the camp. The LORD gave clear commandments to Moses, which touched on the purity and cleanliness of the children of Israel.

The LORD God dwelt in the camp. As the LORD is holy, the children of Israel must observe and obey the commandments given by God so that they could continue to have the fellowship with God. Clear instructions were given to maintain purity and cleanliness in the camp. Then the problem of a possible breach in the sanctity of marriage among the two

million Israelites had to be addressed. A husband might be suspicious of his wife’s infidelity. God detailed the procedure to ascertain the truth and maintain order and moral purity among the people. Some laypersons in the community might want to consecrate their lives specially to the LORD. The way to do this was given to the Israelites. Finally, one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture is the authority given to Aaron and his sons to pronounce the blessings of God upon His people.

We should be excited about learning all these things for they would surely benefit us spiritually. We learn of the character of the Lord our God, and also His will. This should help us to draw valuable principles so that we can conduct ourselves in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

OUTLINE

A. Sin must be put away in the camp wherein God dwelt (Numbers 5:1-10).

1. The person who had to be put out of the camp (vv.1-3).
 - a. A leper.
 - b. A person who had an issue.
 - c. A person who was ceremonially defiled by a corpse.
2. The children of Israel obeyed the LORD’S commandment (v.4).
3. A person who sinned (vv.5-10).
 - a. He must confess his sin.
 - b. He must make retribution and add a fifth thereon.
 - c. He must offer a ram as an offering of atonement.

B. The Law of Jealousy (5:11-31).

1. The annunciation of the trespass (vv.11-14).
2. The presentation of the accused before the LORD (vv. 15-16).
3. The accused was put under an oath of innocence, but if found guilty would be cursed (vv.17-22).
4. The procedure in ascertaining the guilt (vv.23-28).
 - a. Preparation of the bitter water.
 - b. Giving of a wave offering before the LORD.
 - c. The drinking of the bitter water by the accused.
 - d. The result revealed whether the accused was guilty or innocent.
5. The law of jealousy imposed to establish the sanctity of marriage (vv.29-31).

C. The Law of the Nazarite Vow (6:1-21).

1. Any man or woman could take the Nazarite vow (v.1).
2. What the Nazarite must do in the period of his vow (vv.2-12).
 - a. No strong drink.
 - b. No moist or dried grapes.
 - c. No food made from the vine tree.
 - d. No shaving of hair.
 - e. No contact with a dead body.
 - Not even his parents and siblings.
 - f. Accidental contact with a dead body -- must be cleansed.
 - Shave his head.
 - Offer a sin offering and a burnt offering.
 - Offer a trespass offering.
3. When the Nazarite had fulfilled his vow (vv.13-21).

- a. He should make the following offerings (vv.13-15).
 - A he-lamb for a burnt offering.
 - An ewe lamb for a sin offering.
 - A ram for peace offerings.
 - A meat offering and their drink offerings.
- b. The priest would bring them before the LORD (vv.16-17).
- c. The Nazarite would shave off his hair and burn it (v.18).
- d. The priest then offered a wave offering (v.19-20a).
- e. The Nazarite could drink wine (v.20b).
- f. The law of the Nazarite established (v.21).

D. The Aaronic Blessing Upon the Children of Israel (6:22-27).

1. The LORD'S commandment to Moses for Aaron (v.22).
2. The commandment to Aaron and his sons to bless the children of Israel (vv.23-26).
 - a. The Lord's blessing and keeping.
 - b. The Lord's grace.
 - c. The Lord's favour and peace.
3. The children of Israel would bear the Name of the LORD and He would bless them (v.27).

COMMENTARY**God's Holiness & Separation**

The chapter opens with the normal declaration of the LORD to Moses for the children of Israel. It was God's commandment to the children of Israel. The commandment involved three categories of Israelites who were unclean and had to be removed from

the camp. The first category comprised those afflicted with leprosy and infectious skin diseases. The second category comprised those who had bodily discharges. The third category comprised those who came into contact with the dead, making them ceremonially unclean.

The reason for separating these people from the rest was that God dwelt in the camp (5:3b). The accusation that God was harsh and uncaring to treat His people in such a manner should not arise. The LORD God is good, holy and perfect. His decisions and actions are perfect and good. He makes no mistake. He knows what is best for His children. God already gave His reason that He dwelt within the camp. By this reason, we can surmise that all forms of uncleanness, whether physical, moral, or spiritual had to be separated. The other reason for the separation of these afflicted people could be for hygiene purposes.

The spiritual lesson is that God's people must be different from the other nations. The Israelites were chosen by God to be His people. They were to be peculiar, different, pure and undefiled. While there were physical and medical reasons for the separation of these people, the spiritual lessons were more important. The Israelites must learn that they are to be spiritually and morally pure and holy before God. Their prosperity and progress depend solely on God. The children of Israel must conduct themselves in a manner that was pleasing to God. They must reflect the holy character of God. They must be different from all their pagan neighbours. The wonderful note is that the children of Israel obeyed God and did what God commanded them to do (5:4).

While the Israelites tried their very best to obey God and live in accordance to the commandments which God gave them through their leader Moses at Mount Sinai, there were still some who sinned. When a man sinned against another, he was said to have sinned against the LORD. God provided a way for the sinner to be reconciled to Him. He had to first confess his sin. True **repentance** is evidenced by a sincere **confession** of sin. If the sin was against his fellow man, he must make **restitution**. He must make good what was involved, and add another **twenty percent** of the principal to the restitution. We can see the appropriateness of this. Confession of repentance with the mouth meant little and cost nothing. If a person wanted to prove that he was genuine and sincere in his repentance, he must not only confess verbally, but also make good what he had damaged, destroyed or wronged.

And if the person who had been wronged was dead, and restitution could not be made, his kinsman or relative should be the recipient of restitution. But if he had no kinsman at all, then the restitution had to be given to the LORD through the priest who was the LORD's representative. In addition to this, he must offer a trespass offering. The priest would offer in his behalf. We learn that it was not the repentance, confession, and restitution that atoned for his sin but the offering of the atonement (5:8b). As Christians, we are reminded of this fact too. While we are sanctified by the blood of Christ when we accept the Lord Jesus Christ, yet we do sin though not habitually. When we sin, we must confess and plead for the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us, and God has promised that He will forgive our sins

and our fellowship with Him will be restored. But we must take one more step. Like the Israelite, who sinned against his fellow man, we must make good the damage we have done to the other person. If we as Christians obey these commandments of the LORD, we will definitely refrain from sinning against another by speech and action.

The Law of Jealousy

The law of jealousy concerned a man who suspected his wife of having sexual relationship with another man. He did not know for sure because the illicit affair was completely secret. He only had a suspicion. Such a problem was not uncommon in the community in those days. The matter had to be resolved because it was a breach against the sanctity of marriage. The LORD therefore gave specific instructions on the procedure of finding out whether the husband's suspicion was valid or not.

Under the Leviticus law, a woman who was guilty of marital unfaithfulness must be put to death (Leviticus 20:10). In this case, the man had only a suspicion. The man must not take the matter into his hand by punishing his wife on the basis of his suspicion. God had detailed the procedure to ascertain the truth. This prevented the man from punishing or abusing his wife. The man would have to bring his wife to the priest. The truth of whether the woman was guilty or not would be revealed. That was the purpose of bringing the woman to the priest as instructed by God. If she was innocent and her integrity was established, she would be freed. There was no disgrace or repercussion for the woman. In fact, the husband is the one who should feel ashamed if his wife's integrity and faithfulness is vindicated. The LORD

Himself declared that He would continue to bless her and she would conceive children. In those days, it was especially important for woman to bear children. A woman who could not bear children was looked upon as being under a curse or was despised. Today, there are cases where infertility could be attributed to the man but in those days, there was no way to ascertain this. It is the woman who bears children and she is blamed rather than the man.

For the man to bring the woman to the priest on suspicion that she had been unfaithful to him, he must also bring a meat offering (grain or cereal offering) to the LORD. There was only a slight difference, and that was, that the oil and frankincense were omitted (5:15). The priest would then present the woman before the LORD. The woman had to "uncover" her head. This simply means that she had to loosen her hair and let it down. No explanation is given. But it seems that this was to indicate a presumption of shame or mourning.¹ Next she would be formally charged with an oath. She would have to drink the "bitter water" prepared by the priest. The "bitter water" was "holy water" which was probably taken from the laver in the courtyard of the tabernacle. It was then mixed with the dust from the floor of the tabernacle (5:17, 18). Next the curses of guilt were written in a scroll and blotted out with the "bitter water" (5:23).

The priest would declare that it was the LORD who would make her a curse and that the LORD would cause "thy thigh to rot (fall) and thy belly to swell" (5:21). The nature of this curse is not very clear. But this could be a euphemism for the sexual sin, as thigh

¹ R.K. Harrison, *Numbers* (Chicago: The Moody Press, 1990), 18.

is closest to the sexual organ, and the belly refers to the womb. However, whatever it might be, it was definitely not a good or pleasant thing. The woman would have to agree to the charge and procedure. It must be observed that the woman could acknowledge her guilt at any stage of the procedure. That would end the ordeal. Before the priest made her drink the bitter water, he would make the “jealousy offering” before the LORD. Then the priest would give the bitter water to the woman to drink. The next thing was the result. If she was guilty “it shall come to pass”. We are not told whether the result was immediate, anyway her thigh would fall and her belly would swell. She would be a curse among her people. But if she was innocent and clean, she would be free, and she would conceive children. In contrast, a guilty woman would be placed under the curse of not being able to conceive. If this was so, then the result was not immediate. Time would tell. This was the law of jealousy.

As we view this procedure, we must not have the idea that the bitter water possessed some magical power that caused the dire consequences for the guilty. The whole business was of the LORD. The LORD instructed it. The accused was brought before the LORD. The LORD’S name was invoked. It was the LORD who meted out the punishment if the accused was guilty. If the accused were innocent, the bitter water would not harm her in any way. The bitter water was not a magic potion.

A Consecration to the LORD

Numbers 5 touches on the negative aspects of the communal life of the children of Israel. The people who were afflicted with infectious diseases and who were ceremonially unclean had to be put outside the camp. Confession,

repentance and making restitution by a person that sinned against another must be performed. A woman, who was being suspected by her husband of being unfaithful to him, had to go through the ordeal of to be proven innocent.

But in Numbers 6, we are encouraged to learn that there were people who wanted to consecrate themselves totally to God and serve Him. These people were the Nazarites.² Any man or woman might take the vow of a Nazarite -- that is to consecrate himself or herself totally to the service of the LORD for a period of time or for life. The service of the LORD was confined to the priests and to the Levites. But God gave all men, apart from the priests and the Levites, the opportunity to totally consecrate themselves to the LORD, and serve Him wholeheartedly by taking the vow of a Nazarite.

The taking of the vow of a Nazarite was completely voluntary. There was no coercion or compulsion. A person who did not volunteer to take the vow was not considered less devoted or less spiritual. The LORD required the Nazarite to separate themselves from the normal practice of living in three areas. Firstly, the Nazarite must abstain from wine, and strong drink made from grapes, and he must not eat grapes or even raisins (6:3). It was generally accepted that the consumption of wine or strong drink tended to affect the mental alertness of a person. A Nazarite have to ensure a clear and alert mind. But the reason for prohibiting the eating of grapes and raisins is difficult to understand. The reason that most scholars offer is that the eating of grapes and raisins panders to

² The name Nazarite is a transliteration of the Hebrew *nazir* (noun, the verb is *nazar*). It means to “consecrate or the devoted one.”

sensuality.³ Secondly, the Nazarite must let “no razor come upon his head.” This expression means that the Nazarite must let his hair grow. He must not cut his hair for the period of the vow. And thirdly, the Nazarite must not come into contact with the dead. This included his parents and siblings. If he should accidentally come into contact with a dead body, he must shave off his head on the seventh day, and on the next day he must offer a sin offering and a burnt offering. He would then start his Nazarite vow again. Even a Nazarite could not be totally perfect. When he sinned, he must bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering. The Nazarite would remain separated and consecrated completely to the LORD for the period of the vow.

The examples in the history of Israel were Samson and Samuel. Both of them were consecrated to the LORD even before their birth.⁴ And they served a life-long vow of the Nazarite. We also understand from their examples that the

³ Hosea 3:1 *Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love **flagons of wine**.* “Flagons” are raisin-cakes and the word “wine” is Hebrew word for “grapes.” This verse suggests that the grapes and raisins from which wine is made pander to sensuality.

⁴ **The case of Samson (Judges 13:4)**, *Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: 5 For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.*

The case of Samuel (1 Samuel 1:11), *And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.*

taking of the vow was for a special task. In the case of Samson, it was to deliver Israel from the Philistines. Samuel was to become a priest and prophet of the LORD.

If we were present in Israel, we could easily identify the Nazarite. His three abstentions were all visible signs. There is a lesson for us. Having been delivered from the bondage of sin and saved from the penalty of death in the lake of fire by the mercy of God, we ought to remember the exhortation of Paul that we should offer ourselves a living sacrifice unto the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our reasonable service, and be not conformed to the pattern and philosophy of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we can discern the will of God that is good and perfect (Romans 12:1-2). If we faithfully do that, the world will easily distinguish us as living to glorify and serve the one true God!

The vow of the Nazarite was not necessarily a life-long one. He might discharge the vow when he had served his period of the vow (6:13). He was required to offer four types of sacrifice -- a sin offering, a burnt offering, a peace offering, and a meat offering in that order. The drink offering which was the last was a part of the peace offering. Having done that he would shave his head and burn the hair together with his sacrificial offerings in the brazen altar. The priest then would perform in his behalf the wave offering and with that he was released from his Nazarite vow. He might now drink wine like all the other Israelites and return to the normal life of an Israelite.

The spiritual lesson is simple and clear. The action of consecration and separation are inseparable. We may not consecrate ourselves to the Lord Jesus

Christ and not be separated from things forbidden by the Lord. Separation from things unclean and unholy without consecration to the Lord tends to legalism. We separate ourselves from the things that do not honour the Lord because we want to consecrate ourselves to Him and serve Him; we do it for the love of Him who gave Himself for us and who loves us.

The Blessings of the LORD

The annunciation of the LORD to Moses to tell Aaron and his sons to bless the children of Israel with the words given by the LORD is appropriate at this juncture. God had revealed Himself and His will to the children of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai. Leviticus permanently records these laws and commandments, and Numbers Chapters 1-6 summarize these laws. The blessings of God, written at this juncture, strongly intimate that these blessing follow after the priestly laws in Leviticus and Numbers. God's blessings upon his people were conditional on their obeying and keeping the laws of God. This was and is the way of the LORD.

This literary blessing consisting of 3 lines is in poetic form (vv. 24, 25, 26). An analysis of the form reveals a beautiful and valuable insight into the goodness and mercy of God. The three verses get progressively longer. Verse 24 has three words; verse 25, five; and verse 26, seven. The impression is a stream of blessing that begins with a trickle but flows more strongly, and ends with the perfect number of seven, which suggests completeness or fullness.⁵ In

each line, the name of the LORD appears in the middle,

Verse 24: *Bless -LORD - Keep;*

Verse 25: *Shine - LORD - Be gracious to thee;*

Verse 26: *Lift up - LORD - Give thee peace.*

This clearly indicates God is the source of all blessings. God alone is able to bring prosperity and peace to His faithful people.

All good and perfect things and blessings come from the Almighty God. The nature of the blessing is three-fold: God's protection; God's favour and grace; and God's peace.

In verse 24, God is called upon not only to bless but also to "keep" (Hebrew, *samar*) to watch, to guard, to carefully oversee and to protect His people. If we as God's people are under God's watchful eye and care, we will be kept safe from our adversaries and will be able to carry on with our life under the direct leading of the LORD. In verse 25, the expression, "make his face to shine upon thee," means that God is ever present with His people to help them in times of need. He is gracious to them. Verse 26 develops the blessing of the preceding verse by the lifting of His face. God looks directly at His people so that they may receive the benefit of His full attention. The result is peace (Hebrew, *shalom*). The word does not merely mean the absence of conflict. Its meaning is much richer. It encompasses peace, prosperity, completeness, health, safety, and general well-being.⁶ It is appropriate that this blessing of the Lord be

⁵ Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), p.151.

⁶ R. K. Harrison, *Numbers* (Chicago, The Moody Press, 1990), pp. 132-133.

pronounced at the end of the church worship service.

SUMMARY

The general theme of Numbers 5 and 6 is that holiness and ungodliness cannot be together. God is holy and we who are His blood-bought children must be holy as He is holy. This calls for a consecrated life on our part that must be evidenced by our separation from all forms of sin and evil. As His people, we must be visibly different from the people of the world. Only in this way can our witness be effective as the world see the tokens of God's blessings and goodness upon His people.

Restitution must accompany every repentance and confession of sin as evidence of sincerity and genuineness. We must recognize the fact that the LORD is always the Judge and He blesses the obedient and punishes the disobedient.

There is always opportunity to consecrate ourselves and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. In the church where God is glorified and His Word highly honoured, we should willingly and voluntarily offer our services to the Lord. This is the will of God and it is pleasing in His sight for God is praised.

If God, who is all-powerful, gracious and merciful, is ever ready and willing to bless all His people who love and obey Him, shouldn't we do His will? Amen.

D DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

DAILY READINGS

Monday: Numbers 5:1-10; 1Corinthians 5:1-5; Matthew 5:23-24.

Tuesday: Numbers 5:11-31; Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9.

Wednesday: Numbers 6:1-21; Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 5:19-21.

Thursday: Numbers 6:22-27; Matthew 5:18-19.

Friday: Acts 5:1-11; John 15:1-8.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the object lesson in Numbers 5:1-4?

2. What is the object lesson in Numbers 5:5-10?

3. Why do you think that the secret sin of adultery was given more importance in this chapter?

4. In what way does the law of jealousy protect the woman physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually?

5. Does the test of the law of jealousy benefit only the woman or the man or both?

6. Why is total faithfulness within the marriage relationship so important to family and country?

7. What would you say is God's intent behind the laws and commands given in chapter 5? What does He want them to accomplish?

8. What exactly was to be different about a Nazarite compared to other people in Israel?

9. How would you describe the beauty of Numbers 6:24-26? What makes this blessing so appealing?

10. What practical ways can Numbers 6:24-26 help you as you pray for other Christians?

11. Is the God of the OT less compassionate and merciful than the God of the NT?

12. What have you personally learnt from these two chapters?

LESSON APPLICATION

I. The dominant spiritual lesson in Numbers 5 is that God's people must separate themselves from defilement or ungodliness because God dwells in the camp.

A. The text:

1. Those who were afflicted with infectious bodily diseases must be quarantined outside the camp.
2. Those who made dishonest gains must confess, repent, and make restitution.
3. Those who were suspected of immorality had to be tested before God.

B. The Spiritual Lesson

1. The principle learned in this chapter is that since God is Holy and He Himself is in the camp, the camp must be holy.
2. It applies to the Church today. God the Holy Spirit not only dwell in us individually, but where two or three are gathered together. The Church gathers together in the Name of God. God too is in the Church. Therefore the church must be holy as He is holy.
3. The characteristics of holiness that are brought up in this passage are clearly:
 - a. PURITY,
 - b. HONESTY,
 - c. TRUTH.
4. The conduct and character of Christians must exhibit these qualities both in their individual private lives as well

as in their public corporate life in the church.

II. Whereas in Numbers 5 separation is from defilement, chapter 6 concerns individuals who want to separate themselves for God and serve Him wholeheartedly and completely.

A. THE MOVEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1. There are many individual Christians who want to go beyond being separated from ungodliness and just attend worship service on Sundays.
2. These Christians want to do more. They want to be wholly devoted and consecrated to serve the Lord.

B. THESE CHRISTIANS ARE PREPARED TO DO MORE.

1. They are prepared to meet the requirements.
2. They are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices.
3. They may commit themselves for a short term or longer, or a lifetime.

C. God's people are a blessed people.

A. GOD'S PROMISE TO BLESS HIS PEOPLE IF THEY LOVE AND OBEY HIM.

1. God's blessing to His people is all encompassing, wonderful, and matchless.
 - a. BLESS AND KEEP
 - b. PRESENCE & GRACE
 - c. FAVOUR & PEACE.
2. We as God's people cannot complain when we receive so

much and so great a blessing from God.

- a. Something is wrong when a Christian complains about life.
- b. Maybe we need to check ourselves and see where we stand before God.