

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 3

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

CHAPTER 7-8

INTRODUCTION

Chapters 1 to 4 deal with the outward preparation of the children of Israel for their journey to the Promised Land. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the inward preparation. The next three chapters 7 to 9 record the response of the people to the consecration of the tabernacle (7), the dedication of the Levites (8), the observance of the Passover, and the pillar of cloud and fire (9). This lesson focuses on chapters 7 and 8.

Before we start, there is a need to note the chronological timetable of the events that took place in Numbers 1-6 and in Numbers 7-8. The careful student will observe that the timing between these two periods was reversed: the events recorded in Numbers 7-8 happened before those in Numbers 1-6.

We learn in Exodus 40:17 that the tabernacle was completed and erected on the first day of the first month of the second year after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. Numbers 7:1 records that immediately after the erection of the tabernacle, Moses anointed and sanctified it. It also records the events that took place after that. Note that the details of these events are not recorded in Exodus but are given here in Numbers 7. For example, it was not recorded in Exodus 40:17 that Moses

anointed and sanctified the tabernacle after it was set up. Now the census of the children of Israel was taken one month after the tabernacle was erected (Numbers 1:1).

What is the reason for this reverse in chronology? Moses did not give any reason. The records indicate that the details in Numbers 7 and 8 were not found either in Exodus or Leviticus. Moses seemed to have withheld the information until now for instructive purposes. Numbers 1-4 record the outward preparation of the people of Israel. Numbers 5-6 follow with the inward preparation of the people. And the tabernacle having been erected, anointed and sanctified, Numbers 7-8 relate the spontaneous response of the children of Israel and the dedication of the Levites in detail.

Our study of these two chapters would be spiritually instructive and interesting.

OUTLINE

A. The Offerings to the LORD by the Leaders of Israel (7:1-9).

1. The day the leaders brought their offerings (7:1).
2. The nature of the offerings to the LORD (7:2-3).
3. The LORD's instructions to Moses concerning the offerings (7:4-9).
 - a. The LORD spoke to Moses (v.4).
 - b. The offerings were to be used for the service of the tabernacle and given to the Levites (v.5).
 - c. Moses allotted the offerings to the Gershonites and the Merarites (vv.6-8).

- d. The Kohathites were not given because they served in the sanctuary (v.9).

B. Another Offering by the Leaders of Israel for the Dedication of the Altar (7:10-88)

1. The presentation of the offerings to the LORD (7:10-11).
2. The orderly presentation of the offerings by each of the twelve tribes (7:12-83).
 - a. Nathon of Judah (vv.12-17).
 - b. Nethaneel of Issachar (vv.18-23).
 - c. Eliab of Zebulun (vv.24-29).
 - d. Elizur of Reuben (vv.30-35).
 - e. Shelumiel of Simeon (vv.36-41).
 - f. Eliasaph of Gad (vv.42-47).
 - g. Elishama of Ephraim (vv.48-53).
 - h. Gamaliel of Manasseh (vv.54-59).
 - i. Abidan of Benjamin (vv.60-65).
 - j. Ahiezer of Dan (vv.66-71).
 - k. Pagiel of Asher (vv.72-77).
 - l. Ahira of Naphtali (vv. 78-83).
3. Summary of the offerings for the dedication of the altar (7:84-88).
4. The LORD spoke to Moses in the Holy of Holies (7:89).

C. The Lighting of the Candlestick by Aaron (8:1-4).

1. The lighting of the lamps in the Holy Place (7:1-2).
 - a. The instruction of the LORD given to Aaron (vv.1-2a).
 - b. The lamps must be turned so that the light would be diffused throughout the whole place (v.2b)
2. Aaron obeyed (7:3-4).

D. The Dedication of the Levites (8:5-22)

1. The LORD instructed Moses to dedicate the Levites (8:5-6a).
2. The cleansing of the Levites (8:6b-12).
 - a. The threefold outward cleansing (vv.7).
 - Sprinkled with purifying water (7a).
 - Shaved their entire body (7b).
 - Washed their clothes (7c).
 - b. The inward cleansing (v.8).
 - A bullock for a burnt offering (8a).
 - Meat offering (8b)
 - Another bullock for a sin offering (8c).
 - c. The Levites were presented before the LORD and the people (vv.9-12).
 - When everything was prepared the Levites were brought to the tabernacle, before the LORD and the people (9).
 - The children of Israel lay their hands on the Levites (10).
 - Aaron offered the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel (11).
 - The Levites lay their hands on the bullocks for a sin offering and a burnt offering (12).
3. The Levites were offered as a living sacrifice unto the LORD (8:13-19).
 - a. Moses to set the Levites before Aaron and his sons for an offering to the LORD (v.13).

- b. The Levites were the LORD's special possession (v.14).
 - c. The Levites might then do the service of the tabernacle (v.15).
 - d. The rationale of offering the Levites unto the LORD (vv.16-18).
 - e. The LORD gave the Levites to Aaron and his sons to do service in the tabernacle and to make atonement for the children of Israel (v.19).
4. The summary account of the dedication of the Levites (8:20-22).
 - a. They all did to the Levites according to the commandment of the LORD (v.20).
 - b. The detailed instructions of the LORD rehearsed (vv.21-22).
 5. The age qualification of the Levites (8:23-26).
 - a. The instruction of the LORD (v.23).
 - b. The Levites attaining the age of twenty-five and upwards could serve the LORD (v.24).
 - c. The Levites having attained fiftieth year stopped serving, but work with the younger ones (vv.25-26).

COMMENTARY

Giving Meaningfully

Moses erected the tabernacle, anointed and sanctified it with holy oil. The twelve tribes of the children of Israel, who were represented by their princes or leaders, presented their gifts of six wagons (carriages) and twelve draught oxen to the tabernacle. Two

tribes shared the giving of one wagon, and each tribe gave an oxen. The LORD told Moses to receive the offerings and also instructed him on how to distribute the wagons and oxen among the Levites. The Gershonites received two wagons and four oxen because of the nature of their service. Their job was to deal with hangings, curtains, and hanging of the tabernacle, and they needed two wagons and four oxen. The Merarites were given four wagons and eight oxen. Their job and responsibility were greater. They were in charge of the heavier wooden and metal framework of the tabernacle, the panels, pillars, bars, and pegs. Interestingly, the Kohathites were not given any wagon or oxen. Their job was to carry the holiest things of the sanctuary *on their shoulders*.¹ In fact, they were not needed to prepare the things for cartage. This was done by the priests. They were not to touch the most holy things lest they die (4:5-15).

That was the first part of their offering for the service of the tabernacle. There was an additional offering. Each tribe then freely offered one large silver bowl weighing 130 shekels, and one smaller silver bowl weighing 70 shekels, and these two bowls were filled with fine flour mixed with oil for a meat offering. In addition to these, they gave one golden spoon weighing ten shekels and filled with incense. On top of these, they gave one young bullock, one ram, and one lamb of the first year for the burnt offering; one kid-goat for a sin offering; two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five

¹ The most holy things had to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites. It must not be carried on a cart. David did not do this when he attempted to transport the Ark from the house of Abinadab to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:3-8). It brought much grief to David.

lambs of the first year for the peace offerings.

We observe that each tribe represented by its leader presented the same things, nothing more, nothing less. It did not matter whether each tribe had more people than the other tribes. Judah presented first. Reuben, who was the first born, was not given the honour to present first because he had forfeited his rights of primogeniture when Jacob found out that he had a sexual affair with his concubine, Bilhah (Genesis 35:22). The order of each presenting their gifts in the consecutive days, twelve days altogether, was according to their camp arrangement and their marching formation.

There are a number of interesting and instructive lessons for us. The children of Israel participated in the service of the tabernacle. They spontaneously gave to the needs of the Priests and the Levites. How they arrived and decided upon the amount of the offerings is subject to speculation. But we can safely surmise that they must have discussed among themselves and with Moses. Some think that the LORD had instructed them to give. However, what is important is that they gave to the LORD. Having seen the tabernacle erected, anointed and sanctified, and the pillar of cloud and fire hovering over the tent of meeting, they were moved with adoration and worship to give to the LORD who had delivered them in a great and mighty way from bondage in Egypt and saved them from a watery death in the Red Sea. They gave because they remembered and appreciated what God had done for them.

We learn that all gifts to God are received by Him. God does not reject

the good offerings of His people. He readily accepts them. All are treated equal in His sight. There is a lesson to be learned in the fact that each tribe gave the same amount. No tribe could quarrel or take pride in having given more. No tribe had any special treatment or privilege. Each gave exactly the same, and that teaches us that in the eyes of God, all gifts no matter how great or small, as long as it is given for the love of God, is accepted. How often we forget that our God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and all the gold in every mine, could well provide for Himself all the animals for the sacrificial offerings and all the silver and gold wares. What favour can we offer to God? None except He requires of us, the people He bought with His precious blood to love, obey and glorify Him.

When the children of Israel had done all that God required of them to do according to what He had spoken to them through Moses, in their conduct and in their worship of Him, the LORD spoke to Moses and to the children of Israel through him *from off the mercy seat that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims*. God communicated with His people through Moses in the tabernacle from above the ark of covenant. God was in their midst. God's presence was with them. They could approach Him and communicate with Him and present their petitions. What a beautiful thing. If God were for them who could be against them?

Light

Aaron was instructed by God to light the golden lampstand, seven lamps of it in the Holy Place. He was to ensure that the lamps were turned so that the light was diffused throughout the Holy Place. Without the lights, Aaron and his sons

could not see. The light must burn continuously as long as they stayed in a place.

The light in the Holy Place depicted the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ had declared (John 8:12), *I am the **light** of the **world**: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the **light** of life.* As He is the light of the world, we, who belong to Him and follow Him, have the *light of life*. We having the light of life, shine as *the light of the world*. Christ calls on us to so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:14, 16).

The Lord's Special Possessions

There are a lot of details here concerning the Levites that are not found in the previous chapters. The Levites were a special possession of the LORD. The LORD declared that *the Levites shall be mine; they are wholly given unto Me* (8:14, 16). God had chosen them specially to do the service of the tabernacle and to assist the priests, Aaron and his sons. But before they could serve in the tabernacle they needed to be ceremonially cleansed. Outwardly, they had to be sprinkled with the purifying water. Their entire body had to be shaved. They had to wash their clothes clean. Inwardly, they had to bring a meat offering, a sin offering, and a burnt offering. They had to be presented before the LORD at the tabernacle in full view of the children of Israel. The people witnessed the dedication of the Levites. This ceremony separated the Levites from the common people. They belong to God. And **only then could they serve in the tabernacle and assist the priests**. The Levites were presented as a living sacrifice for all the firstborn of the children of Israel (8:18).

The dedication of the Levites has precious and pertinent spiritual lessons for all of us. We also are God's special possession. God has called us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice unto Him (Romans 12:1-2). If we as Christians aspire to serve God, we must live a separated holy life unto the Lord. The cleansing by the sprinkling of water, the shaving of the entire body, and the washing of clothes all denote the necessity of holy conduct and behaviour.² If we believe and identify Christ Jesus the Lamb of God as our Saviour and Lord, our sin and burnt offerings are fulfilled in Him who cleanses us from all our sins. Then, and only then can we effectively serve the Lord.

If the leaders of the church, pastors, elders and deacons, dedicate themselves wholly unto the Lord, and live holy and consecrated lives, God will hear and answer their prayers and petitions. The people will grow spiritually. The Lord will bless.

² See Titus 1:5-11 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

A Time to Serve and a Time to Step Down

The Levites began their term of service at the age of twenty-five and “retire” at fifty. In chapter 4:3 there is a difference in the starting age which was recorded as thirty. Remember that 8:24 was given a month before 4:3. The age of the Levites entering into the ministry of the tabernacle seemed to change from time to time (1 Chronicles 23:24 *These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward.*) There was no strict rule concerning the starting age of the Levite. The circumstances and conditions seemed to dictate the age requirement. One reason for raising the starting age to thirty could be to ensure that the Levites were spiritually matured when they handled the holy things. And one reason for stepping down at the age of fifty could be the physically laborious and demanding work of dismantling, carrying and transporting of the materials and furniture of tabernacle, including the work relating to all the sacrificial animal offerings. Observe that these elderly Levites continued their service in a different capacity by keeping guard over their brethren in the tabernacle - physically less demanding work.

One important principle we can draw from this age qualification is that a novice should not be called to do the work of the Lord in the church. Paul instructed Timothy thus in 1 Timothy 3:6 ***Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*** Secondly, a serving servant should step down and let another

younger but mature servant takes his place. The “retired” servant can play the necessary role of advising, teaching, and counselling the younger ones. This principle is in agreement with Paul’s instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, *therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

The rationale of this principle and practice is clear. This ensures a continuity of quality service in the church. Secondly this also allows the “retired” elder to see that the younger ones who replace them continue the faith and practice of the Church. It is therefore unscriptural for a serving leader in a church to refuse to step down and let another younger and mature leader take over the oversight of the church. In fact, the older leaders should nurture and train his successor. It is neither spiritual nor pious for a serving leader to say that he will remain and hold on to his office until he collapses and dies. Such an attitude and action is foolishness and unbiblical.
AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: Numbers 7:1-9; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

Tuesday: Numbers 7:10-89; Hebrews 6:10-12-112.

Wednesday: Numbers 8:1-4; Psalm 119:105; Matthew 5:14-16.

Thursday: Numbers 8:5-19; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Romans 12:1-2.

Friday: Numbers 8:20-26; Joshua 1:6-9; 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

On giving 1Thess 4:1, 10; 2 Cor 8:1-5.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the leaders of the tribes give the gifts of wagons and oxen to the LORD?

2. In respect of the nature of the gifts, how have the leaders acted intelligently and appropriately?

3. Why was there a difference in the distribution of the gifts to the Levites?

4. What other gifts did each tribe give for the dedication of the altar?

5. Is there any reason why God the Holy Spirit repeated the same items of the gifts twelve times, instead totalling them altogether?

6. What do you think of the quality and the cost of the gifts? What principle of giving can Christians learn from it?

7. How did God show His approval of and His presence with the children of Israel?

8. Whose duty was it to light and tend the golden lampstand of seven lamps daily?

9. How does the ceremonial cleansing of the Levites illustrate the necessity of “clean hands and pure heart” for anyone who would “stand in His holy place”?

10. What is the extent to which the Levites were dedicated to the LORD? In what way does it apply to Christians today?

11. What is significant in chapter 8:20? What spiritual guideline can we learn from the serving of the LORD?

12. What was the age qualification for the Levites to serve the Lord? What do you think are the reasons for it?

13. What patterns and principle do you see in the worship of God in:

(a) Chapter 7

(b) Chapter 8

righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

LIFE IN THE WORD

A. The work of God prospers because His people GIVE GENEROUSLY.

1. AN EXAMPLE. The Israelites set the example for us to emulate.
 - Having witnessed the completion, the anointing and consecration of the Tabernacle, the Israelites spontaneously gave to the service of the Tabernacle.
2. INTELLIGENT USE OF GIFTS.
 - God honours the gift.
 - God prompted Moses to distribute the gifts intelligently and wisely to the Levites according to their needs.

B. An important element of worship is PRAISING GOD.

1. We should not be preoccupied with our needs when we present ourselves before God.
2. We should always praise and thank God. Our Lord Jesus Christ had said that even before we could finish our petition, God knew our needs.

KJV Matthew 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his

C. God has no FAVOURITES.

D. God deals with us INDIVIDUALLY ACCORDING TO HIS WILL.

1. God treats us equally and appropriately.
2. God's ways and thoughts are different from our.
3. God delights to record every little act of service, every little loving gift.
4. He never forgets the smallest thing, and not only does He not forget it Himself, but He takes special pains so that untold millions shall read the record.
5. Compare 2 Samuel 23; Romans 16.

E. Light is a symbol of God's Truth.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ declares that He is the Light of the world.
2. Light illuminates. Light clears away darkness.
3. So everyone who is in the Lord Jesus Christ has "light"—in possession of the truth of everything.
4. As the light of the world we ought to shine the truth so that other hearts may see Jesus, believe and be saved.

F. Our conduct and character must correspond.

1. Creed and conduct, behaviour and character must correspond as one testifies the other.
2. God requires that His children come before Him in spirit and in truth. Any attitude and action that fall short is unacceptable. One must strive to be holy as He is holy.

G. We should give our very best to Him.

1. We do not belong to ourselves. We belong to God for He has saved us from the fires of Hell.
2. We should give the best years of our life to the service of God.

H. Obedience is better than sacrifice.