

Numbers 1-3

Good evening, glad to be here with you all.

Well this evening we are going to continue our study through the Old Testament.

If you are new here, understand that on Wednesday Nights we have committed to studying through the Books of the Old Testament.

Our goal is to offer an online teaching library as a resource for you all.

Now we currently have finished the Book of Leviticus, and tonight we will move on to the Book of Numbers.

Now I imagine many of you have taken a glance or two at this book, and perhaps moved on pretty quickly.

I must admit, through the many genealogies and names found in this book, there is little sermon material.

We will find few narratives within in this book that we can glean from.

But non-the-less, this Book is in the Word of God, and although it may not be thrilling for us to read through, God is thrilled by its content.

It is very important to God, and it will clearly show us time and time again that God is a God of order and structure.

He has a purpose and plan for every detail of the framework of this New Nation He is building out of slaves.

The Book of Numbers gets its name from the numbering of the nation of Israel in chapter 1 and again in chapter 26.

God will command a census to be taken on the outset of Israel's journey, and again at the end.

And we will find in these numbers, that the wilderness was harsh, cruel and hazardous to these pilgrims.

In fact, we will see after 40 years of wondering, when the second census is taken the number of those counted will decrease.

Now, this journey found in the Book of Numbers, from Mount Sinai to the Promise land should have taken no more than 11 days.

But we will see in this Book, disobedience and disbelief.

And this faithless nation will be subjected to 40 years of trials and testing's by their God.

He will take them through the school of hard knocks to get them to the place they need to be to take and receive the promises of God.

Now, Numbers takes up the story where Exodus left off.

Remember Genesis, the first Book of the Pentateuch, which is the first 5 books of the Bible, Genesis dealt with creation, the source of sin, and many other beginnings.

It also introduced us to the Patriarchs and the many promises God gave them.

In Exodus, we saw that the family that received these wonderful promises grew into a mighty nation in the land of Egypt.

They were enslaved and ruled over by cruel taskmasters.

Then God so miraculously delivered them by His chosen leader Moses.

In Exodus, they were delivered and brought as far as Mount Sinai.

We had an interval in their journey at Sinai, as they received their instructions and constitution from God, who desired order and submission.

These people were not delivered to go and do as they wished.

They were delivered for a purpose, and God, at Sinai calls them to Himself.

At Sinai, the Book of Leviticus showed us that during this interval in their travels, God had a new system He wanted to introduce to these stiff-necked rebellious slaves.

God gave them the Law and the instructions for His Tent of Meeting, or tabernacle.

God gave these chosen people a way to relate to Him, through blood sacrifices, and many other ceremonies and rites.

All of these were to be practiced without compromise, because as we saw throughout Leviticus, they continually served as picture of Jesus Christ, and His work on the cross.

Now as Leviticus focused on law and regulation and had little history, in the Book of Numbers we will have little law, and more historical narrative.

The Nation will continue in their journey.

They will move on toward the promise land.

Now, we must understand that they did not do so as an unorganized mob.

But God will bring structure to this nation, and He will have Moses organize this nation of slaves into a most intimidating formation of a mighty disciplined army.

And they will travel to Kadesh-Barnea.

There their faith will fail, and the disbelief in their hearts will overrule all of the miraculous they have already seen.

And they will wonder in the wilderness until that disobedient generation dies off.

And as we journey through this book, we will see many lessons for us today.

And God recorded this history for our learning.

Rom 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope

Also in

1 Cor. 10:11 Paul explains these Old Testament accounts serve a purpose...

11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

Therefore, we will go through the Book of Numbers anticipating lessons that God wants to teach us, through this ancient account.

So let us pray before we get into it...

The First Census of Israel (cf. 2 Sam 24:1-9; 1 Chron. 21:1-6)

1:1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

Now some time had passed during this stop in their journey at Sinai.

If God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai on the 3rd month of the first year of their Exodus from Egypt as Exodus 19:1 explains.

Then they have been here for almost a year.

We see God is no longer speaking from the Mountaintop, but from their finished tabernacle.

Remember the tabernacle housed the Ark of the Covenant, the golden candlestick, and the altar of incense, and the full details of its brilliant design is found in Exodus 25-40.

This was a place that was more than a shrine or monument, it was actually a place that God spoke to Moses, also out in front of this tent, the sacrifices were continually burnt and offered on behalf of the people.

The terms tabernacle and tent of meeting will be used interchangeably throughout our study to describe this place of worship in the center of camp.

Now today, God's dwelling place is the church.

Eph. 2:19-22 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

No longer, is a building or tent His dwelling place, but us corporately, not this building, but those of us who congregate in this building we are His church.

We today, like the tabernacle dwell in the wilderness of evil, in this world.

Remember Jesus' High Priestly prayer for His church?

John 17:15-19 I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

We are in this world, but not of this world.

And that tabernacle in the midst of the harsh wilderness of Sinai is much like God's dwelling place today, in these buildings of flesh and blood.

So Moses hears from the midst of the tabernacle these instructions next...

2 "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, 3 from twenty years old and above — all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies. 4 And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house.

Moses is instructed here to conduct perhaps a second census.

Remember in Exodus 30:12-16 Moses was instructed to tax each person over the age of 20 to collect silver for building the tabernacle.

But here there is another unique reason for a census. This time more information was expected.

They were to be listed by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names.

They were required to know and remember their pedigree.

Which will be important as the nation of Israel's History moves on.

These kind of records will be so important as scripture is recorded.

Many genealogies will be kept, even unto the opening pages of the New Testament.

The records of Jesus' family tree will be kept throughout history, as that is the main purpose for every list of names; we are following a direct path to the promised Messiah.

Notice many things were disputed about Jesus in His day, but never once was His genealogy argued by the religious leaders, they would have public records of his family lineage, and they could have checked and probably did check.

And we see here right from the beginning of this nation, records will be kept.

The immediate purpose for this census here in Numbers was for the building up of an army.

When they were in Egypt God fought for them, they did not once need to utilize any military maneuvers.

Yet, we are in phase two now of this nation's growth, and they will be required to face and fight their enemies.

Remember God at first had them avoid the area of the Philistines because He thought warfare would turn them back to Egypt. Ex 13:17

But now, they are being raised up to engage the enemy.

And we will see later on, that God will give this army structure and order as they travel out in ranks, in a mighty display of power.

Understand God is a God of order, and order brings stability and strength.

We will find later on much application to the church through this structure.

So God's first means to bringing order is for Moses to know how many are able to go to war.

Every man from 20 years old and upward was expected to serve in the war cause as they are prepared to invade the Promise Land.

Aaron and Moses are commanded to be the ones who count this particular census.

God knows the number of the army, but He is doing this for Moses and Aaron.

This will be an empowering moment for them, and it will bring security to them as leaders when the great number of warriors is counted.

God tells them to enlist help in this endeavor, by the head of the clans... and we read...

5 "These are the names of the men who shall stand with you: from Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur; 6 from Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai; 7 from Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab; 8 from Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar; 9 from Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon; 10 from the sons of Joseph:

from Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud; from Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur; 11 from Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni; 12 from Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai; 13 from Asher, Pagiel the son of Ocran; 14 from Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel; 15 from Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan." 16 These were chosen from the congregation, leaders of their fathers' tribes, heads of the divisions in Israel.

17 Then Moses and Aaron took these men who had been mentioned by name, 18 and they assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month; and they recited their ancestry by families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, each one individually. 19 As the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the Wilderness of Sinai.

The chosen representative from each of the secular tribes, were probably the heads of their tribes, were required to recite their ancestry and the names of all those in their tribe 20 years and older.

Why was important for them to know, and recite their pedigree?

Well, for many reasons, I am sure it brought confidence and assurance to these men.

They know where they come from, and in fact, as they recite their particular family line, they would be connected with the promises of old to their father Abraham.

It brought a sense of confidence to know their heritage.

They would prove that their lineage was pure, and not intermingled with any pagan corruption.

This was so very important for these men to know, and prove.

Later on in the scriptures, after the nation is taken into captivity, in Neh. 7:63-64 there will be Levites who fail to remember or know their genealogy and they will be excluded from serving the Lord.

This was of utmost importance to the Lord and His people.

Now, what a shame, if these chosen men, got up to declare their heritage, and they said, “Well, I feel like a Hebrew.”

“You know, I do Hebrew things, I don’t eat pork, and I really like resting on Saturday.”

“I am confident I am a child of Abraham, I just have this inner peace about it.”

It would not happen; these people took pride in knowing how they were a child of the covenant.

They knew their heritage, and it was something they took very serious.

Now, what about you, can you declare to someone your heritage as a Christian?

Can you explain to others how you became a part of this family of God?

Is it because you do churchy things throughout the week.

Is it because you get butterflies every time you think of God?

Is it because your parents raised you in church, that you have a heritage in Christ?

Listen, how we got into the fold of God is important.

Gal 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

We came into this family through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is by His blood that was spilled on that Roman cross that we can be cleansed of our sins.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us, and cleanse us.

When we receive Jesus, then we find our pedigree...

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

You see, our heritage is important, and this New Life we received through Christ, as a child of God, comes through our faith in Him alone.

You know, because of our faith in Jesus Christ, we now come to God in a special ways, and we can approach Him, as a son to a Father.

Rom 8:14-17 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

You see, when you are asked to recite your family tree, it should start at that Tree that our crucified Savior hung on, and from there we declare our relationship with the living God.

Know your heritage Christian.

So these chosen leaders from each tribe, claim their rite to this position, and they began the labor with Moses and Aaron of numbering the Army of Israel.

20 Now the children of Reuben, Israel's oldest son, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 21 those who were numbered of the tribe of Reuben were forty-six thousand five hundred.

22 From the children of Simeon, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, of those who were numbered, according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 23 those who were numbered of the tribe of Simeon were fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

24 From the children of Gad, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 25 those who were numbered of the tribe of Gad were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty.

26 From the children of Judah, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 27 those who were numbered of the tribe of Judah were seventy-four thousand six hundred.

28 From the children of Issachar, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 29 those who were numbered of the tribe of Issachar were fifty-four thousand four hundred.

30 From the children of Zebulun, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 31 those who were numbered of the tribe of Zebulun were fifty-seven thousand four hundred.

32 From the sons of Joseph, the children of Ephraim, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from

twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 33 those who were numbered of the tribe of Ephraim were forty thousand five hundred.

34 From the children of Manasseh, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 35 those who were numbered of the tribe of Manasseh were thirty-two thousand two hundred.

36 From the children of Benjamin, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 37 those who were numbered of the tribe of Benjamin were thirty-five thousand four hundred.

38 From the children of Dan, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 39 those who were numbered of the tribe of Dan were sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

40 From the children of Asher, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 41 those who were numbered of the tribe of Asher were forty-one thousand five hundred.

42 From the children of Naphtali, their genealogies by their families, by their fathers' house, according to the number of names, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war: 43 those who were numbered of the tribe of Naphtali were fifty-three thousand four hundred.

44 These are the ones who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, with the leaders of Israel, twelve men, each one representing his father's house. 45 So all who were numbered of the children of Israel, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and above, all who were able to go to war in Israel — 46 all who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

Now that is a huge number of men.

There have been many disputes on this many Israelites really being able to come out of Egypt, and moving through the wilderness.

Some think this is an exaggerated claim, as many nations in antiquity bolstered their numbers to kind of amplify their representation.

There was a Dr. Melvin Grove Kyle, who was a great Egyptologist.

According to him, he estimates when you add in the elderly, women and children, the Levites, and the mixed multitude the total number would be well over 2 million people traveling through the wilderness.

That, too many people, is an impossibility, the wasteland could not sustain such a group.

As if, God's manna and quail would not be sufficient.

However, it is not difficult to imagine after 400 years in Egypt, God was building a nation of this size.

And it is not difficult to believe that the God who created the stars in heaven, would have trouble feeding such a multitude.

And as far as our study goes we will take this as a literal number as we journey through this fascinating book.

This number is the same number found in the first Census found in Ex 38:26.

We see it is consistent.

Now in Numbers chapter 26 the number will decrease and death rate will outnumber the birthrate in the harsh desert.

Now, Understand with a multitude this large, we see the extreme need for order and structure.

Imagine a group of 2 million people just traveling along as they please, with no ranks or order.

The enemies of God would not fear this kind of scattered group, unless they show some kind of order.

And the tribal separation between families was definitely an easy way to begin this breakdown, and a reset of this large people group.

And this army would be stationed around the center of the camp, the tabernacle.

They would protect this centerpiece from any outside enemies.

They would serve as a barrier around God's meeting place.

The encampment would be square as each tribe took their place.

Now this army took care of threats from without, next we will see one tribe will be put in place to take care of any threats from within.

47 But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe; 48 for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying: 49 "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel; 50 but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle. 51 And when the

tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death. 52 The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies; 53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony."

The Levites played a special role, as they are set apart from the rest of the secular tribes.

They had a different role than that of the warring tribes.

They camped around the tabernacle, as a buffer to protect the laymen from approaching the Holy Site.

If any person from outside the priestly tribe of Levi came and encroached on this Holy area, God's wrath would be unleashed on the people as mentioned in verse 53 here.

The Levites were charged with the duties of a policeman within the camp.

They were instructed to execute anyone who approached the tabernacle.

Remember this tribe was set apart for their zeal for God, when the other tribes were dancing around the golden calf and committing detestable acts, the Levites remained loyal to Yahweh.

Remember Moses said if you are for the Lord join me, and the Levites obeyed.

From then on, they were set a part to this special task of being priests for the Lord.

And here they are given this duty to keep the camp holy using whatever extreme measures they needed too.

They formed an inner rectangle around the rectangle of the tabernacle.

And next, we see the children of Israel obeyed the Lord in this.

54 Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so they did.

I imagine, they found joy in this time period.

I don't know about you when things are in disarray, and confusing, it creates a stress in me that becomes overwhelming.

All my years in construction, God built inside me this need to bring order out of things.

I daily walked onto Jobsites with plans in hand, and as I built houses, I put pieces together, that at first were discombobulated all over the jobsite.

I found it very therapeutic to bring order to things.

Even now, when I get home from working here in the office, and I see a the kids are waiting with a box, a new toy, before I can eat dinner, I have to put that thing together, and Jess knows I cannot stop until the job is complete.

Think about when you come home, and your house is messy and dishes are in the sink, the kids toys are all over the house, and ants are crawling on your walls.

It is as if you have walked into a concert hall full of noise, the confusion is maddening.

And as you began the task of cleaning up, putting away, throwing away, and order starts to come to your house, it brings with it peace and calm.

When we put our kids to bed in a messy bedroom, it is so difficult to have a smooth bedtime, but when their room is clean and orderly it makes bedtime less stressful in our home.

You see order, makes things work smoother, things are not so difficult to accomplish.

And as Israel, is about to embark on conquering, God must first clean up, and order His troops in such a way that they will be more effective.

This will be much more effective than if every man lived where he pleased and did as he wished.

I see here, as the people began to take their place within the camp, a peace and a calm is probably coming over them, they are seeing they have purpose, they are not out there left to fend for themselves.

God is working, and the order is bringing stability. And the next chapter will bring more clarity to the structure of the camp.

The Tribes and Leaders by Armies

2:1 And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.

So each tribe would settle under the banner or flag of their tribe, with their special emblem.

And a buffer zone was created around the tabernacle.

3 On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies; and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be the leader of the children of Judah." 4 And his army was numbered at seventy-four thousand six hundred.

And we see here, the order of the tribes is changed, we see here preeminence is given to Judah.

And this prominent tribe will lead the way on the east side of the tabernacle.

They would be the brunt and head of this fighting force.

Remember Jacob's prophecy in **Gen 49:8 "Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise;**

Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;

Your father's children shall bow down before you.

And we see the younger usurping the older, as a prominent theme in scripture.

The tribe of Judah here taking its place at the head, and will one day rule the nation.

Then the list continues on until...

5 "Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar, and Nethanel the son of Zuar shall be the leader of the children of Issachar." 6 And his army was numbered at fifty-four thousand four hundred.

7 "Then comes the tribe of Zebulun, and Eliab the son of Helon shall be the leader of the children of

Zebulun." 8 And his army was numbered at fifty-seven thousand four hundred. 9 "All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Judah, one hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred — these shall break camp first.

10 "On the south side shall be the standard of the forces with Reuben according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur." 11 And his army was numbered at forty-six thousand five hundred.

12 "Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon, and the leader of the children of Simeon shall be Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai." 13 And his army was numbered at fifty-nine thousand three hundred.

14 "Then comes the tribe of Gad, and the leader of the children of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel." 15 And his army was numbered at forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. 16 "All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Reuben, one hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty — they shall be the second to break camp.

17 "And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards.

We see here the Levites are commanded when they move out with the tabernacle packed up, that they do so in such a manner that they remain within the protection of the center of the camp.

Now I gave you a hand out tonight so you can see the formation of the camp, and what tribes went where.

The list of leaders and their tribes continue... we will pick it up in verse 32...

18 "On the west side shall be the standard of the forces with Ephraim according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud." 19 And his army was numbered at forty thousand five hundred.

20 "Next to him comes the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the children of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel

the son of Pedahzur." 21 And his army was numbered at thirty-two thousand two hundred.

22 "Then comes the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the children of Benjamin shall be Abidan the son of Gideoni." 23 And his army was numbered at thirty-five thousand four hundred. 24 "All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Ephraim, one hundred and eight thousand one hundred — they shall be the third to break camp.

25 "The standard of the forces with Dan shall be on the north side according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Dan shall be Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai." 26 And his army was numbered at sixty-two thousand seven hundred.

27 "Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the children of Asher shall be Pagiël the son of Ocran." 28 And his army was numbered at forty-one thousand five hundred.

29 "Then comes the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the children of Naphtali shall be Ahira the son of

Enan." 30 And his army was numbered at fifty-three thousand four hundred. 31 "All who were numbered of the forces with Dan, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred — they shall break camp last, with their standards."

32 These are the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty.

33 But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the Lord commanded Moses.

34 Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses.

We see here, as God brings order, the people of Israel must know who they are, and what their heritage is, if they were to understand where their place was.

They could not go to war, unless they were sure of their place in God's army.

The same goes for us...

You understand every one of you have a place in Jesus' Church?

When you understand your position in Christ, your purpose becomes clear.

You see much of today's Christianity is focused on the churchgoer, the pew sitter, the comfort of the church seeker is highest priority.

But that will never bring about battle ready churches.

When we understand our heritage in Christ, we understand clearly, we were bought at a price.

Our life is no longer our own, and we are commissioned into the work and battlefield of seeking and saving the lost.

We are all baptized into this Body with many members.

1 Cor 12:27-31 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third

teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

You see, the church was to be ordered as well, into a focused organism, to work together for the glory of God.

When you gave your life to Christ, His Spirit filled you, and equipped you and wants to use you.

The church was never supposed to be a place of sitting, staying put.

We come on Sunday, and Wednesday night to get our marching orders for warfare.

You all have place in His Body, to be an instrument in His hands.

Now if our heritage is not clear, we will miss this most important part of our Christian existence, your life was

not meant to be your own, but you were meant to serve and love others.

Christian, find your place in His church, and you will find a much higher plain to your spiritual walk with the Lord.

Understand you are so very important to all that God is doing.

You can find other churches that let you sit comfortably, but as we study God's Word here, we find that is not what we were meant for.

So now, the nation is encamped all around the tabernacle, they have found their place, and have been given their marching orders.

Next we look at the tribe of Levi, and their instruction on what to do...

The Sons of Aaron(Lev 10:1-7)

3:1 Now these are the records of Aaron and Moses when the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. 2 And these are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 3 These

are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister as priests. 4 Nadab and Abihu had died before the Lord when they offered profane fire before the Lord in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father.

First, we are reminded why only two of Aaron's sons will be working as priests.

The two oldest, came before God and offered common or profane fire.

They were presumptuous and thought they could improve upon God's system.

They went above and beyond what God's Word demanded, and they took their own censors, and not Aaron's which was set apart.

It was a terrible tragedy that took place as they were struck dead in their arrogance.

Remember this was the onset of the worship of Yahweh, and it is thought that perhaps they were even

drunk, because the command after the incident was for the priests to be sober.

They came before God with the false merriment of alcohol in their hearts, thinking all was well.

And because they did not reverence the Lord, they were put down.

And a Holy fear was established not just in priesthood, but in all Israel as their bodies were taken outside the camp.

So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father.

The younger brothers take their place...

The Levites Serve in the Tabernacle

5 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 6 "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. 7 And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do the work of the tabernacle. 8 Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to

the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle. 9 And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are given entirely to him from among the children of Israel. 10 So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

The Levites here are given a superior status among the nation.

Now with great privilege comes great responsibility.

Those who represent God before men must take special precaution to maintain purity and a right testimony.

Even in the church today, position comes at a great price and a great cost.

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

When you desire to be in leadership within the church, it is most definitely a good work you desire.

But the Word of God lists many qualifications to the position.

It is so that man can maintain a proper witness for the Lord.

Titus 1:7-9 For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, 8 but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

This goes for any leader in the church, you teach with your life not just your words.

The ineffective Sunday school teacher, will teach things their life does not line up with, and those kids can spot a Pharisee a mile away.

If your testimony before them is right, your ministry will be powerful and fruitful.

But you are accountable to the calling, and although the Levites here have such a prestigious calling, it will come at a great cost to them...

11 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 12 "Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel.

Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, 13 because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the Lord."

Remember at Passover in Egypt, God struck the first born with death, unless, they could prove death was taken in their place, the blood of their victim marked their doorposts, and the firstborn who were substituted with this precious blood of the lamb were spared.

God declares the firstborn are His, which is man and beast.

The firstborn of the beast would be given in death to the Lord, and the firstborn of man would be substituted.

Now, God explains the whole tribe of Levi will now be set apart to Him instead of the firstborn, and there will be a reconciling later for this.

But Israel will be held accountable to giving God their firstborn or an equivalent paid through the Levites, or Silver.

How about your children, what a wonderful thing to dedicate them over to the Lord.

Not to just dedicate our money and possessions, but even our little ones.

I have held up every one of our children to Lord, and asked Him to use them for His purposes.

It is at times a scary dedication, because God could take them anywhere to use them for His glory.

Sometimes, the temptation is to say God you can use them, just keep them close to mamma and I.

But that is not a true dedication, it is better to say “God, you created the heavens and the earth, I trust You, no matter where and what, you will do better with their lives than I can.”

So the Levites were set apart... next they are counted not for war, but their number is needed for service.

Census of the Levites Commanded(cf. Num. 1:47-54)

14 Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying: 15 "Number the children of Levi by their fathers' houses, by their families; you shall number every male from a month old and above."

Notice the difference in age.

These are not being set apart for battle, but the assessment is for a family of servants.

So next the three families of Levi will be numbered, this will be the workforce to help Aaron and his son's in the ministry.

16 So Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded. 17 These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and

Merari. 18 And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei. 19 And the sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20 And the sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites by their fathers' houses.

21 From Gershon came the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites; these were the families of the Gershonites. 22 Those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above — of those who were numbered there were seven thousand five hundred. 23 The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle westward. 24 And the leader of the father's house of the Gershonites was Eliasaph the son of Lael.

The Gershonites are numbered and given their position behind the tabernacle.

They were the rear guard. And in verse 25 they are given their duties....

25 The duties of the children of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting included the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, 26 the screen for the door of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords, according to all the work relating to them.

Notice even the cords of the tabernacle were so important to the overall work of the Lord, that these men were specifically instructed to carry them.

Imagine the guy carrying the cord, thinking, “All I do is carry this cord, I want to carry the golden lampstand, that would be cooler than this silly cord!”

But that man had his place, and everyone working in the place God called them too, brought stability and strength to the overall movement of the nation.

Imagine him deciding not to carry the cords, and instead jumps in with those who are carrying articles of gold, and when they stop to lift the tent into its place

at the next stop, him being like, “I thought my job was insignificant.”

“I wanted something more important.”

It would hinder all the work of God.

Understand, no matter where God has called you in His work, it is important to Him.

Perhaps you cannot see the bigger picture, but without you serving faithfully where God called you, it slows down the overall work of God.

On Wednesdays, we get a family that comes in to clean the church, and they just have so much joy doing it.

They understand that they are working unto the Lord, and whatever is done for the Lord in this life, it is a great work.

God sees and is just as pleased about that work, than He is for the Evangelist out on the street sharing.

If God has called you to one of those obscure ministries, your carrying the cord, do it with all your

might, and joy in your heart, because it is important to God.

So next, the other two subtribes Kohath and Merari are given their instructions and position...

27 From Kohath came the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites. 28 According to the number of all the males, from a month old and above, there were eight thousand six hundred keeping charge of the sanctuary. 29 The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle. 30 And the leader of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. 31 Their duty included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them.

32 And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was to be chief over the leaders of the Levites, with oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary.

So we see Eleazar was supervisor over the breakdown and set up of the work of the Levites.

Next the families of Merari are given their duties and position...

33 From Merari came the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these were the families of Merari. 34 And those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above, were six thousand two hundred. 35 The leader of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. These were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle. 36 And the appointed duty of the children of Merari included the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, its utensils, all the work relating to them, 37 and the pillars of the court all around, with their sockets, their pegs, and their cords.

38 Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tabernacle of meeting, were Moses, Aaron, and his sons, keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the

children of Israel; but the outsider who came near was to be put to death. 39 All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the Lord, by their families, all the males from a month old and above, were twenty-two thousand.

We see guarding the entrance of the tabernacle was Moses, Aaron, and his sons.

They were there to serve, and mediate for the children of Israel.

They were also the police force to protect from any outsider entering the Holy grounds.

So total number of the Levites was 22,000.

Now remember they are to be a substitute for all the firstborn, but their number poses a problem next, we read...

Levites Dedicated Instead of the Firstborn

40 Then the Lord said to Moses: "Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above, and take the number of their names. 41

And you shall take the Levites for Me — I am the Lord — instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel."

42 So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the children of Israel, as the Lord commanded him. 43 And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

So there were more firstborn, than Levites, about 273 more.

Now, God was a God of order, and because of this, He was consistent.

He did not just brush this off and say, "Close enough."

He needed each firstborn to be substituted; there is no overlooking any inconstancy on God's part.

And the same for us, there is no, "well you were close enough to being a good person."

“Your good almost outweighed your bad in your life, come on in to heaven.”

No way, God will not overlook any inconsistencies in your life.

Either all of your sins are washed by the blood of Jesus, or you are not cleansed.

There is no close enough, we all need a substitute.

And God makes that clear here to the nation of Israel.

44 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 45 "Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I am the Lord. 46 And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, 47 you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take them in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs. 48 And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons."

49 So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those who were redeemed by the Levites. 50 From the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. 51 And Moses gave their redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

So a payment of five shekels is assigned to each person who could not be redeemed by a Levite.

This establishes how much must be paid to the sanctuary when someone is dedicated to God.

Through this dedication the person becomes a slave, but there were ample amount of Levites for the work of God, so the person instead could pay this price, and they were redeemed.

It is the same amount a slave was sold on the open market for.

And we see throughout God's word this theme of redemption.

All of which leads to the ultimate redemption paid by the great sufferer Jesus Christ, who paid the price for all of humanity to choose and receive eternal life.

This chapter focusses in on the Levites, who were there to protect the tabernacle from sinning Israelites or any enemies approaching God's Holy space.

These men are the leaders and teachers of the nation.

The New Testament charges church leaders, in particular the church elders to protect the flock of God, and to correct erring brothers.

There is order in the church today; scripture instructs us in the organization of the church multiple times.

1 Thess. 5:12-22 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but

always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

We see leadership is important to the structure and order of the ministry of the Church.

Your elders and I held accountable to this calling of protecting the church from false doctrine, we are entrusted to the order and structure of the affairs of church.

We are to test all things...

You see the church must too be accountable to this God of order.

And when everyone takes their assigned place, in the order and structure of the Body of Christ, we will see great things as we push on toward the promise land.

I don't know if you have ever been a part of a church that has no structure or order, everyone does what is right in their own heart?

Those churches are out there, and many times, they are nothing more than a circus act, there is no control over the service.

Anyone can stand up and shout whatever nonsense they want too, anyone can speak, and people shouting and screaming here and there.

I know the Body of Christ is diverse and there are many different types of churches within the true church of Jesus.

And I guess that is why I fit in with Calvary Chapel, my mind gets distracted too easy, and my focus gets interrupted when people are shouting or dancing.

I have to have order, for me to truly worship God, and hear from God, and to focus on God.

When someone screams, I look over here, when someone jumps behind me I get unnerved.

I guess that is why I like the book of Numbers, it shows us order, hierarchy, a structure that all focuses in on one thing, the tabernacle, and the worship of God.

If the nation were chaotic, it would distract from the center of what this nation was about.

Their sole purpose is to bring Glory to God, who was in the midst of their camp.

How wonderful this time is here, as these people all shift around to find their place, their purpose in this organized nation.

The church today has a center point as well, and I think much of the church has forgot.

As the nation of Israel zeroed in on the tabernacle, the church today is supposed to be ordered and structured on the Word of God.

Everything needs to stem from it, and be about it, and we all hear from it.

I read too many articles talking how the era of teaching the Bible is behind us, we need other methods.

And I think the church will crumble in disarray if it loses its nucleus, the proclamation of God's Word.

I pray we never be tempted to create programs to please pew sitters, may we always put God's Word at the forefront, and we all find ourselves in our place around it.

It is not a chaotic system, everything here is to bring order to focus on the Word of God.

The Ushers ministry is to maintain this order and safety, to help limit distractions; the children's ministry is there to teach our little ones at a level they can understand, so they are not jumping around in the sanctuary board from the sermon.

The greeters help visitors to be welcome and settled before the Word of God.

The worship team get's our focus on Christ, and readies us to hear from Him.

The cleaning crew keeps things clean and distraction free.

Everything is centered on the proclamation of God's Word, that is our nucleus, our center point.

Numbers will teach us order is strength, disorder is weakness.

If your life is chaotic tonight, come up and get prayer, reset your compass tonight, come up and be ministered too.

Amen?