

Numbers 4-6

Good evening, church.

Tonight we will continue our study of the Book of Numbers.

We finished through chapter three last time, and will pick up our study in chapter 4.

Last time we saw the army of Israel numbered as they were put in order, and in battle formation.

At the center of the formation, lay the center of all of Jewish life, the tabernacle, the place where their God dwelt among them.

The 12 tribes were spread around the tabernacle to protect it from the enemies of God.

In the middle of this formation, on the inner part of the rectangle immediately outside the courtyard and entrance to this tent of meeting, was the Levites.

They too were numbered, but not for war, but for service to the Lord.

The Levites replaced all the firstborn of Israel who were to be set apart to the Lord.

They protected the nation and the tabernacle from threats within.

They were commanded to use whatever force necessary to keep a secular Hebrews from defiling the tabernacle, and thus defiling the nation.

They were even commanded to strike dead anyone who approached their Holy meeting place with God.

They were a fierce police force put in place to maintain the nation's holiness before their Holy God.

The Levites too, were given instructions for the care and transportation of the tabernacle, and we will see tonight another census taken, with a special age selection given for the load bearing Levites.

These will be the mature men of the tribes, charged with the heavy duties of the work.

These men would be tasked with assembling and disassembling the tabernacle.

And this age span really is, as far as smart labor goes, the perfect range.

I have worked many years in construction, and I have seen that those over 30 usually tend to use more wisdom in their work, their frame is developed better for heavy labor, and their stature is at full strength.

The twenty somethings are still learning, still complaining, still developing oftentimes.

“When is the next break, I don’t get paid enough, this is hard, it is hot, this is not fair, this hurts...” and so on, this is what you hear from the younger workers on the jobsite.

They are still developing in their mind and physical ability to reach that stability needed in many trades.

So from a practical standpoint this age group makes a lot of sense here for this most important group of workers.

The tribe of Levi will be broken up by its three families.

Let us read...

Duties of the Sons of Kohath

4:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 "Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, 3 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.

4 "This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, relating to the most holy things: 5 When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. 6 Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles.

So the Kohathites, which was the family that Moses and Aaron were from, they are tasked to carry the Ark of the Testimony.

The priests, the descendants of Aaron were the only ones who could get close to the uncovered Ark, and they had to take special precautions to cover it.

The Kohathites were only instructed to carry their items, but the priests had to prepare them for the journey.

Remember only Aaron, the high priest, once a year would be the only one who could ever approach the Ark uncovered.

For the rest of the year, special care was taken to make sure no eye could see this most Holy item.

The veil that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was taken down very carefully as the priests covered the Ark.

It was covered with multiple layers, the top layer being the blue cloth.

Blue was a color representing heaven.

This color would allow the Ark to stand out as they marched.

It would signify its absolute Holiness and show that is separate from everything else in the procession.

Again, the priests packed it up, and the Kohathites carried it.

Next, we read...

7 "On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring; and the showbread shall be on it. 8 They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. 9 And they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light, with its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they service it. 10 Then they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of badger skins, and put it on a carrying beam.

11 "Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. 12 Then they shall take all the utensils of service with which they minister in the

sanctuary, put them in a blue cloth, cover them with a covering of badger skins, and put them on a carrying beam. 13 Also they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it. 14 They shall put on it all its implements with which they minister there — the firepans, the forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar — and they shall spread on it a covering of badger skins, and insert its poles. 15 And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.

"These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.

We see the other items were covered in other colors, blue cloth was used, but this time put under a layer of badger skins.

We see other unique colors put under the badger skins, and these colors had significance, but to find the true meaning is really a hard task.

We do know that Moses in Exodus 25 was instructed to construct the tent **Ex 25:9 According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.**

And in Hebrews 8:4-5 explain this was a pattern, or copy of the heavenly tabernacle.

Purple seems to be a color of royalty.

The Kohathites carried their items on poles after the priests packed them up.

We will see the Gershonites and Merarites actually packed up and unpacked their items themselves, under the supervision of the sons of Aaron.

But they did not carry these items, they will be given Oxen and carts to assist them in the transportation of these many items.

16 "The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil, the oversight of

all the tabernacle, of all that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings."

17 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 18 "Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites; 19 but do this in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task. 20 But they shall not go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, lest they die."

We see here once again the severity of God's Holiness, even if a well-intentioned Kohathite, who is faithfully serving the Lord, even accidentally looked upon the Holy items, he would be killed.

Aaron's son's were to diligently cover it all of these important symbols of God's Holiness.

And we see the hierarchy of God's system here, Moses was at top, Aaron was next, then Aaron's sons, and they were over the Levites, and here the sons of Aaron

are entrusted with delegating to the Kohathites their work.

Once again, order is being established in this community.

So the Kohathites receive their instruction, next we will see the duties of the Gershonites...

Duties of the Sons of Gershon

21 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 22 "Also take a census of the sons of Gershon, by their fathers' house, by their families. 23 From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, all who enter to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting. 24 This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and carrying: 25 They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting with its covering, the covering of badger skins that is on it, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, 26 the screen for the door of the gate of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and altar, and their cords,

all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things: so shall they serve.

27 "Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service. And you shall appoint to them all their tasks as their duty. 28 This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting. And their duties shall be under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

Now, Ithamar was delegated to oversee the takedown and set-up of the heavy curtains and many coverings of the tent.

He was appointed over the sons of Gershon, who put their hands to this laborious work.

Next, we read about the sons of Merari duties...

Duties of the Sons of Merari

29 "As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families and by their fathers' house. 30 From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, everyone who enters the service

to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 31 And this is what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, 32 and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign to each man by name the items he must carry. 33 This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest."

Ithamar also oversaw the Merarites, and the taking down and setting up of the frame of the tent, and all the intricate pegs, sockets, and cords.

Notice each man carried one item.

Each man had his assignment.

If you were entrusted to carry a peg, you would do so every time, the process of putting up this house of worship depended on everyone doing what they were called to.

There was no little job, even though the Kohathites had carried the more important, most sacred items, the man carrying the peg was just as important to the overall tabernacle and worship of Yahweh being complete.

You see, if that peg was forgotten, the tent could not stand, worship would be hindered.

Understand the same God, that ordered the worship of the tabernacle, is the same organizer of the church.

In the New Testament the church was to be a place of order as well.

All of us collectively have a place, and when the one who is called to carry the peg, is not faithful to that calling, the whole body suffers.

Jesus is the Head of this Body the church, and He structured it with first the Apostles, for which, we now have the Apostles doctrine, the Word.

Then He gave some to be prophets, some to be teachers, this included children and youth, and others

are called to be elders, we also have deacons, and those who assist the deacons.

In our church structure, our deacon's work without a title 'deacon,' but the heads of our usher ministry and greeter's ministry would fall in this category.

Even the cleaning ministry would fall under this category.

And we all have a place in this church structure.

And just like in the service of the tabernacle, God has placed some in authority over others, to bring stability and order.

We are instructed in... **Heb. 13:17 Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**

This is not to be a place of confusion.

The church is to have structure and leadership.

The whole church system falls under the authority of scripture.

So those who are called to supervise and lead, must understand they too are under authority.

You see if you are a peg holder within the Body of Christ, you may think your ministry is not important.

Understand, that your peg you are in charge of is essential to the overall picture here.

So many, after faithfully manning their post, they get ambitious in the ministry, and they forsake their calling, because they want more prominence.

The peg holder, sometimes gets fed up.

“You know I have faithfully carried this peg for 10 years now, and Moses has never once thanked me!”

And that heart is a poisonous one, as the peg holder looks for more notoriety, “Surely Moses will notice when I leave my post!”

And at the next stop, when that man is counted on, he holds up the whole work of God, because they have

this need for notoriety, and even at the cost of hurting everyone else, they will make it known how slighted they have been.

This happens in the church often, and every time one of you forsakes your peg you were entrusted too, it hinders the overall work of God.

Faithfulness church, there will be reward for faithfulness.

God did not see the Kohathites as superior to the Merarites, God did not see position, He saw faithfulness.

Understand the same is for the church, this position of pastor receives no more reward than the faithful greeter who remains steadfast in their calling.

The elder receives no more reward than the faithful widow who prays in her prayer closet unnoticed by man, but seen by God.

You see Christian, we are to serve in expectation of hearing those wonderful words “Well done Good and faithful servant.”

If you are aiming for prominence, you will miss what matters, set your sights instead on faithfulness, and you will find the joy in the work of God that you are looking for.

So next, we get the numbering of each family within those particular age groups...

All three families of the Levites were numbered...

We will skip down to verse 46

Census of the Levites

34 And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' house, 35 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting; 36 and those who were numbered by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. 37 These were the ones who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses

and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

38 And those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families and by their fathers' house, 39 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting — 40 those who were numbered by their families, by their fathers' house, were two thousand six hundred and thirty. 41 These are the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the Lord.

42 Those of the families of the sons of Merari who were numbered, by their families, by their fathers' house, 43 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting — 44 those who were numbered by their families were three thousand two hundred. 45 These are the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and

Aaron numbered according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

46 All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered, by their families and by their fathers' houses, 47 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who came to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens in the tabernacle of meeting — 48 those who were numbered were eight thousand five hundred and eighty.

49 According to the commandment of the Lord they were numbered by the hand of Moses, each according to his service and according to his task; thus were they numbered by him, as the Lord commanded Moses.

Once again, all 8,580 Levites had their particular jobs and tasks.

I imagine this tent went up quickly, with every man doing his job.

It probably did not take any more than an hour to set up or take down.

You see I learned framing by learning how to build a whole house.

I can build from a concrete slab all the way to the roof. But every now and again in the trades, I came across a framer who came off the housing tracks.

Now when you frame houses on a track lot, like we have here in Victorville, or just down the hill in Rancho Cucamonga.

Those framers, would usually learn one aspect of the house, one crew would learn snapping out and plating, the layout of the walls, and they would jump from house to house, just doing that initial layout.

Next would come a crew who only knew framing the walls, and they would bang out those walls so fast, they would be laying out all over the slab, next would be the guys who lift the walls, and put them all together, then plumb and line everything straight, then the sheer panel crew would come and hang all the sheer panel, then the truss crew, the roof sheeting

crew, and each crew just specialized in one part of the framing process.

And if you have ever watched a housing track go up, they go up so fast.

As each person diligently masters his part of the trade.

And I imagine each time they tore down and set up, it went fast as each man focused diligently on his task.

Understand the church, is the same way, when you all focus on your task, the overall reach and effectiveness of our church's outreach will grow.

You see when we have hands being feet too in the body of Christ, it slows us down, when the mouth has to act as a hand, because the hand is not doing his part, the overall work is slowed.

For us to reach the full potential, of all that God wants us to accomplish, we all need to be engaged, and content with the place God calls.

We see here in chapter 4 the effectiveness of the function and work of the tabernacle relies on everyone doing their part.

The same lessons and instruction is there for us today...

Now, remember, God is ordering this nation into a well-organized force of disciplined warriors.

As they are given their place in battle formation as they are readying themselves to embark on the conquest of the promise Land, there are some things that need to be considered and taken seriously before they set out.

The camp must remain pure, and even as important, it must be unified.

So chapter 5 revisits and reminds them that they are a Holy people, and set apart to God.

They must remain pure in order to be effective.

Ceremonially Unclean Persons Isolated (cf. Lev 15)

5:1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. 3 You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside

the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell." 4 And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the Lord spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did.

We dealt in great detail with uncleanness and defilement in Leviticus.

Now, they might be tempted to hide any defilement from others in the camp, and the effects of this would be deadly for the Nation of Israel.

In order for God to dwell among them, and fight for them, they must keep themselves pure and holy.

Lev 15:31 'Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that is among them.'

And they are reminded of three different categories of uncleanness here: lepers, those who have discharges of the sexual organs, and anyone who has been defiled by death.

There will be no strength in battle, or victory promised if they allow this defilement within their holy camp.

We will see this later on in Joshua, when Achan takes of the accursed things, and tries to hide his sin before the Lord, the Nation of Israel will be defeated by a much smaller force of men.

They could not afford to be compromised in any way if they were to receive the promises of God.

In the church, we see all throughout the New Testament, that church discipline is instituted to protect the church from defilement as well.

We learn in Paul's letters to the Corinthian church, that they were commanded to excommunicate a rebellious and sinful person within the church.

For the sake of keeping the church holy and pure.

This is another way for our church to lose its effectiveness in our reach for the Lord.

If He is going to work among us, through us, we must be on guard of sin among us.

To close our eyes to a sinful divisive brother, well that concealment works to dismantle the structure and order of the church.

All of us are accountable to the purity of this body.

Understand when you hear gossiping sister, stop her in her tracks, it affects the overall work here, if you encounter a divisive brother, gently rebuke them, and out of a spirit of restoration, try to help them understand the error of their ways.

Sin, which leprosy is a picture of in scripture, can spread like terminal cancer in a body if not remedied with the sanctifying blood of Christ, it is the only treatment for the plague of sin that can spread throughout the body.

Repentance is the only way to healing.

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

We must keep the camp clean.

And Next, we read....

Confession and Restitution(Lev 6:1-7)

5 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 6 "Speak to the children of Israel: 'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the Lord, and that person is guilty, 7 then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged. 8 But if the man has no relative to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for the wrong must go to the Lord for the priest, in addition to the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him. 9 Every offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they bring to the priest, shall be his. 10 And every man's holy things shall be his; whatever any man gives the priest shall be his.'"

Understand, as they ready themselves for battle, unity between the community is of upmost importance.

Imagine the treachery that could be imposed on the battlefield, if you know the man next to you has wronged you in the past.

He said he wanted to barrow your ox, and he kept the animal longer than he said, and the animal was worked so hard it died.

If the offended person was never lawfully compensated, that poison, called animosity would tempt the person to seek revenge.

God wants them to go out from camp fully restored to one another and more importantly to Himself.

Leviticus 6 details these laws for us, but we see here in Numbers something is added.

It explains what to do if the defrauded man is dead.

The restitution is not forgotten, they are to find the nearest relative, if they are all dead, it should be paid to the priests.

This would cleanse the guilt and put down any inward bickering between the Israelites.

When this restitution is made between brothers, and more importantly God, then with one accord this army could advance.

Understand Jesus taught this as well for the church.

Matt 5:23-24 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

For God to work in our midst, we must be reconciled to our brothers and sisters.

Understand if you come to church with a grudge in your heart, or grumbling within your spirit toward someone, and you are trying to offer a gift of praise and service to the Lord, it will be hindered.

And once again, it will be a strain to the work of the Lord.

Jesus gave instructions in Matthew 18 on how to reconcile with a brother, use that to make your heart right before the Lord.

Now, there would be very few things that would bring division to this mighty army that are more devastating than a corrupt marriage.

So God next gives His instructions on how to rid the nation of those who would weaken the family structure through unfaithfulness.

Now the Law is already clear **Lev 20:10** 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.

Yet here in Numbers, God gives a way to discern if it is truly adultery or just a paranoid jealous husband.

Jealousy can be just as destructive as adultery to a marriage.

Notice, the law is they both should die if adultery is proven, many think this section singles out women, and unfairly punishes them only.

Yet we see in Leviticus, God dealt with both severely.

So we read...

Concerning Unfaithful Wives

11 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'If any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, 13 and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and there was no witness against her, nor was she caught — 14 if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him and he becomes jealous of his wife, although she has not defiled herself — 15 then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance.

16 'And the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord. 17 The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on

the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. 18 Then the priest shall stand the woman before the Lord, uncover the woman's head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy. And the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that brings a curse. 19 And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, "If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse. 20 But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has lain with you" — 21 then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman — "the Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people, when the Lord makes your thigh rot and your belly swell; 22 and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make your belly swell and your thigh rot."

'Then the woman shall say, "Amen, so be it."

23 'Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape them off into the bitter water. 24 And he shall make the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her to become bitter. 25 Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, shall wave the offering before the Lord, and bring it to the altar; 26 and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn it on the altar, and afterward make the woman drink the water. 27 When he has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her and become bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people. 28 But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children.

29 'This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband's authority, goes astray and defiles herself, 30 or when the spirit of jealousy comes upon a

man, and he becomes jealous of his wife; then he shall stand the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall execute all this law upon her. 31 Then the man shall be free from iniquity, but that woman shall bear her guilt."

We see here this peculiar ritual to determine the guilt or innocence of a woman who is thought to have committed adultery.

This would help determine who was clean or unclean, so the camp could remain pure.

This is a case where a husband has a suspicion.

Perhaps he sees his wife making eyes at Benjamin his neighbor, and that spirit of jealousy comes upon him.

He cannot prove anything, but in his own insecurities he is sure that his woman is being unfaithful.

I don't know if you have ever been around a paranoid jealous man, but the level of stress they bring to the life of those around them is intense.

Perhaps Benjamin was just being neighborly and polite, he meant no harm.

Well the jealous man could bring an offering of jealousy to the priests, who would prepare a bitter drink in an earthen vessel.

It would consist of water, and dust from the tabernacle floor.

He would have the woman hold the grain offering brought by the man.

The priest would recite the curse to her, and she would agree to the terms.

She knows if she were guilty, the severity of this curse would be life changing.

Next, he writes the curse and washes it off into the water.

She would then present the priest with the offering, and he waves it, and then burns a portion on the altar.

The woman then drinks the water.

Now, the drink was not poisonous as far as the text tells us.

It seems the judgment is meted out by God supernaturally.

Her belly would swell, and her thigh would rot.

This would be a punishment fit for the crime.

It is not certain what this means scientifically, we know the thigh and the belly have to do with conception.

Many argue this would suggest the woman would remain childless, which in this culture would be seen as a curse on the woman.

Some argue this is some kind of sickness, or even speaking of miscarriages or false pregnancies.

The exact condition is not for us to know, but we can see in verse 28 the contrast to this mysterious curse is childbearing.

Today, childlessness is not viewed as a curse; there is no New Testament revelation that deals with this.

In antiquity however, children were vital to the survival of the family and even nation.

Even a person's retirement and provision was bound up in the children that one produced.

It would be disastrous for a person then to remain childless.

This would in many cases be more severe than simply being dealt the death penalty.

So now, with the man's wife coming out of this ordeal found innocent, he could now look at his neighbor, Benjamin with the love and respect that he is commanded to do so by the law.

God has assured the jealous suspicion of the man is outrages and it is revealed, that it is his own heart the problem lay.

I am sure this would mean some soul searching on the man's part, as he is embarrassed, he would be less likely to be driven by emotion and more stable in the future.

This also served as a severe warning against polluting God's people with an impure marriage.

The strength of this nation would be in the strength of their families, which all started with the husband and wife.

This practice helped maintain the unity once again of this army setting out.

No jealousy and no unfaithfulness would be tolerated.

Now the New Testament strengthens the Bible stance on strong marriages.

We see that our Christian marriages are a picture of Christ and the church.

And those who do not take serious their marriage vows and the purity of the marriage bed, we have just as severe instructions.

1 Cor. 5:11-13 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person. 12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside

God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

Now there is most definitely grace for those repentant sinners.

Jesus told the adulterous woman her sin was forgiven but also instructed her to go and sin no more.

The church must not turn away those, who have come seeking the grace of God in such matters.

But, we should not budge in our stance of not keeping company with those who choose to live in such a lifestyle unashamed.

So next chapter deals with a unique calling within the nation of Israel.

Only the Levites could be the priests, they were the only tribe set apart for the work of the tabernacle, for teaching the commands of God, and for the sacrifices.

Only the male Levites could serve as priests.

But if a man or woman from one of the secular tribes wanted to dedicate their life to the Lord for a certain period of time, they had that option.

Perhaps, a person was grateful for a season of immense harvest and provision, he could take the vow of a Nazirite and be set apart to the Lord as well.

Some, such as Sampson and perhaps Samuel had a lifelong Nazirite vow.

But if they made this special vow to the Lord, before the nation could set out to take the promise land, they had make sure they were living according to that vow.

Any Nazirite not living according to the conditions of the vow could disrupt the whole nation.

So God reminds them next...

The Law of the Nazirite

6:1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the Lord, 3 he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall

drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. 4 All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.

5 'All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the Lord, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. 6 All the days that he separates himself to the Lord he shall not go near a dead body. 7 He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his head. 8 All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the Lord.

9 'And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it. 10 Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting; 11

and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head that same day. 12 He shall consecrate to the Lord the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

13 'Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 14 And he shall present his offering to the Lord: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, 15 a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings.

16 'Then the priest shall bring them before the Lord and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; 17 and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering

to the Lord, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. 18 Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

19 'And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put them upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated hair, 20 and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the Lord; they are holy for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering. After that the Nazirite may drink wine.'

21 "This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to the Lord the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow which he takes, so he must do according to the law of his separation."

According to Gordon Wenham, the Nazirites were the monks and nuns of ancient Israel.

These secular Jews were called to an even stricter calling than the regular Jews.

Their rules were very similar to that of the priests.

They had a distinctive hairstyle, for which in antiquity long hair on a man would be a shameful thing.

They had to be willing to be humbled by their long hair, and live a life of total separation to God.

We find even in the New Testament Paul explains **1 Cor 11:14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?**

In Bible times, it was a thing of dishonor and humility.

We see there are instructions here for the Nazirites to keep from pollution.

If they touched a dead person, even unintentionally they had to purify themselves.

Even if a family member died, they had to maintain separation.

This person's word to God was first priority above all else in a person's life.

Vows to God then were not as they are today.

The nation's holiness and purity relied on these people keeping the vow for the time they had committed to God.

Their yes had to be yes and their no was no.

Now, although a Nazirite was separated from everything else in their life, the positive of this outweighed any negative.

They were separated from many things, but they were separated to God.

And because of this, their calling seemed to be higher than the normal priests, who could mourn the death of a loved one.

The Nazirite resembled the High Priestly office more than anything.

The normal priest were only prohibited from alcohol when they served in the tabernacle, the Nazirite was prohibited the whole duration of the vow.

The Nazirite after the vow was completed, also had a similar sacrifice to that of the high priest.

Those who undertook the vow of the Nazirite undertook a great calling.

They were required to live exceptionally holy lives.

Any pollution of these holy men or woman would defile the army of God.

This vow was costly and unique.

As far as the New Testament goes, we see vows are to be taken serious.

This particular vow is not named in the New Testament, although it seems John the Baptist may have been a Nazirite, and some say James the brother of Jesus was too.

We also see in Acts Paul taking some kind of vow right before he was arrested.

So certain commitments of more dedicated service to the Lord are seen in the church today.

But understand when you make these commitments, make sure you keep your word to the Lord.

Understand the weight of your commitments to the Lord, if we want to see our church used at its fullest potential, may we be a people of our word.

Keep your vows to the Lord.

So after this reminder to the Nazirites we get a beautiful blessing from the Triune God through Aaron, to an obedient people group...

The Priestly Blessing

22 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 23 "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

24 "The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; 26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.'"

27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

J. Vernon McGee says this....

“Here we find the Trinity in the Old Testament. God the Father is the source of all blessing. The Lord Jesus is the One who makes His face shine upon us. The Holy Spirit lifts up His countenance upon us and gives us peace.”

I like that...

Now, here as the Nation of Israel is moved to obedience and purity, we see the reward for such obedience is a blessing from God.

We see obedience brings protection, it brings grace, and it gives peace.

We see in the beginning of each of the three blessings the first part mentions God’s movement toward the obedient nation.

First, He will bless them, in the Old Testament, God’s blessing included, children, property, land, good health, and His presence. Wenham

This blessing also brings security of knowing God will keep them.

He will preserve their going out and their coming in.

Secondly, He will make His face shine upon them, when God is smiling upon them, they can understand the second part, that He is gracious to them.

The next movement toward His people, is He will lift up His countenance upon them.

He will pay attention to them, which will bring security and peace.

Such wonderful promises to those who are obedient and pure.

Here is a good place to close, the people have been numbered, everyone knows their heritage, they are standing under their banners, and the camp has been cleansed.

Now the Lord blesses them.

This is my prayer for us, for our church, that we would be blessed by the Lord.

That we would be properly prepared for the march in this pilgrimage and that we would be set in order.

1 Cor. 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

When the ministry is ordered, people are equipped for the work of God, His saints are using their particular gifts, and they are all in the right place, and most importantly we are cleansed.

When this happens we can expect to receive God's Blessing.

I can say there is no greater achievement than to receive God's blessing upon our ministry.

That is more important than man's approval.

Well if you have any prayer request tonight, please during this last song, come up and pray with one of the Elders up here.

God bless see you Sunday Lord willing. Let's pray...