

## **PREPARATIONS** (Numbers 2:1 – 10:10)

### **The Arrangement of the Camps** (Numbers chapter two)

With so many people involved, it was of utmost importance that everything be done in an orderly fashion. The encampment was laid out tribe by tribe with the tabernacle at its heart. The central location of the tabernacle had two main purposes. Being surrounded by the twelve tribes and their armies it was well protected from any enemy attack. Even more important was the fact that God was thus given the central place of honor and preeminence He so richly deserved. Also, with the tribes ringing it about, they were all equally “near”<sup>1</sup> their God.

Those Israelites who were not Levites<sup>2</sup> were caught between the possibility, on the one hand, of facing death in battle to defend the tabernacle and, on the other hand, the certainty of death if they approached too close to it (Num. 3:10, 38).

The tabernacle is an outstanding type of Christ, but what a contrast exists between the treatment accorded the type here and that extended to the anti-type (Christ) in the Gospels. When Christ “tabernacled” among men (John 1:14 – Greek) His people did not protect Him - they rejected Him and slew Him. He was not given a place of honor in the heart of Jerusalem but was taken “outside the camp” and nailed in shame to a cross (Heb. 13:12). Law forbade the “outsider” in Numbers to even come close to the tabernacle. But all is changed now because Christ was *willing* to be taken outside the camp and crucified. Now all that are willing to identify with the Christ *outside* the camp (Heb. 13:13) are invited *inside* the very Holy of Holies. The death of Christ rent the veil that shut men out from the presence of God (Matt. 27:51). Now we enter the holy place (Heb. 10:19, 20 - NASB) and find mercy and grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). Under law the holiness of God kept the Israelites at a distance (Num. 2:2) under threat of death (Num. 3:10, 38). Under grace the love of God gives life to the redeemed sinner and brings him into His very presence.

The tabernacle, like the temple later, faced east. Those encamped in front of the tabernacle, on the east of it, were under the standard of Judah. This takes on meaning when we learn that the Mount of Olives is east of the temple location in Jerusalem. When Christ, of the tribe of Judah, returns He will descend to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4) and enter the temple of that day through the eastern gate (Ezek. 44:1, 2). The

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<sup>1</sup> Though they were near in contrast to the Gentiles who were far off indeed, they were kept at a respectful distance also (Num. 1:51), for the law did not give the access to God which is accomplished under grace.

<sup>2</sup> They are called “outsiders” in the New King James Version; “strangers” in the King James Version; and “laymen” in the New American Standard Bible.

tabernacle faced the rising of the *sun*<sup>3</sup> that it might, symbolically, welcome the coming of the *Son*.

The Levites were encamped around the tabernacle also, between it and the tribal camps. Moses, with Aaron and his sons, was given the place of honor and responsibility – on the eastern side of the tabernacle (Num. 3:38).

### **The Order of March**

The order of march was carefully laid out. The three tribes under the standard of Judah lead the way (Num. 2:9), followed by those under the standard of Reuben (Num. 2:16). The tent of meeting was next in line, surrounded by the Levites (Num. 2:17). Maintaining its central place, even in the march, it was followed by those under the standards of Ephraim and Dan (Num. 2:24, 31).

The careful planning of their encampment and the order of their march was essential from a practical viewpoint, but it also demonstrates that God is not a God of confusion. Order was possible because they recognized Moses' authority as God's spokesman. "Thus the sons of Israel did; according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so they did" (Num. 1:54).

Today it is Paul, not Moses, we must follow. "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). The truth that God is a God of order remains - untouched by dispensational changes. Paul declares this in his instructions to the Corinthian church (and to us). "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33). A great deal of doctrinal confusion, fleshly fanaticism, and emotionalism could be avoided if we followed Paul's instructions as carefully as the Israelites followed those of Moses.

### **The Spiritual Leadership and Service** (Numbers chapters three and four)

Before considering the opening section of chapter three we need to give attention to its closing verses (40–51). Why was a whole tribe given this place of spiritual privilege and responsibility? It all dates back to the Passover in Egypt. All of the first-born in Egypt were doomed to death, but those among the Israelites were spared when the Passover lambs were sacrificed. The blood of the lambs satisfied the holiness of God on their behalf. God considered them to be His property, purchased by the blood of the lamb.

Paul reminds us that because of the blood of Christ, our Passover Lamb, we also are God's purchased possession. "You were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20). "You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men" (1 Cor. 7:23). Being His 'bought and paid for'

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<sup>3</sup> "They shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting, on the east side, toward the rising of the sun" – Num. 2:2, 3)

property, it is our “reasonable sacrifice” to present our bodies to Him to prove (or demonstrate?) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1, 2).

However, from a practical standpoint at least, it would be easier to set aside a whole tribe to be His special possession than to break into family after family, down through the years, to make up that select band. The firstborn were not considered, en masse, as merely a class of individuals, but each one personally was His – and there had to be a personal substitute to take his place in serving God. So also Christ did not merely die for sinners as a class – He died for me, personally.

My faith must be just as personal. I must believe that He did die for *me* as a person. I had believed Christ died for sinners from the time I was a child. A godly mother saw to that. But it was when I believed He died for *me* - that it was *my* sins that nailed Him to the cross – that I passed from death to life. This is what is meant when we speak of having Christ as a ‘personal Savior.’

Some confusion seems to exist about who the priests were. In my copy of the NASB translation there are two headings in Numbers three that are in error. At verse one the heading reads, “Levites to Be Priesthood,” and at Num. 3:25 it specifies, “Duties of the Priests.” The headings should read, respectively, “Sons of Aaron to be Priesthood” and “Duties of the Levites.”

It is true that the Old Testament priesthood is spoken of as the “Levitical Priesthood” (Heb. 7:11), and that the priests must be from the tribe of Levi (Heb. 7:14). However, most of the Levites were not priests. Only the descendents of Aaron were to be the priests (Num. 3:3; Josh. 21:19). The rest of the Levites were given to Aaron and his sons as helpers in the ministry (Num. 3:6). They were warned not to come near, where only the priests served, lest they be put to death. So the priesthood was Levitical but, more specifically, it should be thought of as the ‘Aaronic Priesthood.’

Much is found in Exodus and Leviticus regarding the priests and Levites, and their duties, while here only those matters that relate to the coming trek to the Holy Land are discussed.

After making it clear that only the sons of Aaron were priests, the matter of their relationship to the rest of the Levites is given attention. The Levites are to have a ministry carefully prescribed by God, but they are not to intrude into the ministry of the priests. If they do so they will die (Num. 3:10).

This setting apart of the priests from the rest of the Levites was protested only a short time later when Korah, a Levite, led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. “You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?” (Num. 16:3). Moses reminded the Levites that they have been given a glorious task and scolded them for desiring the priesthood also. “Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to

Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you? And are you seeking the priesthood also?" (Num. 16:9, 10). God judged their attempted intrusion into the priesthood, and they died. (Num. 16:31- 33).

Today also we should be satisfied with the particular ministry God has given us (Rom. 12:3 – 6). However, today, there is no wall between one area of ministry and another, and we all have an access to God that even the priests did not possess. The man who has the gift of showing mercy will not be slain if he tries to be a pastor, but he will be far more effective if he finds out what his gift is and enters into it with his whole heart.

When I was a missionary to the Philippines one small congregation complained because their pastor was often away from his church. "He is always off holding evangelistic meetings" they complained. I realized we had put a square peg in a round hole. This man's gift was not pastor, but evangelist. We relieved him of his church, set him free to be a travelling evangelist, and sent a man to the church who had a pastor's heart and gifts. The church thrived under their new pastor and, after many years of fruitful service, brother Denzo is still carrying on an effective evangelistic ministry!

### **The Ministries of the Levites (Numbers 3:25 – 4:49)**

At the time before us in Numbers three there were only three priests, Aaron and his two remaining sons. Nadab and Abihu had already died (Num. 3:4). They needed a lot of help to take care of the physical side of their ministry. Particularly, at this point, there was the task of disassembling the tabernacle, moving it to the next encampment, and reassembling it. This was entrusted to the Levites as part of their ministry. They were given to Aaron as his servants in the work of the Lord.

After they were in the land and the temple had been erected they "no longer [carried] the tabernacle, or any of the articles for its service" (1 Chron. 23:26). "Their duty was to help the sons of Aaron in the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts and in the chambers, in the purifying of all holy things and the work of the service of the house of God" (1 Chron. 23:28). Their duties are given in detail in the following verses of First Chronicles twenty-three.

We live in a day when those who teach, preach, or evangelize need many helpers – doing 'secular' tasks for the Lord. How very important it is that the secretaries, pilots, cooks, doctors, and ditch diggers do not fail to appreciate the privilege that is theirs – and that others do not fail to appreciate them either! God has need of His 'Levites' today. Happily, there is much more freedom under grace. Many of the 'helpers' can, and do, have very valuable spiritual ministries as well. Also, the pastors and evangelists often share in the 'secular' aspects of the ministry, as they are needed.

The rather formidable task of transporting the tabernacle was carefully planned. Initially, when it was time to move, Aaron and his sons went inside the tent of meeting

and carefully covered the articles of furniture so they would not be seen by the Levites who were to carry them (Num. 4:5 and following). Then “Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task” (Num. 4:19).

First the Kohathites took out the furniture of the tabernacle. Because the various articles of furniture spoke so clearly of Christ and His ministry they were not to be loaded on carts as the tabernacle itself was. They received special treatment, they were to be carefully carried by hand. Remember how David made the mistake of transporting the Ark of the Covenant on a cart? It resulted in the death of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:3 – 7). Before David set himself the second time to move the Ark he may have read these very chapters of Numbers. He told those who were transporting the ark, “The LORD our God broke out against us [the first time], because we did not consult Him about the proper order” (1 Chron. 15:13). Then, following David’s instructions, “The children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD” (1 Chron. 15:15).

The high privilege of handling the furniture was given to the Kohathites – possibly because Aaron himself was a Kohathite (Josh. 21:10).

The construction and placement of the tabernacle furniture is given in detail in Exodus. The entire tabernacle was a giant object lesson – with detailed typology involved. That is why it was called the “tabernacle of testimony.” It not only testified to God’s presence with Israel, but also bore testimony concerning the coming Messiah. It was a blessed ‘portrait’ of Christ Himself. Only here, in Numbers, do we have the description of the coverings to be used when the furniture was prepared for the march, and there is typology in them as well!

The first item to be prepared for transit was the very heart of the tabernacle, the “Ark of the Covenant.” When the tabernacle was fully assembled a beautiful veil separated it from the rest of the tabernacle. The presence of this veil indicated that the way into the presence of God had not yet been revealed (Heb. 9:7, 8). Only the High Priest could go past the veil and enter the Holy of Holies, where the Ark was located, and then only once a year. The importance of this distance between God and man is emphasized in the passage before us. When the Kohathites entered the tent of meeting to get the Ark they evidently carried the veil suspended in front of them, and then dropped it over the Ark so it was never exposed to their view.

It was not until Christ died on the cross that the veil was torn in two by God Himself – from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51) - making a new and living way into the very presence of God (Heb. 10:19, 20). In the day of Moses a man would die if he dared to enter the Holy of Holies and even glance at the Ark residing there. Today God calls out to each believer “Come boldly to the throne of grace, that [you] may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

Over the veil a covering of badger skin was laid. This protected the Ark from the weather. The badger skin typified the humanity of Christ (it was the outer covering of

every item except the Ark and, possibly, the Laver). Then, last of all, a covering of pure blue was put in place (Num. 4:6). This indicated its purely heavenly significance. In the other furniture we see Christ's deity and ministries through the flesh of His humanity (the badger skins). With the Ark, depicting Christ seated in Heaven, we see His humanity over-shadowed by His deity – so the outer covering was not badger skins, but pure blue!

The Table of Shewbread pictured Christ as the Bread of Life. It was covered with a cloth of blue for, like the manna, Christ was to be the Bread from heaven (John 6:51). The loaves of bread and a collection of implements used in worship were placed on the blue cloth and then a covering of scarlet was placed over it. The scarlet covering hints strongly of bloodshed. It reminds us that the bread must be broken before it can bring life. Christ must die. His blood must be shed before He can give life to those eating of the feast He provides. The top covering was of badger skins, indicating that, though He is God, it is as man He must die.

The Lampstand spoke of Christ as the Light of the World. It was covered with blue, for He was a light coming into the world from heaven (John 1:4, 5, 9). The lamp and associated articles were bagged into a covering of badger skins as the outer covering.

The “Golden Altar” was the Altar of Incense. It prefigured Christ as the One who makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). Its coverings were simply a blue cloth and badger skins. Although He prays for us from heaven (the blue cloth) it is His humanity (badger skins) that constitutes Him our “merciful and faithful High Priest” (Heb. 2:17).

The altar mentioned in verse thirteen was the Bronze (“Brazen” – KJV) Altar. This was the place where the sacrifices were made. A purple cloth was spread over it before it was covered with porpoise skins. Why was it purple instead of blue, as in the other coverings? If purple speaks of royalty, then there is emphasis here, typically, that on an *earthly* cross (no blue to represent heaven) the *King* would die!

What a message is in these coverings! Outside the tabernacle proper the King is on the cross on earth. Inside all is heavenly (blue). But the people there (represented by the Shewbread) are present due to the blood shed on that cross (scarlet) – and the heart of it all is Christ in glory (the Ark of the Covenant was located behind the beautiful veil).

At the conclusion of the above list of furniture it states, “These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry” (Num. 4:15). One is forced to ask, “Why is there no reference to the covering, or the carrying, of the Laver?” “One thing which the Kohathites almost certainly had to carry is omitted here, possibly because it was carried without any covering at all, and was not regarded as of equal sanctity with the rest. Anyhow, the omission is very remarkable, and may have been accidental.”<sup>4</sup> As to the whether or not it was carried by the Kohathites, verse 15 seems to specifically leave it out in this very regard. In order to see a very glorious possible

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<sup>4</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, vol. 2, page 25, on Numbers 4:15.

answer to the problem we must learn a bit more about the Laver.

The Laver was a place of cleansing for those who had already passed by the Bronze Altar on their way in to the Holy Place. It speaks of cleansing for those whose sins have already been dealt with judicially at the cross – those who are already justified. It was a place to wash hands and feet. How very much we need to have our works and our walk cleansed!

According to Scripture it is the Word of God that meets this need for cleansing. As to our walk, it was the Living Word who said to Peter, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me. ... He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean” (John 13:8, 10). When it is our “way” (what we do with our hands?) the answer is given clearly in the Psalms. “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” (Psa. 119:9). In this Psalm it is the written Word that is in view. Does the Laver link the cleansing with the Word? It most certainly does. As with the other articles in the tabernacle it speaks of Christ, the living Word - but it is linked with the written Word as well.

A very significant detail is given concerning the structure of the Laver. “He made the Laver of bronze and its base of bronze, *from the bronze mirrors* of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting” (Ex. 38:8). James speaks of the written Word of God as a mirror. “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror--” (James 1:23). The written Word of God not only reveals our sin to us, like a mirror, but it is also able to cleanse that sin away, as in the mirrors made into a Laver. Christ prayed, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17).

Is it not possible that there is a very important and glorious reason for the omission of the Laver in the list of things the Kohathites were to carry? It may have been intentionally omitted so its carrying would become the responsibility of volunteers. If so, it is wonderful that, with all the religious delegation of authority to Levites only, the carrying of the Laver was open to anyone. It shadows the truth that today the propagation of the Word is the task and responsibility of every believer! Like the Laver the Word is not to be covered at all, but is open to the view of anyone who will but look in faith!

The instructions to the Kohathites close with a solemn warning. If they allow themselves to become puffed up by the importance of the task given them and covet even greater responsibilities they could be cut off from the rest of the Levites in judgment (Num. 4:18 – 20). This warning was needed, as is demonstrated in the rebellion of Korah in chapter sixteen. How easy it is, for us as well, to have privilege foster pride.

In the Gospels, James and John were not only apostles of Christ but, along with Peter, enjoyed a special relationship with Him. They seem to have been an ‘inner circle’ of apostles. It was Peter, James and John who were present on several auspicious occasions when the others were not included. Rising in their self-esteem, as they relished

this distinction, they set their sights higher and asked to be on Christ's right hand and left hand in the kingdom (Matt. 20:21). From other Scripture it seems certain that those posts are reserved for Moses, representing the law, and Elijah, representing the prophets. James and John had the grace to *ask* (through their mother) rather than *demand*, as Korah had done. They didn't share the doom of Korah – however they were gently, but clearly, rebuked for their pride.

The most glaring example of this danger is Satan. His original responsibility seems to have been the post typified by one of the cherubim whose wings covered the Mercy Seat in the tabernacle. Describing his early responsibilities, Ezekiel writes, "You were the anointed cherub who covers" (Ezek. 28:14). Lifted up in his pride he didn't merely request a higher post, nor even demand one - he made it his goal to *violently take* the highest position in the universe. He determined to wrest God from His throne and become "like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). Instead, he will be "brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit" (Isa. 14:15). Korah will share eternity with him.

The Gershonites were to handle and transport the linen fence, the coverings of the large tent, the curtains, veils and any other 'software.' Before they began their journey they were given two carts and four oxen to facilitate this task (Num. 7:7).

The Merarites had charge of transporting the 'hardware' of the tabernacle. "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, 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" (Num. 4:31, 32).

We saw the beginning of modern day 'assembly-line production' when Henry Ford produced that amazing early day car, the 'Model T.' The basic idea was simple. Each worker was responsible for a certain small task so that, once the original planning and assignment of duties was completed, everything could be carried out like clockwork with a minimum of supervision. God was far ahead of Henry Ford. He arranged for the disassembly and reassembly of the tabernacle on an assembly-line basis. Each task was assigned to a worker by name (Num. 4:32). The worker didn't have to know much – just where his particular board or peg belonged.

When God assigns us our task and place in service we do not need a lot of top-heavy human supervision to be effective for the Lord. A story is told of Dwight L. Moody that illustrates this. He had been asked to address a committee on evangelism. When he did not appear at the meeting they sent for him. They found him on the street corner outside holding a street meeting. While the committee was *talking about* evangelization, he was *evangelizing!* Human planning has its proper place, but many committees could be disbanded if the individual believers knew where God wanted them to be and what He wanted them to be doing.

**Defilement in the Camp** (Numbers 5:1 – 10)



It was a giant step forward for the medical profession when they realized that disease is ‘catching’ and quarantine was enforced. But God instituted quarantine long before medical men thought of it.

What would be more fatal to their daily march than to have an epidemic of sickness spread through the camp? The solution was to separate the ill from the well, as was done by Moses. However, it was not merely the practical protection from contagion that was at issue. The camp, with God presiding from the tabernacle in its midst, was to be a representation, as much as possible, of the holiness of God. Those who were ill were not abandoned, but they were kept apart from the rest of the people so that God was surrounded by that which shadowed His perfection.

How different when Christ “became flesh and tabernacled among us” (John 1:14 – Greek). He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners. Yet He welcomed the sick, the crippled and even the dead into His presence and brought life and healing to them. “The law was given by Moses” – and it separated men from God as well as the sick from the healthy. But “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17), and instead of the sick defiling the tabernacle, the Tabernacle healed the sick. His cry was not “Outside the camp!” but “Come unto me!”

Another possible hindrance to the march would be the bitterness incurred when individuals not only sinned against the Lord (Num. 5:4) but also wronged one another (5:7). Our sins as believers are preeminently against God (Psa. 51:4), but they often grievously harm those about us as well. The simple solution to the problem would be confession by the guilty one and restoration to the victim (5:7).

Among the many offerings specified in the law, two are of special interest here. One was the sin offering, which had man’s sinful nature in view. The other was the trespass offering, dealing with the sins produced by that nature. One thing which accompanied the trespass offering, but was not associated with the other offerings, was restitution for the harm done (Lev. 6:2 – 6). Christ is viewed as the sin offering in 2 Cor. 5:21. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be *sin* [singular] for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” He is seen as the trespass offering in 1 Pet. 2:24. “Who Himself bore our *sins* [plural] in His own body on the tree.”

When restitution to those we have wronged is possible it greatly resolves the hurt and bitterness associated with such sins. However, many times it is not possible to ‘make things right.’ Here is where Christ’s death ministers to us in a wonderful way. As the trespass offering, He not only died for our sins, but also made restitution for us where it is impossible for us to do so. “I restored that which I took not away,” He cried out in the Psalms (Psa. 69:4 - KJV).

### **Trouble in the Home** (Numbers 5:11 – 31)

At a time when God was supremely concerned about the national interests of His people, why does He focus attention on this problem in the home? As has been said by

thinking historians, “As goes the home – so goes the nation.” It may be added, “As goes the relationship between husband and wife – so goes the home.” Here the heart of that relationship is addressed. The basic foundation for the marriage relationship is the faithfulness to, and trust in, one another.

The solution to the problem of possible infidelity, and the resulting jealousy, that is set forth here seems strange indeed to us. Apart from the nature of the test for infidelity itself, we wonder why only the wife is depicted as capable of this sin. Also, why is there no censure against a husband who is jealous of his wife without cause? Several things must be borne in mind if we are to understand this passage.

As to the procedure itself, it appears to be adapted to the special needs of the march into Palestine, when there will not be time or facilities for a more extensive investigation into the cases that arise. It is mentioned only here. Leviticus is silent about it, as is Deuteronomy. Also it would work only in a situation where God was actively intervening in the affairs of His people. It is arranged that the woman have the opportunity to confess her guilt, but faces the certainty that the God who knows all about her will reveal the truth before it is over. It would be a meaningless and cruel ordeal today.

Concerning the male orientation of the passage, the “culture” involved must be taken into consideration. While God was concerned for the women in Israel, and gave them a much higher place than was granted to the women of any of the heathen nations, they faced a situation much more strongly male dominated than Christian women do today.

Paul is often depicted as a ‘male chauvinist’ or ‘women hater’ due to his teaching in 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:11 – 15. But the place women enjoy under grace is far above what they knew under law. Of course when the law said one is to love his neighbor as himself, a man’s wife was surely recognized as his closest “neighbor.” However Paul made some statements, specifically dealing with the husband and wife relationship, that rise above those found in the law. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. ... Husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself ... Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself” (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33). “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them” (Col. 3:19). “There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). While guarding carefully against the ‘Women’s Lib’ excesses, Paul delineates a place of high honor and respect to the women who know the Lord. Our passage in Numbers brings this into focus.

Another consideration helps us to understand why, at this particular time, the conduct of the wife is addressed without similar attention to that of the husband. Aside from the Levites, all of the husbands involved were part of Israel’s army. Nothing can be more devastating to the morale of a soldier than the gnawing fear that his wife is unfaithful to him. They are starting out on a campaign to conquer Palestine. These men will be fighting furiously for their homes and loved ones and will desperately need the

assurance their wives are faithfully supporting them.

We must not miss the most important truth suggested here. The stability of the home is critical to our own national interests. More could be accomplished, for example, by making it possible for all mothers to be full time in their homes than by spending billions on government programs. However, humanly speaking, the moral decline in our country has already gone past the point of no return. Only the transformation of our homes can save our land, and only a sweeping revival can produce a sizeable increase in the number of homes where husband and wife are faithful to one another and able to raise godly families.

Thank God for the godly Christian homes in our land, but we must realize the need for revival even in many Christian homes. Moral laxity has worked its way into the homes of true believers in epidemic proportions. Perhaps if a great host of Christian homes were back on track spiritually, enough people would be won to Christ to make a difference, even yet, in our fair land. Few of us can personally make much of an impact on the national situation, but we can take care of our small part of it by giving God His place in our individual lives and in our homes. Such a ‘grass roots’ approach would be able to do what no amount of legislation – even good legislation - could ever accomplish.

### **The Nazarite Vow** (Numbers 6:1 – 21)

Another matter that could interfere with the orderly progress of the host in their march to the Promised Land would be an outbreak of envy, or jealousy, among the people. Would the Levites envy the nearness to God enjoyed by the priests? Would the other tribes long for the spiritual exaltation of the Levites? Would the women feel neglected and unappreciated spiritually? They did have trouble in all these areas later.

Envy is a terribly destructive emotion. It was for envy the leaders of Israel rejected and crucified Christ. “For he [Pilate] knew that they had handed Him over because of envy” (Matt. 27:18). The opposition to Paul’s preaching, on one occasion at least, was spawned by the envy of the Jews. “When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 13:45).

There would be no reason for envy of the spiritual status of others if one became a Nazarite. His separation to the Lord would then place the lowliest Nazirite on a spiritual par with even the High Priest himself.

The priests had a close relationship God, as was indicated in the instructions they received from Him. “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: ‘None shall defile himself for the dead among his people, *except for his relatives who are nearest to him*: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother; also his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband, for her he may defile himself” (Lev. 21:1 – 3).

However the relationship of the High Priest to God was even closer than that of the priests. “He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes; nor shall he go near *any* dead body, *nor defile himself for his father or his mother*” (Lev. 21:10, 11). The Nazarite was above the priests in his separation to the Lord for, like the High Priest, “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. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD” (Num. 6:7, 8).

While the separation to *ministry* was restricted to the men of the tribe of Levi, the honored *relationship to God* of the Nazarite was open to any Israelite, even to the women (Num. 6:2).

The vow of the Nazarite involved several prohibitions.

He was not to consume any product of the grapevine, not even the skins of the grapes (Num. 6:3, 4). Nor was he to drink any intoxicating drink, nor use vinegar. This was not because the grape vine was considered evil for some reason, for Christ turned water into wine, drank wine, and made it a part of the “last supper” as symbolic of His precious blood. The point is, they must be willing to abstain even from that which was good and acceptable in itself as an evidence of their loving, unquestioning, obedience to the Lord. This particular part of their vow would not be difficult to keep while they were in the wilderness. They had no grapes, aside from the one gigantic cluster brought back by the spies at Kadesh-barnea. At the close of the forty years Moses reminded them that none of them had drunk wine or strong drink during that time (Deut. 29:5, 6).

Also the Nazarite was not to cut his hair. The long hair was the visible evidence that he was a Nazarite. Paul remarks, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” (1 Cor. 11:14). The Nazarite must be willing to bear reproach, to be scorned or dishonored by men, if need be, for His Lord.

He was also not to come near a dead body or ‘attend the funeral’ even when death claimed someone dear to his heart. He was dedicated in a special way to the living God and was not to have any contact with death.

There were two kinds of Nazirites. The only one spoken of here was a Nazirite by his own choice and for a stipulated time only. God did raise up Nazirites among them (Amos 2:11), but we have few specific examples of anyone taking this vow.<sup>5</sup> We do, however, have several examples of those who, apart from their own choice, were Nazirites for life. Samson was such a Nazirite. “Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb” (Judges 13:5). Samuel was evidently such a Nazirite also, though the word “Nazirite” is not applied to him. “If You will indeed ... give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come

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<sup>5</sup> It seems that Paul at one time took this vow. “Paul ... had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow” (Acts 18:18).

upon his head" (1 Sam. 1:11).

In the New Testament John the Baptist was also, evidently, a Nazirite from birth. "He will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15).

The story of Samson indicates some differences between the Nazirite vow and the one who was such for life. When one living under a Nazirite vow touched a dead person he became unclean. He had to cut his hair and begin his years of dedication all over again. However Samson touched many dead bodies – he had slain a thousand men at one time. In hand to hand combat it would be impossible to avoid touching the dead. Yet his hair was not cut when this happened. Those under the vow had to cut their hair when they lost their place as Nazirites. Conversely, it was the cutting of Samson's hair that cost him his power as a Nazirite. He was a Nazirite for life – but didn't allow it to cramp his life style. In contrast, both Samuel and John the Baptist lived a life of dedication to God that was consistent with being Nazirites.

Today we do not have ritualistic Nazirites. However, in a sense, each believer is a *real* Nazirite for life, for Paul tells us that from our new birth on we are saints – those who are set apart to God. "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20).

We are urged to take on a spiritual Nazirite-like vow also. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2). We can experience the reality that was merely symbolized in the vow described in the Old Testament.

As the Nazirite was to turn from the enjoyment of all products of the grapevine, we are to be willing to fore-go even some things that are good in themselves for the sake of the Lord and His will and work.

Paul lists a number of areas where the servant of the Lord has his "rights" in First Corinthians nine. But he remarks (concerning his right to take up offerings -- 1 Cor. 9:7 – 11), "Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:12). He explains that we have the right to eat and drink (1 Cor. 9:4), yet he warns us, "If your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. ... It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak" (Rom. 14:15, 21). He set the example for us to follow. "If food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble" (1 Cor. 8:13).

When taking stock of our own life style the question should not be "What is wrong with this?" but "What is *good* about this in view of my dedication to serve the

Lord?"

The story is told of a young Moslem who came to know Christ while an exchange student. After he had been a Christian for some time he was attending a Sunday School picnic. When he refused a ham sandwich someone asked, "Don't you know that, under grace, we have the right to eat pork?" He replied, "Yes, I know that I have the right to eat it, but when I return home my father will ask, 'Have you eaten the accursed meat?' If I say, 'Yes,' I will never be able to talk to him about Christ. I am willing to sacrifice the pleasure of a ham sandwich to win my father to the Lord!"

Interestingly, when the Nazirite in the Old Testament concluded the time of his vow he did two things. He brought a rather extensive offering to the Lord and he shaved off his hair and burned it with that offering.

The believer today who enters voluntarily into a heart dedication to the Lord stipulates no time limit and brings his offering *when he enters into* the relationship. He brings his body as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is his reasonable service. When he has concluded his life of dedication down here and appears before the Lord in glory He does that which seems to be suggested in the burning of the Nazirite's hair. He brings all of those outward indications of his dedication to the Lord – His good works, his godly attitudes, his forgiving spirit, etc. – and disclaims any credit for them. He casts them on the altar to burn for God's glory – he cries out, "It was all His work in me, to Him be the glory!"

The Nazirite, due to his separation to the Lord, was to have no contact with death. We are to observe the reality that the Old Testament vow only hinted at. Our "old man" is dead – he was crucified at Calvary (Rom. 6:6). We are not to let him be a part of our life. We cry out with Paul "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24), and arrive at the same answer he found. "I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 6:25). We are also to be free from dead works, works done in the flesh instead of God working in us "to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Only then can we really serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

Unlike the Nazirite we are to have contact with those who are dead – dead in trespasses and sins. We must be walking in the Spirit, however, lest these contacts defile us. As we keep our eyes on Him we will not be defiled by such contacts, but will be able, by the grace and power of God, to see the spiritually dead brought to life!

Christ was not a *ritualistic* Nazirite, for He drank wine and touched the dead. However He was the only perfect and total *real* Nazirite ever. His "vow" is found in Hebrews 10:7. "Behold, I have come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me; to do Your will, O God." He drank wine, touched the dead and, almost certainly, did not have long hair. But His separation to His Father was total and consistent. It was not necessary for Him to be put under restraint by the rules of the Nazirite, for He always did His Father's will. "The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him" (John 8:29). He touched the dead and they lived! He turned water into wine, drank

wine, and used it as a symbol of His precious blood poured out at Calvary. He did not need to bear the symbolic dishonor of long hair, for He was willing to be dishonored in stark reality - scorned, mistreated and savagely slain by men, that He might do His Fathers will. By His matchless grace may we have His mind in us!

### **The Aaronic Benediction** (Numbers 6:22 – 27)

No doubt much could be written about these verses, but notice two things that stand out. First of all, God intended naught but blessing for Israel, and Aaron was to tell them so. God, as well as Moses, was accused by the people of bringing them into the wilderness to slay them with hunger and thirst. Their troubles were not because God was ‘against them’ but because they were, in their unbelief and disobedience, against Him.

We, like Israel, all too often bring upon ourselves many trials and difficulties, but we must never forget that *God is for us* - even to the extent that He “did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Rom. 8:31, 32). All three members of the Trinity are *for us*. The idea that the Father is angry with us and that Christ is the one who loves us, and died to pacify the Father’s anger, is not scriptural. The Aaronic benediction is as good for us as it was for Israel.

In the second place, notice that the trinity of God is at least suggested. Paul uses a threefold benediction that specifically lists the members of the Godhead that are but shadowed here. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13:14).

### **The Offerings of the Tribes** (Numbers chapter seven)

How fitting that the tribes should bring their offerings to the Lord at this time. They were surely presented in gratitude for all God had done for them in bringing them so far along the way, and to demonstrate confidence in what He was about to do. It is the tragedy of Numbers that this joyful expectation wavered and finally fell, turning an eleven day journey into one that stretched out interminably for thirty eight years!

The initial offering consisted of six covered carts (“wagons” – KJV) and twelve oxen to pull them. Like the offerings listed later in this chapter, they were from the leaders of the tribes (7:2) as the representatives of the tribes themselves. Not being Levites, they could not transport the tabernacle, but they provided the equipment needed by those who did.

These carts and oxen were very practical and timely gifts. The tabernacle had just been set up (v. 1) and must soon be taken over the wilderness trail. Most of its disassembled parts would be exceedingly difficult, if not virtually impossible, to carry on their shoulders, as the Kohathites were to do with its furniture (Num. 7:9). For instance the boards were over two feet wide and fifteen feet long (Ex. 36:21), and there were fifty-six of them (Ex. 36:23, 25, 27, 30). The eleven coverings of goat’s hair were each forty five feet long and six feet wide (Ex. 26:7,8). In addition there were three other coverings

as well: fine woven linen (Ex. 26:1), ram skins, and badger (“porpoise” - NASB) skins (Ex. 26:14). Not only would they be heavy, they would also be bulky and almost impossible to handle (have you ever tried to carry a mattress?). The carts were given to transport these items.<sup>6</sup>

These carts and oxen were not for sacrifice, they do not seem to be typical of anything, and they did not involve shedding of blood or scent of incense. They were just carts. Yet they were offered, the offering was accepted, and the record of it finds its place in Scripture.

Today we are all called on to offer our bodies a living sacrifice. In addition to this, or as an outgrowth of it, some are to leave the comforts and security of home to face hardships, persecution and, possibly, laying down their very lives in order to preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their offering is recognized and respected by all. But there are others who provide the “carts.” Their offerings deserve recognition also. A missionary may evangelize an extended area – but what about those who provide him with the aircraft to facilitate his work? Someone gave a Jeep to our mission. If it had not been available to us our son, unless God had undertaken in some other way, would not have reached the hospital in time. He would be buried in a weed-covered grave in the Philippines today instead of preaching the gospel of the grace of God. Praise the Lord for the dedicated saints who provided the “cart.”

The rest of chapter seven relates the offerings brought by the leaders, on behalf of the tribes of Israel, at the conclusion of the dedication of the tabernacle and its altar. They are brought in the same tribal order as that of the march (established in chapter two) beginning with Judah and concluding with Naphtali.

We cannot really appreciate what is here for us unless we have had the patience to read the chapter all the way through! It seems to be exceedingly pleonastic, unnecessarily redundant, and boringly repetitive. We wonder why Moses took seventy-six verses (vs. 12 – 88) to describe what could easily have been handled in six or eight. The Living Bible condenses seventy-four verses into seventeen at this point. Josephus, in his “Antiquities of the Jews,” sums up this whole chapter in part of a paragraph. What special blessing can possibly spring from the length of this account?

The twelve offerings are identical. Yet each is described in detail, and in full, as if it were the only one of its kind.<sup>7</sup>

So in Romans 12:1 we are urged to bring our bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord. Even though every believer brings the same sacrifice (his body) God takes note of

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<sup>6</sup> The carts were specifically given to Gershon and Merari (Num. 7:7, 8). The Gershonites (with two carts) were in charge of transporting the curtains and coverings of the tabernacle (Num. 4:25), while the Merarites (with four carts) were in charge of the boards and associated articles (Num. 4:31).

<sup>7</sup> If twelve people, using the King James translation, each takes a separate section they can read them aloud in unison with scarcely a variation from one another.



each offering individually, and in detail, as though it, too, were the only one. There are no ditto marks on God's record book. We are never "just another cog in the machine" with Him -- we never get lost in the crowd!

We must *personally* honor *His* sacrifice at Calvary by believing the gospel and resting on His finished work for salvation. It is not enough for us to merely believe He died for sinners. It is when each of us acknowledges, "It was for ME – a guilty sinner -- He died!" that our faith becomes *personal*. Similarly He takes note of *our* sacrifice *personally* and *individually* in service. His reaction to our offerings is not "Millions have given their bodies as living sacrifices," but "*Bill Heath* gave *his* body to me as a living sacrifice! *George Jones* gave *his* body to me as a living sacrifice! ...," etc. We are not just a statistic with Him. Praise the Lord!

Not only did each man receive individual attention to his offering, that it might be personal, but the total is carefully noted also (verses 84 - 88). They were made aware of fellowship in giving and were assured they were not alone in their sacrifice. Here we have individuality without a sense of aloneness, and a sense of belonging without collectivism.

Notice also, it was God who directed that a separate day be given to each offering (v. 11). What could have been done in a few hours took twelve days! God was not in a hurry.

Often at college commencements those graduating (several hundreds sometimes) will stand together as their degrees are conferred en masse. This is time conserving, and very practical, but quite impersonal. I recall when one of our daughters graduated from Junior High School. There were about six hundred graduates in her class, and the ceremony took a couple of hours. Each one was given time to respond to his name and walk forward to receive his diploma. It was a tedious process, but it all became worthwhile when we heard the Principal call out, "Opal Lee Heath," and we saw our lovely daughter walk across the stage to receive the reward for her studies.

With all eternity ahead of us, I do not think our Lord will rush through the giving of rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God is not in a hurry. How satisfying it will be at that time to hear the testimony of each believer. We will not be pressed for time, nor wondering when the meeting will be over.<sup>8</sup> We will be able to hear, from each saint's own lips, the wondrous story of his walk of faith, his heartaches and sufferings, his victories through Christ -- and rejoice with him when he receives his rewards. Our turn will come, too, in God's good time, to tell how He worked in our lives. What a 'missionary conference' that will be!

Now re-read the chapter, when you are not in a hurry, and try to imagine how each group felt when it was *their* offering being received. It was not passed over, nor

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<sup>8</sup> Unlike our experience at Opal's graduation, we will not be merely biding the time until those we have known and loved during this life receive their rewards. We will be equally interested in every other member of the Body of Christ.

lumped with that of others -- they each had their day. All eyes were upon the gifts of their hands and hearts, and God felt it was worth a few extra verses to tell about it in detail. What a wonderful God!

### **The Lamps** (Numbers 8: 1- 4)

The instructions given here do not refer to the original lighting (KJV) of the lamps, for that had already taken place earlier (Ex. 40:25). However, the lamps required re-lighting each morning and evening after the wicks were trimmed (Ex. 30:7, 8). The lamps had to burn day and night (Ex. 27:20), for there were no windows in the Holy Place. The only light there was from the Lampstand and its lamps.

The instructions here pertain to “when the lamps were arranged” each morning and evening after the trimming of the wicks and re-lighting. There must be continual care that the lamps were so arranged that they shed their light “in front of the Lampstand” fully illuminating the Table of Shewbread, the Altar of Incense, and the Lampstand itself. All three of these articles were typical of Christ, but there was reference to Israel in both the Table of Shewbread and the Lampstand. The Table of Shewbread typified Christ as the Bread of Life – but the fact that there were twelve loaves upon it spoke of the twelve tribes of Israel who were to feast on Him.

The Lampstand typified Christ as the ultimate light, and source of all light (John 1:4 – 9; 8:12; 12:35, 36). However He places in the world those who are to be witnesses for Him, shedding His light abroad (John 1:7, 8). In the Old Testament Israel was to be that light (Isa. 9:2; 43:10 – 12; 49:6). During the gospel period Christ Himself was the light (John 3:19; 9:5; 12:35, 36, 46), but when He returned to heaven the believers remained as the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

It is significant that in Revelation 1:20 the seven Jewish congregations are spoken of as “the seven golden lampstands.” Their light is their testimony for Christ. The number seven speaks of completeness and perfection, and those believers will be the only light that dark world will have,<sup>9</sup> bearing testimony to Christ as the Savior. It is interesting that Paul writes to seven churches also in his church epistles. These seven churches epitomize the testimony of all the churches, giving forth their testimony, lights in the world today.

The placement of the lamps was critical. They were to be so positioned that they shed their light over the entire Holy Place. When the priest entered the enclosure he was not to focus his attention on the lights but, by the illumination they shed, he was to see clearly those pieces of golden furniture that spoke so eloquently of Christ. So our testimony should center on Him who is the Light of Life (the Lampstand), the Bread of

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<sup>9</sup> It is the author’s view that John was transported by the Spirit into the Day of the Lord (Rev. 1:10) and that everything following has to do with that coming day. This view is disputed, of course, but if it is valid the churches in Revelation two and three are seen to be Jewish congregations during the first three and a half years of the Tribulation. That they will be Jewish congregations seems sure from the statements in Rev. 2:9 and 3:9.

Life (the Table of Shewbread), and the divinely appointed intercessor (the Altar of Incense). His deity must shine forth from them all (gold speaks of deity in typology). A light can either conceal or reveal, depending on how it is placed. If it is so positioned that it shines in your face all you can see is the light. It needs to be so placed that you see everything else by its illumination. Only then is it of value. May our light so shine that those about us will not have their attention focused on us, but will clearly see the Savior.

### **Cleansing and Service of the Levites** (Numbers 8:5 – 26)

The tasks of the Levites have been carefully laid out in earlier chapters, but they must be cleansed before they can discharge their duties.

As a missionary once told the students in the Bible Institute I attended, “The missionary is called not only *do*, but to *be!*” Workers with skill but no character are like the man who knows his gun so well that he can take it apart and reassemble it in the dark – but doesn’t know where to aim it or when to pull the trigger! ‘Know-how’ must be guided by ‘know-when’ and ‘know-why’!

We have in this chapter something of a review of information given in chapters three and four. The Levites belong to the Lord in consequence of the Passover in Egypt. They are His special possession (vs. 14, 16 – 18). However He has given them to Aaron to be assistants to the priests (vs. 11, 15, 19, 22). Taken from among the other tribes, they represented them in their service. This was indicated when the sons of Israel (through chosen representatives evidently) laid their hands upon them, identifying themselves with the chosen servants of the Lord (v. 10).

Before they begin their service they must be cleansed. No one unclean must serve the Lord, even in what might be described as secular kinds of labor in only a supporting role. Part of the cleansing was personal and physical. “The shaving and washing had, no doubt, a symbolic significance, but their primary object was simply, and obviously, personal cleanliness; it is the hair and clothes that chiefly harbour impurities, especially in a hot climate.”<sup>10</sup> There was a ceremonial cleansing for them – Somewhat similar to that of the priests, but there were differences. “There was in their case [that of the Levites] no ceremonial washing, no vesting in sacred garments, no anointing with holy oil, or sprinkling with the blood of sacrifice [as was the case with the priests]. The Levites, in fact, remained simply representatives of the congregation, whereas the priests were representatives also of God.”<sup>11</sup>

It is said that the Levites were to “make atonement for the children of Israel” (Num. 8:19). They could not do this by offering a sacrifice for them – for that was the work of the priests. Later in Numbers Phinehas “made atonement for the children of Israel” by putting a stop to the sin that was bringing wrath upon them (Num. 25:11, 13).

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<sup>10</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, volume two, page 68 in the section on Numbers.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, page 67.

Somewhat similarly the Levites stood between their brethren and the tabernacle<sup>12</sup> “that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel came near the sanctuary” (Num. 8:19).

We, too, must be cleansed before we can serve effectively. We serve the Lord and minister to people not only by our witnessing and teaching but also by our example. Our life style among believers should not cause them to stumble. It should so touch them that they will be kept from temptations and sins that might otherwise have ensnared them – bringing God’s chastening on them. An adult may more effectively prevent a child from falling into the river by standing between it and the river, than by merely calling out a warning to the child from behind him.

The Levite was to retire at the age of fifty. However he was allowed to donate his services in retirement if he desired to do so (Num. 8:26). His voluntary service was evidently to be in the realm of instruction, advice, encouragement, and light tasks – for they “shall do no work.” “The word ‘charge’ [‘to attend to needs’ – NKJV] ... seems to signify the care of the furniture and belongings of the tabernacle, while ‘service’ [‘work’ – NKJV] means the laborious work of transport, or of preparing sacrifices.”<sup>13</sup>

Retirement is often a kindness and mercy to the elderly, but the opportunity to ‘keep their hand in’ is beneficial to both the retiree and those taking up his responsibilities. The young have special value because of their strength, dedication and innovative thinking. They may “have more understanding than all [their] teachers” if the word of God is their meditation (Psa. 119:99). They may also “understand more than the ancients” if they keep God’s precepts (Psa. 119:100). But, as Rehoboam discovered, it may also prove helpful to consider the mature wisdom and appreciate the experience of those who have served before. (See 1 Kings 12:6 – 15)

### **The Passover** (Numbers 9:1 – 14)

In spite of all the last minute preparations for their march to the Promised Land, they were told to take time to observe the Passover. Since they were originally instructed to observe it “when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised” (Ex. 12:25. See also Ex. 13:5), they may not have expected to observe it while they were still in the wilderness.

As a matter of fact, it is questionable whether they observed another one until they were in the land. Surely as the following thirty-eight years ticked by it would have been more and more difficult to celebrate it. The attendance would necessarily dwindle as the years elapsed, for no one could take part in it unless they were circumcised (Ex. 12:48) and, for some reason, this rite was not being practiced while they were in the wilderness (Josh. 5:5). It was only after the new generation had been circumcised that Joshua held the next recorded Passover (Josh. 5:5 – 19).

<sup>12</sup> Even physically their encampment was between the tabernacle and the location of the other tribes.

<sup>13</sup> The Pulpit Commentary, volume two, page 69 in the section on Numbers.

They were to observe it “according to all its rites and ceremonies” (Num. 9:3). This would seem to involve four days for making sure the lambs were perfect (Ex. 12:3, 5, 6) and a week for the feast of unleavened bread (Ex. 12:18). The entire observance would take eleven days. In their eagerness to be on their way to the land of milk and honey they could have chafed under this delay. If so, they would be even more discouraged when eleven additional days were consumed for the sake of those who were unable to take part in the first Passover, and another one was observed just for them. They could have said, “We are just too busy to take off twenty-two days for this celebration.”

This rings a bell in my heart, for all too often I have been too busy (with the Lord’s work!) to take time to pray and read His word. One day I was under such conviction about this that I wrote the following, which I need to re-read from time to time.

I've so very much to do today --  
     'I don't have time,' Lord, not to pray.  
 How easy it is to beat the air  
     When I fail to take the time for prayer.

I'm fretting and running all day long,  
     With no word of praise nor note of song:  
 So busy with tasks that matter not,  
     And failing to witness as I ought.

Still pushing on doors that Thou hast closed,  
     Neglecting the path Thou hast proposed,  
 The wasted hours soon slip away  
     When I fail to take the time to pray.

As well be too hungry to stop and eat,  
     Too hot to seek shelter from the heat:  
 As well be too lost to use the map,  
     Too sleepy to take a needed nap!

I fall on my knees this morning hour  
     Asking for wisdom, grace, and power.  
 I've too many things to do today --  
     I don't have the time, Lord, not to pray!

There were several reasons for God’s insistence on their taking ‘time out’ to observe the Passover. First of all, it was the Passover that had put them, as a nation, on redemption ground. Before they had received the law or been given the Sabbath to keep; before they had been given water from the rock or tasted bread from heaven; before they had engaged in a single battle; before they had the pillar of fire or the tabernacle over

which it stood guard – they were His people, redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb. It was not only the first-born who were spared that night. The blood was on the door of the house and everyone in the family ate of that one roasted lamb. The blood on the doorposts meant safety for the entire household, for they were warned “none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning” (Ex. 12:22).

The Passover is rich in its typology. The lamb pictured Christ in His death on the cross, as Paul specifically tells us (1 Cor. 5:7). The lamb had to be under observation for four days to make sure it was without blemish. Christ was under close scrutiny by the whole nation for about four years and was proven to be holy, harmless and undefiled. The lamb had to shed its blood, even as Christ shed His blood on Calvary. The blood was to be applied to the side posts and lintel of the doorway with hyssop. Christ’s blood must be applied to our hearts by faith. The lambs were to be slain by the whole congregation of Israel (Ex. 12:6), just as it was the whole mob of Israelites that shouted, “Crucify Him!” in the gospels. Thus it was the sin of every Israelite – yea, the sin of every man – that put Christ on the cross. Other details – no bones broken, the lamb must be a young male, etc. – also find their fulfillment in Christ. They were told, “If the household is too small for the lamb” they were to share it with their next door neighbor. The lamb was never too small for the household! As with our Lamb, the sacrifice was enough to satisfy and to share! (Ex. 12:4). The blood, applied to the two doorposts and to the lintel – when the blood had dripped from the lintel to the threshold below, as it surely would – formed a cross standing between those Israelites and judgment. God gave a “*sign* of the cross” pointing forward to Christ – but we need no such sign pointing back, for we have Him, the *Christ* of the cross.

The Passover was the foundation for the entire transition from bondage in Egypt to the settlement in the land of promise. The original Passover wrought their deliverance from Egypt and initiated the New Year (Ex. 12:2). The second one started them on their way to the land and the third (recorded) one celebrated their arrival there. “The children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year” (Josh. 5:10 – 12). The initiation, progress and culmination of the exodus were based on redemption through the blood of the Passover lamb.

It is important to realize that the Passover was a once for all sacrifice. This was emphasized when they were not even allowed to carry it over to a second day (Ex. 12:10). There were seven days of feasting on the unleavened bread, but only one day for the Passover itself. While the yearly memorial of it involved the offering of lambs, and is called by the name “Passover,” it was actually only a memorial of the Passover in Egypt. “The Passover of the yearly celebration was but a memorial of the Passover in Egypt, which was the one true type.”<sup>14</sup> Only in Egypt were the firstborn in danger of death.

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<sup>14</sup> “The Coming Prince” by Sir Robert Anderson. 16<sup>th</sup> edition dated 1967, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. page 118, footnote.

Only in Egypt were they set free from bondage and sent on their way to the Promised Land. Only in Egypt did they put blood on their doorways.<sup>15</sup> The purpose of the yearly Passover was to remind Israel each year of the redemption that had gained their freedom for them and to teach this truth to the new generations. “It shall be, when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ that you shall say, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice of the LORD, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households’ ” (Ex. 12:26, 27).

One wonders where they obtained unleavened bread for the Passover in Numbers nine. Only a short time later they cried out, “There is *nothing at all* except this manna before our eyes!” (Num. 11:6). God could have made it available in some unrevealed way, but the manna could have been used, for it was bread. “When the children of Israel saw it, [the manna] they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ ... And Moses said to them, ‘This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat’ ” (Ex. 16:15). The manna was surely completely unleavened, for leaven speaks of sin and evil - and it was the bread of heaven, angels food (Psa. 78:24, 25). No more perfect “unleavened bread” could have been found for this Passover!

In Egypt the people ate the feast with a belt on their waist, sandals on their feet, and their staff in their hand, prepared for travel. They were to eat it in haste, for the next day they would be on their way out of Egypt (Ex. 12:11). Here in Numbers they also ate it prepared for action, for they were soon to begin the final march to Canaan. In Joshua five they would eat it in readiness for the conquest of the land.

Numbers opens with the census, for it is a fitting introduction to the book. However the census was actually taken between the designated Passover and the special one a month later (Compare the date in Num. 1:1 with that in Num. 9:1). Those enrolled in that census were reminded, by the Passover, of what had happened a year before. Following the Passover in Egypt Israel had marched triumphantly out of their bondage and had seen Pharaoh’s army destroyed, quite apart from their participation in the battle. They had also been victorious over Amalek, when their army *was* involved. Now another Passover encourages them to expect that God will give them victory over the Canaanites, whether by His direct intervention or through His hand upon them as they fight and settle in their new homes. They are reminded that their entry into the land will be no more of a problem to God than their exit from Egypt. They both depend on the blood of the lamb as the basis for God’s gracious work on their behalf. Similarly both our deliverance from spiritual death at our conversion and our safe arrival in heaven, are totally dependent on the blood of our Passover Lamb.

Paul draws a critical lesson from the Passover in 1 Cor. 5:6 – 8. “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened

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<sup>15</sup> Neither in Numbers nine nor Joshua five did they have doorways, for they were living in tents.

bread of sincerity and truth.”

However when he speaks of celebrating the feast he is not asking us to keep the Old Testament Passover, or even a New Testament modified version of it. “Let us keep the feast” does not mean we are to keep the Jewish Passover any more than “We are the circumcision” (Phil. 3:3) indicates that we should be physically circumcised. He is not describing our conduct for a seven-day period, but our lifestyle every day of our lives. He is saying, in effect, “Israel refrained from the use of ‘the old [physical] leaven’ for seven days to celebrate the death of the Passover lamb. The leaven from which we must refrain, in light of the death of Christ our Passover, is the ‘leaven of malice and wickedness’ – and not just for seven days, but for the rest of our lives.”

Although the Lord’s Table seems, at first glance, to be an outgrowth of the Passover (1 Cor. 11:23 – 35) there are some contrasts worthy of notice. The Passover was to be carried out “according to all its statutes and according to its ordinances” (Num. 9:3). It was to take place at a designated time; was to be preceded by observation of the lamb and the removal of all leaven from the house; and was only for circumcised individuals. The feast accompanying it was carefully described and attendance was mandatory.

What a contrast we find in 1 Cor. 11:23 – 34! For the Lord’s Table no time is set, nor is there a suggestion as to how often it should be observed. “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup” (1 Cor. 11:26) tells the whole story. There are no rituals to observe, no limitations as to who may participate, and not even a specific command to take part in it. There is, of course, no animal sacrifice - for our Lamb has already been offered once for all.

That the Table of the Lord is for us today seems clear. How could it be ‘Jewish’ when the apostle to the Gentiles is the only one who mentions it? How could it be the continuation of the Old Testament Passover and Christ’s last supper when it was part of the revelation given to Paul (1 Cor. 11:23)? How could it be only for believers before Acts twenty-eight when it is not to be discontinued short of the Rapture? “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

Also Paul gives the bread a new significance, in the communion, that was not mentioned by Christ. The bread not only speaks of Christ’s physical body broken for us but also of His mystical Body. “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17). To gather solemnly around this symbol of the unity of the Body while there were divisions among them was, at best, outrageously inconsistent. They were “not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. 11:29).<sup>16</sup> When Paul said, “*First of all*, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you” (1 Cor. 11:18) he was indicating the divisions were the most

<sup>16</sup> According to a marginal reference in the NKJV edition of The Nelson Study Bible the passage reads, “Not discerning the *one* body” (in the “NU-Text”).



important problem they faced at the Lord's Table. This hypocrisy was so serious that they were being chastened for it (1 Cor. 11:30).

As we show forth the Lord's death today may we not be guilty, as they were, of doing to the mystical Body what the Jews and Romans did to His physical body. "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27).

The Passover looked back to the type of Christ as the Lamb of God and looked forward to the cross. The Lord's Table looks back to the cross and forward to the Rapture. The Passover anticipated Israel's march to the land of milk and honey, and they ate it in haste, fully prepared to leave the next day. The Lord's Table anticipates our catching away to glory, and we should be ready to leave, for it could happen tomorrow! Maranatha!

### **Guidance for the Journey** (Numbers 9:15 – 10:10)

#### **The Cloud** (Numbers 9:15 – 23)

The pillar of cloud that served as a guide to Israel during the Exodus was a tremendous physical display of God's vast creative power. In pictures illustrating it the artists usually portray it as a phenomenon about the size of a modern day hot air balloon, elongated vertically as though floating above, but anchored to, the tabernacle. While it evidently, like the funnel cloud in a tornado, had a pendant of cloud reaching down to the tabernacle, the cloud itself was vast enough to cover Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:16). It was of sufficient size to isolate Pharaoh's entire army (Ex. 14:28), including more than six hundred chariots (Ex. 14:7), from a multitude of some two million people for an entire night. It was large enough to light the way for the Israelites when they traveled by night. "The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, *so as to go by day and night*" (Ex. 13:21). At the close of the forty years Moses reminded Israel, "[God] went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you *the way you should go*, in the fire *by night* and in the cloud *by day*" (Deut. 1:33). During the Millennium "the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night." It will serve as "a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain" (Isa. 4:5, 6 – KJV).

Thus the cloud manifested God's presence with them, and served as guide, protector from the enemy, shelter from the desert heat by day and illumination for the travel by night. It was an impressive and dramatic miracle. It continued with them for forty years. It outlasted a whole generation of Israelites! The miracles wrought before the eyes of the world in Moses' day, like those associated with Christ, were "not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26; 1 Cor. 15:6).

Numbers 9:15 – 23 looks back on the thirty-eight years that at this point were still ahead of them. This is evident, for there was no time when the cloud could have lingered

over the tabernacle for a whole year (Num. 9:22) except after Kadesh-barnea. During the yearlong residence at Sinai they did not yet have the tabernacle, for it was erected on the first day of the first month of the second year of the Exodus (Ex. 40:17). At Numbers nine it had just been set up (Num. 9:15) - and the trip to Kadesh-barnea took much less than a year. Moses quite evidently wrote Numbers near the close of the forty years. As he looked back, three things stood out concerning the cloud.

**First of all**, the cloud was a visible evidence of God's presence with them. God had promised, "My Presence will go with you" (Ex. 33:14). This truth is clearly emphasized in our passage in Numbers. In only six verses it tells us seven times that when Israel followed the cloud they moved at the commandment of the Lord, or to keep His charge. The cloud is identified with the Angel of God (a pre-incarnation appearance of Christ). "The Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them" (Ex. 14:19).

When the cloud is first mentioned in connection with the departure of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 14:19, 20) "*The LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud*" (Ex. 14:24). We are also told that the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud (Ex. 16:10). God specifically told Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you" (Ex. 19:9 - compare Ex. 24:16; 33:9). Even the inhabitants of Palestine had heard about this overwhelming manifestation. "They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night" (Num. 14:14). We are informed that on at least one occasion the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with Moses (Ex. 34:5). Clearly the cloud was the constant visible indication that God was with them. No wonder it is called "the cloud of the LORD" (Ex. 40:38).

It is not only during the Exodus that we read about the cloud of the Lord. In the New Testament God spoke to Peter, James and John out of the cloud and declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matt. 17:5). Also, it is very possible that when a cloud received Christ at His ascension it was the glad welcome home by the Father - who had so recently found it necessary, for our sake, to forsake His Son when He was dying on the cross (Acts 1:9). The two witnesses during the Tribulation will ascend to heaven in a cloud (Rev. 11:12). Is this not, again, "the cloud of the Lord"?

At the Rapture we will not be met by the "cloud of the Lord" but by Christ Himself. Paul says, "We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them *in ... clouds*<sup>17</sup> to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). We will not just be caught up "in *the* [atmospheric] clouds," but "in clouds." It is very possible he is referring to clouds of believers who will be caught up (see Heb. 12:1 for just such a use of the word "cloud").

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<sup>17</sup> The definite article "the" is not in the Greek text.

During the millennial reign of Christ the cloud will appear again. “The LORD will create over the area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and a flaming fire shining at night; for it will be a protection over all that is glorious” (Isa. 4:5 – Berkeley Version). They will no longer need the cloud to guide them, for they will never again be moved from their homes, but it will be a constant reminder to them that the Lord is with them, as He was when they were traversing the wilderness. It will also be like a tent (“tabernacle”) “for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge, and for a shelter from storm and rain” (Isa. 4:6).

The cloud was first introduced to us in connection with the departure from Egypt, and now it is brought to our attention again just as they are about to depart for the Promised Land. They will be travelling through that “great and terrible wilderness” (Deut. 1:19) on the way to Kadesh-barnea. They have never been this way before so they will need guidance every step of the way. At the close of the forty years Moses bore testimony to God’s faithfulness to them. “In the wilderness ... you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, *in all the way that you went until you came to this place*. ... [He] went in the way before you to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, in the fire by night and in the cloud by day” (Deut. 1:31, 33).

**Secondarily**, What Moses was impressed with as he looked back over the forty years in the wilderness was that the cloud never departed from them. “In Your manifold mercies You did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of the cloud did not depart from them by day, to lead them on the road; nor the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way they should go” (Neh. 9:19). That is amazing when one considers the almost constant rebelliousness of the people and the many times God had to chasten them for it. Paul wrote something that seems to describe this miracle of grace. “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

**The third thing** Moses noticed in these verses is perhaps the most amazing of all. Looking back over forty years in the wilderness Moses admitted that Israel did not fail to follow the cloud. “At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; *they kept the charge of the LORD*, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses” (Num. 9:23). They complained, rebelled, blasphemed, and provoked both God and Moses time after time. They suffered major chastenings at God’s hand for their perverseness, disobedience and unbelief. But they did not fail to follow the cloud! It is sad that they were not able also to follow God’s guidance as to their conduct. If they had believed God and acted in obedience to Him the cloud would have led them into the land of milk and honey instead of into thirty-eight years of drab desert existence.

If we go our own way in our walk we may find ourselves just where God wants us to be, *under the circumstances*, on the *shelf!* “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27 - KJV). When I was in Bible School I heard a Bible teacher tell of an ancient inscription in Koine Greek that used the word translated “castaway” here. It described a cracked earthenware vessel that was not thrown away but put on a shelf for

some limited use in the future. To put Paul's concern in modern slang, he didn't want to be a 'crackpot' and be 'put on the shelf.' Nor should we!

There is one other detail we need to consider about the cloud. It not only went before them as they traveled, but also remained over the tabernacle when they were to rest. As we serve the Lord today we need His guidance both for our activities and our rest times. Realizing that we are not under the law, and not subject to the Sabbath laws, we may fail to get the rest we need. In the midst of their strenuous service "[Christ] said to [His apostles], 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while,' for there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat" (Mark 6:31). We would have fewer 'burnt out' pastors and missionaries if they occasionally took time out from overly busy schedules to rest. We should no more feel guilty for resting when the cloud stops over us than we should feel imposed upon and overworked when the cloud moves. The important thing is to recognize His leading and follow it.

### **The Silver Trumpets** (Numbers 10:1 – 10)

. God has His own trumpet and He used it when they received the law (Ex. 19:13, 16, 19). He will again use His trumpet at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16),<sup>18</sup> and when Christ comes in glory (Matt. 24:321). Angels utilize trumpets also. They will one day sound them to announce judgments to be poured out on the earth during the Tribulation (Rev. 8:2, 6 & following). In all cases the trumpet is used to gain attention to some very important message or herald an awe inspiring event.

We have a message worthy of being announced with a trumpet blast. Paul commended the Thessalonian believers for their missionary zeal. "From you the word of the Lord has been [*trumpeted*] forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place" (1 Thess. 1:8). Although the Greek word for trumpet is not used in this verse, the word translated "sounded forth" has that connotation.<sup>19</sup> The picture is of a 'town crier,' or his ancient equivalent, sounding a trumpet to gain attention and then boldly shouting his message to all within sound of his voice. We have a wonderful message to proclaim, but I fear we are more inclined to whisper it than to trumpet it forth.

Israel needed guidance at they traveled. The cloud let them know when and where to go and how long to stay there. However they needed guidance also as to many other details of their lives that the cloud could not supply. The silver trumpets made by Moses helped meet this need. They were a sort of public address system for him to communicate his orders to all of the people easily and quickly.

These silver trumpets were to be used in a multitude of ways. They were blown to assemble the leaders, or to call the entire assembly together- whether to begin their

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<sup>18</sup> This trumpet will not be the last of a series of trumpets not yet revealed when Paul wrote his epistles, but the last for US – a final gathering of the saints of this age of grace.

<sup>19</sup> "The Greek word translated 'sounded forth' means 'to sound forth as a trumpet or thunder'" – An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by W. E. Vine, Thomas Nelson publishers, page 1068.

march or prepare for war. They maintained order when they broke camp by notifying each tribe when to set out on the march. Trumpets expressed their gladness in times of rejoicing, and announced the beginning of each month. They also accompanied the burnt offerings and peace offerings. The trumpets were not only greatly useful, they were also an almost constant reminder that the Lord was their God (Num. 10:10). Incidentally, in the conquest of Jericho under Joshua the clarion voice of the two silver trumpets was not heard. On that occasion the mournful wail of seven ram's horns sounded forth the warning of defeat and destruction to the trembling inhabitants of the doomed city.

We do not have either cloud or trumpets today. We do need guidance however. God has a plan for us as much as He did for His people in the Old Testament, and it is a *good* plan. Concerning Judah He said, “I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope’” (Jer. 29:11). As we yield our bodies to Christ as living sacrifices and allow Him to transform us, we are able to prove just how good and acceptable and perfect that plan is (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:1, 2).

We are guided chiefly by the word of God and the Holy Spirit, although He does use circumstances to guide us at times in areas where the word of God has not spoken. The Israelites had the cloud of God over their heads, we have the God of the cloud in our hearts. They had to look up to see the cloud. We are to look up, also, beyond the cloud and “seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” We are to set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1,2). Just as the cloud did not forsake them, even in their rebellion, so nothing can separate us from our Lord or His love, even when we are experiencing His chastening. The guidance possible through the cloud and the trumpets was very limited in its scope. As problems arose God had to give additional verbal instructions to them through Moses. We do not need such further revelation today for we have His completed word to which we can turn in any circumstance we face in life.

As with Israel, however, the guidance is of little value if we do not follow it. He is under no obligation to give us further knowledge of His particular will for our lives until we have obeyed what we already know from His word. A good beginning in knowing God's will is found in First Thessalonians. “For *this is the will of God*, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thess. 4:3). “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for *this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:14 – 22). When this clearly revealed will of God has been addressed we can expect Him to guide us further as we have need of it!

The Israelites evidently found it easier to follow the cloud than to abide by the detailed instructions given through Moses. They ended up in the place God had selected for them, but they acted in unbelief and disobedience when they arrived there. It seems to me that we are sometimes more interested in *where* God wants us to serve Him than

we are in *how* we are to serve Him. The call of God to us is not only to *go* where He wants us to *go*, but also to *be* what He wants us to *be*. If we are what He wants us to be we are in a position to go where He wants us to go (Num. 9:17a) or to stay where He wants us to stay (Num. 9:19).

The preparations for the march to the land of milk and honey have been thorough and time consuming, but now, finally, they are ready to set forth on what is intended to be the last leg of their journey home!