

THE BOOK OF NUMBERS

"Levites: Assigned and Counted"

Numbers 4:1-49

CONTEXT FOR THE TEXT

1. The population in Israel has been counted and found to be over $3\frac{1}{2}$ million (chap. 1).
2. The mustering of the fighting men and their arrangement at the outside of the camp is given (chap. 2)--602,550 men for war who never fought!
3. The Levites were set apart in place of the first born. The answered question: "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Ex. 32:26). They were of great value (3:40-51). Read all of chap. 3.

TEXT ANALYZED

1. Service of Kohathites vv. 1-15.
2. Office of Eleazar vv. 16-20.
3. Service of Gershonites vv. 21-28.
4. Service of Merarites vv. 39-33.
5. Numbering of Kohathites vv. 34-37.
6. Numbering of Gershonites vv. 38-41.
7. Numbering of Merarites vv. 42-45.
8. Summary of numbering vv. 46-49.

TEXT DETAILED

1. Chapter distinctly states this is the Word of the LORD (Jehovah, the intimate Name of God, cf. Ex 3:14). Note vv. 1, 17 to both Aaron and Moses, but to Moses only (v. 21).
2. Each group, Kohathites, Gershonites, and Merarites were counted from 30-50 years old (vv. 3, 23, 30). Numbers 3 numbers from one month. Hence chap. 3 is potential while chap. 4 is actual. Chap. 8:24 states 25 years to 50. Probably an apprenticeship of five years is indicated.
3. The Levitical sons are concerned with the tabernacle proper (vv. 3, 15, 23, 24, 30, 31). Three words stand out: work, service, burden. The former connotes labor; the latter relates to ministry. Let it not be considered more or less! It was for Him, therefore, easy (cf. Mt. 11:28:-30). Wow!
4. Consider what each group was expected to do when the camp moved in the wilderness for 40 years!
 - a. Kohathites
 - 1) Ark (v. 5)
 - 2) Table of showbread (v. 7)
 - 3) Candlestick (v. 9)
 - 4) Golden Altar (v. 11)
 - 5) Brazen Altar (v. 13)

N.B. No laver. Why? Not a manifestation of God, but cleansing for man.

b. Gershonites

- 1) Curtains v. 25, 26
- 2) Cords v. 26
- 3) Everything related to above v. 26

c. Merarites

- 1) Boards (v. 31)
- 2) Bars (v. 31)
- 3) Pillars (v. 31)
- 4) Sockets (v. 31)
- 5) Pins (v. 32)
- 6) Cords (v. 32)
- 7) Instruments (v. 32)

NOTE: The above are:

- a. Holy things v. 4
- b. All to be covered before touched by Levites (cf. v. 5, etc.)
- c. Could kill (v. 15, 19, 30). It was serious business.

5. Assignments given to Levites given by Aaron/Moses, but only as mediators of God's Word (v. 19, 37, 41, 45, 49). Levites were not allowed to "do as they please" or "do for their own benefit." They were to submit to the priests (vv. 28, 33); Ithamar particularly.

6. All instructions were the commandment of the Lord and the hand of Moses. Nothing was left to guess.

7. Every item of the tabernacle got covering before moving (cf. vv. 5, 7, 9, etc.). The various coverings are significant:

- a. Badger's skin (v. 6)
- b. Blue cloth (v. 6). For ark only on outside.
- c. Brazen altar alone had purple cloth (v. 13).
- d. Table of showbread alone had scarlet cloth (v. 8).

NOW CONSIDER

Who would ever think of calling fleshhooks, shovels, basins (v. 14), pins, cords, sockets, pillars (v. 32), dishes, spoons, bowls (v. 7) something spiritual, something held? Only God! Who would work with pins for 25 years and be happy. Only Levites! Why? They were told by God to do this work, service, burden. Now-- what has God saved you to do in His body, the Church? Do it!