

## NUMBERS

### Numbers Chapter 6 - Lesson 28

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

In our last lesson, Pastor reviewed Numbers 3, 4, and 5. Chapters 3 and 4 were mostly devoted to a description of the numbers and duties of the Levites and Chapter 5 spoke of purity required and defilement of the camp resulting in the banishment of those who defile the camp of God's people and detract from its sacred character. Specifically, Numbers 5:5-8 provides: **"(5) And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, (6) "Speak to the people of Israel, When a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person realizes his guilt, (7) he shall confess his sin that he has committed. And he shall make full restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong. (8) But if the man has no next of kin to whom restitution may be made for the wrong, the restitution for wrong shall go to the Lord for the priest, in addition to the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for him."** We see **God's specific instructions to Moses regarding the matters of purity, breaking faith and repentance and confession of sins.**

We have learned that the book of Numbers considers the divine record of the experience of God's people in the wilderness. Redeemed/delivered from Egypt, **possessing the law of God**, led by God's chosen man, Moses, daily looking upon the tabernacle, and supernaturally guided by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night, Israel should have walked triumphantly, obediently and willingly in the perfect will of God. Instead, they repeatedly failed God's instruction and sinned as the book of Numbers records. The purpose of the book of Numbers seems to be an **instruction manual** to post-Sinai Israel dealing with (1) how the nation was to order itself in its journey, (2) how the priests and the Levites were to function during the journey which lay ahead, and (3) how the people were to prepare themselves for the conquest of Canaan in their lives when they settle there. Numbers demonstrates the successes and failure of God's people when they conformed and obeyed and when they did not conform and obey God's instructions.

As individuals and as a church, today, we can take a lesson by understanding that each person of faith has a purpose for his life in God's will, and in the church, each member of the body of Christ has a particular place, a particular ministry and a particular function **for the edifying of the body of Christ**. Our Lord's teaching concerning this concept may be clearly found in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:1-16. Specifically, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 provides: **"(12) For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (13) For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."** And, in Ephesians 4:15-16, we find this passage: **"(15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."** (Making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.) We also learn, as individuals, what our individual responsibility is to the Lord when we profess Christianity and declare that He is Lord of our lives and the savior of our souls. Just as it was extremely important for God's people preparing to occupy the land God gave them to listen to and obey God, so it is important in our lifetime that we, as children of God, members of the Body of Christ and, as the law would describe us, agents, servants, and employees of God Almighty, obey, specifically, God's instructions for us.

Tonight, we are looking at Numbers Chapter 6 which has to do with the Nazirite vow and what was intended and required when one took a Nazirite vow. Here again, the importance of this passage is magnified by Chapter 6:1 which provides: **"(1) And the Lord spoke to Moses saying,"** These

passages are not just a “suggestion” or an “outline,” but they are an instruction **unto the children of Israel.**

The word NAZIRITE in Hebrew means, “separation” - “consecration” - “devotion.” According to Webster’s Dictionary, the word VOW means, (1) a solemn promise or pledge; **as one made to God,** dedicating oneself to an act, service, or way of live, i.e., a nun; (2) a promise of love and fidelity, i.e., marriage vows; (3) a solemn affirmation or assertion; (4) a solemn resolution; (5) to declare emphatically, earnestly, or solemnly.

To show outward signs of the Nazirite vow illustrating devotion to God, one who would separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazirite must (1) abstain from wine and strong drink, (2) must not cut his hair, and (3) must not come into contact with a dead body. The purpose of these outward signs was to indicate separation, consecration, and devotion to God, for service to God. Service to God as a Nazirite was a great honor and bore great responsibility.

There were apparently three different ways of becoming a Nazirite referenced in the scripture. First, Numbers 6:2 says in part, “...**When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazirite, to separate themselves unto the Lord;**” Either a man or a woman could make a decision (vow a vow) for a specific period of time or for a lifetime, to dedicate themselves to the service of the Lord.

Second, a parent could dedicate a child to the service of the Lord as we find Hannah doing in 1 Samuel 1:11 where we find this passage: “(11) And she vowed a vow and said, “O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then **I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.**” Thereafter, in Verse 20, we find: “(20) And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Samuel, for she said, “I have asked for him from the Lord. -In Verse 22, it states: “(22) ...As soon as the child is weaned, **I will bring him, so that he may appear in the presence of the Lord and dwell there forever.**” Then, in Verse 28, this passage, “(28) **Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord.**” Most theologians agree that Samuel was a Nazirite, having been dedicated to the service of the Lord by his mother.

Third, another way one could become a Nazirite, is to be **designated for a specific service by the Lord.** An example is found in Judges 13:2-5 where this passage is found: “(2) There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. (3) And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. (4) Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, (5) for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. **No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.**” Then, in Judges 13:24, this passage: “(24) And the woman bore a son and called his name Samson. And the young man grew, and **the Lord blessed him.**” Samson was declared by God to be a Nazirite, **designated by the Lord for a specific service.** Many believe that the same is true of John the Baptist, though the specific outward signs illustrating devotion to God required by a Nazirite were not all found in the passages of scripture concerning Samuel and John the Baptist. Luke Chapter 1 records the birth of John the Baptist. Luke 1:15-17 provides: “(15) For he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and **he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.** (16) And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, (17) and he will go before him (Jesus) in the

spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, **to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.**"

In the case of Samuel, his mother promised God that, "No razor shall come upon his head" in Verse 11. And we find in Chapter 2:26 that "**Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men.**" Since God Himself prescribed the outward signs of the Nazirite vow, I believe it can be safely presumed that if Samuel found favor with the Lord, he doubtless complied with the outward signs of the Nazirite illustrating devotion to God.

Most of us know the story of Samson who was designated by God as a "**Nazirite unto God from the womb.** And he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." The Bible says further in Judges 13:24 that, "**the Lord blessed him.**" But Samson had moral failures/weaknesses and look at Judges 16:30 which says: "(30) And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. **So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.**

Paul took the Nazirite vow for a specific period of time. (Acts 18:18)

**To separate oneself for service to God or to be separated is a very serious matter.** Taking a Nazirite vow is something that was generally done by someone who wanted to serve God. The idea of being separated for service to God has a two-fold meaning. First, it means being separated from what is contrary to the mind of God, and then being separated unto God himself. The underlying principal of separation is that it is impossible for God to fully bless and use someone who is compromising with or in complicity with sin or evil. Separation from evil requires a desire, an action to remove ourselves or separate ourselves from the world's system and from people who are described in the Bible as "vessels of dishonor." It's not that we do not come in contact with evil or sin in the world, or in the church, but we do not conform to or comply with the requirements of the world which are sinful or evil. The reward for one who has separated himself to service is an unhindered communication and association with Christ/God Almighty. **Jesus Christ was the model of total separation.** He was **holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sin.** Being called to preach, on the other hand (perhaps compared to being designated for the priesthood), is something entirely different. Christ was not a Nazirite. Christ raised people from the dead, there's no indication that he did not cut his hair, there is no indication that he did not have fellowship with people who were having wine with meals.

So we see, that there were specific requirements for one who would "vow a vow" and separate themselves as a Nazirite. Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, Paul, all of these men could be said to have evidenced outward signs of a Nazirite vow.

Because the Nazirite vow was a human vow in most cases, except in the case where God designated someone as a Nazirite, then it was possible for the person who took a Nazirite vow to violate the vow. Because the taking of the vow was so sacred, any violation was looked upon as extremely serious and there were very specific requirements of what one must do if he defiled his consecration or failed in his Nazirite vow, or the end of the time had come when his Nazirite vow was completed. Those passages are found in Numbers 6:9-21.

If one inadvertently came near a dead body, he had to undertake a long ceremony of cleansing in which his head would be shaved on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, and on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, he had to offer two doves or two

pigeons, one as a **sin offering** and the other as a **burnt offering**. Then he could resume his period of consecration.

When one's time of consecration was over, the Nazirite had to take to the tabernacle a one-year old male lamb for a (1) **burnt offering**, a one-year old ewe lamb for a (2) **sin offering**, and a ram for a (3) **fellowship offering**. These were accompanied by (4) **grain offerings** and (5) **drink offerings** presented by the Priest, and a basket of unleavened bread made of fine flour and oil and wafers spread with oil which constituted the formal announcement of the Nazirites period of dedication. (1) **The burnt offering was to symbolize complete surrender to the Lord.** (2) **The sin offering was to atone for any sins unwillingly committed during the period of consecration.** (3) **The fellowship offering was to speak of the fact that the Nazirite and the Lord were in perfect harmony.**

After this was done, the Nazirite was to cut his hair and cast it on the altar on which the fellowship offering had been made. **The offering of the Nazirite's hair represents the commitment of the entire Nazirite experience to the Lord.** It symbolized to the devotee the blessings of God from whom all blessings come.

Finally, the priest was to take the ram of the fellowship offering and put it and bread in the hands of the Nazirite and offer the meat and the bread to the Lord. The (6) **wave offering** means the material was presented as a sacrifice to the Lord and to His servant, the priest. So the priest and the offeror participated in a common meal. Thereafter, the Nazirite could once more drink wine and presumably do all the other things forbidden to him while the vow was in effect.

Perhaps, to us, today, all of this symbolism seems convoluted and complicated and unnecessary. However, I would like to suggest that to the contrary, the Christian life to which one commits himself, is just as sincere, just as solemn, and just as serious as one who took a Nazirite vow. In many ways, every Christian is a "spiritual Nazirite" separated by a vow, a covenant to the Lord, our savior. The problem today is that salvation by grace through faith is often considered in a cavalier way and not taken seriously by the one who makes a profession of faith. That is one of the reasons I believe that Billy Graham said that 50% of the people who are members of churches today, are **professors** of faith, but not **possessors** of faith. They have not come to a sincere repentance/metanoia/a turning around in their lives where they go from one direction to another entirely different direction to serve the Lord God Almighty.

In the final verses of Chapter 6:22-27, we find a priestly blessing or what some called the Aaronic Benediction as follows: "(22) And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, (23) "Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, in this way (or on this wise) **you shall bless the children of Israel**, saying unto them, (24) The Lord bless thee and keep thee; (25) the Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; (26) the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. (27) "And they shall they put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

This blessing/pronouncement/prayer clearly communicates God's desire to **invest His people with His name**. The name of the Lord is tantamount and this blessing is a petition that God might live among His people and meet all our needs. He alone can  **bless us, keep us, look upon us with favor, be gracious to us and give us peace**. Our service to God, our church and our Pastor is very serious, and should be considered so by us.