

Adult Bible Class  
The Book of Numbers  
Lesson #4, Chapter 6

**Numbers Chapter 6 - The Nazirite Vow**

Now we will study the vow of the Nazirite (spelled Nazarite in the KJV) which was a vow of separation unto God that a person, man or woman, could make. The Hebrew word *nazir* means “to be separated or consecrated.” In the Old Testament a person could take this voluntary vow for a period of time. A few people were Nazirites their entire lives (like Samson and John the Baptist). A Nazirite was known by special behaviors.

In the Old Testament, God said of Nazirites:

**Amos 2:10 (NLT)** It was I who rescued you from Egypt and led you through the desert for forty years, so you could possess the land of the Amorites.

<sup>11</sup> I chose some of your sons to be prophets and others to be Nazirites.

There are five features regarding the Nazirite vow.

- 1) It is voluntary.
- 2) It can be done by men or women
- 3) It lasts a specific period of time
- 4) It has specific requirements and restrictions
- 5) At the end of the vow a sacrifice is offered.

As we study this special vow, realize that the word “Nazirite” has nothing to do with Nazareth, the place where Jesus lived. A “Nazirite” is not a “Nazarene.” A Nazarene is someone from Nazareth, but a Nazirite is someone who takes the vow of a Nazirite.

**Numbers 6:1 (NLT)** Then the Lord said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “Give the following instructions to the people of Israel.

“If any of the people, either men or women, take the special vow of a Nazirite, setting themselves apart to the Lord in a special way,

First of all, we must point out that this vow is voluntary. The individual takes the initiative to separate and consecrate himself to God. While a person who was born of the lineage of Aaron was born to the priesthood and had to serve as a priest because of the status of his birth, anyone - whether of the priesthood or of the common people - could voluntarily take the vow of the Nazirite.

There are a few examples of parents presenting their child to God or God proclaiming that a child would be a Nazirite for his entire life:

**Judges 13:3 (NLT)** The angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said, "Even though you have been unable to have children, you will soon become pregnant and give birth to a son. <sup>4</sup> So be careful; you must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink nor eat any forbidden food. <sup>5</sup> You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and his hair must never be cut. For he will be dedicated to God as a Nazirite from birth. He will begin to rescue Israel from the Philistines."

**Luke 1:11 (NLT)** While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him...  
<sup>12</sup> Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John. <sup>14</sup> You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth.

Second, this vow could be taken by men or women - something fairly unusual in Old Testament days when only a man could be a priest or even approach the entrance to the Tabernacle. But this shows just how extraordinary and exceptional this vow was. It was outside the normal scope of the law. The law of God that was given through Moses could be stuffy and ritualistic. But the Nazirite vow was fresh and full of desire for God and was open to all human beings - man or woman, those of the priesthood or those of the common people.

It speaks of the New Testament days ahead:

**Acts 2:14** Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd...  
<sup>15</sup> These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming...<sup>16</sup> No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> 'In the last days,' God says,  
'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.  
Your young men will see visions,  
and your old men will dream dreams.  
<sup>18</sup> In those days I will pour out my Spirit  
even on my servants—men and women alike—  
and they will prophesy.

Let's continue in Numbers:

**Numbers 6:3** they must give up wine and other alcoholic drinks. They must not use vinegar made from wine or from other alcoholic drinks, they must not drink fresh grape juice, and they must not eat grapes or raisins. <sup>4</sup> As long as they are bound by their Nazirite vow, they are not allowed to eat or drink anything that comes from a grapevine—not even the grape seeds or skins.

As we read in Acts, there is a spiritual intoxication that comes from the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is the desire of the Christian - to be filled with, under the influence of - the Spirit of God.

There are worldly influences that try to fill us and influence us. These are represented by alcoholic drinks, and the Nazirite was forbidden during the season of his vow to drink wine, grape juice, eat raisins, or consume any portion at all of the grape. This is intense! Our natural mind tries to reason, "Why forbid something as harmless as eating grapes or raisins?"

**1 Thessalonians 5:22 (NKJV)** Abstain from every form of evil.

Someone who has made a vow to please God will not walk close to the line of what is unacceptable, but he will stay far from that line, giving plenty of room so that there is no chance of becoming entangled with forbidden and sinful things. Intoxicating drink comes from grapes, so grapes are avoided since they are only one step away from wine. The Nazirite understood this. To others, this concept is foolishness.

**Numbers 6:5** “They must never cut their hair throughout the time of their vow, for they are holy and set apart to the Lord. Until the time of their vow has been fulfilled, they must let their hair grow long.

Long hair speaks of dependence. During the Nazirite’s vow, the person was dependent on the Lord, separated unto Him, and his hair was a visible symbol of this dependence and separation.

Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 on authority and the meaning of hair length for men and women. Paul’s teaching on authority shows us that hair is a symbol of accepting one’s place in the natural and spiritual order of things as ordained by God. A woman should show by her long hair (her covered head) that she has submitted to God’s order. A man should show by his short hair (uncovered head) that he has submitted to God’s order.

Though spiritually “*in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye all are one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28), yet we are still in the flesh, and we live a life that is the intertwining of the natural with the spiritual. In the natural realm there *is* male and female, and by submitting to God’s authority and also by submitting to God’s symbols, we balance the natural with the spiritual. God’s symbols are a testimony to spiritual truths. Not only that, but there is real spiritual power in doing things God’s way.

The Nazirite was commanded by God to let his hair grow long. He was not to cut it during the time of his vow. Long, uncut hair spoke of the Nazirite’s dependency on God and separation to Him, just as a woman is dependent on her husband (her head). In Judges, we learn in the story of Samson that his power and strength came from his obedience to the symbol of his vow. The outward expression of the symbol *literally* gave him great spiritual strength.

**Judges 16:16 (NKJV)** And it came to pass, when she [Delilah] pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, <sup>17</sup> that he told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any *other* man.”

We can learn from this that God’s symbols not only have meaning in that they teach a spiritual lesson, but spiritual strength is gained from obeying them. A man or a woman who follows Paul’s admonitions from 1 Corinthians 11 will be spiritually stronger because of it. God’s symbols are powerful. Samson said, “*If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.*” We can be like everyone, or we can separate ourselves, like the Nazirite did in the Old Testament, and be dedicated to God’s ways and teachings, respecting His symbols.

Let's continue in Numbers:

**Numbers 6:6** And they must not go near a dead body during the entire period of their vow to the Lord. <sup>7</sup> Even if the dead person is their own father, mother, brother, or sister, they must not defile themselves, for the hair on their head is the symbol of their separation to God. <sup>8</sup> This requirement applies as long as they are set apart to the Lord.

We live among many who are spiritually dead - those who have not been redeemed or born again. Though they are living in the flesh, they have not been resurrected by the power of Jesus Christ and do not understand or love spiritual things, nor do they have a desire to please God, learn of His ways, and follow Him. In a spiritual sense, we are commanded to stay away from those things that would defile us because we carry in us the presence of God. Death is the result of sin - sin brings death. Therefore, the Christian is to stay away from the deadness of sin. For the Nazirite in the Old Testament, this picture of avoiding the deadness of sin was so important that he was not allowed to attend the funeral of his own close relative. Remember, Old Testament ceremonies and laws teach us New Testament spiritual truths.

In New Testament days the Nazirite vow pictures that we should stay away from things, activities, people that are spiritually dead or we ourselves might become pulled into the deadness of sin. Obviously, attending the funeral of a close relative would not be a problem today to a New Testament believer. However, there are some activities that would defile us and we cannot participate in them because they are full of the deadness of sin.

**Numbers 6:9** "If someone falls dead beside them, the hair they have dedicated will be defiled. They must wait for seven days and then shave their heads. Then they will be cleansed from their defilement. <sup>10</sup> On the eighth day they must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance of the Tabernacle. <sup>11</sup> The priest will offer one of the birds for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way, he will purify them from the guilt they incurred through contact with the dead body. Then they must reaffirm their commitment and let their hair begin to grow again. <sup>12</sup> The days of their vow that were completed before their defilement no longer count. They must rededicate themselves to the Lord as a Nazirite for the full term of their vow, and each must bring a one-year-old male lamb for a guilt offering.

Death is the result of sin. When death defiles the Nazirite, all the former days of his vow no longer count as days of separation and consecration. This shows us that willful sin will bring someone back to square one - they must begin again with the Lord.

For the New Testament believer there is forgiveness from sin and an "advocate with the Father" so that *if* we sin we can go to Jesus in prayer for forgiveness and cleansing. However, the writer of Hebrews tells us that willful sin will cause us to "go back to square one." He speaks to the church to persevere in their life of holiness, separation, and suffering for the gospel's sake:

**Hebrews 10:26 (NLT)** Dear friends, if we deliberately continue sinning after we have received knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice that will cover these sins. <sup>27</sup> There is only the terrible expectation of God's judgment and the raging fire that will consume his enemies. <sup>28</sup> For anyone who refused to obey the law of Moses was put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three

witnesses. <sup>29</sup> Just think how much worse the punishment will be for those who have trampled on the Son of God, and have treated the blood of the covenant, which made us holy, as if it were common and unholy, and have insulted and disdained the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us...

<sup>32</sup> Think back on those early days when you first learned about Christ. Remember how you remained faithful even though it meant terrible suffering. <sup>33</sup> Sometimes you were exposed to public ridicule and were beaten, and sometimes you helped others who were suffering the same things. <sup>34</sup> You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.

<sup>35</sup> So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you!

<sup>36</sup> Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised.

<sup>37</sup> "For in just a little while,  
the Coming One will come and not delay.

<sup>38</sup> And my righteous ones will live by faith.  
But I will take no pleasure in anyone who turns away."

<sup>39</sup> But we are not like those who turn away from God to their own destruction. We are the faithful ones, whose souls will be saved.

## Back to Numbers - and the completion of the vow of the Nazirite...

**Numbers 6:13** "This is the ritual law for Nazirites. At the conclusion of their time of separation as Nazirites, they must each go to the entrance of the Tabernacle <sup>14</sup> and offer their sacrifices to the Lord: a one-year-old male lamb without defect for a burnt offering, a one-year-old female lamb without defect for a sin offering, a ram without defect for a peace offering, <sup>15</sup> a basket of bread made without yeast—cakes of choice flour mixed with olive oil and wafers spread with olive oil—along with their prescribed grain offerings and liquid offerings. <sup>16</sup> The priest will present these offerings before the Lord: first the sin offering and the burnt offering; <sup>17</sup> then the ram for a peace offering, along with the basket of bread made without yeast. The priest must also present the prescribed grain offering and liquid offering to the Lord.

<sup>18</sup> "Then the Nazirites will shave their heads at the entrance of the Tabernacle. They will take the hair that had been dedicated and place it on the fire beneath the peace-offering sacrifice.

The dedicated hair is placed on the fire beneath the peace offering. His glory (the hair of his head that he wore to symbolize his dedication and separation to God) was removed and placed on the fire and burned.

The Scripture continues the ceremony. Parts of the peace offering are given to the priest as is usual for a peace offering.

**Numbers 6:21** "This is the ritual law of the Nazirites, who vow to bring these offerings to the Lord. They may also bring additional offerings if they can afford it. And they must be careful to do whatever they vowed when they set themselves apart as Nazirites."

The vow of the Nazirite is an Old Testament concept. The Christian also separates himself to Jesus Christ - *"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"* (Romans 12:1, NKJV).

## The Priestly Blessing

Chapter 6 of the Book of Numbers ends with this blessing that was to be given to the Israelites from the priests (remember, at this point in time, Aaron and his two sons were the priests):

**Numbers 6:22 (NKJV)** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>23</sup> "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

<sup>24</sup> "The LORD bless you and keep you;

<sup>25</sup> The LORD make His face shine upon you,  
And be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup> The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,  
And give you peace."

<sup>27</sup> "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them [ NLT: Whenever Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel in my name, I myself will bless them]."

This blessing from the priest to the people speaks the following: that the Lord would bless and watch over his people, that the Lord would "smile" on his people and be kind to them, that the Lord would look favorably on His people and give them peace. What a tremendous blessing!

This blessing is given by the priests whom the Lord had chosen to do the blessing (*...for the Lord your God has chosen them to minister before him and to pronounce blessings in the Lord's name...Deut. 21:5, NLT*).

Contrary to what we might think, a biblical principle is that only a greater can bless a lesser.

**Hebrews 7:7 (NKJV)** Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

**Hebrews 7:7 (NLT)** And without question, the person who has the power to give a blessing is greater than the one who is blessed.

We know that the Old Testament priest is a picture or type of Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews has many chapters that tell us that Jesus is our High Priest who approached the heavenly Tabernacle for us. Jesus blesses us - but beyond that, Jesus has made us priests unto God:

**1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)** But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Because Jesus, through His salvation plan, has made us priests unto God, we therefore have the authority and the responsibility to bless. Blessing people is a wonderful privilege and responsibility. We can speak words of blessing, comfort, hope, and peace to people. The child of God who has been baptized in the name of Jesus and filled with the Holy Ghost has the authority to bless. God wants to use His people to bless in His name!

In Numbers when the priest spoke the above blessing, he was speaking on behalf of Jehovah God Himself. When the priest blessed the people it was as if

God was blessing the people. It had the same strength. In the New Testament, Jesus gives His followers His name with all of its power and authority:

**John 14:13** And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*.

**John 16:23 (NLT)** ...Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy.

Connecting the name of Jesus with blessing people is very important. As children of God we have spiritual authority to use the name of Jesus. Numbers 22:27 (NLT) says, "*Whenever Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel in my name, I myself will bless them.*" As priests, they had the privilege, honor, and duty to bless the people, and God said that it was the same as if He was blessing them.

We often think of blessings in terms of actions. Someone might do a kindness, and we would think of it as a real blessing. However, the blessing spoken of here in Numbers comes through words. In the Bible, this blessing is sometimes accompanied by the laying on of hands. Remember, the greater blesses the lesser, or the one doing the blessing stands nearer to God than the one being blessed:

**Genesis 14:18** Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. <sup>19</sup> And he blessed him [Abram] and said:

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,  
Possessor of heaven and earth;  
<sup>20</sup> And blessed be God Most High,  
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

**Genesis 47:7** Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.