

In the Wilderness

Numbers 8-9

- Israel is still receiving instructions on how to worship the Lord properly, and last week we saw how God puts a premium on His people generously giving to His work. We left off with Moses going into the Tabernacle where God is going to speak with him face to face in **7:89**, this aligns with **Ex 33:11**- where it says “**So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend**” Wow! Jesus says a similar thing in **Jn 15:15**- calling His disciples friends, and showing that when we want to glorify God and do His will we should expect to hear His voice.

V1-26

- **V1-4** The Lord tells Moses to speak to Aaron and say to him this is how he should arrange the lamps in the Tabernacle, we see two things in this picture > 1st Divine Revelation, 2nd Divinely chosen leadership, notice the Lord tells Moses exactly how He wants things done to glorify Him, and He tells who He wants to do it (the priests) and specifically Aaron.
- This is a very important point we see in these chapters, God has called all His people to be a holy priesthood **Ex 19:6**, in the NT **1Pet 2:5,9** but in the midst of this He has given to His people spiritual leaders > **Num 12:6-8**, **Eph 4:11-16**, and these leaders are to be respected and obeyed, **Heb 13:17**. Most people understand this and accept it until they disagree with those in leadership and then these scriptures become problematic to them instead of a blessing for them
- Leadership is meant to be a blessing to the body not a burden > **Num 6:23-26**, God ordained it to be so as we see at the very beginning, and He tells us exactly what leadership should look like not just here in the OT, but also He does the same thing in the NT with > Ephesians 4, 1Timothy 3, and Titus 2, so that we don't have to make thing up as we go along, but we can hear from God through His Word and by His Spirit.
- Back to the Tabernacle it was divided into two parts > **1. The Holy of Holies** – where God's glory rested above the mercy seat on the Ark, **2. The Holy Place** – which was separated from the Holy of Holies by a veil. There was three pieces of furniture in the holy place > **1. The table of twelve loaves**, **2. The golden altar of incense**, **3. The golden lamp stand with its seven lamps**.
- Once the Tabernacle was dedicated to the Lord in **Ex 40**, God's glory came upon it and God's fire began to consume the sacrifices made on the altar, but God didn't light the seven lamps on the golden lamp stand in the holy place, that was Aaron's job, for him and his descendants. But it was the job of the Levites to care for the lamp stand, trimming its wicks, adding oil, making sure the light was shining brightly, and in order to participate in this work one had to be dedicated to the Lord by a ritual cleansing, interestingly this is called the record of dedication **V5-7**.

- **V8-19** the Levites were the helpers to the Priests, and they couldn't offer sacrifices for atonement, like the Priests, their job was to keep up the practical service of the Tabernacle so that the Priests when ready to offer prayer, sacrifices, offerings, and fellowship with God, everything was already prepared from the animals, the utensils, the oil, and fires lit.
- So, although different duties from the Priests nonetheless just as important, and required a great deal of dedication, faithfulness and consecration to the Lord, for without it the Priests couldn't do what they were supposed to. Just to clarify if Aaron and his sons were the official clergy in the camp, serving at the altar and in the Tabernacle, then the Levites were the dedicated "Laity" who assisted the Priests in their ministry, which is why they belonged to the Lord to do with as He saw fit **V14**, and were given to the Priests as a special gift to serve Him **V19**.
- So the Levites are regarded as Israel's firstborn given to God, and expected to serve God by watching and guarding both the people and the Tabernacle. This was protection for everyone so no plague would come upon the camp because someone meddled or came near the holy things who weren't supposed to. **V20-22** we see the simple commands to cleanse, dedicate and work for the Lord, that after the ceremonies the Levites would go to work.
- **V23-26** their service began at thirty and would end at fifty, but their formal training would start at twenty five, so their would be a five year apprenticeship.

Chapter 9

V1-23

- **V1-5** here is the first Passover in the wilderness, they had celebrated one when they first left Egypt in **Ex 12** but that wasn't in the wilderness. The Passover was a reminder to them of not only how God delivered them out of Egypt, but also spared them from the judgment He poured out on Egypt. In the **NT** our Passover is of course Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and our reminder is we take communion to remember His broken body and shed blood.
- **V6-14** the Passover was so important that even if someone accidentally defiled themselves on the way to participating in Passover God gave them a provision of waiting a month and then take Passover. This shows how the Lord wanted every Israelite to partake of the Passover and not miss it for any legitimate reason. Now in the NT **1Cor 11** says that the only reasons someone shouldn't take communion is if they are unsaved or in unrepentant sin, but God says if you confess your sin then you are encouraged to come and take communion with the body.
- **V15-23** we see God's "**Shekinah Glory**" the presence of the Lord hovering over the Tabernacle, it first appeared in **Ex 13**, and according to **Neh 9:19** it was with Israel throughout its wilderness journeys. I want you to think about that for a moment, Israel sinned constantly, disobeyed the Lord regularly, so much so that God caused an 11 day journey turn into a forty year odyssey, and yet He never left them nor did He forsake them, He stayed with them until they reached the promise Land, that is the faithfulness of God people, and its not based on us being faithful.

- Although Israel had been organized and ordered by God, though they had been cleansed, set apart, blessed, and walking in their priesthood, they still needed to be guided by God each step of the way to make it to the Promise land. That meant God didn't do all those previous things to cause them to be able to march to the promise land without Him, He did it so they could take every step in dependence upon Him. So if you have an ability, a talent, a gift, it was never given to you to use apart from serving the will of God, but so you can be more dependent upon God.