

Chapter 3

Good evening and thank you again for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to Numbers 3 please?

Last week we saw how God was mobilizing the nation, getting ready to head out. They're getting ready to leave the base of Mount Sinai to enter the promised land of Canaan.

Tonight we're going to study chapters 3-4

The title of tonight's message is AN ORDERLY GOD.

Before we read lets ask for the Lords blessing.

PRAY

1 Now these are the records of Aaron and Moses when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. 2 And these are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab, the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he consecrated to minister as priests. We studied this back in Leviticus 10 if you need a review.

4 Nadab and Abihu had died before the LORD when they offered profane fire before the LORD in the Wilderness of Sinai; and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar ministered as priests in the presence of Aaron their father. Nadab and Abihu were the first pastors to every suffer burn out.

Remember all priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Only Aaron, his sons, and their descendants could serve as priests in Israel.

5 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 6 "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. 7 And they shall attend to his needs and the needs of the whole congregation before the tabernacle of meeting, to do

the work of the tabernacle. All of the tribe of Levi were to come alongside Aaron and his sons to help them in the ministry, not just for the priests, but also the whole congregation. But that's not all...

8 Also they shall attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, and to the needs of the children of Israel, to do the work of the tabernacle 9 And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are given entirely to him[fn] from among the children of Israel. 10 So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall attend to their priesthood; but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.” Only the Levites were supposed to do the job of the Levites. We talked about it last week. I believe one of the keys to life is find out what God wants you to do, and do that thing!

Notice the end of verse 10

In 2 Chronicles we read of King Uzziah. He was a king from the tribe of Judah, he wanted to be a priest. But when he went into the Holy Place God struck him with leprosy. In light of Leviticus God showed him great mercy. The outsider was to die.

11 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 12 “Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, 13 because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the LORD.” In Exodus we saw how the firstborn belonged to God. Yet God didn't want human sacrifice, so He took the tribe of Levi as Israel's firstborn.

14 Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, saying: 15 “Number the children of Levi by their fathers’ houses, by their families; you shall number every male from a month old and above.” Last week the census was 20 years old and above. Here its 1 month. Why one month? I have no idea. If you do, let me know after service!

16-20

16 So Moses numbered them according to the word of the LORD, as he was commanded. 17 These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 18 And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei. 19 And the sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, Izehar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 20 And the sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites by their fathers’ houses. They were to be categorized by the families, with the main grouping according to Levi's three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

21-26 deal with the family of Gershon

21 From Gershon came the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites; these were the families of the Gershonites. 22 Those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above—of those who were numbered there were seven thousand five hundred.

23 The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle westward. 24 And the leader of the father’s house of the Gershonites was Eliasaph the son of Lael. 25 The duties of the children of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting included the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, 26 the screen for the door of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and the

altar, and their cords, according to all the work relating to them. The Gershonites were to take care of the skins that covered the tabernacle and the tabernacle fabrics. Again we studied all these details and their symbolism as we went thru Exodus last year.

27-32 deal with the family of Kohath.

27 From Kohath came the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites. 28 According to the number of all the males, from a month old and above, there were eight thousand six hundred keeping charge of the sanctuary.

29 The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle. 30 And the leader of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel. 31 Their duty included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them.

32 And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was to be chief over the leaders of the Levites, with oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary. The Kohathites were to take care of the furniture of the tabernacle: The ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, and so forth, under the direction of Eleazar the priest, son of Aaron.

33-37 deal with the family of Merari.

33 From Merari came the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these were the families of Merari. 34 And those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above, were six thousand two hundred. 35 The leader of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. These were to camp on the north side of the

tabernacle. 36 And the appointed duty of the children of Merari included the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, its utensils, all the work relating to them, 37 and the pillars of the court all around, with their sockets, their pegs, and their cords. The family of Merari were in charge of transporting the tabernacle's frame. The pillars, the boards, and all the rest.

Gershon handled the tabernacle fabrics.

Kohath oversaw its furniture.

Merari was in charge of its frame.

38 Moreover those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tabernacle of meeting, were Moses, Aaron, and his sons, keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the children of Israel; but the outsider who came near was to be put to death. Remember the east side of the Tabernacle was right by the entrance. Moses and Aaron had the best access.

39 All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, by their families, all the males from a month old and above, were twenty-two thousand. Imagine, 22,000 men... and everyone with Levi genes!

40-45

40 Then the LORD said to Moses: "Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and above, and take the number of their names. 41 And you shall take the Levites for Me—I am the LORD—instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel." 42 So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the children of Israel, as the LORD commanded him. 43 And all the firstborn males,

according to the number of names from a month old and above, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three.

44 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 45 “Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. The Levites shall be Mine: I am the LORD. ” The firstborn - which was always thought to be the best and the favored - always belonged to God. So instead of giving the firstborn of Israel to God in sacrifice, the tribe of Levi was "given" to God as in place of each of the firstborn sons of Israel.

46 And for the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who are more than the number of the Levites, 47 you shall take five shekels for each one individually; you shall take them in the currency of the shekel of the sanctuary, the shekel of twenty gerahs. 48 And you shall give the money, with which the excess number of them is redeemed, to Aaron and his sons.”

49 So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those who were redeemed by the Levites. 50 From the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. 51 And Moses gave their redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses. What’s happening here?

Moses numbered all the firstborn males in the other tribes, from one month old and up. Verse 43 tells us there were 22,273 of them. Evidently these were born right after the Exodus.

So God substituted 22,000 of the Levites in their place according to verse 45. But there were 273 leftover, which means the Israelite males not replaced by Levites. So the Israelites had to

pay "five shekels" to the priests for each of these men. This freed them from God's claim on them for sanctuary service.

Chapter 4 deals with how to pack up the tabernacle.

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 2 "Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, 3 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting. The only ones allowed were those between age 30 and 50. Why this age? Well it's thought that this was the prime age of a man's life, blending both physical strength and wisdom.

The next section of verses, 4-14 explain how the tabernacle furniture was packed for transport. On the way to the Promised Land, the tabernacle furniture would have to travel and be carried great distances. But first, it must be packed properly to ensure its safe travel. Since the furniture itself was holy, it had to be covered and packed by Aaron and the priests before the sons of Kohath could get to it.

4-6

4 "This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, relating to the most holy things: 5 When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it.

6 Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles. This is why it's so important to read all of the bible.

In 2nd Sam 6, King David got flippant and too casual with God's holiness. He wanted to bring the Ark to Jerusalem on a cart. And

when the Ark started to slide, a man named Uzzah reached out to grab it, and instantly, God struck Uzzah dead.

He had touched what was holy, and David was to blame. David tried to serve God his way – a mistake many people make. God's work needs to be done God's way. And God is clear—the ark was to be transported by its poles.

7-15

7 “On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring; and the showbread^[fn] shall be on it. 8 They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. 9 And they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light, with its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they service it. 10 Then they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of badger skins, and put it on a carrying beam.

11 “Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. 12 Then they shall take all the utensils of service with which they minister in the sanctuary, put them in a blue cloth, cover them with a covering of badger skins, and put them on a carrying beam. 13 Also they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it. 14 They shall put on it all its implements with which they minister there—the firepans, the forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar—and they shall spread on it a covering of badger skins, and insert its poles. 15 And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.

“These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry. The Kohathites were the furniture movers. It’s interesting they sued a blue cloth-makes you wonder if this is where Uhaul got the idea from?

16-20

16 “The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle, of all that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings.”

17 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 18 “Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites; 19 but do this in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task. 20 But they shall not go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, lest they die.” The Kohathites were forbidden to touch any of the tabernacle furniture; it was made with poles that they could use to carry the furniture without touching the item itself.

Notice only the priests could lay eyes on the holy furniture. The Kohathites were supposed to use their backs, not their eyes.

But for you and I, in Christ, we’re allowed to not only serve God, but to behold His glory! And the blessing we often take for granted was a privilege the Levites only dreamt about. **Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** All because of Jesus.

The next section details the duties of the Gershonites.

21-28

21 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 22 “Also take a census of the sons of Gershon, by their fathers’ house, by their families. 23 From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, all who enter to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting. 24 This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and carrying: 25 They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting with its covering, the covering of badger skins that is on it, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, 26 the screen for the door of the gate of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and altar, and their cords, all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things: so shall they serve.

27 “Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service. And you shall appoint to them all their tasks as their duty. 28 This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting. And their duties shall be under the authority^[fn] of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. The Gershonites had oversight of the coverings of the tabernacle; the skins and artistically woven designs that made up the walls and the roof of the tent.

29-33 details the duties of the family of Merari.

29 “As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families and by their fathers’ house. 30 From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, everyone who enters the service to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. 31 And 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, 32 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. 33 This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority^[fn] of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.” The family of Merari had the job of packing and transporting the boards and pillars of the tabernacle. Like the others, this was important work, because of all the precious metals used and necessity to lay everything out as God prescribed in Exodus.

The rest of chapter 4 details the final count according to their families.

34-49

34 And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' house, 35 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting; 36 and those who were numbered by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. 37 These were the ones who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

38 And those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families and by their fathers' house, 39 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting— 40 those who were numbered by their families, by their fathers' house, were two thousand six hundred and thirty. 41 These are the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD.

42 Those of the families of the sons of Merari who were numbered, by their families, by their fathers' house, 43 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting— 44 those who were numbered by their families were three thousand two hundred. 45 These are the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

46 All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered, by their families and by their fathers' houses, 47 from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who came to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens in the tabernacle of meeting— 48 those who were numbered were eight thousand five hundred and eighty.

49 According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, each according to his service and according to his task; thus were they numbered by him, as the LORD commanded Moses

Now you may be thinking, why in the world am I learning about the total number of eligible Levites?

Why go through all of this detail-why is all of this relevant?

Isn't it more enticing to study say, Revelation, than it is Numbers?

Whole foods story....

Numbers clearly demonstrates that God values organization and it emphasizes their timing. The Israelites had the Law, and the Tabernacle, and they're ready to go to the promised land. Can you imagine their anticipation-c'mon let's go!

But God knew the nation had to be organized in order to be effective. This was a brand-new nation, freed from slavery, and they needed to number their ranks, develop procedures for operation, and clearly lay out responsibilities.

Throughout the Bible, God demonstrates the importance on effective utilization of time and resources.

When Jesus fed the 5,000, He first arranged the people in groups of 50 and 100. As He broke the bread Jesus gave it to the disciples to serve the people. He didn't do it Himself. Jesus knew how to organize and delegate.

Now there's a balance that has to be maintained though isn't there?

Some churches and people can get so structured and organized they leave no room for the HS to work. When that happens they're trusting in the flesh, not the Spirit. **Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?**

But you really can't read through the book of Numbers without concluding that serving God is intended to be "organized". **1 Corinthians 14:40, Let all things be done decently and in order.**"

Remember last week Numbers 1:3 calls Israel the army of the Lord - just as you and I are soldiers of Christ - and no army goes into battle without a plan, a strategy, an organization.

But there has to be a balance. Let us pray tonight for that!