

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

9-22-21

Numbers 8

Setting Up the Lamps - Verses 1-4

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you set up the lamps, see that all seven light up the area in front of the lampstand.'" ³ Aaron did so; he set up the lamps so that they faced forward on the lampstand, just as the LORD commanded Moses. ⁴ This is how the lampstand was made: It was made of hammered gold—from its base to its blossoms. The lampstand was made exactly like the pattern the LORD had shown Moses.

8:1-4 The lamps provided light for the priests as they carried out their duties. The light was also an expression of God's presence. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The golden lampstand is still one of the major symbols of the Jewish faith.

The Setting Apart of the Levites - Verses 5-7

⁵ The LORD said to Moses: ⁶ "Take the Levites from among all the Israelites and make them ceremonially clean. ⁷ To purify them, do this: Sprinkle the water of cleansing on them; then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes. And so they will purify themselves.

8:5 Take the Levites from among the children of Israel and cleanse them ceremonially: The priests had their dedication back in Leviticus 8 and 9. This was the dedication of the Levites. The priests seemed to have a more spiritually oriented service, but the Levites needed to be dedicated unto the LORD also. Even practical service needs a heart of dedication and consecration to the LORD.

8:7 Sprinkle water of purification on them: This ceremonial cleansing pictured a cleansing of sin. It was part of the new covenant as described in Ezekiel 36:25: Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean.

8:7 Let them shave all their body: This was also commanded in the ceremony for the purification of a leper (Leviticus 14:9). The idea was of a new start, of being made like a baby all over again - as in being born again.

The Dedication Of The Levites Through Sacrifice - Verses 8-15

⁸ Have them take a young bull with its grain offering of the finest flour mixed with olive oil; then you are to take a second young bull for a sin offering. ⁹ Bring the Levites to the front of the tent of meeting and assemble the whole Israelite community. ¹⁰ You are to bring the Levites before the LORD, and the Israelites are to lay their hands on them. ¹¹ Aaron is to present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the Israelites, so that they

may be ready to do the work of the LORD. ¹² "Then the Levites are to lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, using one for a sin offering to the LORD and the other for a burnt offering, to make atonement for the Levites. ¹³ Have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as a wave offering to the LORD. ¹⁴ In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. ¹⁵ "After you have purified the Levites and presented them as a wave offering, they are to come to do their work at the tent of meeting.

8:8 Then let them take a young bull with its grain offering: As a bull is sacrificed, the children of Israel lay their hands on the Levites, to bless them and pray for their dedication before the LORD. It would be clear to both the Levites and the nation that the Levites were servants of both the LORD and the nation.

8:11 A wave offering would present something to God (such as a portion of meat or bread), and essentially say, "This is Yours, God." The nation came before God, and essentially said, "These Levites belong to You, LORD."

8:15 After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting: Real ministry isn't all about dedication ceremonies; it is about doing the work. After the dedication, it was time to get busy!

The Levites Are Regarded As Israel's Firstborn Given To God - Verses 16-19

¹⁶ They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me. I have taken them as my own in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman. ¹⁷ Every firstborn male in Israel, whether human or animal, is mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself. ¹⁸ And I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel. ¹⁹ From among all the Israelites, I have given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the tent of meeting on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary."

8:16-19 I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel: This theme was previously stated in Numbers 3:40-51.

Doing What God Had Commanded For The Cleansing, Dedication, And Work Of The Levites - Verses 20-26

²⁰ Moses, Aaron and the whole Israelite community did with the Levites just as the LORD commanded Moses. ²¹ The Levites purified themselves and washed their clothes. Then Aaron presented them as a wave offering before the LORD and made atonement for them to purify them. ²² After that, the Levites came to do their work at the tent of meeting under the supervision of Aaron and his sons. They did with the Levites just as the LORD commanded Moses. ²³ The LORD said to Moses, ²⁴ "This applies to the Levites: Men twenty-five years old or more shall come to take part in the work at the tent of meeting, ²⁵ but at the age of fifty, they must retire from their regular service and work no

longer. ²⁶ They may assist their brothers in performing their duties at the tent of meeting, but they themselves must not do the work. This, then, is how you are to assign the responsibilities of the Levites."

8:25-26 Why were the Levites supposed to retire at age 50? The reasons were probably more practical than theological. (1) Moving the tabernacle and its furniture through the wilderness required strength. The younger men were more suited for the work of lifting the heavy articles. (2) The Levites over 50 did not stop working altogether. They were allowed to assist with various light duties in the tabernacle. This helped the younger men assume more responsibilities, and it allowed the older men to be in a position to advise and counsel them.