

## HWMR - CRYSTALLIZATION STUDY OF NUMBERS, Book 1, Week 3

### The Service of the Priests and the Levites for God's Move

Scripture Reading: Num. 3:1-39; 4:1-33

#### The holy service

- Num 3:1 - Now these are the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when Jehovah spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai.
- Num 3:2 - And these are the names of the **sons of Aaron**: Nadab the firstborn and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar;
- Num 3:3 - These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, who were consecrated to serve as priests.
- Num 3:4 - But Nadab and Abihu **died** before Jehovah when they **offered strange fire** before Jehovah in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar **served as priests** in the presence of Aaron their father.
- Num 3:5 - And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,
- Num 3:6 - Bring the **tribe of Levi** near and set them before Aaron the priest, that **they may minister** to him.
- Num 3:7 - And they shall keep his charge and the charge of the whole assembly before the Tent of Meeting **to do the service of the tabernacle**.
- Num 3:8 - And they shall keep all the furnishings of the **Tent of Meeting** and the charge of the children of Israel to do the service of the tabernacle.
- Num 3:9 - And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the children of Israel.
- Num 3:10 - And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall keep their priesthood; but the stranger who comes near shall be put to death.
- Num 3:11 - Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,
- Num 3:12 - As for Me, **I have now taken the Levites** from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. **So the Levites shall be Mine**.
- Num 3:13 - For **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 Jehovah.
- Num 3:14 - Then Jehovah spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying,
- Num 3:15 - Number the children of Levi by their fathers' households, by their families; every male from **a month old and upward** you **shall number**.
- Num 3:16 - And Moses numbered them according to the word of Jehovah, as he was commanded.
- Num 3:17 - And these were the **sons of Levi** by their names: Gershon and Kohath and Merari.
- Num 3:18 - And these are the names of the sons of Gershon according to their families: Libni and Shimei.
- Num 3:19 - And the sons of Kohath by their families: Amram and Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.
- Num 3:20 - And the sons of Merari according to their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' households.
- Num 3:21 - Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimeites; these are the families of the Gershonites.
- Num 3:22 - Those who were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those who were numbered of them were seven thousand five hundred.
- Num 3:23 - The **families of the Gershonites** shall encamp behind the tabernacle on the **west**.
- Num 3:24 - And the leader of the father's household of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael.
- Num 3:25 - And the **charge** of the sons of Gershon in the Tent of Meeting shall be the tabernacle and the tent, its covering and the screen for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting,
- Num 3:26 - And the hangings of the court, and the screen for the entrance of the court, which is around the tabernacle and around the altar, and its cords for all its service.
- Num 3:27 - And of Kohath was the family of the Amramites and the family of the Izharites and the family of the Hebronites and the family of the Uzzielites; these are the families of the Kohathites.
- Num 3:28 - According to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, there were eight thousand six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary.
- Num 3:29 - The **families of the sons of Kohath** shall encamp on the side of the tabernacle to the **south**.
- Num 3:30 - And the leader of the father's household of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.
- Num 3:31 - And their **charge** shall be the Ark and the table and the lampstand and the altars and the utensils of the sanctuary with which they minister and the screen and all its service.
- Num 3:32 - And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be leader of the **leaders of the Levites** and have the oversight of those who keep the charge of the sanctuary.
- Num 3:33 - Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites and the family of the Mushites; these are the **families of Merari**.
- Num 3:34 - And those who were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward: six thousand two hundred.

- Num 3:35 - And the leader of the father's household of the families of **Merari** was Zuriel the son of Abihail. They shall encamp on the side of the tabernacle to the **north**.
- Num 3:36 - And the appointed charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle and its bars and its pillars and its sockets and all its equipment and all the service pertaining to it,
- Num 3:37 - And the pillars around the court and their sockets and their pegs and their cords.
- Num 3:38 - And those who encamp before the tabernacle to the **east**, before the **Tent of Meeting** toward the sunrise, shall be **Moses** and **Aaron** and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the **stranger who comes near shall be put to death**.
- Num 3:39 - All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of Jehovah, by their families, all the males from a month old and upward were twenty-two thousand.
- Num 4:1 - Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,
- Num 4:2 - Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' households,
- Num 4:3 - From **thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old**, all who enter into the service to perform the skilled work in the Tent of Meeting.
- Num 4:4 - This is the service of the **sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting** concerning the most holy things.
- Num 4:5 - When the camp sets out, **Aaron and his sons** shall go in, and they shall take down the veil of the screen and **cover the Ark of the Testimony** with it,
- Num 4:6 - And they shall put on it a covering of porpoise skin, and shall spread over it a cloth all of blue strands, and shall put in its poles.
- Num 4:7 - And over the table of the bread of the Presence they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the plates and the cups and the bowls and the pitchers of the drink offering; and the continual bread shall be on it.
- Num 4:8 - And they shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover it with a covering of porpoise skin, and shall put in its poles.
- Num 4:9 - And they shall take a blue cloth, and cover the lampstand of the light and its lamps and its tongs and its firepans and all its oil vessels with which they minister to it.
- Num 4:10 - And they shall put it and all its utensils within a covering of porpoise skin, and shall put it on the carrying frame.
- Num 4:11 - And over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of porpoise skin, and shall put in its poles.
- Num 4:12 - And they shall take all the utensils of ministry with which they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of porpoise skin, and shall put them on the carrying frame.
- Num 4:13 - And they shall remove the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it.
- Num 4:14 - And they shall put upon it all its utensils with which they minister at it, the firepans, the forks, and the shovels, and the basins—all the utensils of the altar; and they shall spread over it a covering of porpoise skin, and put in its poles.
- Num 4:15 - And when Aaron and his sons have finished **covering the sanctuary** and **all the furnishings of the sanctuary**, whenever the camp sets out, then the **sons of Kohath shall come to carry them**; but **they shall not touch the holy things, or they will die**. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting.
- Num 4:16 - And the oversight of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be the oil for the light and the fragrant incense and the continual meal offering and the anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle and all that is in it, the sanctuary and its furnishings.
- Num 4:17 - Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,
- Num 4:18 - Do not let the tribe of the families of the Kohathites be cut off from among the Levites;
- Num 4:19 - But do this to them that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each one of them to his service and to his burden;
- Num 4:20 - But the **Kohathites shall not go in to see the sanctuary even for a moment**; otherwise **they will die**.
- Num 4:21 - Then Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,
- Num 4:22 - Take the sum of the sons of **Gershon** also, by their fathers' households, by their families;
- Num 4:23 - From **thirty years old and upward to fifty years old** you shall number them, everyone who enters to carry out the service to do the work in the Tent of Meeting.
- Num 4:24 - This is the service of the families of the **Gershonites**, in serving and in bearing burdens:
- Num 4:25 - They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the Tent of Meeting, its covering, and the covering of porpoise skin that is on top of it, and the screen for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting,
- Num 4:26 - And the hangings of the court, and the screen for the entrance of the gate of the court, which is around the tabernacle and around the altar, and their cords, and all the equipment for their service; and whatever is to be done with them, so shall they do.
- Num 4:27 - All the service of the sons of the Gershonites shall be **at the command of Aaron and his sons**, in all their burden and in all their service; and you shall assign to them the charge of all they are to carry.
- Num 4:28 - This is the service of the families of the sons of the Gershonites in the Tent of Meeting, and their charge shall be **under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest**.
- Num 4:29 - As for the sons of **Merari**, you shall number them by their families, by their fathers' households;
- Num 4:30 - From **thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old** you shall number them, everyone who enters into the service to do the work of the Tent of Meeting.

- Num 4:31 - And this is the charge of what they are to carry, according to all their service in the Tent of Meeting: the boards of the tabernacle and its bars and its pillars and its sockets,
- Num 4:32 - And the pillars around the court and their sockets and their pegs and their cords, with all their equipment and with all their service; and you shall assign by name the equipment they have been charged to carry.
- Num 4:33 - This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service in the Tent of Meeting, **under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.**

The **holy service** is altogether with the Levites. Thus, the tribe of Levi is **not** for fighting **but for the holy service**. The service is holy because it takes care of the tabernacle of the testimony of God.

In Hebrew the word **service** in 4:3, 35, 39, 43 is **warfare**, indicating the military service. Hence, even the holy service of the priests and the Levites was in the warfare. **Today as priests of the gospel of God, we should consider ourselves warriors**. While we are preaching, teaching, edifying others, and building up the Body of Christ, **we are fighting**. The New Testament priests are warriors, and our priestly service is a fighting.

The **basic principle** of the holy service is that it is **without confusion**; it is **based on life**. Everything in the holy service is in good order and is under the divine ordination.

Because the holy service is based on life, the service is without confusion. We may use the human body as an illustration. Confusion in the human body is a sign of sickness. Because the body is of life, it cannot tolerate confusion. Likewise, **in the Body of Christ as God's army, which is altogether a matter of life, there must be good coordination.**

The **priesthood** is an **organism**, and it can be **properly practiced only in the organic Body of Christ**, not in organized Christianity. An organization can go on even when there is much trouble, but the Body of Christ is bothered when only a little trouble is present. Therefore, we must avoid confusion. The best way to deal with confusion is to avoid it. If we avoid confusion, we will avoid much trouble. (Life-Study of Numbers, Chapter 4, Section 1)

## I. Numbers is a book of service, and chapters 3 and 4 cover the holy service:

- A. In Numbers we have a full type of the church service; the service in Numbers is a picture of the **church service**—3:1-39; 4:1-33; Rom. 12:5-8, 11.
- B. The **service is holy** because it **takes care** of the **Tabernacle of the Testimony of God**—Num. 3:7-8; 4:4-16.
- C. The basic principle of the holy service is that it is **without confusion** because it is **based on life**; everything in the holy service is under the divine administration, and thus it is **in good order**—3:7.

## II. The holy service was carried out by the priests and the Levites—vv. 3, 6, 9-10:

- A. The **priests** were the **anointed ones** who served God directly— v. 3:
  1. The **priests** were to **camp** before the tabernacle, on the **east**, toward the sunrise; they **guarded** the entrance to the **Tent of Meeting**, and anyone who wanted to serve God had to pass through the priests—v. 38.
  2. The priests were to **keep the charge of the sanctuary**, the tabernacle with the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies— vv. 32, 38:
    - a. The word *charge* refers to **responsibility**—vv. 7, 32, 38.
    - b. For the priests to keep the charge of the sanctuary meant that they were responsible for the entire sanctuary and everything related to it.
- B. The **Levites** were not priests directly but were **the serving ones of the priesthood**—vv. 9, 12, 17:
  1. In the **priesthood**, the ministry of the priests, there were many business affairs that required the service of the Levites—vv. 25-37.
  2. The **service of the Levites** was to take care of the Tent of Meeting—the Tabernacle of the Testimony—which is a type of Christ and the church—18:1-4, 6: 13
    - a. In taking care of the tabernacle and its contents, the **Levites** did not serve God directly; rather, they **served the priesthood** and the priests, who served God directly— 3:9, 12, 17.
    - b. The **priests** were to **keep the charge of the sanctuary and the altar**, and the Levites served under the priests in caring for the sanctuary and the altar—18:5-6.
- C. The Tabernacle of the Testimony with all its furnishings and the altar, to which the priests ministered, are types of Christ in all His rich aspects, whom the New Testament believers minister to others—3:25-26, 31, 36-37; Eph. 3:8; 2 Cor. 3:3; 1 Tim. 4:6:

1. The **altar**, signifying the **cross** (Heb. 13:10), refers to **Christ's redemption**, and the **tabernacle** refers to **Christ as the embodiment of God** (Col. 2:9), through whom **God dwells among men** (John 1:14) and through **whom men can enter into God** to enjoy all that He is (14:2, 6, 20).
2. The ministry of the priests and the Levites always **supplies** people with the riches of Christ—Eph. 3:8:
  - a. **To minister is to serve**, and **to serve is to supply people** by ministering to them—2 Cor. 4:1; 3:3, 6, 8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11.
  - b. The New Testament believers **serve** others **the cross of Christ for redemption** (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2) and **the riches of Christ for the life supply** (Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:27-28).

### III. The holy service portrayed in Numbers is not for a Christ who is inactive but for a Christ who is very active; in His activity, in His move, we must match Him—4:1-33:

- A. The priests and the Levites had certain duties in the tabernacle's setting out, in its **going forward**:
  1. The priests **appointed** the Levites to do their service— vv. 19, 27-28, 33:
    - a. The **Levites** did their service not according to their way but **under the direction of the anointed priests**.
    - b. This indicates that we, the New Testament priests serving God, **should not act according to our own idea** but under the direction of the anointed view, that is, **under the direction of the Spirit who anoints us**—3:3; Exo. 28:41.
  2. The priests took care of the primary things, the important things, and the Kohathites (Levites) took care of some of the secondary things—Num. 4:5-14:
    - a. To take care of the furnishings of the sanctuary is to take care of the primary things.
    - b. The priests took care of the Ark; this is to take care of Christ directly and to minister Christ—vv. 5-6.
    - c. The Kohathites carried the furnishings of the sanctuary (vv. 2-4, 15, 17-20, 34-37); to do this today is to speak concerning the church as the expansion of Christ.
- B. In order to see how Christ moves on earth, we should look at **the move of the tabernacle**—vv. 5, 25, 31-32:
  1. **The tabernacle moved on the shoulders** of the descendants of the three sons of Levi—Josh. 3:11, 13-15, 17.
  2. **The Lord moves through our bearing the Ark**, the furnishings of the sanctuary, and the Tent of Meeting—vv. 3, 11, 13-15.
- C. **The principle in God's New Testament economy is that God needs man to match Him in His move on earth**—Matt. 28:18-20:
  1. Without man, God can do nothing; in His New Testament economy, God does nothing without man—Acts 1:8; 13:1-3.
  2. **God must have man to match Him, to be one with Him, to coordinate with Him; this is the basic principle of God's New Testament economy**—Ezek. 1:15-21; 1 Cor. 6:17.
  3. Christ is moving today throughout the earth, and He is moving with those who are one with Him—Acts 1:8; John 15:4-5, 16:
    - a. We are today's sons of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.
    - b. **Christ, the embodiment of God for His expansion, moves through those who love Him**—S. S. 7:11-12; Rev. 2:4-5.

### IV. In the Old Testament there was a distinction between the priests and the Levites; in the New Testament there is only one class, that of the priests—Rom. 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10:

- A. In addition to carrying out their own duties in the setting out of the tabernacle, the priests **appointed** the Levites to do their service—Num. 4:5-14, 19, 27-28, 33.
- B. What the Levites did in the Old Testament in type, the believers as the New Testament priests should also do in reality—1 Pet. 2:5, 9:
  1. The fact that the service of the Levites was under the supervision of the priests indicates that when the New Testament priests do the outward Levitical work, they must do it **under the supervision of the inward, spiritual view of the New Testament priesthood**—Rev. 1:6; 5:10.
  2. The Levitical service should never be separated from the priestly view; the outward service must become a spiritual activity that ministers life to others—Rom. 12:4-13; 15:16; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; 4:10-11.
  3. We need to learn to do outward things under the inward view of the priesthood.
  4. While we are taking care of outward, practical matters, we should be ministering life to others; if we do this, our Levitical service is under the view and supervision of the priesthood—1 John 1:2-3; 2:25; 5:11-16.
- C. When a person serves God, there needs to be both the priestly work and the Levitical work—Rom. 1:9; 15:16:
  1. On the one hand, **we partake of the spiritual service**; on the other hand, we should also **take care of the practical affairs**.
  2. Before any kind of service, we must first serve as priests in the Lord's presence; all service must be priestly.

### V. In Hebrew the word **service** in Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, and 43 is **warfare**, indicating military service:

- A. The holy service of the priests and the Levites involved warfare.
- B. As priests of the gospel of God, we should consider ourselves **warriors**—Rom. 15:16:

1. While we are preaching, teaching, edifying others, and building up the Body of Christ, we are **fighting**—Eph. 3:8; 4:12, 16; 6:10-12.
  2. The New Testament priests are warriors, and our priestly service is a fighting—Rev. 5:10; 19:11-14.
- C. All the spiritual work that we are doing for God, whatever form it may take, as long as it touches the things of the spiritual realm, is in **nature a warfare**—2 Cor. 10:3-5:
1. Preaching the gospel, edifying the saints, administrating the church, and praying are all a kind of warfare—Eph. 1:17-18; 3:8, 14-19; 4:12; 6:10-12.
  2. If our eyes have been opened by the Lord, we will see that the nature of our work in serving the Lord is that of warfare.

#### VI. A reward, or compensation, was given to Aaron and his sons as the **priests** and to the **servicing Levites**—Num. 18:8-32:

- A. The priests and the Levites had no portion other than Christ; Christ was their house, inheritance, land, clothing, food, and everything—v. 31.
- B. Today, in the New Testament, the Levitical service is combined with the priesthood—1 Pet. 2:5, 9:
1. There is no difference between the priests and the servants of the priests; the believers in Christ are both the priests and the servicing Levites.
  2. The **only reward**, the only compensation, for our priestly and Levitical service **is Christ**—Matt. 25:23; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 3:20-21.

#### The Reward

A reward, or compensation, was given to Aaron and his sons as **the priests** (18:8-20) and to the **servicing Levites** (vv. 21-32). **This reward (v. 31) was altogether Christ**. The priests and the Levites had no portion other than Christ. Christ was their house, their inheritance, their land, their clothing, their food, and their everything.

Today, in the New Testament, the Levitical service is combined with the priesthood. There is no difference between the priests and the servants of the priests. This means that **the believers in Christ are both the priests and the servicing Levites**. The only reward, the only compensation, for our priestly and Levitical service is Christ.

#### To Aaron and His Sons as the Priests

##### All the Holy Portions of the Sons of Israel Reserved from the Fire

To Aaron and his sons were given all the holy portions of the sons of Israel reserved from the fire (vv. 8-10). Every item of these holy portions signifies a certain aspect of the riches of Christ.

In the New Testament the expression "**riches of Christ**" is used only once, by the Apostle Paul (Eph. 3:8). God gave Paul the grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel. In the New Testament we can see that Christ is light, life, the divine attributes, and the human virtues. However, the New Testament does not tell us in detail what the riches of Christ are. If we would know the details concerning the riches of Christ, we need to come to the Old Testament and study all the types of Christ.

The **holy portions** given to the priests were reserved from the fire (Num. 18:9). All the portions of the sons of Israel were given to God for His enjoyment. These offerings **were offered to God** through fire and were consumed by holy fire as a satisfying fragrance to please God and make Him happy. However, **God reserved some parts of the offerings** from the fire that they might become the **portion of the priests**. This means that the priests enjoy the same thing that God enjoys.

**God enjoys Christ**. When the Lord Jesus was baptized, the Father spoke from the heavens, saying, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I delight*" (Matt. 3:17). This indicates that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is God's delight, enjoyment, and satisfaction. As God's portion, Christ satisfies God and makes Him happy. God saves part of His portion for us, His priests, to enjoy with Him. Therefore, **both God and we, the priests of God, are enjoying the same thing—the all-inclusive Christ**.

The holy portions of the sons of Israel reserved from the fire included the meal offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering (Num. 18:8-10). All these offerings are types of Christ. (Life-Study of Numbers, Chapter 26, Section 3)