LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE ONE

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD

Scripture Reading: Num. 1:1-4, 42-46; 10:33-36

In this introductory word to the Life-study of Numbers, we will consider the advancement of the divine revelation, a comparison of Numbers and Leviticus, the general sketch of Numbers, the central thought of Numbers, and the sections of Numbers.

I. AN ADVANCEMENT OF THE DIVINE REVELATION

In the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) many seeds of the truth are sown. Every main point of the divine truth is in these books. However, the divine revelation was not given to us once for all but progressively.

In the progress of the divine revelation there is the advancement of the divine revelation. In the first book, Genesis, we have God and His creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). At the end of the sixty-six books of the Bible there is a glorious, bright, new city. In the beginning there was only God Himself. Then God accomplished the work of creation, so in addition to God there was the creation, including man. Man fell, but after the fall of man, there was God's redemption. Eventually, at the end of the Bible, there is a city built with the divine Trinity mingled with His redeemed people. Between God's creation at the beginning and the new city at the end, the divine revelation advances progressively book after book.

A. In Genesis

In Genesis we see God's creation and man's fall. Whereas

Genesis begins with God's creation, it ends with the result of man's fall—a dead man in a coffin (50:26).

B. In Exodus

After the fall of man, God came in to save us with His wonderful redemption. This is what we see in Exodus. In the book of Exodus we have God's salvation and the building of His habitation.

God's habitation is more valuable than His creation. When God created the heavens and the earth, He was homeless. Even though man fell, God would not give up. He still went on to redeem and save fallen man that He might build up His habitation with His redeemed people.

C. In Leviticus

In Leviticus we have the redeemed's worship and living. By the time we reach Leviticus, many of the fallen people have been saved and have become God's redeemed people. Leviticus reveals that these redeemed ones need to worship God and live the life He desires.

D. In Numbers

In Numbers we see God's redeemed people being formed into His army and their journey in fighting for God. The army is for God's people to fight so that God can gain the ground on earth to build up His kingdom with His habitation.

II. A COMPARISON

At this point, I would like to make a comparison between Numbers and Leviticus. Leviticus stresses the redeemed's worship and living. Numbers stresses the redeemed's journey and fighting. In Leviticus God's redeemed were instructed in how to worship God and live a holy life. In Numbers God's redeemed were formed into an army and fought for Him throughout their journey.

In Numbers we can see three things: the formation of an army, the journeys of that army, and the fighting of the army. The formation of the army was for fighting, and the

fighting required the army to journey, not to stay in one spot. Always the children of Israel were going on from place to place to gain ground that God might have a people to be built up for His kingdom and His house. For this reason, in Numbers we have the army, the journey, and the fighting.

III. THE GENERAL SKETCH

Although Numbers is a long book, the general sketch is simple. The general sketch of Numbers is that the redeemed and sanctified Israelites were formed into a holy army of God, which was to proceed by following God's leading and was to fight for Him.

Whatever is written in the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, is a type. In particular, in these books we see that the entire nation of Israel was a type of the church. As Israel was formed into an army, so the church should be formed into an army. Concerning this, we should not look at the present situation, at the outward appearance. If we do this, we will be disappointed and wonder where the army is. Although we may have doubts about the existence of a church army, Satan knows that there is such an army. We need to believe that today there is an army formed with all the faithful ones, journeying and fighting all the time that God may have a kingdom with a house.

IV. THE CENTRAL THOUGHT

In a general way, we may say that the central thought of the entire Bible is Christ, for the Bible is focused on Christ as the center. But what is the central thought of the book of Numbers? The central thought of Numbers is that Christ is the meaning of life, the testimony, the center of God's people, and the Leader, the way, and the goal of their journey and fighting.

A. Christ as the Meaning of Life

In Numbers Christ is revealed as the meaning of the life of God's people. It seems that during the forty years in the wilderness, the two million Israelites were doing nothing. They did not engage in industry, commerce, or farming. But

day by day they were busy with one thing—the ark of God's testimony (Num. 7:89). The ark of the testimony was the center of the tabernacle, which was called the tabernacle of the testimony (1:50, 53). For forty years the Israelites worked for the keeping of the ark with the tabernacle. The ark with the tabernacle was the meaning of their life. If there had not been an ark, the life of the Israelites would not have had any meaning. Both the ark and the tabernacle were called God's testimony. Since the ark typifies Christ, the meaning of the Israelites' life was to take care of Christ as the testimony of God.

B. Christ as God's Testimony

This Christ, who is the meaning of the life of God's people, is God's testimony. In the Old Testament, the testimony refers to the law. The two tablets on which the law was inscribed were called the testimony (Exo. 25:21) and were placed in the ark. Because the testimony was put into the ark, the ark was called the ark of the testimony.

A law is always a testimony of the one who made it. In keeping with this principle, the law of God is a testimony of what God is; it tells us what kind of God our God is. The law tells us that God is love and light and that He is holy and righteous. Love, light, holiness, and righteousness are four of the divine attributes. The law, as a portrait of what God is, typifies Christ as the embodiment of God in all His divine attributes. In Christ we see that God is love and light and that He is holy and righteous. Thus, the New Testament tells us that Christ is the embodiment of God (Col. 2:9). For Christ to be the embodiment of God means that He is the portrait of God, and as such He is the testimony of what God is. Because Christ is the testimony of what God is, He is called "the faithful and true Witness" (Rev. 3:14; 1:5). As God's Witness, Christ bears God's testimony to show us what kind of God He is.

God's people should not only take Christ as the meaning of life but also live a life of testifying Christ. When God's people have this kind of living, Christ becomes their

testimony. In Numbers we see Christ as the testimony of God's people.

C. Christ as the Center

Christ is also the center of God's people. This is portrayed by the way the children of Israel were encamped around the tabernacle with three tribes on each side. The four camps, each composed of three tribes, and the three families of the tribe of Levi all took the tabernacle with the ark as the center. The children of Israel thus took Christ as the meaning of life, the testimony, and the center. This shows us that as the church today we should take Christ as our meaning of life, our testimony, and our center.

D. Christ as the Leader, the Way, and the Goal

The book of Numbers reveals that this Christ, who is the meaning of our life, our testimony, and our center, is One who is moving, acting, and always proceeding onward. In His proceeding onward, He is our Leader (Matt. 23:10), our way (John 14:6), and our goal (Phil. 3:12-14). To take the lead is to proceed on the way. Today we are taking Christ as our Leader, and we are following Him. He is leading us on His way and toward His goal, both of which are actually Himself. Worldly people have neither a way nor a goal, but we have Christ not only as our Leader but also as our way and our goal.

In the New Testament there is a revelation of Christ in all these aspects, but it is not given there in detail. If we had only the New Testament and not the Old Testament with all its types, we could not see Christ in such a detailed and fine portrait. For a complete view of Christ as the meaning of life, the testimony, the center, and the Leader, the way, and the goal, we need the portrait in the book of Numbers.

For the journey of God's redeemed people and for their fighting, Christ is the meaning of life, the testimony, the center, and the Leader, the way, and the goal. If Christ were not all this to us, there would not be a way for God to gain the ground on earth to build up His kingdom with His house,

which eventually will consummate in the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem will be the consummation of God's kingdom and God's house.

The entire Bible shows us one thing—that God's intention is to have a people formed into an army to take Christ as their meaning of life, testimony, center, Leader, way, and goal and to proceed on and fight for God that He may gain the ground on earth and have a people built up as His kingdom and His house, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem.

V. THE SECTIONS

The book of Numbers has three sections: being formed into an army (1:1—9:14), journeying (9:15—20:29; 21:4-20; 33:1-49), and fighting (21:1-3; 21:21—32:42; 33:50—36:13).

The fulfillment of God's intention to gain a people and to have them formed into an army was not a simple matter. This army was formed with twelve tribes. It is wonderful that Jacob had exactly twelve sons, who became twelve tribes. Among these twelve tribes, Levi was consecrated to God for the service of the tabernacle. As a result, there was the shortage of one tribe. However, this shortage was made up by Joseph's receiving a double portion through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who filled the gap to keep the number of tribes at twelve. Furthermore, within the consecrated tribe of Levi was the house of Aaron, the priestly house. Levi had three sons who encamped around three sides of the tabernacle. Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons encamped at the front of the tabernacle. Such a camping of the children of Israel in array was marvelous.

Before the children of Israel were formed into an army, the whole earth had been taken over by God's enemy. But in Numbers we see that one race, the race of Israel, was saved, sanctified, and formed and arranged into an army. This was a shame to the enemy.

No human mind could have written a book such as Numbers. There are many other records of the formation of armies, but there is none like the record in Numbers. Only God could write such a record and provide the persons

needed to form such an army. The persons in this army take Christ as their everything—their meaning of life, their testimony, their center, and their Leader, their way, and their goal.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWO

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(1)

Scripture Reading: Num. 1

The picture portrayed in Numbers chapter one shows us the entire New Testament, from the incarnation of the Triune God to be a man, living and dwelling among men, to the consummation of the incarnation, the New Jerusalem.

To see the incarnation of the Triune God in Numbers 1 is difficult, because we do not have such a concept. If we would see the incarnation of the Triune God in this chapter, we need to consider the matter of the tabernacle with the ark. Within the tabernacle was the ark, and within the ark was the law. The law is called "the testimony" (17:4, 10). The law is a testimony of God because it testifies, shows us, God. Thus, it is actually God who is the center. However, here we do not have God merely in Himself but God in an ark made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. This ark, being one entity of two elements, wood and gold, typifies Christ in His humanity with His divinity.

The word *incarnation* is not in Numbers chapter one, but the picture is here. In this picture of the tabernacle with the ark, we see the Triune God incarnated to be a man living among men. The tabernacle was built with forty-eight boards. First, the number forty-eight is composed of six multiplied by eight, which signifies man (six) in resurrection (eight). Second, forty-eight is composed of twelve multiplied by four, which signifies the Triune God (contained in the number twelve, composed of three multiplied by four) in His creature (four). Therefore, this picture shows the Triune God incarnated to be a man living among men. Here we see the

Triune God, we see man, and we see the Triune God dwelling among men.

The picture of the New Jerusalem in Numbers 1 involves the encampment of the twelve tribes of Israel around the tabernacle. The New Jerusalem has twelve gates, three gates on each of the four sides, with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them (Rev. 21:12-13). In Numbers, the twelve tribes were arranged into an array, which shows us a picture. In this array, three tribes, each tribe being an army, were encamped on each of the four sides of the tabernacle. On the east, toward the sunrise, was the camp of Judah, composed of the armies of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun (Num. 2:2-9). On the west, at the rear, was the camp of Ephraim, composed of the armies of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin (2:18-24). On the south was the camp of Reuben, composed of the armies of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad (2:10-16). On the north was the camp of Dan, composed of the armies of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali (2:25-31). This encamping of the twelve tribes is a picture of the New Jerusalem.

Now we can realize how Numbers 1 affords us a picture of the New Testament from the incarnation to the New Jerusalem. This is actually a summary of the history of the church, which began with the incarnation and will consummate with the New Jerusalem. In type, the history of Israel from Numbers through Malachi, which includes things that are both very good and encouraging and very poor and discouraging, portrays the history of the church.

In the picture in Numbers, God is in the center; that is, God is in the ark, in Christ. God is no longer just in the heavens; He is also on the earth, in a man who is His embodiment. This man who is the embodiment of God is Jesus Christ (Col. 2:9). Such a man is constituted with two elements, a golden element and a wooden element. He is a "gold-wood" man, a God-man.

Now this wonderful One, the Triune God incarnated to be embodied as a man, has been expanded, increased, and enlarged. In His expansion and enlargement, Christ has

become the tabernacle, God's dwelling place. As such a tabernacle, He is enterable.

When God was in Christ only, no one could enter into Him. Without Christ's expansion, no one could enter into God. But now, in His expansion into a tabernacle, Christ is not only God's dwelling place but also the place where we can enter into God. Today we can enter into God, taking Christ as our life that He may be the meaning of our life. As He is our life to be the meaning of life to us, He is our testimony. We live Him, express Him, show Him, in every aspect and in every direction. Then He spontaneously becomes our center. Therefore, Christ today is our meaning of life, our testimony, and our center.

Christ, the embodiment of God, has been enlarged into a habitation in which God dwells and into which we enter. In this enlarged Body of Christ, God has a dwelling place, and we have a place where we can enter into God, meet with God, and even be mingled with God.

This God had no intention to come down, to be incarnated at Bethlehem, and then remain stationary. For almost two thousand years this dear One has been moving. Today He is here with us, moving. In His moving, He is the Leader. He is the unique Leader, for He alone is qualified to lead. Christ is our Leader, our way, and our goal. When we have Christ, we have leadership. When we follow Christ, we follow our Leader. When we follow Him directly, we become a leader. The leadership is with Him; the leadership is He. Christ is not only our Leader but also the way we take today. Our way is Christ, and our goal also is Christ. Bringing Christ to a certain place should be honored. But if we bring something other than Christ, that thing should be condemned.

Eventually, the picture in Numbers shows us God and His chosen people mingled together as one entity to conquer the enemy on earth. The enemy utilizes and usurps the entire earth, which God created for Himself and His purpose. How can God regain the earth? God will not regain the earth directly, by Himself as the mighty God, the Creator. In the New Testament economy, God would never do this by

Himself. He had to be incarnated to become a man, Christ, and this Christ has to be ministered to sinners to make them all the enlargement of Christ. As a result, there is on earth the mingling of the Triune God with the tripartite man that God may move on earth and regain it. This move began from Jerusalem as the center, passed through Judea and Samaria, progressed to the uttermost part of the earth, and is here today. Now we are part of this, part of the Triune God incarnated to be a man, living among men to have Himself increased into His chosen people, causing all of them to be mingled with the processed Triune God. This is God's work of the new creation within the old creation. The ultimate consummation of this work will be the New Jerusalem, which is the processed Triune God mingled with the transformed tripartite man. This is Numbers chapter one.

Having such a picture before us, let us now begin to consider how God's people are formed into an army.

I. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BEING FORMED INTO A BODY TO FIGHT FOR GOD AND SERVE GOD FOR THE CARRYING OUT OF GOD'S PURPOSE

The children of Israel were formed into a body to fight for God as warriors and serve God as priests for the carrying out of God's purpose. God's purpose is to have the New Jerusalem, to mingle Himself with His redeemed people. The formation of the children of Israel into a body to fight for God and to serve God typifies the New Testament believers being built up into the organic Body of Christ to fight for God for the carrying out, in its service to God, of God's eternal economy.

II. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY ABLE TO FIGHT FOR THE PROTECTION OF GOD'S TESTIMONY (THE ARK IN THE TABERNACLE)

The children of Israel were formed into an army able to fight for the protection of God's testimony (the ark in the tabernacle). This indicates that, in a very real sense, the church today is fighting for the protection of the incarnated

God. God in Himself needs no protection, but God in His embodiment needs to be protected by the fighting of the church.

A. The Book of Numbers Stressing the Testimony of God

The book of Numbers stresses the testimony of God more than the book of Leviticus does. The word *testimony* is used more frequently in Numbers than in Leviticus.

B. A Matter of a Formed Assembly, Not of Individuals

The army of God protecting God's testimony is a matter of a formed assembly, not of individuals. Today some Christians emphasize individual spirituality. But in the sight of God, individual, separate spirituality means nothing. God desires the formed, coordinated Body of Christ.

III. BY BEING NUMBERED

The children of Israel were formed into a fighting army by being numbered by their families and leaders (vv. 1-16) and according to their age (vv. 20-46).

A. By the Families and Their Leaders

The children of Israel were numbered by the families and their leaders, that is, by the source of life and under its leadership (authority). The families refer to the source of life. In our spiritual history, there should be a source of life. Even in the church life today, we must have a family. Who brought you to Christ? Who begot you in Christ? In other words, who is your spiritual father? In this matter, the Bible is balanced. Of course, God is our divine Father. Nevertheless, Paul told the Corinthian believers that they might have had "ten thousand guides in Christ, yet not many fathers," for in Christ Jesus he had begotten them through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15), imparting the divine life into them so that they became children of God and members of Christ. Thus, those believers belonged to Paul's "family." They did not hear the gospel, repent, and believe apart from

him as their spiritual father, their source. As believers in Christ, we all have three kinds of fathers: a fleshly father, a spiritual father, and the divine Father. Today's numbering depends on the source of life.

The leaders in Numbers 1 refer to the leadership under the authority of Christ in His Body. Just as there is order in our physical body, there must be a good order among the members in the church life. There must be some kind of leadership. Without leadership, it is impossible to maintain a proper situation. (Those who claim that there should be no leadership in the church eventually assume the leadership and become the strongest leaders.) For the church to be formed into a fighting army, we need the source of life and also the leadership in life.

B. According to Age

The numbering is also according to age, according to maturity in life. Besides the source of life and the leadership in life, there is the need of the maturity in life. These three things must be bound together as a strong cord. Today, some care only for spirituality, only for maturity; however, we should care not only for the maturity of life but also for the source of life and the authority of life.

1. From Twenty Years Old and Above

The numbering was of all the males from twenty years old and above (vv. 2-3). This refers to those who were able to go forth to war.

2. Excluding All Females and the Males under Twenty Years Old

This numbering excluded all females and the males under twenty years old. The females signify those who are spiritually weaker, and the males under twenty signify those who are spiritually immature. The sisters in the church life today should not feel excluded by this, because spiritually speaking they may be men, the stronger ones. What counts here is not our natural status but the spiritual nature of

our being. Those who are weaker and those who are immature are not qualified to go forth to war.

3. The Firstborn Being Numbered from Birth and the Males of the Levites Being Numbered from One Month Old

All the firstborn of Israel, who belonged to God, were numbered from birth (3:13). Furthermore, every male of the Levites, who served the tabernacle, was numbered from one month old and above (3:15).

4. The Age for a Vow and the Age for Fighting

For a vow to God, an Israelite male of the highest valuation was required to be between twenty years old and sixty years old (Lev. 27:3). But for fighting, an Israelite male was required to be twenty years old or above, without limit. Even at the age of eighty-five, Caleb was still a warrior, able to fight for the nation of Israel (Josh. 14:10-11).

C. Recognized by the Authorities

The numbering of Israel was recognized by the authorities in three aspects: first, by Moses, signifying Christ as the Head exercising His authority; second, by Aaron, signifying Christ as the High Priest carrying out His priesthood; and third, by the leaders of the twelve tribes, signifying the elders of the churches taking the lead among God's people. If we say that there is no leadership in the church, we annul, put aside, the elders, who are the real and actual leadership in the church life. The church would then become an anarchy; it would be lawless, altogether without government.

D. The Levites Not Numbered among the Army

The Levites were not numbered among the army (Num. 1:47-54; 2:33). They were appointed to minister to the tabernacle of the testimony and encamp around it to keep it from being touched by the children of Israel.

E. The Fighting Israelites Protecting the Serving Levites

The fighting Israelites were the outward protection for the serving Levites, who were for the testimony of God. The Levites were encamped around the tabernacle, and they were surrounded by the twelve tribes, who protected them.

F. The Formed Israelites Being a Type of the Church

The formed Israelites were a type of the church. Ephesians, a book on the church, reveals that the church is a corporate warrior fighting the battle for God's testimony (Eph. 6:10-20). The church is also composed of God's serving ones as the Levites. For fighting, we are a corporate warrior, and for serving we are the Levites, even the priests.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THREE

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(2)

Scripture Reading: Num. 2

In this message we will consider the matter of the children of Israel encamping in array.

IV. ENCAMPING IN ARRAY

In Numbers 2 we see that the children of Israel encamped in array. To put something in array is to set out something in a beautiful arrangement for a display. All the tribes encamped in array were in a beautiful order. In this array were the twelve tribes, the three families of the sons of Levi, and an extraordinary group including Moses, Aaron, and the sons of Aaron, the priests.

A. The Children of Israel Encamping in Array Typifying God's Redeemed People Being Consummated in the New Jerusalem

The children of Israel encamping in array typifies God's redeemed people being consummated in the New Jerusalem. According to our observation and the outward appearance of the situation of the church today, there does not seem to be any encamping in array. In the Catholic church, the state churches, the denominations, and the independent groups, there is much confusion. In all these there are real believers, who are God's chosen ones. However, among the real ones, there are many tares, many false believers, as revealed in the parable in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. Of course, God's formed army does not include the tares; only the genuine believers in Christ throughout the generations are counted.

All these believers, after being saved, sanctified, renewed, transformed, and conformed to the image of Christ, will be glorified. In this glorification will be seen the reality of the New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's work, in His New Testament economy, of the new creation in the old creation.

God will spend four dispensations to work His new creation out of the old creation. Eventually, God's work of the new creation will consummate in one entity—the New Jerusalem. There we will see God's redeemed people camping in array. Today, however, the situation among the children of God is a mess that causes us to mourn and weep. But we believe that out of this weeping there will be a jubilee. First, there will be a jubilee on a smaller scale during the millennium. Then there will be a jubilee on a full scale for eternity in the new heaven and new earth.

The entire Bible of sixty-six books shows us one thing—God's economy. God's economy is, first, to work out the old creation. Then out of the old creation, God uses four dispensations to bring forth the new creation. Today, this new creation consummates in the church; in the millennium it will consummate in the New Jerusalem on a smaller scale; and in the new heaven and new earth it will consummate in the New Jerusalem on a full scale. The consummation of the picture of God's economy revealed in the Bible is the New Jerusalem.

When God shows us a picture, He does not care for all the negative things. He cares only for what He sees. In Matthew 13 there are negative things—the tares, the leaven, and the big tree—among the precious things. God in His economy does not care for these but for the wheat (the plant life), which will be transformed in nature to become gold, pearls, and precious stones (minerals). All these precious things will consummate in the New Jerusalem. In the New Jerusalem we will not see tares, leaven, or the big tree; instead, we will see gold, pearls, and precious stones.

We must admit that, at present, we still have some leaven

and some of the element of the big tree. To have the element of the big tree is to desire to be great and have a nice facade. We confess that leaven and the element of the big tree are with us, even within us. Nevertheless, we may have the joyous assurance that we also have gold, pearls, and precious stones and that these are growing and increasing. We may have such an assurance concerning ourselves and also concerning the church. When we look at our church and our work, we may be grieved by the damage caused by the messy situation among us. Matthew 13 shows us that this is unavoidable. One day we will go from Matthew 13 all the way to Revelation 21 and 22, where we see the New Jerusalem constituted of gold, pearls, and precious stones.

In the present church life the elders may have more headaches than joy. However, they should not cast the church aside but should go on until they get out of Matthew 13 and reach the New Jerusalem.

First, we will reach the New Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom, which will still be in the old creation but will be in a revived dispensation. If we are faithful to the Lord in this life, we will be there in the millennial kingdom to participate in the New Jerusalem before the new heaven and new earth. However, if we are defeated, God will deal with us quite severely for a thousand years. The New Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom (Rev. 3:12) will be a prize only to the overcoming saints, whereas the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth will be the common portion of all the redeemed for eternity. In the new heaven and new earth all God's redeemed people will be perfected and completed. Thus, for eternity in the New Jerusalem there will be no dust but rather gold, pearls, and precious stones.

B. Every Man by His Own Standard, with the Ensigns of Their Fathers' Houses

"The sons of Israel shall encamp each by his own standard, with the ensigns of their fathers' houses" (Num. 2:2a). Every man encamping by his own standard, with the

ensigns of their fathers' houses signifies that they were arranged without their choice according to their preference but according to God's ordination and arrangement. If an Israelite were born in the house of Reuben, he had to camp with the tribe of Reuben and be under the ensign of Reuben. He could not camp with Judah or some other tribe. We today need to learn not to have our own preferences but to be according to God's ordination and arrangement.

C. Facing the Tent of Meeting—with the Testimony of God as the Unique Goal

All the children of Israel were encamped "facing the tent of meeting" (v. 2b), with the testimony of God as their unique center and goal. The ark within the tabernacle was the testimony of God, and the testimony of God was the law contained within the ark (Exo. 25:16). The law is a portrait of God, typifying Christ as the testimony of God, expressing what God is. Hence, the ark within the tabernacle, as a type of Christ, the embodiment of God, was the center of God's people, who were journeying in fighting for His testimony. For the testimony of God, the tabernacle was called the tabernacle of the testimony; for the meeting of God's people, it was called the tent of meeting.

D. Around the Tent of Meeting

The children of Israel were encamped around the tent of meeting (Num. 2:2c). This was for the protection of the tabernacle of the testimony.

E. On Four Sides

The children of Israel were encamped on all four sides of the tabernacle. On each side was one camp, composed of three tribes (vv. 3-16, 18-31).

1. The Camps on the East, South, West, and North

On the east side, toward the sunrising, was the standard of the camp of Judah, composed of the armies of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; these were to set out first (vv. 3-9).

On the south side was the standard of the camp of Reuben, composed of the armies of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; these were to set out second (vv. 10-16). On the west side was the standard of the camp of Ephraim, composed of the armies of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin; these were to set out third (vv. 18-24). On the north side was the standard of the camp of Dan, composed of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali; these were to set out last (vv. 25-31).

2. The Sequence of the Four Camps

The sequence of the four camps was not according to birth but according to spiritual condition. Although Reuben was the firstborn (Gen. 29:31-32), because he committed fornication he lost the birthright (Gen. 49:3-4; 1 Chron. 5:1-2). Judah was born fourth (Gen. 29:31-35), but he set out first because he was an overcoming lion among the twelve brothers (Gen. 49:8-9), typifying Christ as the overcoming fighter, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5), the One who defeated God's enemy. Ephraim, the son of Joseph, was third because of Joseph. Among the camps, Dan was the last. Dan was also the worst, for he was a "serpent" (Gen 49:17), and he was the first to rebel against God's kingdom and set up a second worship center (1 Kings 12:26-30). (See *Life-study of Genesis,* Messages Ninety-eight through One Hundred Seven for more concerning the spiritual condition and blessing of the twelve tribes of Israel.)

3. Four Camps of Three Armies Each Yielding the Number Twelve

Four camps of three armies each yields the number twelve. This number, composed of three multiplied by four, signifies the Triune God (three) mingled with His creatures (four), forming a unit of eternal and perfect government. The number twelve is the number of God's perfect and complete government. The twelve Apostles, for example, are for God's government.

F. The Tent of Meeting with the Camp of the Levites, Which Was to Set Out in the Middle, Being in the Midst of the Camps

In the midst of the camps was the tent of meeting, with the camp of the Levites, which was to set out in the middle of the four camps (Num. 2:17). The Levites were encamped around the tabernacle on three sides: on the west the Gershonites (3:23), on the south the Kohathites (3:29), and on the north the sons of Merari (3:35), leaving the east side for Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's two sons (3:38).

The more we consider the picture of the children of Israel encamping in array around the tabernacle, the more we must adore God for His plan, His sovereignty, and His creating ability. By God's creating ability, Jacob had twelve sons, each of whom became a tribe. One tribe, Levi, was set aside to become the priests (Levites), but Joseph's two sons filled the gap. Levi begot three sons, who occupied three sides of the tabernacle, leaving one side for Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons.

These details are not presented as clearly in the New Testament as they are in the Old Testament. This is why we need the pictures in the Old Testament. Although there are many pictures in the Old Testament, few Christians know how to apply them to what is recorded in the New Testament. If we read Revelation 21 and 22 carefully, we will find in these chapters certain reminders referring us to the Old Testament. Without the pictures in the Old Testament, it is difficult to understand the revelation concerning the New Jerusalem given in the New Testament.

We need to look into these matters in Numbers, not for others but for ourselves, considering our situation today. We should seek the Lord's mercy and ask Him, "Lord, am I a wheat or a tare? Lord, is there leaven within me?" The Lord may answer from within our spirit by exposing our idle words, our criticizing, gossiping, vain talking, and backbiting, all of which are leaven. Then we also need to ask the Lord, "Lord, is my work still related in some way to the big tree?" He may say, "Yes, you like to have a facade, to make

a display of what you have done." We should also ask the Lord whether we have gold, pearls, and precious stones. He may reply that we do have some gold and also some of the element of pearls and precious stones, but the amount and the brightness are quite deficient. Since this is our situation, what should we do? We should humble ourselves before the Lord and receive His dealings.

In order to read the book of Numbers properly, we need to humble ourselves before the Lord and allow Him to open His word. Then we will be enlightened and dealt with by Him.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FOUR

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(3)

Scripture Reading: Num. 3

In this message we will begin to consider the holy service, which is covered in chapters three and four of Numbers.

V. THE HOLY SERVICE

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.

A. The Tabernacle of the Testimony with All Its Furnishings and the Altar, to Which the Priests and the Levites Minister, Being Types of Christ in All His Rich Aspects, Whom the New Testament Believers Minister

The tabernacle of the testimony with all its furnishings and the altar, to which the priests minister, are types of Christ in all His rich aspects, whom the New Testament believers minister. The tabernacle is the tent, and the altar, located in the outer court, is where the sacrifices were offered to God. The altar refers to Christ's redemption, and the tabernacle refers to Christ as the embodiment of God, through whom God dwells among men and through whom men can enter into God to enjoy all that He is.

To minister is to serve, and to serve is to supply people by ministering to them, just as a waiter supplies people with food. The ministry of the priests and the Levites always supplies people with the riches of Christ. The cross of Christ

is for redemption, and the riches of Christ are for supply. Today we, the New Testament believers, serve others with the cross of Christ for redemption and the riches of Christ for the life supply.

B. The Holy Service of the Priests and Levites Being in the Warfare

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.

C. The Holy Service Depending on Fighting

The priestly service, the holy service, depends on fighting. This is illustrated in 1 Samuel 4.

D. The Basic Principle of the Holy Service

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.

E. The Persons and Their Duties

Numbers 3 has much to say about the persons and their duties. We need to dwell on this because it actually concerns us and our duties.

1. The Priests—the Anointed Ones Who Serve God Directly

First, we will consider the duties of the priests and then the duties of the Levites. The priests are the anointed ones who serve God directly.

a. Camping before the Tabernacle, on the East toward the Sunrise

"Those to encamp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tent of meeting toward the sunrise, were Moses and Aaron and his sons" (v. 38a). Here we see that the priests were to camp before the tabernacle, on the east, toward the sunrise. The priests were actually gate guards, guarding the entrance to the tabernacle. Anyone who wanted to serve God had to first pass through the priests.

The priesthood today is no longer a household matter as it was with Aaron; the priesthood is universal. Nevertheless, the principle remains the same. Not everyone can pass through the gate guard to reach the ark within the veil. Those who want to do this must first pass through the priesthood. Once a believer has passed through the priesthood which guards the tabernacle, he has the right to enter into the tabernacle, pass through the second veil, and reach the ark, where God meets with His people.

The priesthood today is universal. This means that every believer is a priest and should serve as a priest. However, not every believer actually functions as a priest.

b. To Keep the Charge of the Sanctuary

The priests were to keep the charge of the sanctuary (vv. 38b, 32). The sanctuary was the tabernacle with its two sections, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The word *charge* refers to responsibility. For the priests to keep the charge of the sanctuary meant that they were responsible

for the entire sanctuary and everything related to it. If anything were damaged or stolen, the priests were responsible.

c. For God's Charge to the Children of Israel

The priests were to keep the charge of the tabernacle "for the charge of the sons of Israel" (v. 38b). Concerning the tabernacle, a number of charges were given by God to the children of Israel. They were supposed to do certain things and were not supposed to do other things. If the people kept these charges, it was fortunate for the priests. If the people could not keep God's charge, the priests were held responsible. The priests were to correct the people or keep them away from the sanctuary or fulfill the charge for them. This is what it means to say that the priests kept the charge of the sanctuary for God's charge to the children of Israel.

If we have experience in the spiritual service of God, we will realize that, in principle, the New Testament priests bear the same responsibility today. We not only bear the charge of the sanctuary ourselves, but often we must bear the responsibility for others' service. If they do something wrong, we should correct them and also instruct them to do the right thing. The crucial point here is that the priests are charged to take care of God's holy dwelling place.

d. The Layman Who Came Near Being Put to Death

"The stranger who comes near shall be put to death" (v. 38c). The stranger here was a layman, someone who was not a priest. Any layman who came near was to be put to death.

2. The Levites— Replacing the Firstborn of Israel

The Levites replaced the firstborn of Israel (3:5-9, 11-37, 39-51). Why was it necessary for the firstborn of Israel to be replaced or redeemed? At the time of the Passover in Egypt, all the firstborn were condemned. But unlike the firstborn of the Egyptians, the firstborn of Israel were not

slain. Through the Passover all the firstborn of Israel were redeemed, saved, and replaced. Because of this, in succeeding generations all the firstborn males among the children of Israel were to be replaced by the Levites, the serving ones. The firstborn had lost their position, and therefore it was necessary for them to be replaced by the Levites. For this reason, the number of Levites had to equal the number of firstborn, and any shortage had to be redeemed.

This replacing of the firstborn by the Levites, the serving ones, indicates that everyone who has been redeemed, saved, and replaced must serve. Since we today have been redeemed, saved, and replaced, we must serve.

a. Serving the Priest

"Bring the tribe of Levi near and present them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him" (v. 6). Here we see that the Levites were to serve the priest.

b. Doing the Service of the Tabernacle

"They shall keep his charge and the charge of the whole assembly before the tent of meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle" (v. 7). This reveals that the responsibility of the Levites was to do the service of the tabernacle.

c. The Gershonites Camping behind the Tabernacle on the West and Being in Charge of the Tabernacle with All Its Parts

Levi had three sons—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The Gershonites, the descendants of Gershon, camped behind the tabernacle on the west and were in charge of the tabernacle with all its parts (vv. 21-26). Because they camped behind the tabernacle, they protected it from enemies coming from the rear. This was an important responsibility, for the enemy will often attack from the rear. Furthermore, whenever the tabernacle moved, the Gershonites took care of the entire tabernacle with all its parts.

God gave Jacob twelve sons so that there could be twelve tribes encamped around the tabernacle, with three on each of the four sides. God gave Levi three sons to camp around

three sides of the tabernacle—the Gershonites on the west, the Kohathites on the south, and the sons of Merari on the north. Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons camped on the east, in front of the tabernacle. As we consider this, we realize that only God could write the book of Numbers, and only God could provide the materials to have such an array.

None of those involved in this array was hired; all were born. The twelve tribes were born of Jacob, and those guarding the tabernacle were born of Levi. Because no one was hired, no one could be fired. Birth is a matter of life, but hiring and firing have nothing to do with life. The building up of the Body of Christ today has nothing to do with hiring or firing people; the building up of the Body is altogether a matter of life and is therefore organic.

d. The Kohathites Camping on the South Side of the Tabernacle and Being in Charge of the Ark, the Table, the Lampstand, the Two Altars, the Vessels of the Sanctuary, and the Veil

The Kohathites camped on the south side of the tabernacle and were in charge of its contents: the ark, the table, the lampstand, the two altars (the altar of burnt offering outside the tabernacle, which was for redemption, and the incense altar within the tabernacle, which was for God's acceptance), the vessels of the sanctuary, and the veil (vv. 27-31).

We need to know the spiritual significance of caring for the contents of the tabernacle. Spiritually speaking, to take care of the ark is to take care of Christ, that is, to present Christ to others as the ark, the embodiment of the Triune God. We need to visit people and tell them that Christ, the embodiment of God, is the Triune God incarnated to be a man with two natures, divine and human. Then we may go on to say that on the ark was a cover and that within the ark were three items—the rod that budded, the hidden manna, and the tables of the testimony—all of which refer to Christ. Christ is the budding rod, the hidden manna,

and the testimony of God. This is to present Christ as the ark.

In presenting Christ as the ark, the embodiment of God, we may further tell the ones we visit that in the typology of the Old Testament, God met with His people not at the altar or at the showbread table or at the lampstand or at the incense altar but on the cover of the ark. This cover was called the propitiatory cover, and on it the redeeming blood was sprinkled. The redeeming blood was shed on the altar to redeem us from our sins, and then this blood was brought into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the cover of the ark, where God met with His people.

This kind of speaking concerning Christ may surprise people, because they have never before heard such a presentation of Christ. To present Christ to others in this way is to preach the gospel.

Have you ever presented Christ in such a way as the embodiment of God? If we do not know how to present Christ in this way, we do not know how to take care of the ark. In addition to learning to present Christ as the ark, we also need to learn to present the aspects of Christ signified by the showbread table, the lampstand, the two altars, and vessels of the sanctuary, and the veil.

e. The Sons of Merari Camping on the North Side of the Tabernacle and Being in Charge of the Boards of the Tabernacle, Its Bars, Its Pillars, Its Sockets, All Its Furnishings, All Its Service, and the Pillars of the Court All Around, with Their Sockets, Pegs, and Cords

The sons of Merari camped on the north side of the tabernacle. They were in charge of the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its furnishings, all its service, and the pillars of the court all around, with their sockets, pegs, and cords (vv. 33-37). The tabernacle had forty-eight boards. The number forty-eight, composed of six multiplied by eight, signifies the natural man in resurrection. Six signifies the man created on the sixth day, and eight signifies the resurrected Christ, the Christ who

was resurrected on the eighth day. For additional details concerning these items, please see the Life-study of Exodus.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FIVE

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(4)

Scripture Reading: Num. 4

In this message we will consider the duties of the priests and the Levites in the tabernacle's setting out.

F. The Duties in the Tabernacle's Setting Out

The priests and the Levites had certain duties in the tabernacle's setting out. To set out is to go forward. Thus, what is covered in the holy service is not for a Christ who is inactive but for a Christ who is very active. In His activity we must match Him.

In the Old Testament, God could move by Himself, without man. For instance, when God created the heavens and the earth, there was no need of man to match Him. But the New Testament begins with the divine incarnation. This set up the principle for God's New Testament economy, which is that God needs man to match Him. Without man, God can do nothing. In the Old Testament, God could do many things without man. In the New Testament, God has given Himself to be bound together with man. This binding together of God with man can be illustrated by the runners in a three-legged race, who are bound together in such a way that each pair of runners has three legs. In the New Testament, 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.

In His New Testament economy, God does nothing without man. Man must be one with God, match God, and be bound together with God. "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit"

(1 Cor. 6:17). This implies that in the New Testament God's economy has bound man together with God. God is willing to be bound to man, for He cannot move without man. Now God moves not only with man but also within man. This is why God never preaches the gospel directly to anyone; instead, He preaches the gospel through man.

Christ is moving today throughout the earth. "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). To be Christ's witnesses is to be His testimony, and to be His testimony is to be His portrait. If we are Christ's testimony, His portrait, people will see Him wherever we go. We witness for Christ in the sense of being His portraits. Hence, all gospel preachers are actually witnesses, portraits, of Christ.

The Lord's move today is with us. Regarding His move, we may be either a "mule wagon" or a "747." By this I mean that if we are slow, the Lord's move with us will be slow. If we are fast, the Lord's move with us will be fast.

We need to see how the Lord moves today. He moves within us. We are today's Gershonites, Kohathites, and sons of Merari. In order to see how Christ moves on earth, we should look at the move of the tabernacle. The tabernacle moved on the shoulders of the descendants of the three sons of Levi. This moving was in a very good sequence, with no confusion. Only Aaron and his sons could look at the holy things and touch them. The Levites could look at them and touch them only after they had been packed and covered. The layman had no right at all to touch the holy things.

From the foregoing we can realize that not everyone is able to bring the Lord's recovery from one country to another. By the Lord's mercy, I can testify that when I came to the United States, I brought the ark with all the furnishings of the sanctuary. I also brought the tent of meeting, which is the enlargement of Christ, the church. The Lord moves through our bearing the ark, the furnishings of the sanctuary, and the tent of meeting.

Christ, the embodiment of God for His expansion, moves

through those who love Him. If we do not move, He cannot move. Rather, He is bound and even imprisoned within us. If we do not move, we become a prison to the Lord.

1. The Priests

The duties in the tabernacle's setting out involve both the priests and the Levites. In the Old Testament there is a distinction between the priests and the Levites. However, in the New Testament there is only one class, that of the priests, which includes the Levites. Hence, what the Levites did in the Old Testament, we, the New Testament priests, should also do.

a. Packing the Furnishings of the Sanctuary

The priests had the privilege of packing the things of the divine Person. To pack a person's belongings is a special privilege, given only to those who are close to that person. He who packs another's belongings sees all of that person's mysteries and secrets.

The priests packed the furnishings of the sanctuary, including the ark, the showbread table, the lampstand, the golden altar, and the altar (vv. 5-14). The first item of the furnishings of the sanctuary to be packed was the ark. The priests covered the ark with the veil of the screen, a covering of porpoise skin, and a cloth of blue (vv. 5-6).

We today have the privilege of packing the things of Christ. First, we pack Christ as the ark, with all that this comprises. Then we pack the showbread table. This is to minister Christ as food, as bread, to God's serving ones. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the bread of life....He who eats Me shall also live because of Me" (John 6:48, 57b). We also pack the lampstand. The showbread table is for life, and the lampstand is for light. Furthermore, we pack the golden altar, which is for God's acceptance, and the bronze altar, which is for God's redemption.

b. Appointing the Levites to Do Their Service

The priests appointed the Levites to do their service (Num. 4:19, 27-28, 33). The Levites doing their service were not

according to their way but under the direction of the anointed priests. 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 very Spirit who anoints us.

c. The Charge of Eleazar the Son of Aaron the Priest

"The charge of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the continual meal offering, and the anointing oil, even the charge of all the tabernacle and all that is in it, of the sanctuary and its vessels" (v. 16). All these items signify the different aspects of the rich Christ. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul says, "To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach to the nations the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel." By the New Testament alone it is difficult for us to see Christ's unsearchable, or untraceable, riches. We also need the types, the pictures, in the Old Testament. Through all the items mentioned in Numbers 4 we can see that Christ's riches are untraceable.

Even the anointing oil is Christ. Although the anointing oil signifies the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is the consummated Triune God. John 7:39b says, "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." After Christ was glorified (resurrected), the Spirit became the all-inclusive, compound, life-giving, indwelling Spirit, who is the consummated Triune God. The Triune God was "raw," unprocessed, but after passing through the process of incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection, He was fully consummated to be the all-inclusive, compound Spirit. Today the Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45b). In this sense, the anointing oil is Christ.

2. The Levites

a. The Age Requirement—
from Thirty Years Old up to Fifty Years Old

As we come to the service of the Levites, we see that with the Levites there was an age requirement. To serve as a

Levite, one had to be between thirty and fifty years old (Num. 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 43, 47). These are the "golden years" of human life. Even the Lord Jesus did not reach the full age for God's service until He had reached the age of thirty (Luke 3:23). He did not begin His work until He was thirty.

In Numbers we can see some comparisons regarding age requirements. To be counted in the service to God, one had to be one month old and above—those at that age needed to grow and mature (3:39, 43). To be counted in the warfare for God's testimony, one had to be twenty years old or above—those at that age were mature and strong, without limit (1:20). Caleb, for example, was able to fight even at the age of eighty-five (Josh. 14:10-11). To be counted in the service that was close to God, one had to be from thirty years old up to fifty years old—those at that age were more mature and were stronger, without deterioration.

b. The Kohathites

The priests took care of the primary things, the most important things, and the Kohathites took care of some of the secondary things. To take care of the furnishings of the sanctuary is to take care of the primary things. The priests took care of the ark. This is to take care of Christ directly and to minister Christ. The Kohathites carried the furnishings of the sanctuary (Num. 4:2-4, 15, 17-20, 34-37). To do this today is to speak concerning the church as the expansion of Christ.

The Kohathites were not to touch the holy things (v. 15) or to go in to look at them (v. 20). In either case, the penalty was death.

"Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his service and to his burden" (v. 19b). Here we see that the service of the Kohathites was under the assigning of Aaron and his sons. This indicates that in the Old Testament there are two classes—the priests and the Levites. But in the New Testament these two classes are one. We today are both priests and Levites. When we as priests do the Levitical work, we must be under the supervision of our priestly view. For example, arranging chairs in the meeting hall is not a

spiritual work but a Levitical service. But this Levitical service should be carried out under the inward, spiritual view of the priesthood. If the arranging of chairs is done in this way, the serving ones will pray for the church and for those who will sit on the chairs. The principle is the same with knocking on people's doors for the purpose of preaching the gospel. The Levitical service of door-knocking should be carried out under the supervision of the priestly view. Then those who visit people with the gospel in this way will have much prayer. They may pray, "Lord, while I am knocking on this person's door, I ask You to knock on his heart."

Today we should not separate the Levitical service from the priestly view. Any kind of outward activity must be carried out under the supervision of the inward, spiritual view of the priesthood.

c. The Gershonites

The Gershonites (vv. 22-28, 38-41) were to carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting, its covering, the covering of porpoise skin, the screen of the entrance to the tent of meeting, the hangings of the court, the screen of the entrance to the gate of the court, their cords, and all the equipment for their service. They did this at the command of Aaron and his sons, and under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest (vv. 27-28).

Once again we see that the Levitical service was carried out under the supervision of the priests. This is a further indication that we need to learn to do outward things under the inward view of the priesthood. For instance, the way work is done in the church business office should be very different from the way in a bank, where there is no priestly supervision. All the service in the church business office should be done under the heavenly view and supervision of the priests. Then whatever we do in the church business office will become a spiritual activity and will minister life to others. While we are caring for business matters, we should minister life to others. If we do this, our Levitical service is under the view and supervision of the priesthood.

d. The Sons of Merari

The sons of Merari (vv. 29-33, 42-45) were to carry the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, pillars, and sockets, the pillars of the court round about, their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their equipment. This was to be done under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

Whatever is written in the Bible is for our good and is worth studying. Therefore, we need to study all the items related to the tabernacle, such as the pillars, sockets, pegs, and cords. All these items typify Christ. Christ is our peg and our cord. By knowing all these items related to the tabernacle, we know Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE SIX

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(5)

Scripture Reading: Num. 5:1-10

In order for God's people to be formed into an army, certain terms, or conditions, must be met. One of these conditions is the requirement to deal with defilement. In this message we will begin to consider what Numbers 5 reveals concerning the dealing with defilement.

VI. DEALING WITH DEFILEMENT

God is righteous and holy and cannot tolerate defilement. His people, therefore, must deal with defilement.

A. The Cause of the Dealing

The cause of the dealing with defilement is threefold. First, God's people are His dwelling place and habitation (v. 3); second, God's people are His warriors fighting for Him (1:20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42); and third, those who are formed into an army are also priests to serve God (3:3). For God to have a dwelling place, an army, and a priesthood, His people must deal with defilement. They, like God, must be righteous and holy and therefore clean.

B. The Corporate Dealing

The dealing in Numbers 5 is in a very good sequence. Numbers 5:1-4 begins with a corporate dealing. The whole army should have a corporate dealing, not just a dealing as individuals. This corporate dealing mainly concerns three

things—leprosy, discharges, and uncleanness through contact with the dead.

1. Dealing with Leprosy

In the church life as God's army, there should be no leprosy. Leprosy signifies the evil issues of the natural man, especially in rebellion. In this sense, we all are leprous and have leprosy. Leprosy is something within us, in our very element. It is deep and subjective, and it needs a thorough dealing. If we do not deal with the leprosy within us, we will become defiled and unclean.

According to the Old Testament teaching, leprosy comes mainly from rebellion against God's authority. The first illustration of this was the case of Miriam and Aaron, who rebelled against God's deputy authority, Moses (12:1-10). By rebelling against God's deputy authority, Miriam became leprous.

The rebellious nature, the rebellious element, is within our blood and nature. Hence, it is something very natural. As a natural man, every one of us is a leper.

2. Dealing with the Discharges

The second thing that must be dealt with is the discharges. Anything that comes out of our being, such as sweat, is a discharge. Spiritually, the discharges are the excessive, abnormal, and unrestrained issues of the natural man, signifying one's being without control, being unbridled, in relation to one's self, temper, preferences, likes, and dislikes. In our daily life, if our being is somewhat excessive and unrestrained, it becomes abnormal. This abnormality is a discharge. For example, if we lose our temper, we are excessive, unrestrained, and abnormal. This is a discharge, an issue, of the natural man. An unrestrained expression of our likes or dislikes is also a discharge.

3. Dealing with the Uncleanness through Contact with the Dead

The third thing that must be dealt with is the uncleanness through contact with the dead—the spiritual deadness.

The Israelites were not to contact anything that was dead, whether an animal, an insect, or a person (Lev. 11:24-47; Num. 19:11). If they touched these things, they would be defiled.

Death is more dirty than sin. If we contact those who are spiritually dead, we will be defiled by spiritual deadness.

4. Keeping the Defilements Away from the Camp

The defilements of leprosy, discharges, and uncleanness through contact with the dead were to be kept away from the camp, which is the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people. God is righteous, holy, and living. Thus, leprosy, discharges, and spiritual deadness cannot be allowed to remain in God's dwelling place, army, and priesthood.

5. The Uncleanness That Needs to Be Dealt With within the Church

The three kinds of defilement dealt with in the camp of Israel constitute all the uncleanness that needs to be dealt with in the church. These three things—leprosy from rebellion, discharges from being excessive, abnormal, and unrestrained, and uncleanness through contact with the dead—are a full type of the uncleanness that should be dealt with and removed from the church life. If we deal with these three things, the church will be clean.

C. The Individual Dealing

After the corporate dealing with defilement, there is the individual dealing (5:5-10). The church as a body needs the corporate dealing. This body is composed of the saints, and they should have the individual dealing.

1. Dealing with the Guilt of One's Sinning against God

In the individual dealing, we must first deal with the guilt of our sinning against God (v. 6). This is to deal with

the defilement of unrighteousness, of being guilty before man and condemned before God.

In some things we may not be righteous with God. We might have wronged God, and thus there is something sinful between us and God. This is the defilement of unrighteousness, and it needs to be dealt with.

We also need to deal with the guilt that is before man. If we steal something from others, we are wrong with them and have become unrighteous. This unrighteousness is condemned by God. In such a case, we are not only wrong with man but are also under God's condemnation.

2. Confessing His Sin

Numbers 5:6 and 7a say, "When a man or woman commits any of the sins of men so as to act unfaithfully against Jehovah, and that person is guilty, then he shall confess his sin which he has committed." Here we see that to deal with our sin, trespass, or guilt, we must make a thorough confession.

3. Making Restitution for His Trespass in Full

After confessing our sins to God (1 John 1:9), we should go to the one we have wronged to make restitution in full for our trespass (Num. 5:7b). Suppose you have stolen something from a certain person. As a result, you are unrighteous in relation to him and also under God's condemnation. You need to repay that person what you owe him. This is to make restitution for your trespass.

4. Adding One-fifth to the Trespass and Giving It to the Wronged One

Numbers 5:7c says that the person who committed the trespass should add one-fifth to the trespass, "giving it to him to whom he did the trespass."

Because we Christians are still in the old man, we do not realize in how many things we desire to make a gain for ourselves at others' expense. For instance, in sitting next to others, we may want more space for ourselves and thus

may not be careful to keep our legs in front of our own chair. If our conscience is keen, we will realize that this is wrong.

Furthermore, sometimes we may take advantage of others' possessions, perhaps using them without permission. School teachers may bring home pens, chalk, and stationery. We should not consider this insignificant; this is stealing.

In many things we make a gain for ourselves at others' expense. Unconsciously we may wrong others and thereby become indebted to them. We need to confess our wrongdoing to the Lord. No doubt, He will forgive us, and the blood of Jesus will cleanse us (1 John 1:9, 7). But a problem still exists between us and the one we have wronged. Thus, we must go to that one and make restitution, paying what we owe, and even more than we owe.

Our God is righteous and holy, and we must be righteous and holy as He is. Otherwise, we will be condemned by God's righteousness and holiness. Whenever this is our situation, we must confess our trespass and then make restitution.

5. Making Restitution to a Relative of the Wronged One or to God for the Priest

If the wronged one is deceased, then the restitution should go to his relative. "But if the man has no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the trespass, the restitution for the trespass shall go to Jehovah for the priest" (v. 8a), just as every man's portions were to be presented to the priest (vv. 9-10). Whenever we have a holy portion to present to God, we give it to the priest. Here we see that this restitution for dealing with our guilt becomes holy, just like a holy portion given to God. Today we may give this to the church or to one who serves God as a priest and lives by faith.

6. The Propitiation by a Ram Being Made for Him

Numbers 5:8b speaks of "the ram of propitiation with which propitiation is made for him." Besides confessing and

making restitution, the propitiation by a ram was to be made for the guilty one. This ram typifies Christ.

This portion of the Word reveals how fine our God is. First, we confess our sin to God and then go to make restitution. Afterward, we come back to God to offer Christ as the ram of propitiation.

The individual dealing described in these verses may seem like a small matter, but it is like a small screw in a big machine. If one small screw is wrong, the whole machine cannot run. Therefore, we need this kind of dealing. The church must have the corporate dealings, and the saints must have the individual dealings.

We may think that it is impossible to see on earth a church that has been purged of defilement. According to our view, all kinds of confusion, troubles, and defilements are among us. However, as the story of Elijah makes clear, in God's eyes He has seven thousand hidden ones. Elijah accused the people of God, saying, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have torn down Your altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life" (Rom. 11:3; 1 Kings 19:10). The Lord answered Elijah, saying, "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal" (Rom. 11:4; 1 Kings 19:18). Here God seemed to be saying, "Elijah, in your eyes the situation may be a mess, but I am satisfied with these seven thousand."

Through the centuries, God has always had the "seven thousand" who could be counted on by Him. Hence, God still has His testimony today. We need to learn how to be counted among the seven thousand. This means that we need to have a thorough dealing corporately and individually that will keep us right according to God's conditions and terms for the formation of His fighting army. Apparently, the formation of such a fighting army cannot be seen today. But in God's eyes there is such a formation, and there is such an army. The fighting for God is still going on. God still has a people on earth. He can see His army fighting and His priesthood serving.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE SEVEN

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(6)

Scripture Reading: Num. 5:11-31

In this message we will continue to consider the dealing with defilement described in chapter five of Numbers.

D. Dealing with a Wife over Whom Her Husband Was Jealous

In 5:11-31 we have the dealing with a wife over whom her husband was jealous. This case reveals that God is not only sovereign over each of His children but also that He may even do something miraculous in dealing with a particular kind of defilement.

In understanding the book of Numbers, we can easily understand in a logical way the corporate and individual dealings in 5:1-10. However, it is not easy to comprehend logically the dealing in 5:11-31, something that is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. The only way to understand this dealing logically is to take it as part of typology.

The revelation in the Bible is given to us in different ways. First, the divine revelation is given in clear words, such as Genesis 1:1, where we are told that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Second, the revelation is conveyed through historical records. The books from Exodus to Malachi are a long history of the children of Israel, unveiling to us an abundance of divine truth.

Third, the divine revelation is given through the lives of different characters, such as the great men in Genesis (Adam, Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,

and Joseph). For example, Enosh was a weak, frail, mortal man, but he was characterized by his calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 4:26). Although Enosh was weak, by calling on the name of the Lord he was made rich and strong, for he entered into the strength and riches of the One on whom he called.

Finally, the divine revelation is given through typology. Typology implies figures, shadows, types, and patterns. For instance, Abraham's two wives are figures of two covenants: Hagar signifies the covenant of law, and Sarah, the covenant of grace (Gal. 4:21-31). The story of Sarah and Hagar may be considered not only as a figure but also as a shadow. Neither the covenant of law nor the covenant of grace had been enacted at the time of Hagar and Sarah. Nevertheless, Hagar and Sarah are, respectively, shadows of the covenants of law and of grace.

Even clear words and figures of speech may be related to typology. Proverbs 4:18 says, "The path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (ASV). This proverb is a clear word, yet in this word is a figure of speech that is a part of typology. The "dawning light," the sunrise, signifies Christ's coming (Luke 1:78). This figure may also signify our revival in the morning. From this illustration we see that a clear, plain word may include a figure of speech which may be regarded as a part of typology.

The typology in the Bible is a great thing and has many aspects. Probably, in the Old Testament the divine revelation conveyed through typology may equal that in plain words.

It is difficult to explain Numbers 5:11-31 by clear words. What is portrayed here has nothing to do with history or with a character, but it does have something to do with typology.

In typology, God gained a people at Mount Sinai and used them to build a habitation on earth. He then gave them a set of laws, regulations, and ordinances for their worshipping of Him. After this, He came in to form this people into an army. The people gained by God to be formed

into an army that can fight for Him and a priesthood that can serve Him should be altogether clean—in their being, nature, speaking, appearance, behavior, the way they move and act, and even in what they possess.

The corporate dealing in chapter five includes only three things: leprosy, discharges, and deadness. Nevertheless, these things comprise all the uncleanness that needs to be dealt with among God's holy people. On the side of the individual, the dealing with one's faithfulness is a dealing according to God's righteousness. This is why there is the need of such a portion as 5:1-10.

Numbers 5:11-31 is a particular portion in all the sixty-six books of the Bible, showing us not only God's sovereignty but also His miracle. The record here is a record of a miracle.

The test with the water of bitterness (v. 18) used a combination of water (referring to the Holy Spirit), dust from the floor of the tabernacle (referring to man's human nature), and the meal offering (referring to Christ). The wife who was under suspicion was asked to drink the water. If she was sinful, the water would work in her abdomen to cause it to swell and to cause her thigh to be reduced. This does not seem to be a record of something divine. However, this is a wonderful miracle.

The record in Numbers 5 is similar to the record of what the Lord Jesus did in John 9:1-7. He healed a blind man by mingling spittle with dust to make clay and then anointing the blind man's eyes with the clay. Today, if the Lord tried to do this to us, we might consider it a joke, and we might not be willing to allow Him to do such a thing to us.

In the record of Numbers 5:11-31 we can see typology. The water typifies the Holy Spirit, the meal offering of barley typifies the resurrected Christ, and the dust represents the created man (Gen. 2:7). Hence, creation, the Spirit, Christ, and His death and resurrection are all involved. The water into which was put dust from the floor of the tabernacle became not only a water of bitterness that

brought a curse, but also a working water that caused the abdomen to be enlarged and the thigh to be reduced.

If we would expound 5:11-31, we must know how to expound the types. The hardest point for us to expound is the dust on the floor of the tabernacle. Dust refers to the natural man, to the man created by God, and the tabernacle is God's dwelling. God's dwelling place is built upon the man created by Him. This is the dust on the floor of the tabernacle. God's dwelling place is holy, yet there is a kind of dust that can be joined to God's dwelling place. To take such a dust and put it into the water is to take a human nature that can be joined to God's dwelling place and put it into the Holy Spirit. This water containing dust is then put together with Christ as the meal offering made of barley (in resurrection) but with no frankincense and no oil (without the effectiveness of resurrection and without the Holy Spirit) upon it. Here we see the human nature created by God conjoined with God's dwelling place, put into the Holy Spirit, and applied with the resurrected Christ. Such a thing will be a real test of our chastity.

Corporately and individually God's people should be chaste to God. It is not sufficient merely to be clean. To be clean is one thing, and to be chaste is another. We may not have leprosy, we may not have discharges, and we may not have any contact with deadness, but are we chaste? We may be very faithful, but we do not have a high character if we are not chaste. A wife may be good in every way, but if she has another love, the other love will spoil her in her chastity. God's people should not only be clean in every way and in every respect—they should also be chaste. Thus, we need to learn how to be chaste toward the Lord.

Let us now briefly consider some of the details related to the dealing with a wife over whom her husband was jealous.

1. Typifying Christ's Jealousy over His Believers and His Church

The dealing with a wife over whom her husband was jealous typifies Christ's jealousy over His believers and His

church. We must remember that the church and all the believers have a husband—Christ. We may not be rebellious (leprous), we may be quite self-controlled and restrained (not discharging), and our behavior may be altogether right with both God and man, but as a wife to Christ, are we chaste? To be chaste, a wife should not have any love other than her husband. If a wife appreciates any other man, she is on the verge of losing her chastity.

If we are a chaste wife to Christ, we can follow our Husband to fight. David had a fighting wife (1 Sam. 25). In Revelation, Christ's fighting army is composed of His overcomers, who are a fighting wife to match Christ (Rev. 19:7-9, 11-14). In order to be a part of the Lord's fighting army, we must be chaste. The dealings in the book of Numbers show that the requirement for God's people to be formed into an army is very high.

The church and all the believers should have only Christ as their love (2 Cor. 11:2-3). If the church or any of the believers seeks and pursues anything other than Christ, that is spiritual adultery in the eyes of God. Those who commit spiritual fornication will be judged and cursed by God (1 Cor. 16:22) and will not be able to fight for God and serve God. Once we lose our chastity, we lose our ability to fight for God and to serve Him.

2. Bringing the Wife to the Priest

The man who was jealous over his wife was to bring her to the priest (Num. 5:15a). The priest here may signify Christ or someone who is very close to God.

3. With a Meal Offering of Jealousy

"The man shall bring his wife to the priest, and bring her offering for her, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it and put no frankincense on it, for it is a meal offering of jealousy, a meal offering of remembrance, bringing iniquity to remembrance" (v. 15). The priest was then to place this meal offering of jealousy into the hands of the woman (v. 18). The meal offering signifies Christ in His humanity offered to God that God's people

may be acceptable. In this case, the meal offering was of barley meal with no oil or frankincense upon it. Barley signifies the resurrected Christ, oil signifies the Holy Spirit, and frankincense signifies resurrection. Such a meal offering of jealousy brought iniquity to remembrance.

4. The Priest Presenting Her before God, Unbinding Her Hair, and Putting Dust from the Floor of the Tabernacle into the Holy Water Which Was in an Earthen Vessel

"The priest shall present the woman before Jehovah, and unbind the hair of the woman's head" (v. 18a). The unbinding of the woman's hair shows that she has not subjected herself to the headship. The priest also took the holy water (the Holy Spirit) in an earthen vessel (the natural man) and took the dust (the nature of the natural man—Gen. 3:19; Psa. 22:15) from the floor of the tabernacle and put the dust into the water to make it the water of bitterness that brings the curse (Num. 5:17-22).

5. The Priest Writing the Curses in a Book, Washing Off What He Writes into the Water of Bitterness, and Making the Woman Drink the Water That Brings the Curse

"Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and wash them off into the water of bitterness; and he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse" (vv. 23-24a). The curses here refer to the word of God's judgment.

6. The Priest Taking the Meal Offering of Jealousy Out of the Woman's Hand, Waving the Meal Offering before Jehovah, and Burning a Handful of It as a Memorial upon the Altar

"The priest shall take the meal offering of jealousy out of the woman's hand, and shall wave the meal offering before Jehovah and bring it to the altar. And the priest shall take a handful of the meal offering, as its memorial portion, and offer it up in smoke upon the altar" (vv. 25-26a). The waving

of the meal offering signifies resurrection. The handful of the meal offering that was offered up in smoke was burned to God as a memorial portion.

7. The Womb of the Woman Who Had Defiled Herself Swelling, Her Thigh Wasting Away, and the Woman Becoming a Curse among Her People

"When he has made her drink the water, if she has defiled herself and has acted unfaithfully against her husband, then the water that brings the curse shall enter into her to cause bitter pain, and her womb shall swell, and her thigh shall waste away, and the woman shall become a curse among her people" (v. 27). For the womb (abdomen) to swell meant that it became abnormal. For the thigh to waste away meant that the woman's strength was decreasing. This dealing involved creation, redemption, resurrection, the Holy Spirit, and God's habitation. Such a dealing was surely miraculous.

8. The Woman Who Had Not Defiled Herself Being Clear and Conceiving Seed

"If the woman has not defiled herself and she is clean, then she shall be clear and shall conceive children" (v. 28). Literally, the Hebrew word translated "children" means seed. The woman who had not defiled herself would conceive seed.

The dealing in 5:11-31 indicates that God's test of His people's chastity is very severe. Our character must be high in chastity. Then we can fight for God and serve God.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE EIGHT

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(7)

Scripture Reading: Num. 6:1-5

I really admire the sequence of the arrangement of the chapters in the book of Numbers. Chapters one through four record the formation of the divine army, which fights for God and serves God. Immediately after this record, there is a chapter on dealing with defilement. Then there is a test of our chastity, to determine if we are single, pure, and chaste toward the One whom we love. Following this, there is a chapter on the Nazarites. In this message we will begin to consider this chapter on the Nazarites.

VII. TO BE SANCTIFIED—TO BE A NAZARITE

God desires that all of His people be Nazarites. To be a Nazarite is to be sanctified absolutely and ultimately to God. To be sanctified in this way is to be for nothing other than God.

The section on dealing with defilement shows us that God wants His people to be clean, righteous, and faithful. The test for chastity indicates that God wants us to love only Him, to love Him with our heart, with our mind, emotion, and will, and with our physical strength (Mark 12:30). He wants us to have no one else and nothing else other than Him as our first love and our unique love. Even if we love Him in such a way, we still may not be absolutely and ultimately for Him.

We may use married life as an illustration of loving the Lord without being absolutely for Him. God might have favored you with a wife who truly loves you. However,

although she loves you and is altogether chaste toward you, she may not be utterly, absolutely, and ultimately for you. Even the most loving wife is still somewhat for herself in certain things.

The matter of the Nazarite is a test of our absoluteness. If we would be a Nazarite, we must be absolutely, utterly, and ultimately for God.

A. Signifying the Lord Jesus in His Living for God in His Humanity

According to typology, among the human race the unique Nazarite is the Lord Jesus. Hence, a Nazarite is a type of Christ. A Nazarite signifies the Lord Jesus in His living for God in His humanity.

B. By Making a Special Vow to Separate Oneself to God

Numbers 6:2 speaks of a man or a woman making "a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself to Jehovah." Here we see that a Nazarite is sanctified by making a special vow to separate himself to God. At times we might have made a vow to the Lord, but it might not have been very strong or absolute, and we might not have kept it. Can you make a vow and be faithful to it for your whole life?

1. Separating, Sanctifying, Oneself to God Following the Dealing with All the Defilements

There is a difference between separation and sanctification. Separation is on the negative side, and sanctification is on the positive side. On the negative side, we separate ourselves from the worldly people. On the positive side, we sanctify ourselves; that is, we give ourselves to God. First we are separated, and then we are sanctified.

Separating, sanctifying, oneself to God should follow the dealing with all the defilements (chapter five). This is logical, for the dealing with defilement should precede the vow of the Nazarite.

2. The Priests Being Such by Birth

The priests, who are such by birth, are ordained by God out of His initiation. A priest must be a Nazarite, a person absolutely for God. This is according to God's ordination. One's becoming a priest is a matter of God's initiation; it does not depend on what the person does but on what God does concerning him.

3. The Nazarites Becoming Such by a Vow

The Nazarite, who becomes such by a vow, is separated to God by himself out of his initiation. This means that a person is not a Nazarite by birth but can make himself a Nazarite by making a special vow. Thus, the priests are ordained by God out of His initiation, but the Nazarites become such by a vow out of their own initiation. Today we are in the Lord's recovery out of God's initiation and also out of our initiation. Both are needed.

4. The Accomplishing of God's Purpose Requiring Man's Cooperation to Complement God's Ordination

The accomplishment of God's purpose requires man's cooperation to complement God's ordination. This is illustrated by the case of Samuel. Samuel was a Nazarite who complemented the deficient Eli, a priest ordained by God. In his old age Eli had certain deficiencies. However, Samuel, out of his own initiation, came in to fill up the gap caused by Eli's deficiencies and thereby to complement the deficient Eli.

C. Abstaining from Wine and from Anything Related to Its Source

"He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink, and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is made from the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins" (vv. 3-4). Here we see that a Nazarite had to abstain from wine and anything related to its source. This

signifies abstaining from the earthly enjoyment and pleasure (cf. Psa. 104:15; Eccl. 10:19). To abstain from all kinds of wine is to abstain from all kinds of earthly enjoyment and pleasure.

We should be careful of anything earthly that makes us happy. Earthly pleasure leads to lustful conduct and to a lustful intention. Earthly enjoyment and pleasure would defile a Nazarite.

A Nazarite had to abstain from vinegar made from wine, from the juice of grapes, and from grapes fresh or dried. This signifies abstaining from anything that issues in earthly enjoyment or pleasure. Vinegar is classified with wine because the source is the same. Wine, vinegar, and grape juice are all prohibited. From this we see that the one who is absolute for God is altogether separated from anything of earthly pleasures. This shows the absoluteness of the Nazarite.

D. Not Shaving the Head

"All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall come upon his head. Until the completion of the days for which he separated himself to Jehovah, he shall be holy; he shall let the hair of his head grow freely" (Num. 6:5). Not shaving the head signifies not rejecting the headship of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3, 6).

To be a Nazarite we must take care of two things. First, we must have nothing to do with earthly pleasure. Second, we must be absolutely under authority, absolutely under the headship.

The shaving of one's head signifies the rejecting of the headship of the Lord. Spiritually speaking, for us to shave our head means that we cast off the Lord's authority over us. The Nazarite was to let his hair grow long (freely); that is, he was to remain in subjection to the Lord's headship, wherein is the power (Judg. 16:17).

Today is a day of lawlessness. If we were to do away with the police and close the courts, society would be full of robbers and murderers. We could not bear to live in such an intolerable situation. The United States of America has

an excellent constitution, and based upon this constitution there are strong laws and many courts to see that these laws are carried out. Everyone who appears in a court of law must submit to the laws of the United States government. Otherwise, the entire society would be destroyed.

The fallen race is a rebellious race. The rebellious nature is still within us. Thus, it would be dangerous to be in a situation in which there is no deputy authority. This was the reason God established human government (Gen. 9:5-6). The entire government is a deputy authority representing God's authority. Speaking of this, Paul says, "Let every person be subject to the authorities over them. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are appointed by God. Therefore he who resists the authority opposes what God has appointed" (Rom. 13:1-2a). Teachers, employers, and police officers are deputy authorities. Everywhere on earth there is deputy authority.

Let us apply this matter of deputy authority to the church. Is there deputy authority in the church? If there is no deputy authority in the church, why are there elders? Recently, some have said that there is no deputy authority in the New Testament. If such a claim is true, why does the New Testament tell us that there are elders in the churches? Surely, Christ is the Head, and the authority is the Spirit, but we still need elders in the church. Without elders, the church would be in anarchy.

There is also deputy authority in our family life. The parents are the deputy authority to the children (Eph. 6:1), and the husbands are the deputy authority to the wives (Eph. 5:23). Paul even says that a wife should fear her husband (Eph. 5:33). For a wife to fear her husband means that she takes him as the deputy authority. Even in a small family there is deputy authority. Then how much more should there be deputy authority in the church!

Two particular characteristics, or two signs, of a Nazarite are, first, that he does not touch any worldly pleasure and, second, that he always keeps himself under some authority. These are solemn matters. As those who would be absolute for God, we must abstain from earthly pleasure. Furthermore,

we must not shave our head; that is, we must respect authority and remain under the headship of our Lord in every way.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE NINE

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(8)

Scripture Reading: Num. 6:6-12

In this message we will continue to consider the matter of being sanctified to be a Nazarite covered in chapter six of Numbers.

E. Not Touching Death So That He Might Not Be Defiled

In the foregoing message we saw that to be sanctified to be a Nazarite, first, one must not touch any earthly pleasure (signified by wine—vv. 3-4) and, second, one must keep oneself under God's headship (signified by not shaving the head—v. 5). Now we need to see that a Nazarite must not touch anything dead so that he might not be defiled. The most hateful thing in the eyes of God is death, and a Nazarite must not be defiled by it.

1. Not Being Defiled by the Death of the Blood Relatives, but Remaining in His Separation to Be Holy to God

A Nazarite should not be defiled by the death of his blood relatives, the relatives closest to him, but should remain in his separation to be holy to God (vv. 6-8). Even the death of his father and mother should not defile him. This signifies that we should not be defiled from the deadness that comes through natural affection, but should keep ourselves clean in our sanctification. A Nazarite must remain fully sanctified, separated to God from all things, and should continually cleave to God.

A Nazarite had to abstain from earthly pleasure and not

be defiled by the deadness that comes through natural affection. Pleasure is a matter of enjoyment, and natural affection is a matter of love. To avoid defilement, a Nazarite had to be careful concerning both earthly pleasure and natural affection.

2. Cleansed on the Seventh Day of the Defilement Caused by the Sudden Death of One beside Him

If the head of a Nazarite's separation was defiled by the sudden death of one beside him, he was to be cleansed on the seventh day (the last day of his separation—Acts 21:27) by shaving his head (Num. 6:9-12). This indicates that if we are defiled by some unexpected deadness, we should be cleansed by reseparating ourselves to the Lord.

Humanly speaking, it would not be the fault of a Nazarite if one beside him died suddenly. Nevertheless, such a sudden death would defile the Nazarite, and the Nazarite was held responsible for this defilement. Today we are living among others, and we cannot predict when, spiritually speaking, someone will die beside us. If we are defiled by unexpected deadness, we need to have a new start. We need to be cleansed by reseparating ourselves to the Lord.

We do not realize how dirty and defiling death is. We consider sin to be very defiling, yet God hates death much more than sin. In the church life, sin may come in to defile the church and damage the saints, but more often we are defiled by death. Death is something hidden. Often death is right beside us, yet we have no consciousness of it or feeling concerning it and become defiled by it.

How can we know that we have been defiled by death? We know this by having a sense, or feeling, of deadness. Sin brings in condemnation, which affects our conscience. However, death is not a matter of condemnation, not something that affects our conscience. Rather, death is a matter that deadens us and makes us dead.

Often when you come to a meeting, you receive a supply of life and are enlivened. Sometimes, however, when you get home from a meeting, you feel deadened, but you do not

know why. You sense no condemnation in your conscience, but there is a killing going on within you that makes you dead. Your spirit is weak and dull. You are "down" and cannot rise up, and you cannot pray for some days. You did not know it, but in that particular meeting you received some killing; you were deadened by some kind of death. We all have had this kind of experience.

As those who are absolutely and utterly for God, we must avoid earthly pleasure and the influence of death. It is easy to abstain from earthly pleasure, but it is not easy to sense that we are near someone who is spiritually dead. Nevertheless, if we are living in the Spirit in every way, when we come to a meeting, we may immediately have the sense that deadness is there. We may realize not only that the meeting is low and slow but that in the meeting there is deadness hidden beneath the surface. At such a time we need to pray very much to counter that deadening situation: "Lord, cover me with Your blood against any deadening, against any spiritual deadness." We must fight against deadness.

Early in the church life in my hometown we were on a church life honeymoon. Everything was new and fresh, and it was difficult to sense any deadness. About a year later, I left my job, became full-time, and moved to Shanghai to be with Brother Nee in the church there. The church in Shanghai had a considerable history and had passed through many troubles. Thus, the church was rather old. Although I was at the center of the work and could have come to know the situation there, I learned not to know anything, for the more we know, the more we are deadened. (Most of the talk in the church life is not related to sinful things but is related to death.) In some of the meetings I was enlivened, but sometimes I had the feeling of being dead. It seemed that the longer I sat in the meeting, the more I became deadened. I wanted to pray, but I was not able to utter anything in prayer. I was under the killing of death, and my spirit could not rise up.

Later, I talked to some older, more experienced ones, and I learned a lesson. When you come to a meeting, you need

to sense whether there is any deadness there. You should not do this purposely, as if you were attending the meeting as an inspector. On the contrary, you should be a person who is able to sense the presence of death in a meeting. If death is present, you should be the first to pray, "Lord, cover this meeting with Your prevailing blood. Under this blood we participate in the divine life." Exercise your spirit strongly against the deadness in the meeting. Then as you sit in the meeting you will be protected. This is part of the spiritual warfare.

The churches in the United States have an extensive background and history. Because of the background and the present situation, there are many elements that have brought in death. I believe that this is the reason for the gradual decline in attendance at the prayer meeting in many churches. Hidden deadness can cause the prayer meeting to become dormant. We need to fight against death and its effects.

As Nazarites, we must learn to avoid deadness. We can easily avoid the deadness caused by the death of a blood relative, for that kind of death is apparent. It is not easy, however, to avoid the unexpected death of someone near us, because that kind of death is often hidden. Therefore, we must be those who are full of life, which is "anti-death." This depends on how much we exercise our spirit to pray, not in a general way but with a prayer that fights against the enemy.

Sin is of Satan (John 8:44), who is also the source of death (Heb. 2:14). With the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there is evil; however, the result of partaking of this tree is not evil—it is death. When we eat of the tree of life, the result is life. In the church life we must constantly fight against death. For example, if in the prayer meeting death makes it difficult for us to pray, we need to fight against death and its influence.

As Nazarites we must abstain from earthly pleasure, remain under the headship of the Lord, and learn to fight against death. Death is everywhere. Society is filled with the germs of death. Because these germs are even in the church

life, we need to pray daily, hourly, fighting against death, the last enemy of God (1 Cor. 15:26).

We should not think that the Nazarites are not for fighting. The Nazarites are numbered for the formation of God's army. They are very vigilant, full of feeling for the war against death. In every church there is the need of the sense, the consciousness, of death so that we may fight against it.

a. On the Eighth Day the Nazarite Bringing Two Turtle Doves or Two Young Pigeons to the Priest to the Entrance of the Tent of Meeting, One to Be Offered as a Sin Offering and the Other as a Burnt Offering, for His Propitiation

"On the eighth day he shall bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons to the priest to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and the priest shall offer one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering, and make propitiation for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead body. And he shall sanctify his head that same day" (Num. 6:10-11). The eighth day is the day of resurrection, the day that is against death. On this day the Nazarite was to have a new start. In order to have a new start, he had to bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons to the priest, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. A sin offering was needed because he had failed in his Nazarite vow, and this failure was a sin. A burnt offering is an offering of absolute consecration and absolute sanctification. Through these offerings propitiation was made for him, and he was redeemed from his wrongdoing. For us today, these offerings indicate that we should offer Christ as both the sin offering and the burnt offering, in resurrection, for our forgiveness through His redemption.

On the eighth day the Nazarite was also to sanctify his head. This means that he was to have a new consecration for his subjection under the headship.

b. The Nazarite Separating Himself to God Again and Bringing a Lamb for a Trespass Offering, the Former Separation Being Void

Numbers 6:12 says that the Nazarite was to "separate himself to Jehovah for the days of his separation, and bring a lamb a year old for a trespass offering; but the former days shall be void, because his separation was defiled." This was a new vow of consecration for the Nazarite to separate himself to God again. For this, he needed a lamb for a trespass offering. His failure in his vow was a sin, for which he needed a sin offering. His mistake was a trespass, for which he needed a trespass offering. Applying this verse to us today, we see that once our former separation has been made void, we should reseparate ourselves to God by taking Christ as our trespass offering.

From reading these verses in Numbers 6, we see that it is a serious matter to make a Nazarite vow. It should not be taken lightly. In making such a vow, we must be especially careful to keep ourselves from being defiled by death. If we keep ourselves from the defilement of death, we will be living persons who can be absolute for God, for His army, and for His priesthood.

God ordained one family (Aaron's) to be the priests. This ordination excluded all others from this opportunity. But the vow of the Nazarite opens the gate, affording all the people of God an equal opportunity. The Nazarite vow depends on our initiation, not God's. It depends on our willingness. If we are willing, the door is open.

Here we see God's sovereignty. He has His ordination and also His regulation, the vow of the Nazarite. Not only the house of Aaron had the privilege of being absolute for God; this opportunity was available to all. God's regulation balanced His ordination and gave equal opportunity to all God's people to be absolute for God as a warrior or as a priest.

Consider the case of Samuel. Samuel was not a priest; he was a Nazarite who eventually fulfilled the duty of a

priest. Samuel filled in the gap caused by the deficiencies of Eli, who was a priest according to God's ordination. The one who was a volunteer filled the deficiency of the one who was a priest by God's ordination. This indicates that, eventually, God's regulation is equal to, if not better than, His ordination. The ordination depends on God's initiation, but the regulation depends on our initiation. The door is now open to everyone. Whether or not we take the opportunity depends on our willingness.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TEN

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(9)

Scripture Reading: Num. 6:13-21

A Nazarite is a superior person, one who is absolutely, utterly, and ultimately for God. In order to be a Nazarite, one must pass through all the dealings with defilement and the test of suspicion in chapter five. Anyone who has not passed through the dealings and the test in Numbers 5 cannot be a Nazarite.

A Nazarite must overcome four main things. First, he must overcome the natural affection toward his blood relatives, the natural affection he has for his mother, father, wife, and children. The Lord Jesus overcame such natural affection. Matthew 12:48 through 50 say, "Who is My mother, and who are My brothers? And stretching out His hand over His disciples, He said, Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in the heavens, he is My brother and sister and mother." The Lord Jesus recognized as His relatives those who were His relatives in spirit, not those who were His relatives in the natural life.

Surely the Lord Jesus was a real Nazarite. The best pattern of a Nazarite is the man Jesus. Since He is the pattern, we all must learn of Him, follow Him, and take His yoke (Matt. 11:29-30). As a rule, every New Testament believer should be a Nazarite. However, today it is difficult to find one proper New Testament Nazarite in a city.

The second thing a Nazarite must overcome is earthly pleasure. If we would be Nazarites, we must abstain from earthly pleasure.

Third, a Nazarite must deal with the rebellion in his nature. Thank God that we were created with an abundance of hair on our head, indicating that we are under authority. I can testify that it is a great blessing to be under someone, some thing, or some environment. During the Japanese invasion of China, I was arrested by the Japanese and kept in prison for thirty days. Although I was under a very strict dealing and control, even that imprisonment was a blessing to me.

Children and teenagers need to be under authority. A child who is not under authority will be unruly and wild. The same is true of teenagers who are not willing to be under someone, some thing, or some environment.

In the church life we all have received God and have been born of God. We all have received the life of God. In this sense we all, including the Apostle Paul, are equal. However, in the church some are babes. In his first Epistle, John, in a general way, addressed all the saints as "little children" (2:1, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). Nevertheless, he respectively addressed some as "young children," others as "young men," and still others as "fathers" (2:12-14). To say that all the members of a family of three generations are the same would make the family a mess. In family life we surely need to respect the differences between the grandparents, the parents, and the children. The principle is the same in the church life. First Peter 5:5 says, "Younger men, be subject to elders." Although, in the spirit, the older ones should also learn to obey the younger ones (Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 5:5b), still the difference in age remains.

It is a blessing to be under someone or some thing. It is even a blessing to be severely limited. I thank the Lord that from the day I came into the recovery, the Lord put me under someone, some thing, or some environment.

Today some are teaching that it is not necessary for believers to submit to a deputy authority, that believers should not be under anyone. This erroneous teaching is very damaging. First, it is damaging to those who teach in this way, and then it is damaging to the ones who receive such a teaching. Those who accept the teaching that the believers

should not submit to deputy authority will be spoiled by this teaching. Some may even be spoiled without remedy in their youth. Therefore, it is a serious matter to teach that we should not submit to deputy authority, and it is also a serious matter to receive this teaching.

A Nazarite is a person full of hair, full of submission. With him there are a submissive spirit, standing, atmosphere, and intention. If you are such a person, there will be a great blessing for you and for your future.

Fourth, a Nazarite must always try his best to avoid death. Do not allow anyone to stand by you who is about to die suddenly. If someone beside you dies suddenly, you may feel that your situation is excusable. But there is no excuse for being defiled by death, and the sudden death of someone will cause your Nazarite vow to be made void. Especially when rumors and gossip are spreading, it is better not to stand by anyone. A person may suddenly die in front of you by uttering all kinds of death. Once you have been contaminated by death, you need to deal with that contamination and have a new start. Otherwise, you will be killed, and eventually the entire church, seemingly without explanation, will be brought into a deadened situation.

As Numbers 5 indicates, in order to be a Nazarite, one must pass through many dealings and severe tests. Furthermore, according to 6:1-12, a Nazarite must overcome natural affection, worldly pleasure, rebellion, and deadness. Therefore, to be a Nazarite is to be something that is spiritually very high and superior.

Let us now consider 6:13-21 to see some further matters related to being a Nazarite.

F. At the Completion of the Nazarite's Days of Separation, the Nazarite Being Brought to the Entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and the Nazarite Bringing His Offerings to God

"This is the law for the Nazarite, when the days of his separation have been completed: he shall be brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and he shall bring his

offering to Jehovah" (vv. 13-14a). In ancient times, the Nazarite's separation lasted for seven days. In the Bible seven days indicate a full course, even a whole lifetime. For example, in Genesis 1 we have seven days—six days for God's work in creation and one day for rest. Furthermore, the Passover was followed by the feast of unleavened bread, a feast that lasted seven days. The seven days of this feast signify the whole course of our Christian life.

At the completion of the Nazarite's seven days of separation, he was to be brought to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and he was to bring his offerings to God. Each of these offerings was a type of Christ. The enjoyment of Christ as these offerings indicates the overcoming of natural affection, earthly pleasure, rebellion, and death.

1. One Male Lamb a Year Old without Blemish for a Burnt Offering

The Nazarite was to bring "one male lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering" (v. 14b). Here "male" signifies strong, "lamb" signifies meek, "a year old" signifies fresh, and "without blemish" signifies without defects. This lamb for a burnt offering typifies Christ as our burnt offering that we may be acceptable to God in Him and live to God by Him. For us to be in Christ means that we are one with Him. First we are in Him, and then we live to God by Him.

When we offer such an offering, we lay our hands on the offering to indicate that we identify ourselves with the offering, making ourselves one with the offering. Therefore, our offering is not merely Christ Himself but also ourselves identified with Christ. Apart from Christ, we cannot offer anything that can be accepted by God. In order for God to accept us, we must be offered to God with Christ in such a way that we make ourselves one with Christ as the burnt offering.

In Numbers 6 the completion of the Nazarite's days of separation signify not an ending but a beginning. This beginning is the beginning of a life of the burnt offering, a life absolutely, utterly, and ultimately for God. This means

that when we offer the burnt offering to God, laying our hands on the offering and making ourselves one with the offering, we promise God that from that time we will be just like this offering, living a life absolutely for God in the seven days of the vow of the Nazarite.

2. One Ewe Lamb a Year Old without Blemish for a Sin Offering

The Nazarite was also to bring "one ewe lamb a year old without blemish for a sin offering" (v. 14c). Here "ewe" signifies submissive. This ewe lamb typifies Christ as our sin offering that we may be redeemed.

At the beginning of our Nazarite life, we need redemption. The reason we need God's redemption, which has been completed in Christ, is that, no matter how good we may be, we are still in the old creation. We need to lay our hands on the ewe lamb which is our sin offering. While we are offering ourselves to God to live absolutely, utterly, and ultimately for Him, we realize that we are still sinful. Thus, as a match to Christ as our burnt offering, we need Christ as our sin offering. In the morning we may pray, "Father, I offer myself to You in Christ as a burnt offering. At the same time, Father, I offer my Lord Jesus as my sin offering." Daily we need Christ as our sin offering.

3. One Ram without Blemish for a Peace Offering

The Nazarite was also required to offer "one ram without blemish for a peace offering" (v. 14d). The "ram" here signifies strong for enjoyment. This ram typifies Christ as our peace offering for our enjoyment with God in fellowship with peace. The result of the burnt offering and the sin offering is the peace offering.

The peace offering is for the fellowship in enjoyment between us and God. Both we and God enjoy Christ as the same object for our fellowship. We and God enjoy Christ as the burnt offering and as the sin offering, and this issues in the enjoyment of Christ as the peace offering. For Christ to be our peace offering means that we and God mutually

enjoy Christ and have fellowship in Christ. This fellowship is not just once but is for our whole life.

4. A Basket of Unleavened Bread, Cakes of Fine Flour Mixed with Oil, and Unleavened Wafers Anointed with Oil, and Their Meal Offering and Their Drink Offerings

Finally, the Nazarite was to bring "a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their meal offering and their drink offerings" (v. 15). In this verse, "a basket" signifies fullness, "unleavened" signifies without sin, "bread" signifies formed, "cakes" signifies more formed, "fine" signifies even and balanced, "flour" signifies Christ ground in His humanity, "mixed" signifies mingled, "with oil" signifies the Holy Spirit (divinity), "wafers" signifies easy to eat, "anointed" signifies poured upon, "meal offering" signifies holy food, and "drink offerings" signifies holy drinks for God. All this typifies Christ in His humanity with His divinity offered to God for us as food both to God and to us and also as holy drinks to God.

Without these types, we could never imagine that Christ has so many aspects. We need to stay in and muse upon the revelation of Christ in these types in the book of Numbers so that we may enjoy Him more.

G. The Nazarite Shaving the Head of His Separation and Putting the Hair on the Fire under Some Parts of the Sacrifice of the Peace Offering to End the Days of His Separation

"The Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering" (v. 18). Here we see that at the end of his separation the Nazarite was to shave his head. This does not mean that the Nazarite put

away the headship and gave up his submission. The Nazarite had offered the burnt offering, which was a promise to God that he would continue for his whole life to live as in the days of his separation.

Every man, every male, has two statuses. The first status is that of a female, submissive to God and having long hair as a sign of submission. The second status is that of a male, representing God and having his head shaved as a sign of his being God's representative. In the position of a female, the Nazarite kept his hair during his vow. Then, at the completion of the vow, he took the position of an ordinary man and shaved his head. In a proper family, there is a male representing God as the head, and there is also a female in submission. But when we come to kneel before the Lord, we all come as females, having the long hair of submission.

H. The Priest Taking the Shoulder of the Boiled Ram, One Unleavened Cake, and One Unleavened Wafer, Putting Them upon the Palms of the Nazarite, and Waving Them for a Wave Offering

"The priest shall take the shoulder of the ram, when it is boiled, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them upon the palms of the Nazarite, after he has shaven the hair of his separation. And the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before Jehovah; they are a holy portion for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering" (vv. 19-20a). "Shoulder" signifies strength to bear, "wave" signifies offering in resurrection, "the breast" signifies love to embrace, "wave offering" signifies resurrection, and "heave offering" signifies ascension. The types here signify that Christ will supply the believer who separates himself by a vow to be a Nazarite and becomes a serving one of God with Himself as the life supply in different aspects in His resurrection and ascension.

In the Old Testament, the offerers and the priests were two different categories of people. Thus, besides the offerer,

there was the need of a priest. In the New Testament, we are both the offerers and the priests. On the one hand, we are those who offer Christ; on the other hand, we are those who carry out the priestly service. Eventually, what we enjoy is the very Christ we offer to God in His resurrection and ascension.

I. The Nazarite Now Permitted to Drink Wine

"After that the Nazarite may drink wine" (v. 20b). After all the procedures in verses 13 through 20a were accomplished, the Nazarite was permitted to drink wine.

As we have pointed out, the Nazarite's separation was of seven days, signifying a full course of time. Samson was a Nazarite from his mother's womb for the full course of his life (Judg. 16:17). The source of Samson's power was his long hair. When he was submissive to the Lord, taking the Lord as his head, he had power. But when his head was shaved, he lost his power. From this we see that in submission there is power.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE ELEVEN

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(10)

Scripture Reading: Num. 6:22-27; 2 Cor. 13:14

In this message we come to a wonderful section of the book of Numbers—6:22-27. These verses cover the matter of being blessed by God in His divine trinity.

VIII. BEING BLESSED BY GOD

This section on being blessed comes after the dealing with defilement, the test of suspicion, and the vow of the Nazarite. These three things are actually three steps. First, we must deal with anything that is defiling. Then we need to undergo the test related to suspicion. Following this, we should consecrate ourselves to the Lord by taking the vow of the Nazarite.

If we spend time to consider these three steps, we will realize that to serve the Lord and to fight for His kingdom are not shallow, small, or light matters. On the contrary, these matters are very deep, high, and profound. We must be up to the level of a Nazarite, one who overcomes natural affection, earthly pleasure, rebellion, and unexpected death. If we overcome these four things and stay away from them, we will be in a position to receive God Himself as our blessing.

A. By God in His Divine Trinity

After the record of the Nazarite vow, the Lord told Moses to tell Aaron and his sons—all the priests, who were so close to Him—to bless His people in the way of His divine trinity. Jehovah is the Triune God. As the Triune God, He

dispenses Himself into us in His divinity and in His divine trinity. Without being triune, God could not dispense Himself into His chosen people as their blessing. The very blessing is God Himself dispensed into His chosen people. Although God desires to bless His chosen people in this way, they need to come up to a standard that matches His blessing.

The unique blessing in the whole universe is God Himself. Anything besides God is vanity. The entire universe was created by God, yet without God, apart from God, even the universe created by God is vanity. The existence of the universe is a great miracle, but without God the miraculous existence of the universe is vanity. Apart from God, everything is "vanity of vanities" (Eccl. 1:2). Only God Himself is real. Only He is the blessing to us. If we gained the entire universe yet missed God, we would be the most pitiful persons. History is filled with cases of people who gained many riches and many material things but who eventually realized that, without God, it was all vanity. God Himself is our blessing, and this blessing comes to us through the dispensing of the divine Being into us in His divine trinity—in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The traditional and even the basic theology concerning God's divine trinity does not have the view that the divine Trinity is for God to dispense Himself into us. This light has come to us only in the last thirty years.

Ephesians chapter one gives us a record of how the Triune God blesses His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people in His divine trinity. This chapter is mainly on the three steps of God's blessing us in His divine trinity, that is, on how He blesses us in the Father (vv. 3-6), in the Son (vv. 7-12), and in the Spirit (vv. 13-14). Eventually, because of such a flow of the divine Trinity as the blessing to God's chosen people, there is an issue, and the issue of this blessed flow is the church as the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all (vv. 22-23). The church as the Body of Christ is the total issue of the divine Trinity as a flow to dispense all that God is into His chosen people. The

Body of Christ is the fullness, the totality, of the One who fills all in all.

Like Numbers, Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is also a book of numbers. This is true in a particular way concerning the description of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem has twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes (21:12), and twelve foundations with the names of the twelve apostles (v. 14). Furthermore, the tree of life bears twelve kinds of fruit (22:2). Among these twelves the Triune God is hidden, and even mingled, as His people's blessing.

The consummation of the record of the entire Bible is God the triune as the very particular and subjective blessing to His people. As the consummation of the entire record of the Bible, the New Jerusalem is just the very God in His divine trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—wrapped up in the number twelve with His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people as their blessing. This blessing will last eternally. Such a blessing is the ultimate fulfillment of God's blessing to Israel in Numbers 6. Only when the New Jerusalem comes, will this blessing be completely fulfilled.

In the blessing in Numbers 6, "Jehovah bless you and keep you" (v. 24) is ascribed to the Father; "Jehovah make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you" (v. 25) is ascribed to the Son; and "Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace" (v. 26) is ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The Father blesses us, the Son shines upon us, and the Holy Spirit lifts up His countenance upon us. As a result, we are kept, we receive grace, and we have peace.

Most of the Epistles of Paul open with a word concerning grace and peace. Grace is of the Son and peace is of the Spirit. Grace is somewhat objective. Peace is subjective; it is the result, the issue, of our enjoyment of grace. First we receive grace and then we enjoy peace. We receive grace in the Son and we enjoy peace in the Spirit.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace (John 1:1, 14).

Of His fullness we have all received grace upon grace (John 1:16). Whereas the law was given through Moses, grace came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). This grace is actually a person, Christ Himself. When we receive grace, the result is that we have peace. This peace is the pneumatic Christ, the Christ who is the life-giving Spirit becoming the Spirit of peace within us.

The blessing in Numbers 6 is neither an Old Testament blessing nor a New Testament blessing. Rather, it is the eternal blessing of the Triune God, which is the Triune God dispensing Himself in His divine trinity into us for our enjoyment. This is God's eternal blessing.

"Jehovah bless you" means that Jehovah gives Himself to you. However, God does not give Himself to us merely in an objective way like one brother giving a gift to another. God gives Himself to us in His trinity, step by step and little by little. If you were to ask me what blessing I have received from the Lord, I would answer, "The only blessing I have received from the Lord is my Triune God. My Triune God is my blessing."

1. In the Father—
"Jehovah Bless You and Keep You"

Referring to the Father, Numbers 6:24 says, "Jehovah bless you and keep you." The Father blesses us in every way and in every aspect in His love (cf. Eph. 1:3), and He keeps us in every way and in every aspect in His power (cf. John 17:11, 15).

The blessing One keeps us. In Numbers 6:24 the word *keep* is of crucial importance. In John 17:11 the Lord Jesus prayed that the Father would keep us in His name. This is to keep us in the dispensing Triune God. While the Triune God is dispensing Himself into us, we are kept in the dispensing One. In John 17:15 the Lord Jesus went on to pray that the Father would keep us from the evil one. When we are kept in the dispensing Triune God, there is nothing left for the hand of the enemy. We should pray for the blessing of being kept absolutely in the dispensing Triune

God and altogether outside of the evil one. What a blessing this is!

2. In the Son—"Jehovah Make His Face to Shine upon You and Be Gracious to You"

The second part of this blessing says, "Jehovah make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you" (Num. 6:25). In Luke 1:78, when the Lord Jesus was about to be born, Zachariah prophesied, "The rising sun from on high shall visit us." This rising sun is the Son in the divine Trinity. This implies God's incarnation to show Himself to us in a shining way. No one has ever seen God, but through His incarnation we have seen His face and have beheld His glory (John 1:14), and He has been shining upon us continually. Wherever He went, He was a great light shining upon the people sitting in darkness (Matt. 4:16), for He is the light of the world (John 8:12).

The word *face* in Numbers 6:25 signifies presence. As the One whose face shines upon us, Christ the Son is the visible presence of the invisible God. God and His presence are invisible, but through His incarnation He became the shining sun. This shining sun is God's invisible presence becoming visible. God's presence not only became visible—it was also shining. On the Mount of Transfiguration, some of the Lord's disciples beheld Him in His glory (2 Pet. 1:16-18; Matt. 17:1-2).

Numbers 6:25 speaks not only of Jehovah making His face to shine upon us, but also of Jehovah being gracious to us. These two points added together equal John 1:14, 16-17. God's incarnation was the shining of His presence. Along with this shining there was grace. "The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us…full of grace" (v. 14). The Lord is gracious to us; He has even become grace to us. For the Lord to be gracious to us means that He is continually grace to us. This grace is the grace of Christ (2 Cor. 13:14a), which is actually Christ Himself. When we have Christ, we have grace. The Triune God is altogether gracious to us. Day after day we enjoy Him as grace.

3. In the Spirit—"Jehovah Lift Up His Countenance upon You and Give You Peace"

The third part of this blessing says, "Jehovah lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace" (Num. 6:26). In the blessing in Numbers 6 we have both the face and the countenance, and there is a difference between them. The face denotes the presence of the person, and the countenance denotes the expression of the person. To lift up your countenance upon a person means that you confirm, assure, promise, and give everything to that person. Jesus came as the face of God, and the Holy Spirit comes as the countenance of God. Ephesians 4:30 says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." If we grieve Him, His countenance will drop. If we obey Him, He will be happy with us, and He will lift up His countenance to confirm us, assure us, guarantee us, promise us, and give us everything.

The Father blesses, the Son shines, and the Holy Spirit lifts up His countenance. When the Triune God is dispensed into us, we have the face of the Triune God and also His countenance. He is happy with us, assuring us, confirming us, guaranteeing us, promising us, and giving us everything. Eventually, we are kept in the Triune God, the Triune God becomes grace to us every day, and we have peace.

In Numbers 6:23-26 there is no mention of material blessing. In these verses the Lord did not tell the children of Israel that He would bring them into the good land, that He would give each one of them a portion of the land, that He would keep them from famine and give them rain, that He would protect them from their enemies, and that He would cause them to flourish. The blessing here is not of such a nature.

What, then, is the blessing in Numbers 6? This blessing is the Triune God in His person as the Father, as the Son, and as the Spirit. In the Father we receive the blessing and are kept in the Triune God. In the Son we receive God's presence and enjoy Him as grace. In the Holy Spirit God's countenance is over us, and we enjoy peace day and night.

B. Compared with the Blessing in 2 Corinthians 13:14

Second Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." The blessing here is actually the same as that in Numbers 6:23-26. The grace of the Lord is the Lord Himself as life to us for our enjoyment, the love of God is God Himself as the source of the grace of the Lord, and the fellowship of the Spirit is the Spirit Himself as the transmission of the grace of the Lord with the love of God for our participation.

In both Numbers 6:23-26 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 the blessing is not outward and material. The blessing here is not a matter of an excellent job, a nice house, a high education, and a good family life. Furthermore, this blessing is not related to having any kind of position in the church. Sometimes when we consider our situation, we may be disappointed and feel that we do not have anything. It may seem to us that everything under the sun and even everything in the spiritual field is vanity of vanities. We may feel that nothing is real, not even in the church life. What should we do when we feel this way? We should turn to the Triune God. He is our real blessing and portion. What a blessing it is to have Him as the blessing! What a blessing it is to have His face, His presence, and to enjoy Him daily as grace! The more we suffer, the more we enjoy Him as grace. What a blessing it is to have His countenance smiling upon us, assuring us, and confirming us! And what a blessing it is to have peace in Him, by Him, and with Him! This is the Triune God as our blessing. Oh, may the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWELVE

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(11)

Scripture Reading: Num. 7:1-10, 84-89

In this message we come to a new section of Numbers, chapter seven. This chapter covers the offerings of the children of Israel.

IX. OFFERINGS

After the dealing with defilement, the testing of suspicion, the vow of the Nazarite, and the blessing of the Triune God, the situation between God and Israel came to a new stage. On the people's side everything was ready. They had been formed into an army and were camping in array. On God's side, the tabernacle had been built and set up, and it was standing on earth, declaring that the God of the heavens now had a dwelling place on earth, even in the wilderness.

From a bird's-eye view, we can see two items: the tabernacle and the altar. The tabernacle signifies God's embodiment on earth. This embodiment is God's habitation, where He can dwell among men and through which man can not only contact Him but also enter into Him to participate in all that He is in His elements and attributes. These elements and attributes are signified by the showbread, the lampstand, the incense altar, and the ark. Man can enter into God. How wonderful!

Before this time, God did not have a home on earth. As far as the earth was concerned, God was homeless. He had nowhere to go, to stay, or to settle down. Abraham was a close friend to Him and was very good to Him. God liked

Abraham very much as a close friend, but He could only come to visit him, to stay in His friend's tent for a few hours and then leave. He had no place to settle and to rest. When the children of Israel went down into Egypt, they were usurped, occupied, by Pharaoh, who used them as slaves. God could do nothing. At that time He could be considered only the God in the heavens but not yet the God on earth.

In the book of Numbers the situation is altogether different. Now, in the wilderness, among the approximately two million children of Israel, God could have a home, a habitation, and could become fully settled and rest. Also, His people had been formed into an army in good order to have a display in a beautiful array in order to declare something to God's enemy. Furthermore, God's chosen people had the right, through the altar (that is, redemption), through the shedding of the blood of the sacrifices, which pointed to Christ, not only to contact God but also to enter into Him. At this stage in the book of Numbers, God was no longer just in the heavens; He was the very God of the heavens and of the earth. Thus, God now has two residences—the heavens and the earth. The residence He prefers is His residence on earth.

The tabernacle with all its furnishings fully portrays and typifies the embodied Triune God, the processed Triune God. To be in the tabernacle is to be in the embodied and processed Triune God. Once we are in the tabernacle, we can take a tour within it and view all its contents.

The Christian life is a touring life; it is a life of daily taking a tour in the tabernacle, the typified Triune God. This means that after entering into the tabernacle, we can have a tour to see God's attributes and elements. As we are taking such a tour, we will see the showbread, the lampstand, and the incense altar, all of which typify Christ. God is life; the showbread table displays the bread of life. God is light; the lampstand shines upon us, and we are in the light. God accepts repentant and redeemed sinners, and the incense altar signifies God's welcoming of us.

Have you taken a tour in the tabernacle today? After you rose up this morning, did you call, "O Lord Jesus," and enter

into God's dwelling place? In God's dwelling place we see life, light, the incense for acceptance, and the ark. After spending time at the altar to deal with our sins, we can enter into the tabernacle and make a tour, looking at the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. Then we can enter into the most holy place and muse upon the ark. We can even open the ark and see the law of the testimony, the budding rod, and the hidden manna. The Christian life is such a sightseeing life, a life of daily touring the tabernacle.

A. The Anointing of the Tabernacle with Its Furnishings and the Altar with Its Utensils

Numbers 7:1 speaks of "the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed and sanctified it, and all its furnishings and the altar with all its utensils." This indicates that after the setting up of the tabernacle, Moses anointed the tabernacle with its furnishings and the altar with its utensils.

We need to know the spiritual significance of the anointing. The ointment with which the anointing is accomplished may be likened to paint, and the anointing may be likened to painting. The ointment, which is a compound of different elements, typifies the compound, all-inclusive Spirit. This compound Spirit is the consummation of the processed Triune God. As the consummation of the processed Triune God, the all-inclusive Spirit includes Christ's divine nature, human nature, incarnation, human living, all-inclusive death, wonderful resurrection, and exalting ascension. The ointment, therefore, typifies the Triune God with all that He has passed through. (See *Life-study of Exodus*, Messages One Hundred Fifty-seven through One Hundred Sixty-six.) To anoint is to put this ointment upon the anointed object. This can be illustrated by painting. To paint an object is to apply paint to the object. Eventually, layer upon layer of paint may be applied to that object. Likewise, to anoint is to apply the processed, consummated Triune God with His divine nature, human nature, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension, as a whole, to the object of the anointing.

Without the anointing, the tabernacle and the altar had nothing to do with God. Thus, the ointment, a symbol of the compounded and consummated processed Triune God with all His elements and processes, as a whole, had to be put upon the tabernacle and the altar. From that time onward, the tabernacle and the altar were absolutely one with the compounded, consummated Triune God. We today have also been anointed. This means that we are identified with the processed Triune God.

After the tabernacle and the altar were anointed, they became most holy, and whoever touched them was sanctified, made holy. Furthermore, by being anointed, by being identified with the processed Triune God, the tabernacle and the altar were dedicated.

B. The Offering of Six Wagons and Twelve Oxen

Numbers 7:2-9 speaks of the offering of six wagons and twelve oxen. This offering was for the transporting of the tabernacle (not including its furnishings) and the altar, and it was to match God's move in His dwelling place on the earth. The six wagons and the twelve oxen were offered by the people who had dealt with defilement and had been sanctified to receive the blessing of God in His divine trinity.

God, according to His eternal economy, will not do anything by Himself. He did something by Himself only in producing the old creation. But in the new creation He will not do anything by Himself and He will not move by Himself. He must move and work through man.

In Numbers the omnipotent God moved in a portable home in wagons drawn by oxen. We may find it very surprising that God moved in such a way. At the end of the Bible the Lord said, "I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20). Why has the Lord not come yet? It seems that He is coming very slowly. Actually, it is not the One in the wagon who is slow; the oxen are slow. This indicates that the transportation we offer Him is slow. If we could offer God a faster means of transportation, such as a 747, surely He would take it. My point here is that, according to God's New Testament economy, God will not move, act, or do anything by Himself.

He needs man's cooperation, even man's coordination. He needs us, and we need to offer ourselves to Him.

C. The Offering of Twelve Silver Plates, Twelve Silver Basins, and Twelve Gold Spoons Full of Incense

The leaders of the twelve tribes offered twelve silver plates, twelve silver basins, and twelve gold spoons full of incense (vv. 84-86). In offering these for the service of God, they cooperated with God in His services by offering the silver and gold vessels with the incense, signifying Christ in His redemption and His divine nature as a fragrant satisfaction to God.

These items were offered by the twelve tribes in twelve days, signifying that both the offering people and the offering time are eternally complete in God's administration. It took twelve days for all these items to be offered. This indicates that God was patient with man's slowness in his coordination. Although the pace was slow, both the offering people and the offering time were eternally complete and perfect for the divine administration.

D. The Different Categories of Offerings

The leaders of the twelve tribes also offered twelve oxen, twelve rams, twelve lambs a year old, and their meal offering for the burnt offering; twelve male goats for a sin offering; and twenty-four oxen, sixty rams, sixty male goats, and sixty male lambs a year old for the peace offering (vv. 87-88).

We need to offer ourselves to God to match His need for His move. This offering is our coordination with God. However, because we are sinful, we cannot coordinate with God by ourselves. If we try to do this, we will not be accepted. We need Christ. First, we must offer Christ as our sin offering to redeem us from sin. Then we must offer Christ as our burnt offering so that we may live for God in Christ, with Christ, and by Christ. As our burnt offering, Christ is for our living to God. The result of the sin offering and the burnt offering is the peace offering, signifying our enjoyment with God and God's enjoyment with us. The issue of the sin offering and

the burnt offering is the rich peace offering, through which we and God enjoy Christ mutually in peace.

1. For the Worship of God

These offerings are for the worship of God. The proper worship of God is very different from the worship in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. According to the Bible, in order to worship God, we must offer ourselves to Him. Then we must offer Christ as our sin offering, burnt offering, and peace offering. As a result, God is satisfied, and we also are satisfied. Then we and God can sit down together to enjoy Christ in a mutual way.

Even for the transportation of God's moveable home, there was the mutual enjoyment between God and His people in Christ as the sin offering, burnt offering, and peace offering. The principle is the same with us today. For example, when you come to clean the meeting hall, you must come in the way indicated by the type in Numbers 7. This means that first you should offer yourself to cooperate with God and then offer Christ as your sin offering, burnt offering, and peace offering. If you offer Christ in this way, you and God will enjoy Christ in mutuality and be satisfied with Him.

2. To Satisfy God by the Burnt Offerings, Sin Offerings, and Peace Offerings

When we have the proper worship of God, God is satisfied by the burnt offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings. All these offerings signify Christ as the redemption of God's people in different aspects.

3. Offered by the Twelve Tribes in Twelve Days, the Number of the Sacrifices Being Twelve Multiplied One Time, Two Times, or Five Times

These sacrifices were offered by the twelve tribes in twelve days. The number of the sacrifices was twelve multiplied either one time (twelve), two times (twenty-four), or five times (sixty), signifying that the offering time, the offering people, and the offerings are eternally complete in God's administration.

E. Affording a Time for Moses to Speak with God

The offering in Numbers 7 afforded Moses a time to speak with God. "When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the propitiatory cover that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubim; and he spoke to Him" (v. 89). At the propitiatory cover upon the ark of the testimony, there was a conversation between man and God. In this conversation Moses could hear God's voice. How wonderful that God and man could be one to the extent that they could have such a conversation!

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTEEN

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(12)

Scripture Reading: Num. 8

In this message on chapter eight of Numbers, we will briefly consider two matters—lighting the lamps (vv. 2-4) and the presenting of the Levites (the serving ones of the priesthood—vv. 5-26). Instead of covering these matters in detail, we will pay attention only to some of the crucial points.

X. LIGHTING THE LAMPS

Numbers 7 speaks of the offerings related to transportation, and 8:2-4 speaks of the lighting of the lamps. Only after the offerings were presented did Aaron light the lamps.

A. After the Conversation with God through the Offerings

Numbers 7 ends with Moses conversing with God through the offerings (v. 89). The lamps were lit after this conversation.

B. The Seven Lamps Giving Light in Front of the Lampstand

Numbers 8:2 and 3 say, "When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand. And Aaron did so; he lit its lamps in front of the lampstand, as Jehovah commanded Moses." Here we see that the seven lamps, which signify the seven Spirits (Rev. 4:5), gave light in front of the lampstand, shining toward the middle, or the

central part, of the tabernacle. Thus, the shining of the lamps was in the right direction for serving and moving.

Within the tabernacle there was no light from the sun, moon, or stars. Apart from the shining of the lampstand, the entire tabernacle would have been in darkness.

C. The Workmanship of the Lampstand

"This was the workmanship of the lampstand, hammered work of gold; from its base to its buds, it was hammered work; according to the pattern which Jehovah had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand" (Num. 8:4). The workmanship of the lampstand portrays the constituting of Christ as the light-holder. One piece of gold was hammered into the form of a lampstand according to the pattern that God had shown Moses (Exo. 25:31-40; 37:17-24). Gold signifies Christ's divine nature, and the beating of the gold signifies Christ's sufferings in His humanity, through which He was constituted as the divine light-holder to shine in God's dwelling place so that God's serving ones could serve there. (For further details concerning the lampstand, see *Life-study of Exodus,* Messages Ninety-two through Ninety-four.)

At this point the people were ready, the transportation had been offered, and the lamps had been lit. Thus, God's people could begin to render their spiritual service to Him.

XI. THE PRESENTING OF THE LEVITES (THE SERVING ONES OF THE PRIESTHOOD)

The presenting of the Levites, the serving ones of the priesthood, took place in Numbers 8:5-26. Actually, the Levitical work should be one with the priesthood. Because of the Old Testament arrangement, God divided these into two sections. The priesthood was a divine service rendered directly to God, and the Levites served the priesthood. Things such as caring for the animals and carrying the furnishings of the tabernacle were Levitical works.

A. Cleansing the Levites

"Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and

cleanse them" (v. 6). All the Levites had to be cleansed. Verses 7 and 8 speak of the cleansing of the Levites.

1. Sprinkling the Water of Purification upon Them

"Thus you shall do to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water for purification upon them" (v. 7a). Sprinkling the water of purification upon the Levites signifies the application of the effectiveness of the redemption of Christ upon the serving believers. Today, in principle it is the same with us. Every day, early in the morning, we are cleansed anew through the sprinkling, the applying, of the redeeming blood of Christ.

2. Shaving All Their Flesh

Concerning the cleansing of the Levites, Moses was commanded to "let them pass a razor over all their flesh" (v. 7b). This signifies the cutting off of all the natural strength. The hair on the body, signifying the natural strength, had to be shaved off. This indicates that in our service to God we should not depend on our natural strength.

3. Washing Their Clothes and Cleansing Themselves

The Levites were also required to "wash their clothes and cleanse themselves" (v. 7c). This signifies dealing with their conduct and their person. Both the person and the conduct of the serving ones had to be dealt with.

4. Offering a Young Bull for a Sin Offering and Another Young Bull for a Burnt Offering and Its Meal Offering

"Then let them take a young bull and its meal offering of fine flour mingled with oil, and you shall take another young bull for a sin offering" (v. 8). The Levites offered a young bull (the fresh Christ) for a sin offering. This indicates that they were sinful. They also offered another young bull for a burnt offering. This indicates that they should live for God. The meal offering of fine flour mingled with oil indicates that they should live as Christ lived in His humanity.

What they offered of Christ indicates that they should be like their offering. However, they were not like that. Thus, they needed Christ to be their offerings and their replacement. They needed Christ as the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the meal offering.

B. Presenting the Levites to God

After the Levites were cleansed, they were presented to God. Verses 9 through 22 describe this presenting of the Levites.

1. The Sons of Israel Laying Their Hands upon the Levites

"You shall bring the Levites before the tent of meeting, and gather the whole assembly of the sons of Israel. And you shall bring the Levites before Jehovah, and the sons of Israel shall lay their hands upon the Levites" (vv. 9-10). Here we see that the sons of Israel laid their hands upon the Levites. This means that the sons of Israel identified themselves with the Levites.

Actually, the services of the tabernacle should have been taken care of by the sons of Israel, yet God chose the Levites to replace the sons of Israel. Now these Levites were about to be presented to God, meaning that all the sons of Israel would be presented to God. Hence, the sons of Israel laid their hands upon the Levites to identify themselves with the Levites.

2. Aaron Offering the Levites to God as a Wave Offering

"Aaron shall offer the Levites before Jehovah as a wave offering from the sons of Israel, that they may do the service of Jehovah" (v. 11). In typology, a wave offering signifies the resurrected Christ. Here the offering was not composed of cattle but of living persons, the Levites. The Levites were offered as a wave offering that they might do the service of God.

3. The Levites Laying Their Hands upon the Heads of the Bulls, and Moses Offering One for a Sin Offering and the Other for a Burnt Offering

"Then the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bulls; and you shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to Jehovah, to make propitiation for the Levites" (v. 12). For the Levites to lay their hands on the bulls meant that they identified themselves with the bulls. Here three parties were identified with one another through the laying on of hands: the sons of Israel, the Levites, and the bulls.

Moses offered one bull for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering to make propitiation for the Levites. The Levites had been cleansed, but they were still held condemned because they still had sin. On the one hand, Aaron could offer them to God, yet, on the other hand, Moses had to make propitiation for them.

4. Moses Presenting the Levites before Aaron and before His Sons, and Offering Them as a Wave Offering to Jehovah

"You shall present the Levites before Aaron and before his sons, and shall offer them as a wave offering to Jehovah" (v. 13). Aaron first offered the Levites to God as a wave offering before redemption (v. 11). Afterwards, Moses offered the sin offering and the burnt offering to make propitiation for the Levites. Then he presented them again before Aaron and his sons and offered them as a wave offering to Jehovah.

5. Moses Separating the Levites from among the Sons of Israel

"Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine" (v. 14). Through the foregoing procedure, Moses separated the Levites from among the sons of Israel, and the Levites became God's.

6. The Levites Going In to Do the Service of the Tent of Meeting instead of All the Firstborn of All the Sons of Israel

The Lord took the Levites as the replacement of all the firstborn of the sons of Israel (v. 18). Therefore, the Levites went in to do the service of the tent of meeting instead of all the firstborn of the sons of Israel (vv. 15-18). If the Levites had not carried out this service, the firstborn of the sons of Israel would have been required to do it.

7. God Having Given the Levites to Aaron and His Sons

"I have given the Levites as ones given to Aaron and his sons from among the sons of Israel, to do the service of the sons of Israel in the tent of meeting, and to make propitiation for the sons of Israel, that there may be no plague among the sons of Israel when the sons of Israel approach the sanctuary" (v. 19). Here we see that God gave the Levites to Aaron, the head priest, and to his sons, the priests, to do the service in the tent of meeting and to make propitiation for the sons of Israel.

C. The Age for the Service of the Levites

Verses 23 through 26 speak of the age for the service of the Levites.

1. From Twenty-five Years Old and Above

"This is what pertains to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and above they shall go in to serve in the service of the tent of meeting" (v. 24). According to the standard of the Bible, in order to serve, a Levite had to be at least twenty-five years old, the age required to obtain a full education and to attain to the full growth of a proper human being.

2. From the Age of Fifty

"From the age of fifty years they shall withdraw from the work of the service and shall serve no more; but they shall minister to their brethren in the tent of meeting, to

keep the charge, and they shall do no service. Thus shall you do to the Levites with regard to their charges" (vv. 25-26). From the age of fifty the Levites were to withdraw from the work of the service, but they were to minister to their brethren in the tent of meeting, to keep the charge. This indicates that, even though they were to retire from the service, their experience was still needed. The Levites needed twenty-five years of preparation and twenty-five years to do the proper work. After that time, they ministered to their brethren. What they had gained in experience through the twenty-five years of their service was still needed after the age of fifty.

The charge of the tent of meeting was all-inclusive. There were many different charges concerning the service of the tabernacle with all its contents, the altar, and the outer court. Each offering also had its own law: the law of the sin offering, the law of the trespass offering, the law of the burnt offering, the law of the peace offering, and the law of the meal offering. Besides these basic offerings, there were a number of other offerings, each with its own law. Because there were so many regulations, there was the need of "attorneys" to instruct the people. Actually, these "attorneys" were the priests who instructed the people concerning the laws of the offerings. The point here is that there was the need of some experienced ones to instruct God's people so that they would not do anything wrong to offend Him. Because God is serious about the laws governing the tabernacle, the offerings, and the Levitical work, some needed to know how to care for these things so that the service could go on smoothly with God.

Here in Numbers we have a full type of the church service. I hope that the Lord would open our eyes to see that, comparatively speaking, in the church service we have been somewhat loose. With respect to spiritual principles, we have not been so serious, strict, and right. Our making mistakes unconsciously could be the reason that we have missed much of God's blessing. In serving God, we should not be loose but should be serious. We all, especially the

young ones, need to learn the spiritual regulations and spiritual laws regarding the service of God.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FOURTEEN

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(13)

Scripture Reading: Num. 7:1, 87-88; 8:12; 6:14-17

In this message I would like to give a word concerning the divine provisions revealed in chapters six through nine.

Numbers 5:1 through 9:14 is a section which may be considered an insertion in the record about the formation of the army. This insertion includes two kinds of matters—God's requirement and God's provision. First we have God's requirement and then we have His provision. Chapters five and six may be considered God's requirement, which includes different dealings, a testing, and the highest requirement of the Nazarite. All these are God's requirements over His redeemed people in order to form them into His army. Chapters seven and eight and the first part of chapter nine may be considered the divine provision.

Let us now consider the items which are included in God's provision.

THE OINTMENT

A Type of the Processed and Consummated Triune God

The first item of the divine provision in these chapters is the ointment for the anointing of the tabernacle and all its furnishings and the altar with all its utensils (7:1). The ointment typifies the consummated Triune God after passing through all the processes. In the entire Bible this ointment is one of the greatest provisions God has prepared for His redeemed.

By the time of Numbers 7, the tabernacle and the altar

had been built up by God through His people and belonged to God. But without being anointed, the tabernacle and the altar were still separate from God Himself, having nothing to do with God's life, God's nature, or anything God had accomplished, obtained, and attained.

For us to be anointed means that the processed Triune God is put into us and upon us, even mingled with us. We may use the painting of a wooden article as an illustration. After several coats of paint have been applied to the article, it becomes fully one with the paint. The article may be wooden, but after it is painted, we no longer see the wood; instead, we see the nature, the essence, the element, the character, the appearance, the color, and the expression of the paint, for the paint has been applied to the wooden article and has become one with it. For us to be anointed by God means that we are "painted" with Him, that God Himself is put in us and on us.

After the making of the tabernacle and the altar, God came in to "paint" these two items with an ointment, a type of Himself not as the original God but as the consummated God. In eternity past God was altogether perfect, but He was not completed. He had the divine nature but not the human nature. However, according to His intention, in the coming eternity He, the very God, will be a God not only with the divine nature but also with the human nature. Because in eternity past, God was not completed, He needed to come into time, a bridge between the two eternities, to pass through many processes in order to be completed.

Before God became a man, He came to Abraham in Genesis 18 in the form of a man. Approximately two years ago, a certain denominational journal recognized that this one who came to Abraham was Jesus. God came and spoke to Abraham like a friend. Abraham served the Lord a meal, and He ate it. The very God ate the food served to Him by Abraham. Also, Abraham brought Him water, and He washed His feet. When the Lord was leaving, He did not leave quickly. Accompanying Him, Abraham walked with Him and saw Him off. Abraham did not pray to this man but talked to Him as a friend. According to Genesis 18, God appeared

to Abraham in the form of a man long before He became incarnated. Things like this concerning the Lord's person we cannot comprehend.

In the evening of the day of His resurrection, the Lord Jesus came back to His disciples in a physical body (Luke 24:37-43; John 20:19-29). Without the opening of any door, He suddenly stood in their midst (John 20:19). "They were startled and became frightened and thought they beheld a spirit" (Luke 24:37). The Lord said to them, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you behold Me having" (v. 39). After speaking this word, "He showed them His hands and His feet" (v. 40). Then He asked them if they had anything to eat, and when they handed Him part of a broiled fish, "He took it and ate before them" (vv. 41-43). Our limited mind cannot comprehend how the Lord Jesus, with a body of flesh and bones, could suddenly come into a room where the doors were shut. This is the wonderful person of Christ.

In eternity past God did not have a physical body. He needed to go through some processes to get Himself consummated so that He could be completed. He was already perfect, but He wanted to be not only perfect but also processed in order to be completed. He did not want to be merely God for eternity; He wanted to be a God-man. In eternity past He was God, but He was not a God-man. Therefore, in time He has gone through many processes in order to be consummated and completed.

The Ointment Symbolizing the Completed God

The completed, or consummated, God is symbolized by the ointment, which was compounded with four spices and olive oil (Exo. 30:22-25). This ointment is mentioned in 1 John 2:20 and 27. In these verses the word *anointing,* a gerund, is used to describe the moving of the ointment. When you apply cream to your face, you cause the cream to move. We may say that in Exodus 30 we have the "cream," the ointment, and in 1 John 2 we have the moving of the

cream, the anointing. We have this anointing, the moving of the ointment, within us.

The ointment is not a thing but a person—the completed God. The ointment within us is the processed, compounded, consummated Triune God, the God who has passed through the necessary processes in order to be completed. This is the greatest provision God has prepared for His redeemed people.

The Spirit

In the Bible, the last title given to the Spirit of God is "the Spirit" (Rev. 22:17). The completed God is the Spirit. John 7:39b says, "The Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." When Jesus was glorified, that is, when He entered into resurrection (Luke 24:26), the Triune God was consummated and completed to become the Spirit. The Spirit, therefore, is the processed, consummated, and completed Triune God.

Let us consider what the Spirit comprises. Within the Spirit is divinity, the divine nature. The Spirit also includes humanity, the human nature. This means that the Spirit includes the element of incarnation. How great a thing was the incarnation! God was conceived within a virgin's womb and stayed there for nine months. The divine conception was part of a marvelous process. This conception was followed by the Lord's birth and human living. For thirty years the Lord Jesus lived in the home of a carpenter. Then He came forth to minister for three and one-half years, passing through all kinds of sufferings. In His crucifixion He accomplished an all-inclusive death. Then He walked through death, came forth from death, and entered into resurrection. In resurrection He, the last Adam, became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45), and this life-giving Spirit is now the Spirit—the consummation of the processed Triune God. Now He is ready to be applied to us as the ointment. He is the Triune God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit. Within Him are God, man, redemption, the impartation of life, and the power of resurrection. What a wonderful divine provision! Our God is now anointing us

with this provision. He is anointing us with the compounded Spirit, the consummation and completion of the processed Triune God.

I can testify that when I am preparing myself to speak for the Lord, I usually pray, "Lord, fill me with Yourself as the essential Spirit and pour Yourself upon me as the economical Spirit. O Lord, in my speaking be one spirit with me so that You speak in my speaking." Whenever I pray like this, I am strengthened, confirmed, infused, and filled inwardly and outwardly with the consummated Triune God.

Anointed to Become God-men

In His New Testament economy, God does not want us merely to be good men—He wants us to be God-men, those who are mingled with the processed Triune God. The more the ointment, the completed Triune God, is applied to us, the more we become God-men. Once again, we may use painting as an illustration. Before a wooden article is painted, it has nothing to do with the paint. But when the paint is applied to the wooden article, it becomes a painted article. It is no longer merely a wooden article; it is now a wooden article to which paint has been applied. In like manner, we are being painted with the processed Triune God. The more we are painted by Him and with Him, the more we are mingled with Him to become God-men.

OFFERING OURSELVES TO THE LORD TO RECEIVE HIS PROVISION

Since God has prepared such a great provision for us, what should we do? We should offer ourselves to the Lord to receive His provision. Although God has prepared this provision for us, we may not come to Him, or we may come to Him without offering ourselves to Him and submitting ourselves to Him. To offer ourselves to the Lord means that we surrender to Him. We must receive the divine provision by offering ourselves to the Lord, submitting and surrendering to Him. We should pray, "Thank You, Lord. You have

prepared everything for me. Now I surrender to You." This is to offer ourselves to Him.

In Numbers 7 we first have the anointing on God's side and then the offering on our side. God has been processed to become the ointment that is to be applied to us. To receive the application of this ointment, we need to be willing to surrender to the Lord, placing our entire being into His hands and saying, "O Lord, do whatever You like to do." The Lord likes to paint us with Himself within and without, making Himself one with us.

CHRIST AS THE REPLACEMENT FOR AND CONSUMMATION OF ALL THE OFFERINGS

After we offer ourselves to the Lord to enjoy His provision, Christ is available to us as the replacement for and consummation of all the offerings. In the Old Testament there are many different kinds of offerings, but today we have one, all-inclusive offering—the all-inclusive Christ. The offering of ourselves to God is God's second provision, and the all-inclusive Christ is the third divine provision.

For our practical experience and enjoyment, Christ is mainly three kinds of offerings—the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering. As those who are being anointed by God and who offer themselves to Him, we need to lay our hands upon Christ as our sin offering. Whenever we enter into God's provision through our offering of ourselves, we feel condemned. In our conscience we feel that we are unrighteous in many things. We sense that in various ways we are lacking, wrong, and unclean. At such a time we need to put our hands on Christ and take Him as our sin offering. Whenever we do this, we know that we are redeemed, propitiated, and forgiven, and we have peace within. At this juncture we desire to live for God. However, we realize that we have failed in this and that in ourselves we cannot live for Him. But the One on whom we have laid our hands is also our burnt offering. Thus, in our experience, the sin offering becomes the burnt offering. Then we can pray, "O Lord Jesus! I am one with You in living for God and living to God absolutely." After enjoying Christ as our

sin offering and burnt offering, we no longer have condemnation, rebuking, or conviction. Instead, we have peace. We now enjoy Christ as our abundant peace offering. This peace then becomes a fellowship between us and God in which we and God enjoy Christ in mutuality.

ENJOYING CHRIST AS THE EDIBLE, DRINKABLE, AND ENTERABLE ONE

Along with the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering, we have a basket of bread, cakes, wafers, and the drink offering. The bread, the cakes, and the wafers typify Christ in different aspects as our food supply. The drink offering is also a type of Christ. As the real drink offering, Christ has been poured out to satisfy God and also to satisfy us. As the bread, the cakes, and the wafers, Christ is edible, and as the drink offering, He is drinkable.

Our Christ is not only edible and drinkable—He is also enterable. By eating and drinking Him, we enter into Him, and He enters into us to become our very being. Our Christ is enterable! Now we are in Him, and He is in us.

The Christian life is a life of daily partaking of the divine provisions. This means that we should not try in ourselves and in our natural strength to live the Christian life. The hair, which signifies the natural strength, must be shaved off (8:7), indicating that our natural strength must be cut off. Instead of relying on our natural strength, we should simply partake of and enjoy all the divine provisions.

The last item of the divine provisions revealed in Numbers 6 through 9 is the Passover. In the following message we will consider the record concerning the Passover in 9:1-14.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FIFTEEN

BEING FORMED INTO AN ARMY

(14)

Scripture Reading: Num. 9:1-14

In this message we will consider 9:1-14, a record concerning the keeping of the Passover. No matter how busy God's people were and no matter where they were, they were required to participate in the Passover once a year.

XII. KEEPING THE PASSOVER

Although Numbers chapters one through eight were spoken in the second month of the second year after the exodus from Egypt (1:1), the people were charged to keep the Passover in the first month. While in the second month Moses was busily recording all the divine provisions, God charged him to write something about what was to take place in the first month. These verses record what the Lord spoke to Moses "in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt" (9:1). This indicates the importance of the Passover.

A. At the Appointed Time

The children of Israel were to keep the Passover "at its appointed time" (v. 2). This appointed time was on the fourteenth day of the first month, at dusk (v. 3a).

B. According to All Its Statutes and All Its Ordinances

Numbers 9:3b says, "According to all its statutes and all its ordinances you shall keep it." Statutes are regulations

without judgments, and ordinances are regulations with judgments. The fact that the Passover was to be kept according to all its ordinances and judgments indicates that the keeping of the Passover leaves no opening for man's ideas and opinions.

C. The One Who Was Unclean through Contact with a Dead Body or Who Was Far Off on a Journey Still Required to Keep the Passover

Verse 6 speaks of "certain men who were unclean through contact with the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the passover on that day." When Moses brought their situation to the Lord, He said, "If any man of you or of your generations is unclean through contact with a dead body, or is far off on a journey, he shall still keep the passover to Jehovah. In the second month on the fourteenth day at dusk they shall keep it" (vv. 10-11a).

D. Eating It with Unleavened Bread and Bitter Herbs, Leaving None of It until the Next Morning, and Not Breaking a Bone of It

"They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it until the morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute for the passover they shall keep it" (vv. 11b-12). Here we see that the children of Israel were to eat the Passover with unleavened bread. Unleavened bread signifies the Christ who is without sin. Whenever we receive Christ as our life supply, we receive a life that is without sin. Thus, to eat the Passover with unleavened bread means to eliminate all sinful things. When we enjoy Christ as our Passover, we must purge away everything sinful.

The Passover was also to be eaten with bitter herbs. The bitter herbs signify regret and repentance with a bitter sense regarding sins. To eat the Passover with bitter herbs means that we need to regret and repent, to experience a bitter taste regarding sinful things.

None of the Passover was to be left until the next

morning. This indicates that we should enjoy the Passover in its freshness. This also indicates that we are to receive Christ in a full way, not partially. Instead of allowing anything of Christ to be left over, we should take Him in full.

Furthermore, the people were not permitted to break a bone of the Passover lamb. The unbroken bone indicates that Christ's divine life is unbreakable. When the Lord Jesus was crucified as our Passover lamb, His legs were not broken (John 19:33, 36). This signifies that in Christ, the Passover lamb, there is something unbreakable and indestructible. This unbreakable and indestructible element is His eternal life. In Christ as our Passover lamb there is the divine life, the eternal life, the unbreakable and indestructible life, that can impart life into us.

E. The Man Who Was Clean and Not on a Journey Not Refraining from Keeping the Passover

"The man who is clean and is not on a journey, yet refrains from keeping the passover, that person shall be cut off from his people, because he did not offer Jehovah's offering at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin" (Num. 9:13). This signifies that the redeemed believers are required to take the Lord's table (Luke 22:19).

F. A Stranger Being Permitted to Keep the Passover with the Sons of Israel

"If a stranger sojourns among you and will keep the passover to Jehovah, according to the statute of the passover and according to its ordinance, so shall he do; you shall have one statute, both for the sojourner and for him who was born in the land" (Num. 9:14). A stranger being permitted to keep the Passover with the sons of Israel signifies that the believing Gentiles have been destined to partake of the Lord's table.

G. The Importance of Keeping the Passover

Numbers 1—8 are the words spoken by God to Moses on the first day of the second month in the second year after

the exodus from Egypt, whereas the words in 9:1-14 were spoken in the first month of the same year (v. 1). However, in this portion of Numbers, the word concerning the unclean ones and the ones on a journey still partaking of the Passover was to be applied on the fourteenth day of the second month (vv. 10-11). Hence, the word in 9:1-14 is here referred to in the second month. This shows the importance of keeping the Passover in relation to the move of God's redeemed people with God in His activity.

We should not think that partaking of the Lord's table has nothing to do with God's move or with our move with God in His activity. The Lord's table has much to do with God's move on earth. Therefore, we must keep the Lord's table.

The Passover includes a number of crucial points. The Passover signifies a new start, because it takes place in the first month of the year. Therefore, the Passover should remind us that we need a new start.

The Passover reminds us that we are a people who should have died under God's righteous judgment. But for us who should die under His righteous judgment, God prepared a replacement, Christ, who died a vicarious death for us, thus saving us from the death-judgment of God's righteousness.

The Passover also reminds us that we belong not to ourselves but to the One who died for us. Now we should enjoy Him for our entire life. We have been replaced by Christ, we belong to Him, and we should enjoy Him by taking Him as our life, our life supply, and our everything.

The Passover in the Old Testament was a yearly reminder to the children of Israel. Today we, the believers in Christ, have a weekly reminder, the Lord's table. Every week, on the first day of the week, we should have the remembrance of the Lord at His table, enjoying all that He is to us. However, some may come to the Lord's table without knowing what they are doing. Whenever we come to the Lord's table we should be reminded that we need a new start, a new beginning on the eighth day, which is the first day of the week and a day in resurrection. We also need to be reminded that we were destined to die under God's righteous judgment,

but God prepared Christ to be our replacement to die for us. Therefore, we have been saved from the death-judgment. Furthermore, at the Lord's table we should be reminded that we do not belong to ourselves but to the One who replaced us and who is now our life and life supply. Since Christ is our life and life supply, we should live by Him. This is the significance of the Passover and also of the Lord's table.

Both the Passover and the Lord's table are feasts. Whenever we participate in the Passover or in the Lord's table, we partake of a feast to enjoy Christ in the presence of God. This enjoyment is a mutual satisfaction to God and us.

By the time of 9:1-14, the children of Israel had been formed into an army, all the defiling things had been dealt with, all the tests had been completed, the Nazarites had been consecrated to the Lord to the uttermost, and God's people had participated in the divine provisions. They even had a corporate table for feasting before God and with God on Christ as their mutual enjoyment. Now they were ready to move on, to journey to fight for God that He might gain the ground on earth to build up His kingdom with His house.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE SIXTEEN

JOURNEYING

(1)

Scripture Reading: Num. 9:15—10:10

After the children of Israel had been formed into an army, they were ready to journey to fight for God so that He could gain the ground on earth to build up His kingdom with His house. Their moving was not up to them; it was altogether according to the Lord's leading. They did not move when they wanted to move but when the Lord led them to move. In this message we will begin to consider the journeying of God's people.

I. THE GUIDANCE

The children of Israel set out according to the Lord's guidance (9:15—10:10). Godless people, those who are without God and the Lord, do not have a guide. The worldly people are very busy, but they are without a guide. However, God's people have a guide, and this guide is God Himself.

A. By the Cloud

The children of Israel set out under the guidance of the cloud (9:15-23). When God came to be our Redeemer, He came in type as a lamb. The Lord Jesus is the Lamb of God to take away our sins (John 1:29). But when God came to be our guidance, He came as the cloud. This guidance in the form of a cloud is God consummated to be the Spirit.

A cloud has much to do with the earth, yet it belongs not to the earth but to the heavens. A cloud is closely related

to rain and is nearly the same as rain. Often a cloud will actually become rain. When rain comes, something from the heavens reaches the earth, benefiting the people on earth.

Zechariah 12:1 says that God stretched forth the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him. We may say that the heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, and man, with his spirit, is for God. In what way are the heavens for the earth? When the heavens rain, this rain is for the earth. The earth receives the rain from the heavens. The earth is for man because the earth by the rain produces all kinds of food and foodstuff. Man should live by his spirit for God. This is a simple picture of the scenery concerning man on earth.

The history of human civilization shows that man has usually "followed the cloud" and settled where there is water. Primarily, man lives not in dry places but near the rivers, the seas, and the oceans. Hence, man must follow the cloud. If people do not want to wither and die of thirst, they must go where there is water.

In typology the cloud from the heavens signifies God in the sense of God's presence. When the cloud was in a certain place with God's people, God's actual presence was with His people. When they saw the cloud, they knew that God was present with them. When the cloud, God's presence, remained, the children of Israel stayed where they were. But when the cloud moved, that was a sign that God was ready to move and that the people should also get ready to move. Thus, when the cloud set out, Israel moved, and when the cloud stopped, Israel stopped. From this we see that the guidance was God Himself in the form of a cloud.

Now we need to consider how to apply the matter of God's guidance by the cloud to our experience today. Christians should always follow the Spirit. However, whereas the cloud in the Old Testament was visible, the Spirit is altogether invisible. Also, the cloud was somewhat concrete, but the Spirit is altogether abstract. The children of Israel could see the cloud, but we cannot see the Spirit. How, then, can we know that God is with us? What is the sign of God's

presence? Concerning these questions, we need to learn a lesson from our forefathers—go where there is water.

Water comes from rain, and rain is from the cloud. In a sense, rain is another form of the cloud. The cloud and the rain are the same in substance. In essence the cloud and the rain are the same. The cloud becomes rain, and when the rain comes, we have water. Therefore, we may say that the cloud, the rain, and the water are three-in-one.

Today we cannot see the Spirit, but we can see what issues from the Spirit. This issue is the sense within us that we are being watered. However, often as we move we have the sense deep within that we are dry. When we are dry, we should not move, but neither should we stay. This dryness is a strong sign that we are wrong with God, either in our position or in other matters. Hence, we need to pray, not in a general way but by confessing. Often we do not know in what we are wrong. Since our dryness is a sign that we are wrong and since we may not know in what we are wrong and therefore do not know what to confess, we need to grope. In our groping, we may confess from different angles concerning our mistakes, shortcomings, wrongdoings, defects, and even fleshly activities and lustful desires. We may need to confess from many different directions. We need to confess by groping until our feeling in our prayer reaches something, and the cloud is there. Then we know the Lord's leading.

The presence of the Spirit today is altogether invisible and abstract, and it has absolutely something to do with our situation before God, especially in our spirit. When our spirit is wrong, we need to go to God to adjust our spirit. We may not be able to adjust our spirit in a morning watch of only ten minutes. It may take more than half an hour for us to adjust our spirit in full. If we are wrong in something and if the Lord has the purpose of teaching us to know His way, He may not be quick to show us in what we are wrong. Rather, He may leave us in a puzzled state for quite a while, even for several days. During this time, we may pray in a groping way seemingly without getting anywhere. Because the Lord has a deep lesson for us to

learn, He will train us during these puzzling days of groping. Then one day we will reach the point where the Lord wants us to be. There we either touch the rain or see the cloud. It is in this way that we learn.

We need to keep in mind that God's guidance is actually God Himself in His presence with us. In ancient times, God's guidance was in the form of a cloud. Today we do not have the cloud; we have the Spirit within us.

1. The Cloud Covering the Tabernacle of the Testimony

"On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of testimony" (Num. 9:15a). Here we see that on the day the tabernacle was set up, the cloud (the Spirit) covered (overshadowed) the tabernacle of the testimony. This overshadowing in the vast and terrible wilderness was a great salvation. Furthermore, I believe that the cloud overshadowed not only the tabernacle but the entire camp of the children of Israel. In the wilderness there was an array, and above that array was an overshadowing cloud. This overshadowing cloud was an indication, a testimony, that there was something on earth for God.

2. At Evening and at Night the Cloud Bearing the Appearance of Fire

"At evening it was over the tabernacle like the appearance of fire until morning. So it was continually; the cloud covered it, and at night it had the appearance of fire" (vv. 15b-16). In typology, the cloud signifies the Spirit, and the fire, for enlightening, signifies the Word. When we have a clear sky in our spiritual life, we feel the presence of the Spirit. Quite often, however, we are in the night, and then the Spirit becomes the Word to us. This is a strong proof that the Spirit is the Word (cf. Eph. 6:17-18). The overshadowing element becomes the shining essence. Today we have both the Holy Spirit as the cloud and the holy Word as the fire. The Holy Spirit as the cloud overshadows, and the holy Word as the fire shines.

3. The Cloud Being Taken Up, Settling Down, and Abiding

When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel set out. Where the cloud settled down, they encamped. When the cloud abode over the tabernacle, they remained encamped (Num. 9:17-22). Because the children of Israel followed the cloud, they did not need to worry or be anxious about when to move. Instead of being anxious, they could be at peace.

4. To Keep the Charge of God according to the Word of God by Moses

The children of Israel followed the cloud in order to keep the charge of God according to the word of God by Moses. "At the word of Jehovah they encamped, and at the word of Jehovah they set out; they kept the charge of Jehovah according to the word of Jehovah by Moses" (v. 23).

In the wilderness, the children of Israel numbered more than two million, but they were in good order and were under a divine arrangement. They did not stay or move according to their own likes, dislikes, or preferences. Rather, they stayed together or moved together according to the word given by God to Moses.

B. By the Two Trumpets

First, Israel's guidance was God Himself in the form of a cloud. Second, the children of Israel were guided by the two trumpets (10:1-10). Because the trumpets made a loud sound, they could become a means of guidance.

1. Made of Silver by Hammered Work

"Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Make for yourself two silver trumpets; of hammered work you shall make them" (vv. 1-2a). In typology, silver signifies Christ's redemption. The fact that the trumpets were made of hammered work indicates that they were made through beating.

2. For Summoning the Assembly and Having the Camp Set Out

The two silver trumpets were to be used for summoning the assembly and for having the camp set out (v. 2b).

3. The Blowing of Both Trumpets for Assembling

The blowing of both trumpets was for assembling. "When both are blown, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to you at the entrance of the tent of meeting" (v. 3).

4. The Blowing of One Trumpet for the Assembling of the Leaders

The blowing of just one trumpet was for the assembling of the leaders. "But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall assemble themselves to you" (v. 4).

5. The Blowing of an Alarm for the Camps on the East Side to Set Out

The blowing of an alarm was for the camps on the east side to set out. "When you blow an alarm, the camps that are encamped on the east side shall set out" (v. 5).

6. The Blowing of the Second Alarm for the Camps on the South Side to Set Out

The blowing of the second alarm was for the camps on the south side to set out. "When you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are encamped on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out" (v. 6).

Here in Numbers the sound of the trumpet was called an alarm because, in God's thought, the children of Israel were continually at war. At any time they could hear the alarm for fighting. When they moved, they moved in a fighting way. This signifies that our Christian walk, our Christian move, is a fighting move. However, quite often we have been negligent in this matter and have suffered as a result. Concerning certain moves, we suffered a great deal because we did not have the consciousness that we

were in a battle. We are always at war, and therefore we should constantly be under the sounding of the alarm.

7. The Sons of Aaron, the Priests, Blowing the Trumpets

"The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets" (v. 8a). Only the sons of Aaron, the most spiritual persons, those closest to God, those who knew His heart and intention, could blow the trumpets.

8. The Sons of Israel Sounding an Alarm with the Trumpets When They Went to War in Their Own Land against Their Adversary

The sons of Israel were to sound an alarm with the trumpets when they went to war in their own land against their adversary. "When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you shall be remembered before Jehovah your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies" (v. 9). This verse speaks of the adversary, the enemy, and being remembered before God. An adversary is different from an enemy. Whereas an enemy comes from without, an adversary comes from within. To sound an alarm with the trumpet is a marvelous thing because this causes us to be remembered by God and to be saved from our enemies.

9. On the Day of Their Gladness, at Their Appointed Feasts, and at the Beginnings of Their Months, the Sons of Israel Blowing the Trumpets over Their Burnt Offerings and over Their Peace Offerings for Remembrance before Their God

"On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts, and at the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; they shall be to you for remembrance before your God: I am Jehovah your God" (v. 10). This verse speaks of three kinds of occasions: the day of gladness, the appointed feasts, and the beginning of

months. (In typology God pays much attention to the new moon, to the beginning of a new month; we, however, may not pay adequate attention to the matter of a new beginning daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly.) On these occasions the sons of Israel were to blow the trumpets over their burnt offerings and their peace offerings. The burnt offering signifies Christ as our acceptance by God and as our living; the peace offering signifies Christ as our peace and enjoyment with God.

Of the five basic offerings, the burnt offering and the peace offering are great enjoyments to God and to His people. The burnt offering indicates that God's people are absolute for Him. Because of this offering, God has enjoyment, and His people also have enjoyment. Hence, both God and His people are happy, and the day becomes a day of gladness, even a feast. At such a time, the trumpets were to be sounded over the burnt offerings. This indicates that when we are absolute for God, there will be a day of gladness, a day for both God and us to have enjoyment. In the same principle, when we and God live in peace, remain in peace, and enjoy peace as a mutual fellowship, there will also be a great day. When in the church today God's children are absolute for Him and dwell together with God in peace, there will be a great day, a day worthy of blowing the trumpets.

The guidance for the children of Israel in their move was both from the heavens (the cloud) and from the earth (the two trumpets). When the cloud moved, all the people received the sign to move. When the trumpets sounded, they took action to set out. Today we have the Spirit and the Word, and quite often the Word becomes an alarm to us.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE SEVENTEEN

JOURNEYING

(2)

Scripture Reading: Num. 10:11-36

In the foregoing message we considered the guidance given to the children of Israel. In this message we will cover the matter of their setting out.

II. SETTING OUT

Numbers 10:11-36 describes how the children of Israel set out, how they went forward on their journey.

A. The Guidance of the Cloud

The people set out according to the guidance of the cloud. On the twentieth day of the second month in the second year (v. 11a), the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony, and the sons of Israel set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai (vv. 11b-12a). Verse 12b tells us that the cloud abode in the wilderness of Paran. This was their setting out the first time at the word of Jehovah by Moses (v. 13).

B. The Sequence of the Setting Out

In verses 14 through 28 we have the sequence of the setting out. In this sequence, the standard of the camp of the sons of Judah took the lead (vv. 14-16), setting out first by their armies. They were followed, not by another camp, but by the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, the Levites who carried the tabernacle (v. 17). They were followed, in turn, by the second camp, the camp of Reuben (vv. 18-20). The Kohathites, the Levites who carried the

sanctuary, set out next, and the tabernacle was set up before their arrival (v. 21). The camp of the sons of Ephraim set out third (vv. 22-24), and the camp of the sons of Dan, taking up the rear of all the camps, set out last.

C. Trusting in Man

Verses 29 through 32 give us a record of Moses asking his father-in-law, an older and more experienced Midianite, to go with them (v. 29). The father-in-law refused (v. 30). Then Moses besought him to go with them in order that he might be their eyes, for they were to encamp in the wilderness (vv. 31-32). Moses thought that his father-in-law would be a great help, but God's sovereignty would not allow any man to come in. Thus, Moses and the children of Israel had to put their trust in the Lord. This account of Moses' trusting in man is inserted here to compare man's leading with the leading of the ark in the subsequent verses.

D. The Leading of the Ark—the Crucified and Resurrected Christ in His Resurrection

The remaining verses in chapter ten reveal the leading of the ark—the crucified and resurrected Christ in His resurrection (vv. 33-36). Today, the leading One among the churches is the crucified and resurrected Christ, who is the ark.

1. The Sons of Israel Setting Out from the Mount of Jehovah Three Days' Journey, and the Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah Going before Them to Seek Out a Resting Place for Them

"They set out from the mount of Jehovah three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them" (v. 33). Here we see that the sons of Israel went three days' journey. The way was not paved, the oxen were slow, and travel for the wagons was difficult. However, the ark (Christ) of the covenant of Jehovah went before them to seek out a resting place. The ark, with all the contents of

the tabernacle, including the altar, showbread table, lampstand, and incense altar, was the responsibility of the Kohathites and was borne by them. The Kohathites should have set out after the camp of Reuben; nevertheless, the ark came to the front to take the lead.

There is a difference between guidance and leading. The term *guidance* is used with respect to the cloud and the blowing of the trumpets, but concerning the ark we have used the term *leading.* Guidance is general; leading is particular. The cloud and the trumpet guided the children of Israel in a general way. However, the ark did not render a general guidance but a particular leading to the people. Thus, the ark became the leader, taking the lead to find a resting place.

During the forty years the children of Israel traveled in the wilderness, it was difficult to find a resting place for two million people. Today our Christian life is a long journey on a rugged, unpaved way. As we are journeying on this rugged way, it is not easy for us to rest. The Lord Jesus, the Forerunner, has cut the way (Heb. 6:20), but He did not pave the way. He passed through the rugged way, and now we are following His footsteps on this way. We have need of a resting place. Here no one, not even the older and more experienced ones, can help us. Concerning this, we should not put our trust in man. The unique One in whom we can trust is Christ as the ark. He is the Leader, and He leads us to the proper place of rest. He not only guides us in a general way but leads us in a particular way.

In Numbers 10 the real leader was not Moses. At that time, even Moses was inadequate. The ark led the children of Israel in a particular way, much like a small boat leads a large ship through a narrow strait and a swift current into the harbor.

Not only was the ark a living ark, but the rock that followed the Israelites was also living (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4). In the wilderness Christ followed the children of Israel as a rock to supply them with living water. As the ark, He was their Leader, taking the lead to find a resting

place for them and to lead them through the hard part of their journey.

The children of Israel were led not by man (Moses' father-in-law) but by the ark (Christ) of God's covenant. This indicates that the leadership of Christ is faithful. This leadership is not according to emotion or affection but according to a covenant. God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants to bring them into the good land (Gen. 12). Eventually, God's covenant was placed in the ark, and thus the ark was called the ark of the covenant (Num. 10:33). Hence, Christ is the Christ of the covenant, the Christ of God's faithfulness. Christ must lead us into a resting place because He is the Christ of God's covenant.

2. The Cloud of Jehovah Being over Them by Day When They Set Out from the Camp

Numbers 10:34 tells us that the cloud of Jehovah was over the children of Israel by day when they set out from the camp.

3. The Word of Moses When the Ark Set Out

When the ark set out, Moses said, "Arise, O Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You" (v. 35). We are not the enemies of God or the haters of God; we are His army and His lovers. Judges 5:31 says, "Let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." Because we love God, we do not flee before Him; rather, we are as the sun going forth in its might. We may be small in number, but we are here as His army and as His lovers.

4. The Word of Moses When the Ark Rested

When the ark rested, Moses said, "Return, O Jehovah, to the myriads of thousands of Israel" (Num. 10:36). What does this mean? In studying this verse, we need to realize that sometimes the Old Testament prophets did not know the full meaning of what they were saying. We may apply this principle to Moses' speaking here. It is not likely that, when he uttered this word, Moses was clear that the ark

was a type of the incarnated Jehovah. Today we realize that the ark and Jehovah cannot be separated. Moses, however, might have felt that Jehovah was separate from the ark. Thus, when the ark rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah." This is a logical application of this word spoken by Moses. But there should also be a greater meaning to Moses' word. In order to understand such a word, we need the whole Bible, because sometimes the speaking of the prophets was fulfilled much later.

Numbers 10:35 is quoted in Psalm 68:1. Then in Ephesians 4:8-10 Paul applied this word to the ascension of Christ. Ephesians 4:8 uses the word *height*. In the quotation of Psalm 68:18, height refers to Mount Zion (Psa. 68:15-16), symbolizing the third heaven, where God dwells (1 Kings 8:30). Psalm 68:1 implies that it was in the ark that God ascended to Mount Zion after the ark had won the victory. A quotation from Numbers 10:35, verse 1 of Psalm 68 indicates that the background of this psalm is God's move in the tabernacle with the ark as its center. Wherever the ark, a type of Christ, went, the victory was won. Eventually this ark ascended triumphantly to the top of Mount Zion. This portrays how Christ won the victory and ascended triumphantly to the heavens. Hence, the rising up in Numbers 10:35 refers to the rising up to the heavens in Christ's ascension.

This being the case, the word *return* spoken by Moses in verse 36 must refer to the second coming of Christ. If the arising in verse 35 refers to Christ's ascension, then the return in verse 36 must refer to His second coming. Christ left us by His ascension, and He will return to us by His second coming.

From this we see that this word spoken by a great prophet of God should be interpreted by the entire Bible, in particular by Psalm 68 and Ephesians 4. If we put the whole picture together, we will see a full view of God's economy.

God's economy is the Triune God incarnated to be the ark. The ark, therefore, implies the Trinity, Christ's incarnation, and Christ's living in His humanity. How much the

ark speaks to us! In Numbers 10 the ark rose up. Moses' understanding might have been that when the ark set out, the God who was somewhat embodied in the ark rose up. However, Psalm 68 applies this rising up to Christ's ascension (see v. 18), as Paul does in Ephesians 4. The application of Numbers 10:35 in Psalm 68 and Ephesians 4 indicates that Moses' word in Numbers 10:36 must refer to Christ's second coming. Hence, concerning Moses' word in Numbers 10, there was an application at Moses' time, and there is also an application in God's economical plan.

When God's people went to war, the ark went out to fight. In Psalm 68 the ark went out to battle, and, after winning the victory, it came back to the top of Mount Zion. Paul interpreted this and applied it to Christ, who first descended by being incarnated and by entering into Hades, and who then ascended from Hades to earth in His resurrection and from earth to heaven in His ascension (Eph. 4:9-10). Today Christ is still in the heavens. One day He will return. Therefore, Moses prayed, "Return, O Jehovah." This surely refers to Christ's second coming. This is the way to understand this great word spoken by a great prophet of God. By this we can see a full picture of God's economy, from Christ's incarnation to His second coming.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE EIGHTEEN

JOURNEYING

(3)

Scripture Reading: Num. 11

In this message we will begin to consider the failures recorded in chapters eleven through fourteen of Numbers.

III. FAILURES

Moses' word in 10:35 and 36 implies Christ's incarnation, ascension, and coming back. But after this marvelous word at the end of chapter ten, from chapter eleven through chapter seventeen there is nearly nothing except failure. These chapters speak of different kinds of defilement. The behavior of the people in chapter sixteen was an insult both to Moses and to Jehovah. The insult was so severe that Jehovah, who is full of mercy and patience, could not tolerate the situation any longer and became very angry. This is similar to the situation in John 2, in which the Lord Jesus, the incarnated God, became angry. In Numbers 16 God became like this, saying to Moses, "Rise up from the midst of this assembly that I may consume them in a moment" (v. 45).

We may not care for these chapters that record the failures of God's people, but these chapters are in the Bible, and we need to pay attention to them.

A. Murmuring Evil

In Taberah, which means "a burning," the children of Israel were murmuring evil (11:1-3; cf. Deut. 8:2). Here *evil* refers not only to evil words but also to evil things. The evil words spoken by the people were based on evil things.

These evil words went into the ears of Jehovah. This murmuring kindled the anger of Jehovah, and He sent fire to consume some at the extremities of the camp. Moses prayed for the people, and the fire abated. "So the name of that place was called Taberah, because the fire of Jehovah burned among them" (Num. 11:3).

B. Lusting

After the murmuring, the mixed multitude among the people began to lust (vv. 4-35). The mixed multitude consisted of those without a definite family, those who did not know of whom they were born or to what family they belonged. In principle, it is possible for there to be such a mixture in the church life today, for certain ones, not knowing how they were saved or through whom they were regenerated, may not have a proper spiritual status.

The name of the place where the mixed multitude lusted was called Kibroth-hattaavah, which means "the graves of lust," because "there they buried the people who lusted" (v. 34).

1. For Meat to Eat

a. Remembering the Food in Egypt

Numbers 11:4 and 5 say, "Now the mixed multitude that was among them lusted exceedingly; and the sons of Israel also wept again, and said, Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic." Here we see that those who lusted for meat remembered the food in Egypt. In Egypt they had fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic, food which signifies the enjoyment of the world, but in the wilderness they had only manna (vv. 6-9).

b. Bored of Eating Manna

Verse 6 goes on to say, "Now our soul is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna before our eyes." Manna signifies the heavenly Christ as the daily food for

God's people. This is pointed out by the Lord Jesus Himself in John 6:29-35.

In the wilderness the people became bored of eating manna. Day after day, they received the miraculous supply of manna. No matter where they were, there was enough manna in the morning to feed more than two million people. This surely was a miracle. But even though the children of Israel witnessed this miracle daily for forty years, they were not affected by it in a positive way. Instead, they became tired of manna, even bored of eating it.

Manna is a type of Christ. If we are honest, we will admit that just as the children of Israel were bored of eating manna, we have sometimes become bored of eating Christ as our daily food.

1) Manna Being Like Coriander Seed

"Now the manna was like coriander seed" (Num. 11:7a). This indicates that as food Christ is full of life. This food is a seed. When we eat Christ, He comes into us as a seed. Compared to corn or wheat, the coriander seed is tiny. Although this seed is very small, it is full of life, and it brings the life element into our being. As such a seed, Christ grows within us.

2) Its Appearance Like That of Bdellium

The appearance of manna was like that of bdellium (v. 7b). This indicates that manna was bright in appearance. Bdellium has been interpreted to signify two different substances, both a white transparent gum and a white pearl. The pearls produced by resin from certain trees are very much like the pearls produced by oysters. When the resinous gum that flows out of these trees hardens, it forms pearl-like balls. The word *bdellium* in 11:7b may refer to these balls. Both kinds of pearls are bright and transparent.

3) Ground between Millstones or Beaten in a Mortar, Boiled in Pots, and Made into Cakes

"The people went about and gathered it, and ground it between millstones or beat it in a mortar, and boiled it in

pots, and made cakes of it" (v. 8a). The fact that the manna could be ground, beaten, and boiled indicates that it was solid. After the people had prepared the manna in this way, they made cakes of it. These cakes were a form of fine bread and were nourishing. This indicates that manna was good for nourishment. As our real manna today, Christ is rich in nourishment.

4) Its Taste Like the Taste of Fresh Oil, or of Cakes Baked with Oil

"The taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil" (v. 8b). The Hebrew words translated "cakes baked with oil" may also be rendered "fresh oil." The taste of fresh oil or of cakes baked with oil signifies the sweet taste of the Holy Spirit. Oil typifies the Holy Spirit. When we eat Christ as our manna, we taste the Spirit of God. The oil here is fresh. The Spirit we taste when we enjoy Christ as manna is always fresh.

5) Falling with the Dew

"When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell with it" (v. 9). This indicates that every morning the manna came with the fresh mercy of God (Lam. 3:22-23).

In the Bible, dew signifies God's gracious visitation from the heavens. The manna always comes with God's gracious visitation. Whenever we touch Christ as our life supply, we have the sense that heaven has come to us in a soft, watering, refreshing manner.

The manna surely was a marvelous supply to the children of Israel. Nevertheless, in spite of such a wonderful miracle every day, they grew bored of this manna and longed for the food of Egypt.

2. Moses Complaining That the People of Israel Were a Heavy Burden upon Him

At this juncture, Moses became very bothered. Up to this point, he did not have much experience in leading God's people. According to verses 10 through 15, Moses went to

God and complained that the people were a heavy burden upon him.

3. God Raising Up Seventy Elders as Helpers to Moses

"Jehovah said to Moses, Gather for Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; and bring them to the tent of meeting, that they may take their stand there with you" (v. 16). Here we see that God raised up seventy elders as helpers to Moses. Seventy is the number of completion and fullness. God's raising up these seventy elders indicates that when He does something, He does it completely and in full.

a. God Putting the Spirit That Was upon Moses upon the Seventy Elders

God put the Spirit that was upon Moses upon the seventy elders (v. 25). When this Spirit came upon them, they prophesied.

b. Moses Desiring That All the People of Israel Were Prophets Speaking for God

Two of the seventy, who were not with the others around the tent of meeting, also prophesied (v. 26). "A young man ran and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, a minister of Moses, one of his chosen men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them" (vv. 27-28). Joshua was jealous for Moses, and he charged Moses to forbid them. But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake?" (v. 29a). Then Moses uttered a great prophecy: "Oh, that all Jehovah's people were prophets, that Jehovah would put His Spirit upon them!" (v. 29b). This prophecy was promoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians and will be fulfilled in God's New Testament economy.

4. God Feeding the People of Israel with Quail

At this time when the people were lusting for meat, God came in to do a great miracle. He fed the people with quail

(vv. 18-23, 31-34). He brought in so many quail that they surrounded the camp for a distance equal to a day's journey and to a depth of about three feet (v. 31).

a. In His Anger God Striking the People with a Severe Plague

In feeding the people with quail, God was angry, and in His anger He struck them with a severe plague. "While the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the anger of Jehovah burned against the people, and Jehovah struck the people with a severe plague" (v. 33).

b. The Lusting People Being Struck and Buried in Kibroth-hattaavah

The lusting people were struck and buried in Kibroth-hattaavah. "Therefore the name of that place was called Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who lusted" (v. 34). This was for the purpose of clearing up the mixed multitude. By this plague God purified His people.

5. The People of Israel Journeying from Kibroth-hattaavah to Hazeroth and Abiding There

"From Kibroth-hattaavah the people journeyed to Hazeroth; and they abode at Hazeroth" (v. 35). It is likely that the people were silent as they journeyed to Hazeroth. To be sure, no one desired to eat quail, for their lusting for meat had brought in death.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE NINETEEN

JOURNEYING

(4)

Scripture Reading: Num. 12

In this message we will be concerned with another failure recorded in the book of Numbers—slandering.

C. Slandering

In chapters eleven and twelve there was one problem after another among the children of Israel. First, those on the extremities of the camp of Israel murmured evil against Moses and against God, and then the mixed multitude lusted for meat. After this, Miriam and Aaron, Moses' sister and brother, both of whom were older than Moses, followed the tide of murmuring and rebellion to stand up against Moses and slander him. At that time, there was turmoil among the Israelites; there was no peace or quiet. There must have been a great deal of gossip circulating among the people, and this might have stirred up Miriam and Aaron to speak against Moses. I believe that their motive for doing this had already been with them for quite a time; it was not something new that originated at this juncture.

1. Moses Having Married a Cushite Woman

Numbers 12:1b tells us that Moses had married a Cushite woman. We are not told when Moses did this; neither do we have a way to find out where or why he did it.

2. Miriam and Aaron Speaking against Moses, the Deputy Authority of God

It seems that, in Numbers 12, the children of Israel were in the season for murmuring, gossip, and rebellion. Thus,

"Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married" (v. 1a). For some reason, they were not happy with Moses concerning this. However, the Bible does not tell us that God was bothered by this marriage or that He condemned it.

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were blood relatives. They were all over eighty years old. Moses had been called by God, and Aaron also had been called by Him. We are not told that Miriam was called, but the Bible does speak of her as a prophetess (Exo. 15:20). She had been ordained by God, and when the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, she took the lead in praising God (Exo. 15:21). All three of them were quite distinctive among the people. They were well-educated, they were close to God, they were knowledgeable in the things of God, and they were considered leaders among the people of Israel. Nevertheless, there were "germs" hidden within Miriam and Aaron that were stirred up by the "winds" blowing with the tide of turmoil. From this we need to learn that in the service of the Lord we should not allow anything negative to remain hidden within us. Any such thing that is not rooted out of our being will come out sooner or later. We need to be alert and aware of any germs that may still be in us. We may seem to be very good, but when certain winds begin to blow or when a particular "storm" or turmoil arises, we may be affected and involved. Then, like Miriam and Aaron, we will be exposed.

a. Because of Jealousy

One of the germs hidden within Miriam and Aaron was jealousy. Both Miriam and Aaron were older than Moses, with Miriam probably being the eldest. Being older than Moses, in their heart they regarded themselves higher than Moses and were jealous of the greater respect that Moses received.

Miriam and Aaron said, "Has Jehovah indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" (Num. 12:2). Miriam might have said, "I am a prophetess, one who speaks for God. God has spoken not only through Moses but also through me." Hence, the real issue here concerned the question of who had God's oracle. You may

be used by God to speak for Him, but you may not have God's oracle.

At Moses' time the oracle of God was with Moses. According to the Pentateuch, God spoke to Moses many times. Whenever Jehovah wanted something to be done, He first spoke about it to Moses. Actually, neither Aaron nor Miriam was God's spokesman; only one, Moses, had the oracle of God. The jealousy concerning this was the germ that caused the "sickness" in Numbers 12. Throughout the generations, the germs of jealousy and rivalry regarding speaking for the Lord have existed among God's servants.

In speaking against Moses, Miriam and Aaron were speaking against the deputy authority of God. Although Moses was younger than Miriam and Aaron, God had appointed him to be His deputy authority, His representative authority. God had called Aaron and had raised up Miriam, but there is no hint that God charged them to be His representative. But God told Moses clearly that He had chosen Him to be His representative authority on earth (Exo. 3:10-17; 7:1). Because of Moses' timidity, God gave Aaron to Moses as his helper (Exo. 4:10-16; 6:30—7:1). However, this does not mean that He appointed Aaron to be His authority. According to God's governmental administration, Miriam and Aaron should have submitted themselves to Moses. But they rebelled.

b. Taking Moses' Apparent Mistake as an Excuse

Miriam and Aaron took Moses' apparent mistake in marrying a Cushite woman as an excuse to speak against him. However, the fact was that they were competing with Moses in speaking for God. They were in rivalry with Moses. This, not the Cushite woman, was the real factor in their speaking against Moses.

3. Moses Being Very Meek, More Than All Men Who Were on the Face of the Earth

"Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all men

who were on the face of the earth" (Num. 12:3). In God's lexicon, in the spiritual dictionary, to be meek is not to strive, not to fight back, when others are against you. In the constitution of the kingdom of the heavens, one of the nine blessings is given to the meek: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). It is not those who fight or strive who will possess the earth; the meek will inherit the earth. Second Timothy 2:24 says, "A slave of the Lord must not contend, but be gentle toward all." Moses was such a person; he did not fight or strive.

Numbers 12:3 was written by Moses. It was not easy for Moses to write such a word about himself. This shows Moses' faithfulness (v. 7; Heb. 3:2, 5). Whatever God told him to write, he wrote, even if it was something good about himself. If he had refused, he would have been unfaithful, and he would have been political. He would have been playing politics. In every area of human society, we can see the playing of politics. It is difficult to find the frank faithfulness of one who serves God according to what God says.

4. God Intervening

In Numbers 12:5-9 God intervened.

a. Coming Down in a Pillar of Cloud and Standing at the Entrance of the Tent, Speaking to Aaron and Miriam

"Jehovah came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward" (v. 5). God took the slander of Miriam and Aaron seriously because this matter touched God's authority. To touch, defy, or challenge God's authority is to shake God's throne. This is very serious, much more serious than murmuring evil and lusting for meat.

b. Vindicating Moses

God vindicated Moses as His servant, one who was faithful in all His house (v. 7). God also vindicated Moses as one with whom He spoke mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in obscure words, and as one who beheld the form of Jehovah (v. 8a).

c. Rebuking Aaron and Miriam

God rebuked Aaron and Miriam. He asked them, "Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?" (v. 8b). The anger of Jehovah burned against them, and He departed from them (v. 9).

5. Miriam Being Punished

In verses 10 through 12 we see that Miriam was punished. Why is it that although two rebelled, only one was punished? Why did God punish the female but not the male? We may think that the male had borne more responsibility and that he should have been punished instead of the female. There were, I believe, two reasons why God punished Miriam but not Aaron. First, it is likely that Miriam took the lead in this rebellion. She was the instigator, the initiator, who stirred up Aaron. Miriam, not Aaron, was the main source. Second, it is not at all seemly for a female to rebel. Concerning rebellion, some allowance may be given to a male, but none should be given to a female. God punished Miriam to warn and alarm all the females among the children of Israel so that they would not follow Miriam.

a. Being Made Sick of Leprosy

Miriam was punished by being made sick of leprosy. "The cloud removed from over the tent; and behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam, and she was leprous" (v. 10). This was God's governmental dealing.

b. Aaron Begging Moses for Her

Aaron begged Moses for Miriam (vv. 11-12). Aaron had been instigated by his sister, and now he became her mediator, her intercessor. We should learn from this not to follow an instigator. If we follow such a one, we may eventually have to beg on his behalf.

In begging for Miriam, Aaron confessed their folly. "Aaron said to Moses, Oh, my lord, do not lay upon us the sin in which we have done foolishly and have sinned" (v. 11). Then he went on to plead that she would not be as one

dead. "Let her not be as one dead, the flesh of whom is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb" (v. 12). Aaron begged that Miriam would not die in such a pitiful way.

6. Moses Praying for Miriam's Healing

Moses prayed for Miriam's healing, saying, "Heal her, O God, I beg You" (v. 13). This is a further indication of Moses' meekness. If he had not been meek, he would not have prayed for her but instead would have let her die in her leprosy. If someone rebelled against you, would you pray for the healing of that one? Have you ever prayed in this way?

God heard Moses' prayer and judged her by shutting her up outside the camp for seven days (vv. 14-15a). The people were delayed on the march until Miriam was brought in again (v. 15b). "After that, the people set out from Hazeroth, and encamped in the wilderness of Paran" (v. 16).

The principle in the case of Miriam and Aaron is the same with us today. I hope that the Lord will speak more to you than I have spoken so that we all may learn the lesson.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY

JOURNEYING

(5)

Scripture Reading: Num. 13:1—14:10

In this message we come to another failure among the children of Israel—not believing in God (13:1—14:38).

D. Not Believing in God

1. God Commanding Moses to Send Twelve Men to Spy Out the Land of Canaan

God commanded Moses to send twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan (13:1-20). At that time the atmosphere and morale among the children of Israel had been severely damaged by their rebellious situation. Thus, it was not a good time for the spies to be sent. But under God's sovereign arrangement, they were sent.

From a human standpoint, it was necessary to spy out the land. But spiritually speaking, in anything we do, it is better not to spy out the situation. To spy out the situation is to test God, and the result is usually negative.

a. One Man from Each Tribe

"From each tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, every one a leader among them" (13:2b). These twelve "heads of the sons of Israel" (v. 3) included Caleb and Joshua, whose name means "Jehovah is Savior."

b. To See What the Land Was

The spies went out to see what the land was, whether the people who dwelt in it were strong or weak, whether they were few or many, whether the land in which they

dwelt was good or bad, whether the cities in which they dwelt were camps or strongholds, whether the land was fat or lean, and whether there was some wood in it or not. Also, the spies were to bring some fruit of the land, for the time was the season of the first fruits of the grapes (vv. 18-20).

To spy out a situation in this way weakens our faith. We should simply believe in God without knowing anything.

2. The Twelve Men Going Up, Spying Out the Land, and Cutting Down from the Valley of Eshcol a Branch with a Single Cluster of Grapes

The twelve men went up and spied out the land. They cut down from the Valley of Eshcol (which means "cluster") a branch with a single cluster of grapes and carried it on a pole between two of them, with also some of the pomegranates and figs (vv. 21-24). From this we can see how rich the land was.

3. The Twelve Men Returning at the End of Forty Days

At the end of forty days, the twelve men returned to Moses, Aaron, and all the assembly of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran at Kadesh (13:25—14:10). Kadesh is at the border of the good land.

a. Bringing In News That the Land of Canaan Flowed with Milk and Honey, but Also Bringing an Evil Report

The twelve men brought in news that the land of Canaan flowed with milk and honey (13:26-27). However, most of the men went on to say, as an evil report, that the people who dwelt in the land were great and strong, that the cities were fortified and very large, and that the children of Anak (the Nephilim—the giants) were there (vv. 28-29, 31-33).

b. Caleb Quieting the People before Moses

Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us

go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to prevail" (v. 30).

c. All the Assembly of Israel
Crying Aloud, Weeping, and Murmuring

All the assembly of Israel cried aloud, wept, and murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying to them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or died in this wilderness! Why does Jehovah bring us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" (14:1-3). Then they even dared to say to one another, "Let us choose a leader, and return to Egypt" (v. 4). These unbelieving and rebellious people were very eloquent, clever, insistent, and strong in their opinion.

d. Moses and Aaron Falling
on Their Faces before the Whole
Congregation of the Assembly of Israel

Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel (v. 5). This shows their meekness. They did not fight against the people.

e. Joshua and Caleb Rending Their Clothes
and Speaking to All the Assembly of Israel

Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes and said to all the assembly of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy out, is an extremely good land. If Jehovah delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against Jehovah; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our bread; their defense has departed from them, and Jehovah is with us. Do not fear them" (vv. 6-9). It is difficult to say what "their defense" means; it may refer to the god who protected them. The words "Do not rebel against Jehovah" indicate that not to believe in the Lord is to rebel against Him.

f. All the Assembly Saying to Stone Them with Stones

All the assembly said to stone Joshua and Caleb with stones. Then the glory of Jehovah appeared at the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel (v. 10).

At this point, I would like to speak a word concerning the spiritual significance of the good land, the land of Canaan. When I was first sent to this country with the Lord's recovery, at the first conference in Los Angeles, I gave a series of messages, based mainly on Deuteronomy 8:7-10, that were published in the book *The All-inclusive Christ*. In those messages I pointed out that the good land is a picture of the all-inclusive Christ. The good land was used by God to typify a person, who is the embodiment of God. This embodied God is the Triune God, who has been processed and consummated in one person, Jesus Christ.

The Bible is a marvelous book, and it contains many different kinds of writings and subjects. Actually, the entire Bible presents one matter—that God desires to be embodied in one person, who is the unique One in the universe. It is impossible to exhaust the telling of this wonderful person. God and man are in this person; He includes all the elements and attributes of the divine nature and all the virtues of the human nature. In Him we have the reality of both the divine nature and the human nature. In Him we also have life, light, and the Spirit. All the positive things in the universe are embodied, contained, and realized in this one person, the all-inclusive God-man, who is the center and meaning of the universe.

The religion of Christianity has been on earth for over nineteen hundred years. Nevertheless, since the time of the apostles, the wonderful person of Christ has not been presented to people in as full a way as He is revealed, somewhat hiddenly, in the Bible and as we see Him today. We thank the Lord for opening His holy Word to us, enabling us to see aspects of Christ which have been veiled for centuries.

Very soon after the first century, the Bible, the revelation of this wonderful person, became veiled and later was locked up by Catholicism. During the Reformation, the Bible was unlocked, but it was not yet unveiled. Since that time, the things Christians have seen in the Bible are related mainly to God's salvation. These things include God's creation, the divine attributes of faithfulness, righteousness, holiness,

and love, man's fall and sinfulness, God's love for man, Christ's coming to save and redeem man through His vicarious death on the cross, His resurrection from among the dead, and the Holy Spirit's being poured out at Pentecost to make the believers the church. For the most part, Christians have not seen God's economy. What they teach, preach, and propagate is largely according to human thought, with only a little that is according to the divine thought. In their preaching they do not emphasize the impartation of life. Instead, they stress the matters of forgiveness, redemption, justification by faith, and sanctification, but they have not seen the dispensing of the Triune God into the tripartite man, that man may have the divine life and possess the divine nature to become part of the enlarged Christ. (Some of those who stressed the inner life saw that the believers are members of the enlarged Christ, but they saw this only vaguely, not clearly.)

Students of theology are commonly taught that they should not invent any new theological terms. The concern is that new terms might be used to introduce heresy into orthodox theology. However, during the past sixty years, the Lord has opened His Word to us and has shown us many items that had been veiled for centuries. In order to describe these things, we have been forced to invent a number of new terms. For example, in speaking of God's dispensing Himself into His chosen people, we use the term *dispensing.* This term should be differentiated from the noun *dispensation,* which refers to the various ages arranged by God for the accomplishing of His economy. Thus, when we speak of the arrangement of the divine government, or of God's arrangement in His economy, we use the word *dispensation,* but when we speak of God's dispensing Himself into us, we use the word *dispensing.*

A major revelation in the Word which the Lord has shown us is that in the book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, the Spirit, who was "not yet" before Jesus' resurrection (John 7:39), is called "the Spirit" (Rev. 22:17). The Spirit is the consummation of the processed Triune God. When we receive the Spirit, we receive an all-inclusive person who is

the consummation of the processed Triune God. This is not my theology; it is scriptural theology, the theology of the Bible. No theology is as high as this.

In the beginning of the Lord's recovery in China, we adopted much of the Brethren theology. But during the past sixty years, the Lord has brought us on and on, and a number of advancements have taken place among us. Today, the theology we have seen of the Bible is much higher, deeper, and richer than the Brethren theology. The main item of the biblical theology is God's economy, which is altogether centered in the all-inclusive Christ.

We might have enjoyed this all-inclusive person in an initial way as our Savior, but this does not mean that we have possessed Him as the good land. Consider again the typology in the Old Testament. In type, when the children of Israel were in Egypt, they accepted Christ as the lamb, sprinkled the lamb's blood for their redemption, and ate the meat of the lamb as their life supply so that they could walk out of Egypt. Then in the wilderness they went on to enjoy Christ as the heavenly manna and as the living rock that followed them and that was cleft to flow out the living water. At Sinai, they received the law and built the tabernacle, both of which are types of Christ, and they entered into the tabernacle to fellowship with God and to enjoy the showbread table, the lampstand, and the incense altar. Although they enjoyed Christ in all these ways, they had not yet enjoyed the good land. Therefore, they still needed to enter into the good land.

We have participated in Christ as the reality of all the items enjoyed by the children of Israel. We have experienced Him as the Passover, the manna, the rock, the living water, the law portraying God, the offerings, and the tabernacle. However, we have not yet entered into Christ as the good land. We are still on the way, and while we are journeying, God is testing us. Perhaps we are now on the border of the good land, that is, on the extremities of the all-inclusive Christ. If we try to spy out the land, we will lose our faith. Instead of spying out the land, we should say, "Hallelujah for the all-inclusive Christ! He is the good land flowing with

milk and honey. I don't need to spy out this land—I will enter into the land by faith." We need to enter into the land and take the land by faith, as Caleb and Joshua did.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-ONE

JOURNEYING

(6)

Scripture Reading: Num. 14:11-45

In this message we will first continue to consider the failure of the children of Israel in not believing in God (vv. 11-38). Then we will see that they also failed by transgressing the word of God (vv. 39-45). Concerning these matters, I have some serious things to say.

4. God's Abhorring of the Children of Israel

Because of their failure at Kadesh, God abhorred the people of Israel (14:11-38). God had brought the children of Israel to the border of the good land, and they could have easily crossed the border and entered into the land. But God knew their heart, and He put them to the test. He gave the word to send out the twelve spies to spy out the land (13:1-2). According to Deuteronomy 8:2, God did this purposely in order to test them. This test exposed them to the uttermost.

Our faith may be very weak and small, nearly nonexistent. Since this may be our situation, we should learn to humble ourselves before God, confessing the weakness of our faith and asking Him to forgive us. This is the spirit we should have before God. But as indicated by what they said, the children of Israel did not care for God but only for themselves. Their feeling was centered not on God but on themselves.

Today, thirty-five hundred years later, we can realize from reading the biblical record that although God's bringing of the people into the good land was apparently for the people, it was actually to accomplish, to carry out,

God's eternal plan, which is altogether centered on the all-inclusive Christ. This is on the positive side.

On the negative side, God still has an enemy, Satan. Apparently, it is man who occupies and usurps the earth; actually, the usurper is not man but Satan. This is the reason that in Matthew 6:10 the Lord Jesus told us to pray that the Father's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. This indicates that God's will has not yet been accomplished on earth. Concerning God's will being done, there is no problem in the heavens, but there is a problem on earth. Therefore, we need to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

At the time of Exodus, the entire earth was occupied by the Gentiles, who were under the hand of Satan. Not even a small part of the earth created by God was under His control. The children of Israel were in Egypt, but Egypt was not their land. They had to find a land, and God had prepared a land for them. Hundreds of years before, God had told their forefather Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants (Gen. 13:14-17). Actually, God's desire was that Abraham's descendants would take that good land for His purpose.

When the men spied out the land, they found that the descendants of Anak, a particular people whom the Bible calls the Nephilim, or giants, were dwelling there (Num. 13:33). The origin of the Nephilim is seen in Genesis 6. In brief, Genesis 6 tells us that when man fell to such an extent that he became flesh (v. 3), the fallen angels came down to earth to marry the daughters of men (vv. 1-2, 4). This mixed marriage produced the giants, the Nephilim. God could not tolerate this mixture. It was because of this mixing of the human race with the fallen angels that God destroyed the whole human race by the flood. Later, the same mixed race, the Nephilim, a mixture of fallen angels and fallen man, dwelt in the land of Canaan. Hence, God commanded the children of Israel to take over this land and to destroy every living being there so that the human race could be cleared up (Deut. 7:1-2).

However, the children of Israel did not know this. Their

consideration was not for God but for their own interest. They did not care for God in the least, but cared only for their safety, their peace, and their existence. They did not confess their weakness or humble themselves before God. Eventually, they offended God to such an extent that they became abhorrent to Him. What they did was altogether abhorrent in His sight.

As human beings we need to be concerned for our daily life, our jobs, our safety, and our security. But we should not forget that God's enemy, Satan, is hidden behind the scene and that the real issue on earth today is a matter not between God and man but between God and Satan. Thus, if we care only for our existence, security, safety, peace, and future, we may become an abhorrence in the eyes of God.

Today some believers are very much for themselves, caring for their security and for blessings in material things but not caring for God's purpose. Such Christians believe in Jesus Christ only for their own benefit; they do not have the slightest thought concerning God's interest on earth and in the universe.

Surely we are God's children, and God is for us. But for whom are we? Some Christians give no thought to God's interest, God's gain, or God's suffering. They think and speak only about themselves and their security. Among worldly people today, security is a big idol. Everything they do is for their security. For their security they study diligently and work hard. Some even fear God and believe in Christ for their own security.

Why did the children of Israel become abhorrent to God in Numbers 13 and 14? They became abhorrent because they were so much for themselves. In everything and in every way they were for themselves, not for God's interests. If they had thought even a little about God's interests, they would have said, "God, as You have been so good to us, we just love You. We would like to sacrifice our future, our safety, our security, our existence, and everything for Your purpose. We forget about our benefit. We care only that You

accomplish Your purpose. For Your purpose, let us go and possess the land."

Caring for God and His interests produces faith. When we are so much for ourselves, it is difficult for us to have faith in God. But if we take the standing that we are for God and that for His interests we are willing to risk everything—our future, our family, even our life—faith will spontaneously be produced in us.

We all need to be impressed with the fact that in ourselves we are weak and do not have any faith. Who among us can boast that he has faith? Faith is of God, faith is in God, and faith comes from God. If we would have faith, we must learn to care for God's interests and not for our benefit. The worldly people are concerned daily for their own security and benefit, but we should care for God and His interests. History tells us that those who cared for God and did not consider their own benefit became people of faith, and some even became giants of faith.

a. God Wanting to Strike Them with Pestilence and Make of Moses a Nation Greater Than They

In His abhorring of the people of Israel, God wanted to strike them with a pestilence and make of Moses a nation greater than they (Num. 14:11-12).

b. Moses Praying for Them according to God's Word

Moses prayed for them according to God's word, namely that Jehovah is slow to anger and abounding in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression (vv. 13-19). Moses was a God-man; he knew God. Therefore, he did not pray according to his concept; rather, he prayed according to God's concept, according to what God is, what God speaks, and what God promises. Moses did not argue with God, but he did pray to God. His prayer, saying that Jehovah is slow to anger and abounding in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, bound God according to what He had spoken and what He is.

c. God Forgiving Them according to Moses' Prayer

God forgave the people according to Moses' prayer (v. 20),

but their unbelief nevertheless had certain negative consequences (vv. 21-38).

1) God Not Allowing Those Who Murmured against Him to See and Enter into the Good Land

God would not allow those who murmured against Him to see and enter into the good land. Rather, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, their carcasses would fall in the wilderness (vv. 22-30, 32).

2) God Bringing Their Little Ones into the Land

The people had said that their little ones would become a prey and would be taken over by the Canaanites and the Nephilim. But God said, "Your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have rejected" (v. 31).

3) They and Their Children Being Wanderers in the Wilderness Forty Years

The rebellious ones and their children would be wanderers in the wilderness forty years to bear their iniquities according to the number of days (for every day a year) in which they spied out the land (vv. 33-34).

4) The Men Who Returned with an Evil Report Dying by the Plague before Jehovah

The men who returned with an evil report and made all the assembly murmur against Moses died by the plague before Jehovah (vv. 36-38). Even though all the people rebelled against Him, God did not destroy the entire people. Instead, God killed the ten men who instigated the rebellion.

E. Transgressing the Word of God

In 14:39-45 we see that the people failed again by transgressing the word of God.

1. The People of Israel Mourning Greatly and Saying That They Would Go Up to the Place Which Jehovah Had Spoken Of

The people of Israel, after hearing the word of Moses to them, mourned greatly (v. 39). Then they rose early in the morning, went up to the top of the mountain, and said, "We will go up to the place which Jehovah has spoken of; for we have sinned" (v. 40). Their word indicates that they were not only a rebellious people but also a stubborn people.

2. Moses Forbidding Them

Moses forbade them, for God was not among them because they had turned back from following God (vv. 41-43). The people had actually given God up. The journey from Egypt had not been their journey but the journey of the ark. From Egypt they had followed the ark, which was the embodiment of God (a type of the Triune God in His incarnation embodied in Christ), but from this point they gave God up and would not follow Him any longer. The principle may be the same with us today in our following the Lord. When we rebel against the Lord, we give Him up and do not follow Him any more. What a terrible situation!

3. The People Presuming to Go Up to the Top of the Mountain

The people presumed to go up to the top of the mountain, although neither the ark of the covenant of God nor Moses departed out of the midst of the camp (v. 44). The people were supposed to move only when the ark moved. But when God asked them to move, they did not. Now they presumed to move by themselves.

4. The Amalekites and the Canaanites Coming Down from the Mountain and Defeating Them

"The Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that mountain came down, and defeated them and beat them back as far as Hormah" (v. 45). In Canaan there were at least seven tribes, but only these two tribes came out to

fight against the people of Israel. In the typology of the Bible, the Amalekites typify the flesh; they signify the fallen, fleshly people. The first war the children of Israel fought after their exodus from Egypt was against Amalek (Exo. 17:8-16). The Canaanites signify human beings who have joined themselves to the evil spirits, to the satanic power of darkness in the air.

We need to read the history of Israel as our history. Without God's mercy and grace, we would be the same as they. Thus, we must be very much on the alert. We should not think that it is a small thing to touch the church, the church life, the way of the church, or the ground of the church. Our own history of the past twenty-seven years tells us that it is not a small thing to touch God's way, which is the church. Without the church, God has no way to go on. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were God's way. If God had not been able to accomplish His purpose with them, He would not have had a way on earth. Today the church is God's way. It is therefore a serious matter to touch the church, to say something evil or good about the church.

My expectation is that we all will be greatly blessed by touching the way of God, which is the Body of Christ. Whatever the situation may be, we must hold a proper attitude in a proper spirit and stand on the proper ground to touch the church, to live the church life, to speak about the church, and to view the matters concerning the church. Then we will be greatly blessed, and our blessing will become others' blessing.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-TWO

JOURNEYING

(7)

Scripture Reading: Num. 15

In this message we will consider the ordinances in Numbers 15.

IV. ORDINANCES

In the middle of all the turmoils, chapter fifteen is inserted. Why is there the need of such an insertion? According to the behavior of the children of Israel, it became clear that they did not care very much for God's interests. What they did was mostly for themselves. This situation brought in God's judgment and punishment. It is doubtful that at that time the children of Israel remembered all the instructions on how to be accepted by God. They could not be accepted by themselves or in themselves but in the One who replaced them, Christ. In the Old Testament typology, this Christ, our replacing One, has many aspects, which can be seen in the many different kinds of offerings. The main aspects are seen in the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering, which may be matched by some corresponding offerings, such as the meal offering of cakes and wafers and the drink offering.

Numbers 15 might have been inserted because the children of Israel did not care for God's interests. This chapter was a reminder to them that their situation was altogether displeasing to God. Probably they had forgotten to offer the offerings required by God to make propitiation for their errors, wrongdoings, and rebellion.

Let us consider again the situation of the children of Israel. First, those who were at the borders of their encampment, not at the center, murmured evil before God. Then the mixed multitude among them lusted before God. Both received their portion of God's judgment. After that, as a great surprise to Moses, his older sister and brother, who had always been with him at the center of God's move, rebelled. Thus, the situation and atmosphere among the children of Israel were very low, and the morale, along with all the positive things, was gone. Next, the spies were sent to spy out the land, and ten of these spies brought back an evil report. They also received the proper judgment from God. Therefore, before another rebellion arose (see chapter sixteen), God came in with Numbers 15 as an insertion. If the children of Israel had kept the ordinances in this chapter, they would have been rescued from further turmoil.

Two of the ordinances inserted here concerned the offerings and the breaking of the Sabbath. To present an offering to God indicates that we realize that we cannot do anything to please God. We offer Christ to God because we are unable to make God happy, to be well-pleasing to Him, and to be accepted by Him. By offering Christ to God we admit that, in ourselves and by ourselves, we cannot please Him or be acceptable to Him.

To keep the Sabbath is to acknowledge, recognize, and receive the fact that God has done everything for us. We do not need to do anything, and we cannot do anything, for ourselves. God has done everything, and we should simply acknowledge and accept what God has done for us and rest in it. This is to keep the Sabbath.

God created everything in six days. At the conclusion of His creation, He created man. When man came forth from God's creating hand, he did not need to do anything. He began immediately to enjoy what God had made for him, and he rested in it.

To break the Sabbath is to deny what God has done for us and to try to do everything for ourselves. This is a

blasphemy to God. If we try in ourselves to do something to please God, our effort is a blasphemy to God because it is a denial of what God has done for us.

We should always have the consciousness that we are nothing and that we are not able to do anything. What we can do and should do is offer Christ to God as our replacement. Christ is the One in whom we trust.

We should also keep in mind that striving in ourselves and for ourselves means nothing and is actually blasphemy. We should simply accept God and what He has done for us. We should not be like the worldly people who deny God by all their self-endeavoring. They deny God by what they do. Even some atheists would say, "Who is God? I don't need God. I can do everything myself." This is to deny God and to blaspheme Him.

As we come to the ordinances in Numbers 15, I would remind you of the difference between ordinances and statutes. Statutes are regulations without judgment, whereas ordinances are regulations with judgment. For example, the regulation concerning the breaking of the Sabbath involves a judgment.

A. Concerning the Offerings

In 15:1-31 we have the ordinances concerning the offerings.

1. To Be Applied in the Good Land

The ordinances concerning the offerings were to be applied in the good land (vv. 2, 18). Once the people entered the land, they were to keep these ordinances.

2. For a Special Vow or as a Freewill Offering or at the Appointed Feasts, to Offer a Satisfying Fragrance to God

Some offerings were for a special vow or as freewill offerings, and some offerings were offered at the appointed feasts as a satisfying fragrance to God. According to the instructions given in Exodus and Leviticus, God commanded that at the appointed feasts more offerings be offered to

Him. Numbers 15 speaks of only a few of these offerings that were "a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah" (v. 3).

a. Offering from the Herd or from the Flock as an Offering by Fire or a Burnt Offering or a Peace Sacrifice

Verses 3 and 8 speak of the burnt offering and the peace offering. The burnt offering signifies a life that lives for God and to God for His satisfaction. The peace offering is for our fellowship with God, issuing in mutual enjoyment. To offer these two offerings is to offer the crucified Christ, Christ in His death.

b. With a Meal Offering of Fine Flour Mingled with Oil

The meal offering matches the burnt offering and the peace offering. Whenever we offer a burnt offering or a peace offering, we need to match this offering with a meal offering of fine flour mingled with oil (v. 4). Such a meal offering signifies Christ in His humanity mingled with the Holy Spirit to be the food of God and man. What we offer to God as a meal offering becomes food not only for God but also for us.

c. With Wine for a Drink Offering

The wine for a drink offering is an additional matching offering (v. 5). The drink offering signifies Christ pouring Himself out for God's pleasure. Christ has poured Himself out as wine to make God happy.

All these offerings are types of Christ. Daily we need to take such a Christ as our offerings and offer Him for a satisfying fragrance to God.

d. The Same Statute and Ordinance Being for All the People of Israel and the Sojourning Strangers and the Heathens among the People of Israel

The same statute and ordinance were for all the people

of Israel and the sojourning strangers and the heathen among the people of Israel (vv. 13-16). This signifies that all the heathens and strangers share Christ in the same way as the people of Israel (Eph. 2:12-19; 3:6).

3. For a Heave Offering to God

The sons of Israel were also to offer a heave offering to God (Num. 15:17-21). Christ in His death is signified by the burnt offering and the peace offering. The meal offering signifies Christ in His humanity mingled with the divine Spirit, and the drink offering signifies Christ being poured out for God's satisfaction. The heave offering signifies the ascended Christ, Christ in His ascension. Today Christ is not on the earth, and He is no longer in His death. Yes, He is still in His humanity, but He is a man mingled with divinity in ascension. He is the ascended Christ, the Christ in the heavens, the heavenly Christ. When we offer Him as the heave offering, we offer something with the heavenly element, atmosphere, essence, and taste.

a. A Cake of the First of the Dough

"Of the first of your dough you shall offer a cake as a heave offering" (v. 20a). A cake of the first of the dough signifies Christ as the firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). The Christ whom we offer in His ascension to God as God's food is the Christ who is the firstfruit in resurrection.

b. As a Heave Offering from the Threshing Floor

"As a heave offering from the threshing floor, so shall you offer it" (Num. 15:20b). The things from the threshing floor refer to fresh grain, grain that is whole and unground.

There is a difference between whole grain and a cake made from dough. Dough is made from grains of wheat that have been ground. A cake is an entity made of flour ground from many grains. The cake in verse 20 not only refers to Christ Himself but also indicates Christ's Body, the church.

4. For the Sin of Ignorance of the Assembly of Israel, Who through Ignorance Did Not Do All the Commandments of God

When we offer up all these nourishing, satisfying, and fragrant things to God, we must not forget that we are still sinful, that we are still a natural man in the old creation. No matter how much we seek the Lord and walk by the Spirit, we are still in the flesh. Thus, we need to offer something for this.

According to 15:22-26 there had to be an offering for the sin of ignorance of the assembly of Israel, who through ignorance did not do all the commandments of God. This indicates that today we need to pray concerning the ignorant sin of the church. The church ignorantly may do certain things that are wrong with man and God. These things are done not purposely but unconsciously. Nevertheless, we need to offer something concerning them.

a. One Young Bull
for a Satisfying Fragrance to Jehovah

For the sin of ignorance, the assembly of Israel was to "offer one young bull for a burnt offering, a satisfying fragrance to Jehovah" (v. 24a). This burnt offering signifies Christ in His freshness to satisfy God.

b. With Its Meal Offering and Its Drink Offering

The burnt offering for the sin of ignorance was to be offered with its meal offering and its drink offering (v. 24b). As we have pointed out, the meal offering signifies Christ in His humanity to be the food of God and man, and the drink offering signifies Christ pouring out Himself to satisfy God. Such an offering is needed for the ignorant sin of the church.

c. One Male Goat for a Sin Offering

The offering for the sin of ignorance also required one male goat for a sin offering (v. 24c). The sin offering signifies the Christ who was made sin for us.

d. To Make Propitiation for All the Assembly
of Israel, So That They Would Be Forgiven

"The priest shall make propitiation for all the assembly of the sons of Israel, and they shall be forgiven" (v. 25a). In the foregoing message, we saw that Moses prayed that the children of Israel would be forgiven. God's forgiveness is based on Christ's redemption for propitiation, without which God has no ground to forgive man. Thus, if the people were to be forgiven, something had to be offered to God for their propitiation. If we, taking Christ's redemptive death as our standing, ask God to forgive us, He must do it based on His righteousness, not on His mercy (1 John 1:9). This is according to God's governmental administration. Our learning of things such as this can keep us from committing further sins.

5. For a Person Sinning through Ignorance

In Numbers 15:27 through 29 we have a word concerning a person sinning through ignorance.

a. A Female Goat a Year Old for a Sin Offering

"If one person sins through ignorance, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering" (v. 27). This goat signifies Christ, who knew no sin, being made sin for us by God (2 Cor. 5:21). This matter, which is according to God's righteousness and His governmental administration, is deep and mysterious.

b. To Make Propitiation before God,
So That the Person Would Be Forgiven

"The priest shall make propitiation before Jehovah for the person who is in ignorance, when he sins through ignorance, to make propitiation for him; and he shall be forgiven" (Num. 15:28). Without propitiation, even though God has a heart to forgive us, He has no way. Christ's propitiation affords God the way to fulfill the desire of His forgiving heart.

6. The Person Who Did Anything with a High Hand, Thus Reviling God, Being Cut Off from among the People

"The person who does anything with a high hand,

whether he is born in the land or a sojourner, reviles Jehovah, and that person shall be cut off from among his people" (v. 30). To do things with a high hand is to do as one wishes without caring for others. Those who behave in this way utterly disregard both man and God. They act as if they alone existed in the whole universe. On occasion we have observed such behavior in the church. Certain ones acted as if they were the only ones who mattered; they ignored, neglected, despised, and abandoned everyone else. We should never do things with such an attitude and spirit.

a. Such a Person Having Despised
the Word of God and Having Broken His Commandment

A person who does anything with a high hand "has despised the word of Jehovah and has broken His commandment" (v. 31a). Such a person behaves as if there were no God.

b. His Iniquity Being upon Him

The iniquity of the person who does anything with a high hand will be upon him (v. 31b).

In the New Testament, which we all love, we are charged to enjoy Christ, to seek Christ, and to pursue Christ, but we are not shown the way to enjoy Christ. The road map with all the details for the enjoyment of Christ is found in the Old Testament. The ordinances in Numbers 15 concerning how to offer Christ as the various offerings are not only for the children of Israel; in typology they are also for us. When the Old Testament is applied in the way of typology, it becomes the New Testament to us, for it becomes the map showing us the way to enjoy Christ.

Because of the turmoil among the children of Israel, God was, in a sense, forced to insert the ordinances recorded in chapter fifteen. Especially in times of turmoil we need to remember the ordinances concerning our offerings to God. These will keep us in a proper relationship with God. If we ignore these ordinances, however, we will be condemned and might even become abhorrent to God.

B. Concerning Breaking the Sabbath

In verses 32 through 36 we have the ordinance concerning breaking the Sabbath.

1. A Man Found Gathering Wood on the Sabbath Day

"While the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the assembly" (vv. 32-33). The ordinance concerning breaking the Sabbath was given because of what this man was doing on the Sabbath.

2. The Man Being Put into Custody

The man was put into custody "because it had not been made plain what should be done to him" (v. 34). God spoke to Moses concerning this, saying, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the assembly shall stone him with stones outside the camp" (v. 35).

We may think that gathering wood on the Sabbath was not a serious offense and that the punishment meted out was too severe. We need to understand why this offense was so serious. To break the Sabbath is not merely to do something wrong; to break the Sabbath is to deny God and all that He has done for us. The keeping of the Sabbath by the children of Israel was a great sign that they recognized God and what He had done for them. Anyone who denied God and His work by breaking the Sabbath had to be cut off.

3. All the Assembly Doing as God Commanded Moses

"All the assembly brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones and he died, as Jehovah commanded Moses" (v. 36). This time the people were not disobedient. They might have been somewhat frightened. Without exception, they all did as God commanded Moses.

4. The Significance of Keeping the Sabbath

We need to know the significance of keeping the Sabbath. To keep the Sabbath is to believe in God and obey God to participate in what He has accomplished for us. To break the Sabbath is to break the principle that we should not strive for ourselves. Breaking this principle leads to death.

C. Concerning the People's Dress

In verses 37 through 41 we have the ordinance concerning the people's dress.

1. Making Tassels on the Corners of the Garments and Putting upon the Tassel of Each Corner a Cord of Blue

"Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put upon the tassel of each corner a cord of blue" (v. 38). The Hebrew words translated "tassels on the corners" may also be rendered "fringes in the borders." Here "cord" signifies binding, and "blue" signifies heavenly; hence, a blue cord indicates a heavenly binding. For us today, this cord of blue signifies that, as children of God, our conduct and behavior should be beautiful and should be under the binding of the heavenly government.

2. Looking upon the Tassel and Remembering All the Commandments of God and Doing Them

The people were to look upon the tassel and remember all the commandments of God and do them, not seeking after their own heart and after their own eyes, according to which they committed fornications (v. 39). Thus they would remember and do their God's commandments and be holy to God.

According to the record of the four Gospels, the Lord Jesus wore this kind of garment. One day a woman came to touch the fringe (tassel) of His garment (Matt. 9:20-22), which signifies the beauty of His human virtues, from which His healing power issued forth. This indicates that we, the

children of God, should walk under the heavenly binding. As people of the kingdom of the heavens, we should be bound not by the police or the law courts but by a heavenly binding, by the heavenly government and ruling. This will produce a beauty in our human conduct and virtue.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-THREE

JOURNEYING

(8)

Scripture Reading: Num. 16:1-18

In this message we come to another rebellion, the rebellion described in Numbers 16. This rebellion took place immediately after the insertion with the instructions and warnings in chapter fifteen.

V. REBELLION—A MORE SERIOUS FAILURE

The first rebellion was the murmuring of evil by those at the border of the camp. The second rebellion was the lusting of the mixed multitude. The third involved two elder relatives of Moses who were very close to him. Now, after the fourth rebellion, the rebellion of unbelief in spying out the land, some of the leading ones rebelled. This time the rebellion was on a much larger scale; it involved more than two hundred fifty people.

A. The Rebels

We first need to see who the rebels were.

1. Korah

Korah, a descendant of Levi, was of the same tribe as Moses and Aaron. He served God with them. Hence, he was not among those at the border nor among the mixed multitude. Rather, as a Levite, a serving one, even a leader among the Levites, he was in the center of the camp.

2. Dathan, Abiram, and On

Dathan, Abiram, and On were descendants of Reuben (the firstborn of Jacob). They must have taken the lead

among the sons of Israel according to their natural birth (16:1).

3. Two Hundred Fifty Leaders of the Assembly

With Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and On, there were two hundred fifty leaders of the assembly. They had been chosen from the congregation and were well-known men (v. 2).

Numbers 16:1 and 2 indicate that the rebellious spirit was spreading unto a thorough saturation among the people. This rebellion was a great hardship to Moses and Aaron because it was against the center of the government.

B. The Cause of the Rebellion

1. The Struggle for Position and Power

The cause of the rebellion was the struggle for position and power. In verses 9 and 10 Moses said, "Is it too small a thing for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the assembly of Israel to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of Jehovah, and to stand before the assembly to minister to them; and that He has brought you near to Him, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? And will you seek the priesthood also?" The priests had the priesthood, the priestly service, and the Levites had the Levitical service next to them and were serving the priests. But, as Moses' word indicates, the rebels were struggling for power and for a higher position.

2. The Accusation

In verse 3, the rebels made an accusation against Moses and Aaron, saying, "You have gone too far! For all the assembly is holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of Jehovah?" This shows that the root, or the factor, of this rebellion was the struggle for power. Through the centuries, many problems among Christians have been caused by the struggle for position and power. In society this power struggle is everywhere—in the schools, in the government, and in corporations. In the work place, people play politics in order to gain more power and position. The

same thing happened among God's people in ancient times and has been repeated again and again among Christians through the centuries.

C. The Reaction of Moses

In 16:4-11, 15-18 we see the reaction of Moses.

1. Falling on His Face

"When Moses heard it, he fell on his face" (v. 4). This indicates that in his reaction to this rebellion, Moses was humble.

2. Standing on the Position of God's Deputy Authority

Although Moses was humble in falling on his face, he did not give up his God-given position as God's deputy authority (vv. 5-11, 16-18). He rebuked Korah and all his company and charged them to be present before Jehovah with their censers, saying that Jehovah would make known who was His and who was holy and would cause him to come near Him. This indicates that in a struggle for power the only one who can judge and expose the real situation is God Himself. Moses did not fight back; rather, he brought the rebels and the ones against whom they rebelled to God. As God's deputy, or delegated, authority, Moses referred this case to God as the highest authority for His speaking, exposure, and judgment.

3. Being Very Angry

Moses was very angry and prayed, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one ass from them, and I have not ill-treated one of them" (v. 15). Moses' prayer concerning God's not accepting their offering was serious. It is not easy for a servant of God to pray in this way. Here it seems that Moses was forced to vindicate himself, but God did not condemn him for this.

4. Sending to Call Dathan and Abiram

Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram (v. 12a), but, speaking

in a very eloquent manner, they answered that they would not come up (vv. 12b-14).

I do not like to talk about the rebellion of God's people, but the Bible gives us a long portion here in Numbers 16 to cover this matter. Ambition for position and power is always a problem to God's people. Ambition is a "gopher" that undermines God's plan and damages His people.

I admire Moses' boldness in confronting this problem. He was attacked to the uttermost. Those rebels not only attacked him, but they also rebelled against him as the authority arranged by God. It was difficult for him to say anything.

When I was with Watchman Nee on the mainland of China, I saw him attacked a number of times. He never did anything or said anything to vindicate himself, and he never complained against others. As he told me, because he was the target, it was difficult for him to say anything concerning himself without vindicating, and it was difficult to say anything about others without condemning. So the best way, he said, was not to say anything.

Even though Brother Nee was the one under attack, it was the church that was damaged, and it was God's plan that was hurt. Furthermore, many young ones, who did not have much discernment concerning these things, were damaged. On the other hand, the church received some positive help from all the turmoil.

The ambition for power and the struggle for power are in our blood. This ambition and struggle can be found not only among males but also among females. The rebellion of Miriam and Aaron against Moses proves this. I believe that this rebellion was instigated by Miriam. I have seen cases in which a sister instigated a rebellion from behind the scenes. She used a brother to carry out her intention. We all need to be careful to guard against the "gopher" of ambition within us.

The first generation of Christ's followers was troubled by the struggle for power. At a very crucial time, when the Lord Jesus was going to Jerusalem to be crucified, He told His followers what would happen to Him (Matt. 20:17-19). They heard Him, but they neither listened to what He said

nor cared about it. While He was telling them about His death, they were struggling for power. The mother of James and John (Jesus' aunt) even brought her two sons to the Lord, begging Him to put one on His right and one on His left in the kingdom (Matt. 20:20-28). The other disciples were indignant toward these two brothers. This indicates that there was a power struggle among the disciples.

If you read through the Acts and the Epistles, you will see that this struggle for power was there from the beginning of the church life. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-4) were a couple who lied to God. Actually, their lying was a struggle for power. They wanted to be more important, to elevate themselves in the eyes of others. At the end of the Epistles, John mentioned one who was struggling for power, Diotrephes (3 John 9-11).

The history of Christianity is a history of the struggle for power. This struggle is within each one of us. You may not realize it, but it is hidden inside you. Eventually, the church life will be a test to our real situation. As long as we are in the church life, sooner or later we will be tested and exposed.

Consider the rebels among the children of Israel in Numbers. Some rebels were on the border of the camp, some were with the mixed multitude, and some were very close to Moses, the leading one. Now, in chapter sixteen, two hundred fifty leaders rebelled. In view of all this, we must believe that the struggle for power was in every one of the sons of Israel.

We have been confronting this problem for over sixty years. The elders know that if they serve in a certain local church for several years, they will surely offend others. Some people are seeking for position and power, and if, because of the elders, they cannot get what they want, they will be offended. For example, in 1935 a co-worker in Shanghai rose up to take advantage of a tumultuous situation to seek for a "promotion." Brother Nee was away and had left the administration of the church and the leadership of the work to me. The brother who was trying to take advantage of the turmoil came to me, but I did not

give him a positive answer. Eventually, this co-worker became an enemy to Brother Nee.

Those in the church life or in the Lord's work who are somewhat in the position of taking the lead will unavoidably offend some who are greedy for power. Because their desire for power and their lust for position are not satisfied, these greedy ones get offended and become displeased with those taking the lead. In such a case, the book of Numbers gives us a map that helps us to know what to do.

In chapter sixteen, Moses was bold and faithful in confronting a large-scale rebellion, a rebellion of two hundred fifty leaders. Although he fell on his face, he still did something. He brought this matter openly to God, to let God come in to speak, to judge, and to vindicate.

In spite of what Moses did, those rebels, especially the leaders, were strong and stubborn. They had made up their minds not to be subdued. When Moses asked Dathan and Abiram to come to the tent of meeting, that is, to the Lord, they accused Moses, saying that he had brought them out of a land of milk and honey (Egypt), that he had made himself a ruler over them, and that he had not brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey. Finally, they said, "Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up" (v. 14). They were eloquent and very stubborn.

What should we do in this kind of situation? In such a rebellious situation, it is better not to do anything. The Lord is still living. He is still on the throne and is still sovereign. He is the sovereign Lord and the highest authority. He is the Head of the Body today. Thus, we must always refer these things to Him and let Him be what He is. This is all we can do, and this is what we must do.

Concerning ourselves, we need to realize that without the Lord's mercy and grace we might be the same as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. But by His mercy we are here. Now we must learn to be alert and pray regarding any kind of rebellious situation.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR

JOURNEYING

(9)

Scripture Reading: Num. 16:19-50

Concerning the serious rebellion in chapter sixteen, we have already considered the rebels, the cause of the rebellion, and the reaction of Moses. In this message we will see how God judged this rebellion (16:19-50).

D. God's Judgment

No matter what is happening on earth, God's government still stands, not only over His house, the church, but also over the entire world. From our study of history and from our observation of the present situation of the world, we are assured that everything is under God's government. We must believe, therefore, that everything, including judgment, is under Him, up to Him, and in His hand.

In chapter sixteen of Numbers, God's judgment is three-fold, coming from the earth, from heaven, and from within the people themselves. The earth opened up to swallow certain of the rebellious ones, fire came from heaven to consume many others among the rebels, and germs from within others of the rebellious ones produced a plague that killed them.

1. Korah Gathering All the Assembly against Moses and Aaron

Korah gathered all the assembly, not just his company or party, against Moses and Aaron at the entrance of the tent of meeting (v. 19a). This forced God to come out and appear in His glory to all the assembly (v. 19b). God's appearing in such a way was a very significant event.

2. Jehovah Speaking to Moses and Aaron

Jehovah spoke to Moses and Aaron, telling them to separate themselves from among this assembly that He may consume the assembly in a moment (vv. 20-21). Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and said, "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and will You be angry with all the assembly?" (v. 22).

Moses and Aaron addressed God as "the God of the spirits of all flesh." The assembly was a composition of flesh, but all those in the assembly had a spirit. God is the God not of the flesh of people but of their spirit.

3. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Together with Their Wives, Their Sons, and Their Little Ones, and All the Men That Belonged to Korah and All Their Goods, Being Swallowed by the Earth and Going Down Alive into Sheol

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were not afraid because of what they had done. They, together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones, came out and stood at the entrance of their tents (v. 27). The fact that their tents were close together indicates that they were very intimate. They belonged to different tribes—Korah, to the tribe of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, to the tribe of Reuben—but they were quite close. When the earth opened up, they were all in the same place.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones, and all the men who belonged to Korah and all their goods, were swallowed by the earth and sent down alive into Sheol (vv. 28-33). *Sheol* is a Hebrew word equivalent to the Greek word *Hades*. Sheol, or Hades, is the place where the souls and the spirits of the dead are kept. Korah and the others went down to Sheol alive. They went there directly; they did not need to die first. Hades is like a temporary jail, and the lake of fire is the final prison. These perished ones entered into the temporary jail to wait for the final imprisonment in the lake of fire. They went there without dying physically. This was something new that Jehovah created (vv. 29-30). We may

say that it was a great miracle in a negative sense. In this way God used the earth to judge the rebellious ones. Probably this is the only time that living people were punished in such a way.

4. Fire Coming Forth from Jehovah and Consuming the Two Hundred Fifty Men Offering the Incense

After the earth had swallowed the families of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, there were still two hundred fifty followers of Korah. They were well-known leaders selected from the entire congregation. By this we can see that the rebellion was quite popular, even universal. Immediately after the three leaders were swallowed up alive by the earth, fire came forth from Jehovah and consumed the two hundred fifty men while they were offering incense (v. 35). This was the second aspect of God's judgment.

5. The Censers of the Two Hundred Fifty Men Being Holy and Being Made into Hammered Plates as a Covering for the Altar

The censers of the two hundred fifty men who had sinned against their souls, that is, against themselves, were made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar, as a sign to the sons of Israel and a reminder to them, so that no one who was a stranger, who was not of the descendants of Aaron, would draw near to burn incense before Jehovah, lest he become as Korah and as his company (vv. 36-40). The two hundred fifty men were burned by God in His judgment. Then their censers were hammered into plates to cover the altar. When the people came to offer at the altar, they were reminded of the rebellion and of God's judgment on Korah and his company.

6. The Exposure of the Unsubdued Rebellious Nature of the People of Israel

We may think that, after this twofold judgment, all the children of Israel would be calmed down and subdued. That, however, was not their situation. Their rebellious

nature remained in them, and it was exposed. In verses 41 through 50 we have the exposure of the unsubdued rebellious nature of the children of Israel.

a. On the Next Day All the Assembly of the Sons of Israel Murmuring against Moses and Aaron

The murmuring of the people against Moses and Aaron proves that their rebellious nature had not been subdued. "On the next day all the assembly of the sons of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, You have killed the people of Jehovah" (v. 41). I find it incredible that they could murmur against Moses and Aaron in such a way.

b. God's Intervening

God intervened immediately. His glory appeared in the cloud that covered the tent of meeting (v. 42). He told Moses that He would consume the assembly in a moment (vv. 43-45a), and He sent the plague to kill them under His wrath (v. 46b). The germs of the plague were probably in them already.

c. The Propitiation for the Sons of Israel through Moses and Aaron

At this juncture, Moses and Aaron did something as an emergency measure. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces (v. 45b). Aaron put fire from the altar in the censer, placed incense on the fire, carried the censer quickly to the assembly, and stood between the dead and the living, to make propitiation for them. Then the plague was stopped. Nevertheless, fourteen thousand seven hundred of the people were killed. This was God's judgment from within the rebellious people.

By reading chapter seventeen we can see that the remainder of the people still were not subdued. There had been a threefold, miraculous judgment by God. God had judged them by the earth, by fire from heaven, and by the plague that issued from the germs within them. Any one of those judgments should have been sufficient to subdue them

and to cause them to fall down before God and worship Him. They certainly should have been subdued by the third judgment. However, even after the third judgment the people still complained (17:13). How terrible was their situation! They were so bold in their rebellion, not caring if they went to Sheol or the lake of fire, that they risked their lives, even their souls. They rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and eventually they rebelled against the very God, Jehovah. From this we see how perverse is the rebellious nature of fallen humankind.

If we consider God's way of judging, we will see that He executes His judgment from three directions: from the earth, from heaven, and from within the rebellious ones. Rebellious people, however, are not subdued by this. Actually, according to the record of the Bible, God never has subdued people by judgment. After the thousand years of purifying in the millennium, the human race will still rebel (Rev. 20:7-9). God's judgment does not subdue people; rather, it consumes them.

After reading a portion such as Numbers 16, some of us may have questions about God's love, mercy, kindness, and forgiveness. Why did God forgive the sinning Israelites yet still punish them? To answer this question we need to realize that, according to the teaching of the Bible, God's forgiveness is of different kinds. One kind is forgiveness through punishment. For God to forgive is one thing, and for Him to punish is another. In a particular situation God forgives, but He forgives through punishment; hence, this is a forgiveness with punishment.

We need to have a holy fear before God. We should bow down and humble ourselves before Him and pray, "Lord, have mercy on me. Only Your mercy can preserve me and keep me in Your grace."

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FIVE

JOURNEYING

(10)

Scripture Reading: Num. 17

In Numbers 17 we have God's vindication. Before we consider this matter, I would like to add a word concerning the descendants of Korah.

Numbers 16 seems to indicate that all of Korah's family, including his children, perished. But Numbers 26:11 tells us that the sons of Korah did not die. Either they did not take part in that conspiracy and rebellion, or they took Moses' word in 16:26 and departed from the tent of their father and thereby escaped the tragedy that took place when the earth opened and swallowed Korah and his company.

In 1 Chronicles 6:33-37, a record of the genealogy of Samuel, we are told that Samuel was a descendant of Korah. Korah aspired to have a higher position in the priesthood. He did not attain it and he became rebellious. However, one of his descendants became a priest, not by struggling for power but by being offered as a Nazarite. (See Messages Eight through Ten on being sanctified to be a Nazarite.) Samuel was not only a priest but also a great prophet.

Furthermore, as the title of Psalm 88 indicates, this psalm was written by Heman, a descendant of Korah and a grandson of Samuel (1 Chron. 6:33). Heman was not only a psalmist but also a singer in the temple under David's arrangement.

In God's sparing Korah's descendants, we can see His mercy. One of Korah's descendants became a great prophet and took part in the priesthood. Another became one of the psalmists, a writer of one of the best psalms and a temple

singer and musician. Thus, from the history recorded in the Old Testament, we can see that God is severe to some but merciful to others. Whether we experience His mercy or His severity depends on how we behave ourselves.

E. God's Vindication

Numbers 17 is a chapter on God's vindication. God's vindication always goes along with His judgment. Hence, His judgment and His vindication cannot be separated. Actually, God's judgment is a form of vindication. But judgment is mainly on the negative side, and vindication is mainly on the positive side. On the negative side, in chapter sixteen God judged Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and the other rebels, including not only the two hundred fifty leaders of the assembly but also the company of Korah. In carrying out this judgment, God exercised His righteousness. In chapter seventeen God went further to vindicate Aaron and Moses, His deputy authority, in a positive way.

1. After His Judgment, God Commanding That Twelve Rods Be Laid before the Testimony

After His judgment, God commanded that twelve rods be laid before the testimony (the Ten Commandments in the ark), which typified Christ and was the place where God met with His people (vv. 1-7). This signifies that everything had to be brought into the presence of God to let God deal with the real situation by speaking the truth to all the people through His vindication. In typology a rod signifies authority (cf. 1 Cor. 4:21). In Numbers 17 the rods represented the leaders of the twelve tribes (v. 2), and Aaron's rod represented the tribe of Levi (v. 3).

Jehovah said, "The rod of the man whom I choose shall bud; thus I will make to cease from Me the murmurings of the sons of Israel, which they murmur against you" (v. 5). A rod is a piece of dead wood. It has not only been cut, but it is also dead and dried up. Yet such a dead and dried up piece of wood would bud. A bud is something organic, something of life. It was God's intention that this budding

of a dead rod would cause the murmurings of the people to cease.

The rods were to lie before God in the tent of meeting through a whole night. It is not likely that Aaron slept well that night. He probably thought about his rod, wondering if it would bud. For Aaron that night was truly a dark night. Sometimes, for His vindication, God puts us into a dark night, a dark tunnel, through which we must pass.

2. Aaron's Rod Budding

Moses must have been the first person to see the budding rod. "On the next day Moses went into the tent of the testimony; and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi had budded and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds" (v. 8). What a miracle that was! Aaron's dead, dried up rod budded. This was an organic miracle.

Moses brought all the rods to all the sons of Israel, and they all looked (v. 9). The record indicates that, without saying a word and without praising the Lord for His vindication, each man took his rod.

3. The Budding Rod of Aaron Being Put Back before the Testimony

a. As God Commanded Moses

The budding rod of Aaron was put back before the testimony (v. 10). This was done according to God's commandment to Moses (v. 11).

b. To Be Kept as a Sign for the Sons of Rebellion

The budding rod of Aaron was to be kept as a sign for the sons of rebellion, that their murmurings against God might be ended, lest they die (v. 10). Verse 5 refers to the murmurings as being against Moses, but verse 10 refers to them as being against God.

In Numbers 16 and 17 two signs were produced through the rebellion of the sons of Israel. One was a negative sign, made of the censers of those who had been judged (16:36-40). One was a positive sign, produced by the budding rod of

Aaron. The budding rod was contained in the ark with two other things—the hidden manna and the testimony of God, the law. All three items are types of Christ. The budding rod, the hidden manna, and the testimony, the law, of God all signify Christ. By this we can see that whatever happened in the Old Testament on the positive side was related to Christ.

The budding rod of Aaron typifies not a dead Christ but the resurrected Christ, the budding Christ, who imparts life to others. Christ always flows out life to enliven others. Christ is the greatest budding rod in the universe. Today He is still budding, and we are a small part, the fruit, the almonds, of His budding.

4. The Rebellious Nature of the People of Israel Being Exposed to the Uttermost

The rebellious nature of the people of Israel was exposed to the uttermost. After God's vindication through Aaron's budding rod, they said, "Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone. Everyone shall die who comes near at all to the tabernacle of Jehovah. Shall we not all end up perishing?" (vv. 12-13). This indicates that even after seeing God's judgment and vindication, the people were not subdued. The earth had opened to swallow Korah and his company, fire had come down from God to consume the two hundred fifty leaders, and fourteen thousand seven hundred of the people had been slain by the plague in one day. All these were miracles on the negative side. The next day, God did a miracle not on a large scale but on a small scale, causing Aaron's rod to bud, blossom, and bear fruit, even ripe fruit. This was altogether positive, a matter of mercy and grace, with no thought of judgment. It was a vindication to indicate who and what were of God and on God's side. Everyone should have been convinced and subdued, but the people of Israel still spoke words of rebellion to Moses.

It is no wonder that these children of Israel were not permitted to enter the promised land. In their rebellion, they had gone too far. Some of the rebels had said to Moses and Aaron, "You have gone too far!" (16:3). Moses said the

same thing to them: "You have gone too far, sons of Levi!" (16:7). Actually, the rebellious ones had gone too far, yet they accused Moses and Aaron of going too far. They condemned Moses and Aaron for doing what they themselves were doing. Similar things have happened through the generations, with the ambitious ones falsely accusing others of being ambitious. In Numbers 16 and 17 God's judgment and vindication clearly indicated that the rebels, not Moses and Aaron, had gone too far.

As chapter seventeen reveals, this case ends with the punished people not being subdued. Therefore, even God gave them up and let them go. If we had been there and had been able to do something about the situation, we probably would have punished the people further for their rebellious words. But God was God, and He did not do anything. Neither did Moses or Aaron do anything. They simply let the people be as they were. It is good to have such a picture in typology.

Do not expect to see an ending of turmoil. Every "storm" will surely come to an end. In history there has never been an endless storm. Although a particular storm will end, those who become involved in that storm may not cease their rebellion.

The rebellious nature in man is Satan himself. Satan has been rebellious, he is rebellious, and his rebellion will not end until he is thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). He may not be subdued even when he is in the lake of fire. Do not forget that this rebellious one is in us, and in ourselves we do not have a way to overcome him. Only one person, Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God and also the Son of Man, can defeat this evil one, and He has defeated him (Heb. 2:14).

We need to be continually on the alert by watching and praying. We have not only the Devil as the enemy on the outside but also Satan as the adversary on the inside. We should remember the word of the Lord Jesus to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you to sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). On one occasion, Peter told the Lord that He was the Christ, the Son of the living

God, and the Lord praised him, saying that he had been blessed by the Father (Matt. 16:16-17). Immediately after that, the Lord Jesus rebuked Peter, calling him Satan (Matt. 16:23). Within a very short period of time, a person who had been blessed by the Father became possessed by the Devil, and even became Satan. Since this is the situation with fallen human beings, we should not expect to see the ending of man's rebellious nature. There is no end.

When Paul was about to be martyred, he wrote to Timothy, in his last Epistle, saying that all the people in Asia had left him (2 Tim. 1:15). This is the sad, dark portrait in 2 Timothy. Nevertheless, Paul was triumphant (2 Tim. 4:17-18).

We have emphasized the fact that, even after God's judgment and vindication, the children of Israel continued to speak words of rebellion. Numbers 17 portrays a sad picture concerning this rebellion. After seeing such a picture, we can only worship God, and worship Him as the Lord.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SIX

JOURNEYING

(11)

Scripture Reading: Num. 18:1-14

Before we turn to 18:1-14, I would like to give a further word on the two signs in chapters sixteen and seventeen.

These two signs, one negative and the other positive, were produced through the rebellion of Korah and his company. The negative sign is the cover of the altar made of the censers belonging to the two hundred fifty men who had been judged (16:36-40). This altar, on which the sacrifices were offered, is a type of the cross of Christ. God's judgment of these two hundred fifty men signifies the judgment of the cross on all of man's service to God which is according to man's opinions, by his flesh, and in rivalry with others. The two hundred fifty men were burning incense in the service of God, which was according to their own way. Their service was judged by God, and the result of that judgment was a negative sign, the covering on the altar. The positive sign is Aaron's budding rod, which signifies Christ in resurrection, the budding Christ.

These two signs, signifying Christ in resurrection and His judging cross, are with us today as a reminder and a warning to us regarding our service to God. The negative sign warns us not to serve God according to our opinion, by our flesh, or in rivalry with others, for that kind of service, we should remember, was judged thirty-five hundred years ago. On the positive side, the budding rod—the budding Christ in His resurrection, who not only buds but also blossoms and bears fruit to maturity—is with anyone who truly stands with God and is one with Him.

The almonds produced by Aaron's budding rod point to the enjoyment of Christ. Such terms as *enjoying Christ*, *eating Christ*, and *drinking Christ* are part of a new vocabulary that came to this country with the Lord's recovery. Christ is enjoyable, and He is our portion for our enjoyment. However, as we will see, in the typology of 18:8-10, the Christ who is the priests' portion is actually a part of God's portion reserved for the priests to share. The priests not only eat God's food; they also eat with God and feast with Him. They are invited by God to share His portion.

The divine thought concerning enjoying, eating, and drinking Christ is in the holy Word, but it has been hidden for nearly two thousand years. We did not see the matters of eating and drinking Christ until 1958, at which time I gave a series of messages on enjoying the Lord by eating and drinking Him.

When we come to 18:31, we will see that the vindication of the priesthood is not only by the budding rod but also by the reward given to the priests. This reward is Christ. The more the priests serve, the more they receive Christ as their reward and the more they enjoy Christ. Such a reward is the divine food to be enjoyed by the faithful priests. This is much greater than the budding rod.

VI. THE LEVITICAL SERVICE AND THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD, WITH THEIR REWARD

A. The Levitical Service and the Aaronic Priesthood

Numbers 18 unveils to us the charge or the duties of the Levitical service and the Aaronic priesthood, with their reward. The reward was the compensation the Levites and priests received for their service. After the rebellion in chapter sixteen, which was an attack on the priesthood of Aaron and his household, a definite word was given regarding the service of the Levites and the priesthood of Aaron and his sons and also regarding their reward. I believe that the word here became a statute or an ordinance

that was kept by the children of Israel throughout the generations.

1. The Service of the Levites

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 (vv. 1a, 2a, 3-4, 6). 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.

a. The Levites Being a Gift to Aaron and His Sons

The Levites were a gift to Aaron and his sons, a gift that had been given to God (v. 6b). God wanted all the firstborn of the children of Israel to do the service. Eventually, God used the Levites to replace them. The children of Israel gave their firstborn to God as a gift, and these were replaced by the Levites. God then gave the Levites, who had been given to Him, as a gift to the priests.

b. To Join Aaron and His Sons and Minister to Them

The Levites were to join Aaron and his sons and minister to them. For the Levites to minister to the priests meant that they served the priests.

2. The Priesthood of Aaron and His Sons

In English the word *priesthood* is sometimes used to denote a body of priests, that is, a number of priests who have been grouped together. This word is also used to denote the service of the priests, and this is mainly the meaning here in Numbers 18.

Aaron and his sons were to bear the iniquity of their priesthood (v. 1b). The word *iniquity* is used here to charge the priests not to make mistakes while carrying out their priestly service. The priesthood was a service to offer all kinds of offerings and sacrifices to God, all of which were types of different aspects of the rich Christ. Thus, it was a very important and serious matter. Any mistake, neglect, or shortage would have been a kind of iniquity. The priests were required to fulfill their charge without making mis-

takes so that their priestly service would not have any iniquity.

The priests were to keep the charge of the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and of the altar (v. 5). The whole tabernacle was the sanctuary. In the Bible the word *sanctuary* is used in a very ambiguous way; it may refer to the Holy Place, to the Holy of Holies, or to both. The sanctuary typifies Christ and also the church. The altar, which was outside the sanctuary, signifies the cross of Christ. Therefore, the sanctuary and the altar typify Christ with the church and His cross.

The Levites served under the priests in caring for the sanctuary and the altar. For instance, when the children of Israel were commanded to move, the Levites packed and carried the tabernacle and all its furnishings. When the people arrived at a particular place, the Levites set up the tabernacle and everything related to it.

a. For All That Concerned the Altar and That Was within the Veil

Numbers 18:7a says, "You and your sons with you shall keep your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil." The ark, which was within the veil, contained three items: the testimony of God (the law), the hidden manna, and the budding rod. Two cherubim were on the cover (lid) of the ark. On the day of propitiation the blood of the sin offering was sprinkled on the cover of the ark. All these matters were under the charge of the priests.

b. Their Priesthood Being a Service of Gift Given by God

"I give you your priesthood as a service of gift" (v. 7b). The priesthood, as the highest service rendered by God's people to God, was a great gift given by God to Aaron and his sons. This was the reason Korah was ambitious to seek it (16:10).

B. The Reward

A reward, or compensation, was given to Aaron and his

sons as the priests (18:8-20) and to the serving 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 serving Levites. The only reward, the only compensation, for our priestly and Levitical service is Christ.

1. To Aaron and His Sons as the Priests

a. 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.

1) To Be Most Holy to the Priests

The portions of the offerings reserved for the priests were to be most holy to them because these offerings were food for God (v. 9). The priests ate not man's food but God's food, food which is most holy.

2) To Be Eaten by Every Male of the Priests' Houses in a Most Holy Place

The holy portions were eaten by every male (the stronger ones) of the priests' houses in a most holy place (v. 10). The most holy place here signifies the church, the Body of Christ. According to the typology in Numbers 18, apart from this most holy place, we cannot enjoy Christ very much. Of course, we can enjoy Christ at the altar, but this enjoyment is superficial. In order to enjoy that part of Christ which God enjoys, we need to be in a most holy place. We admit that Christ is everywhere and that we can enjoy Him everywhere. Nevertheless, some parts of Christ we cannot enjoy unless our standing and position are right. Our standing must be in the proper church life, in the organic Body of Christ.

b. The Heave Offering and the Wave Offering of the Sons of Israel

"This also is yours, the heave offering of their gift, all the wave offerings of the sons of Israel; I have given them to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due" (v. 11a). This verse speaks of two particular portions—the heave offering (the ascended Christ) and the

wave offering (the resurrected Christ). To heave is to lift up. In typology, the heave offering refers to Christ's being lifted up, to Christ's ascension.

In the New Testament we have a revelation of Christ from eternity past to eternity future. In eternity past Christ was the Word (John 1:1). Then, in time, He was incarnated. Thus we have Christ in His incarnation. He lived on earth in His humanity and was crucified. Then He resurrected and ascended, becoming the Christ in resurrection and ascension. He will come again and will reign in the millennial kingdom. Finally, in eternity future, He will be in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. Thus, we have Christ in nine great aspects: as the Word, in His incarnation, in His human living, in His crucifixion, in His resurrection, in His ascension, in His second coming, in the millennium, and in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. Whereas this is revealed clearly in the New Testament, in the Old Testament we have Christ in typology, and the details of Christ revealed there are endless.

Concerning the enjoyment of Christ in a stronger way, there is a cycle. If we would enjoy Christ in this way, we need to be stronger. The stronger we are, the more strongly will we enjoy Christ. Then the more we enjoy Christ in a stronger way, the stronger we will be.

1) To the Sons and Daughters of the Priests

The heave offering and wave offering were given not only to the priests but also to the sons (the stronger ones) and daughters (the weaker ones) of the priests. This indicates that as long as we belong to the priestly family, whether we are strong or weak, we can enjoy such a Christ. If we are weak, the enjoyment of Christ will strengthen us.

2) To Be Eaten by Every Clean One Who Was in the Priests' Houses

"Every one who is clean in your house may eat of it" (Num. 18:11b). Here "house" denotes a family. Every clean person who belonged to a priestly house, a priestly family, could eat of the heave offering and the wave offering.

c. All the Fat of the Oil, All the Best of the New Wine and of the Grain, the Firstfruits Given to God, All the First Ripe—to Be Eaten by Every Clean One Who Was in the Priests' Houses

"All the best of the oil, and all the best of the new wine and of the grain, their firstfruits which they give to Jehovah, I give to you. The first ripe of all that is in their land, which they bring to Jehovah, shall be yours; every one who is clean in your house may eat of it" (vv. 12-13). Literally, the Hebrew word translated "best" means fat. The fat of the oil signifies Christ's best part, which was for God, and the best of the new wine and of the grain signify the Christ who was poured out to God. The firstfruits and the first ripe of all that is in the land both signify the resurrected Christ. These portions were given to be eaten by the priests and by every clean one who was in the priests' houses.

d. Every Devoted Thing in Israel

"Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours" (v. 14). These devoted things also refer to Christ.

We need to give ourselves to know Christ. The Apostle Paul desired "to know Him and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10). This "Him" is too great; He is the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23). Because we have the Bible, it is possible for us to know such a One. I hope that many of the saints, especially the young people, will devote themselves to know Christ not only according to the New Testament revelation but even more according to the Old Testament typology.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-SEVEN

JOURNEYING

(12)

Scripture Reading: Num. 18:15-32

In this message we will continue to consider the Levitical service and the Aaronic priesthood, with their reward, which is Christ. First, we will see some further matters related to the reward to Aaron and his sons as the priests. Then we will see the reward to the Levites.

e. Every Firstborn of Man or Beast

Every firstborn of man or beast was given by God to Aaron and his sons as a reward (vv. 15-18).

1) The Firstborn of Man and the Firstling of Unclean Beasts Being Redeemed

"Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to Jehovah, shall be yours; nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts you shall redeem" (v. 15). Each firstborn son did not belong to his parents but to the priests. Therefore, the parents were to redeem him at a cost (v. 16). Even the firstling of an unclean beast, though it was not acceptable for offering to Jehovah, had to be redeemed.

2) The Firstling of an Ox, of a Sheep, or of a Goat, Not Being Redeemed

"But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shall offer up in smoke their fat as an offering by fire for a satisfying

fragrance to Jehovah; but their flesh shall be yours, as the breast of the wave offering and as the right thigh are yours" (vv. 17-18). Here we see that the firstling of an ox, of a sheep, or of a goat (which typifies the crucified Christ) was not to be redeemed. Their fat was to be offered by fire for a satisfying fragrance to God. Their flesh, their meat, was for the priests, even as the breast of the wave offering and the right thigh of the heave offering (signifying respectively Christ in resurrection and in ascension as food to the serving ones) were the priests'.

f. All the Heave Offerings of the Holy Things Offered to God by the Sons of Israel Being Given to the Priests and to Their Sons and Daughters with Them

"All the heave offerings of the holy things which the sons of Israel offer to Jehovah I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due; it is a covenant of salt forever before Jehovah for you and for your seed with you" (v. 19). A particular portion—the heave offerings—of the things offered to God as holy things was always to be set aside for the priests and for their sons and daughters.

g. The Priests Having No Inheritance nor Any Portion in the Land of Israel

The priests had no inheritance nor any portion in the land of Israel. God Himself was their portion and their inheritance among the sons of Israel (v. 20). Not only was God's food their portion (vv. 8-10)—God Himself was their portion and their inheritance. Because God was their portion and inheritance, they did not need any other portion or inheritance.

2. To the Levites as the Serving Ones in the Tent of Meeting

Verses 21 through 32 speak of the reward to the Levites as the serving ones in the tent of meeting.

a. Every Tithe in Israel for Their Inheritance

"To the sons of Levi, behold I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, the service in the tent of meeting" (v. 21). This

verse reveals that the Levites, the serving ones in the tent of meeting, were to receive every tithe in Israel for their inheritance. Of the harvest from the vineyard, the grain of the threshing floor, the flocks, the herds of bulls, oxen, sheep, and goats, one-tenth was to go to God (Lev. 27:30-32). This portion, called the tithe, was to go to God for the Levites and was considered the Levites' inheritance. As a result, the Levites possessed one-tenth of the wealth of the entire nation of Israel.

1) The Levites Being Required to Offer to Jehovah a Heave Offering from the Tithes They Received of the Sons of Israel, a Tithe of the Tithe

The Levites were to offer to Jehovah a heave offering (the ascended Christ) from the tithes they received of the sons of Israel, a tithe of the tithe (Num. 18:26). This offering was reckoned as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and the fullness of the winepress (v. 27).

Suppose an Israelite produced one hundred goats. Since he was required to offer a tithe to God, this means that he would offer ten goats to Him. These ten goats would then go to the Levites. After receiving this tithe of ten goats, the Levites would set apart one goat to be offered to God. This goat was a tithe of the tithe. The offering of the tithe may be likened to today's practice of paying income tax.

2) The Tithe of the Tithe Being Given to Aaron the Priest

"So shall you also offer a heave offering to Jehovah from all your tithes, which you take from the sons of Israel; and from it you shall give Jehovah's heave offering to Aaron the priest" (v. 28). This verse tells us clearly that the heave offering offered by the Levites to Jehovah was to be given to Aaron the priest. The tithe from the people went to the Levites, and the tithe from the Levites went to Aaron the priest.

Why is the tithe of the tithe called a heave offering? We have pointed out that in typology the heave offering refers to the ascension of Christ, to the ascending of Christ to the

heavens. This thought corresponds to the Lord's word in Matthew 6:19 and 20, where we are told to "lay up treasures in heaven" rather than on earth. To lay up treasures in heaven is to "send" our money to heaven, and to do this is to "heave up" our money. According to typology, whatever is heaved to God becomes a type of the ascended Christ. For example, suppose a particular heave offering consisted of one hundred goats. These goats, which were heaved up to the heavens, became a type of Christ in ascension. Today, we, the children of God, should also offer some of the things God has given us. When we offer these things, we heave them up, lifting them up to the heavens. What we offer in this way becomes the ascended Christ.

The living of the children of Israel in the wilderness was a matter of doing everything for Christ. They took care of the ark, a type of Christ, and also of the tabernacle, the lodging place of the ark. Inside the tabernacle were different aspects of Christ—the showbread table, the lampstand, the incense altar, and the ark with its contents—and outside the tabernacle was the altar, which signifies the cross of Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 2:2 Paul said, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified." Paul cared for Christ and His cross. His life on earth was a life of handling Christ and the cross. While Paul was handling Christ, he sometimes handled tents as well (Acts 18:3). Eventually, all the tents he made became Christ, because he did not make them for himself but for Christ. All the tents made by Paul were heaved up to the heavens; hence, they all became Christ.

The principle should be the same with us today. No matter what our profession or occupation may be, in actuality we should not be handling the things related to our work; rather, we should be handling Christ all the time. Whether or not this is our situation depends on a basic factor—working at our profession or occupation for Christ and not for ourselves. If we do our work for Christ, then what we offer to God will become a heave offering. It will become something of Christ heaved up to the heavens.

What are we Christians doing on earth? What is our center? The ark was the center of the children of Israel. According to typology, this indicates that our center should be Christ. The type further indicates that we should handle Christ as the ark and as all the contents of the tabernacle, and we should also handle His cross. Then whatever we do, we will work for Christ and handle Christ. This will become the factor, the cause, the element, and the essence of our living on earth, and it will cause our living to be absolutely Christ. Then whatever we give to the Lord will be heaved up to Him and will become Christ.

3) The Tithe Being Eaten by the Levites and Their Households in Any Place

"You may eat it in any place, you and your households; for it is your reward in return for your service in the tent of meeting" (v. 31). The tithe offered to the Levites by the sons of Israel could be eaten by the Levites and their households in any place.

b. The Levites Having No Inheritance among the Sons of Israel

Neither the priests nor the Levites had any inheritance among the sons of Israel (vv. 23b, 24b). Their inheritance was God. The very God whom they enjoyed was their reward in return for their service. Today our reward for our service is Christ. Unfortunately, however, many believers know Christ only in a very limited way. Because they do not know Him adequately, they do not enjoy Him adequately. Thus, we are studying Numbers in order that we may know Christ in a fuller way and enjoy Him more.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had defied the priesthood, but God strongly vindicated it. God vindicated the priesthood not only by causing Aaron's rod to bud but, even more, by giving such a reward to the priests. By comparing the reward given to the priests with that given to the Levites, it is clear that the Levites' reward was much inferior. It is possible that the enjoyment of the superior reward given to the priests was one of the primary motives, besides ambition

for power and position, for the rebellion led by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Our service to God today is not in the realm of material things, and therefore our reward is not in the realm of material things. Our reward is Christ. If we serve as priests, we will enjoy more of Christ. If we serve merely as Levites, we will enjoy less of Christ. Strictly speaking, however, God's New Testament economy combines the priesthood and the Levitical service. In the New Testament, the priesthood includes the service of the Levites. Since these two have become one, the reward also is one—Christ as everything.

I would encourage all the saints, especially the young people, to save their time for studying the holy Word and for reading our publications. The riches in the Word will reconstitute your entire being. I hope that the holy Word will eventually become your constitution, and that you will become a person constituted with the holy Word concerning Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

JOURNEYING

(13)

Scripture Reading: Num. 19

In this message we will cover chapter nineteen of Numbers, which deals with the water for impurity. However, before I come to this matter, I would like to say a word about the way the book of Numbers is sectioned.

The first section (1:1—9:14) shows the formation of the children of Israel into an army. From 9:15 they began as the army to set out on their journey. They traveled only a little more than three days before the troubles, turmoils, and rebellions came in. These things began to take place in chapter eleven.

Chapters eleven through fourteen form one group, in which we see four aspects of rebellion. First, the people on the border, on the edge, of the camp murmured evil against God (11:1-3; cf. Deut. 8:2). Second, the mixed multitude, those who were not clear about their status and family, lusted according to their fleshly desires (Num. 11:4-35). Third, Miriam and Aaron, who were very close to Moses and in the center of the administration, rebelled (12:1-16). Fourth, the children of Israel were unbelieving concerning entering into the good land. That was a rebellion out of the unbelief of a fleshly people (13:1—14:38).

Chapter fifteen is an insertion in which ordinances were given in three directions: concerning God's provision of different offerings, which are aspects of Christ; concerning the keeping of the Sabbath, which is to receive what God has done for us; and concerning the people's dress, which

signifies that our living should have some beauty and that our conduct should be under a heavenly ruling.

Immediately after the three ordinances were given, in chapter sixteen a nationwide, universal, popular rebellion occurred. Two hundred fifty of the top leaders and well-known men from among the children of Israel rebelled to such an extent that there is no word to describe it. In the whole Bible we cannot see another occasion where God was so angry with man that He judged the leaders of the rebellion by causing the earth to open its mouth and swallow them up with their families and possessions.

It is noteworthy that some of the children of Korah did not join the rebellion. Rather, they departed from it. Eventually, Samuel, a descendant of Korah (1 Chron. 6:33-37), became a great prophet and a Nazarite priest. Samuel's grandson, Heman, became a psalmist and a holy singer in God's temple under the Levitical service arranged by David.

Chapter seventeen records that at the end of that vast, terrible rebellion, God vindicated Aaron by the resurrected Christ in His resurrection power. This power was displayed in a dead and dried up piece of wood that budded, blossomed, and bore fruit, even unto maturity.

Chapters eighteen and nineteen are another insertion. Apparently chapter eighteen is a regulation that reconfirms the compensation, or reward, given to the Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical service to the priesthood. Actually it is a strong vindication added to the previous vindication, the budding rod.

Because a company of the Levites had rebelled against the priests, the people became confused. Thus, after the turmoil, God reconfirmed the priesthood. God had already confirmed the priesthood in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Now, in Numbers, God reconfirmed the reward to the priesthood and the Levitical service. This was a strong vindication against the rebellion.

If we read chapters eighteen and nineteen in a superficial way, we will not be able to appreciate the background and atmosphere that remained after the rebellion. A particular

kind of atmosphere was created among the children of Israel toward the priests and the Levites. Both had nothing as an inheritance to live on. They lived solely on what the children of Israel would give them in the way of tithes. The practice was that the people gave tithes to the Levites, the Levites in turn gave tithes to the priests, and the priests then offered something to God. This means that the priests, the Levites, and even God Himself lived on the mercy of the children of Israel. The Levites lived on the giving of the sons of Israel; the priests lived on the giving of the Levites; and God lived on the giving of the priests, the Levites, and the sons of Israel. If the people had refused to give, all three—the Levites, the priests, and God Himself—would have had nothing to eat. Therefore, at this juncture God came in to reconfirm His reward to the priests and to all the serving ones of the priesthood. This became a covenant, a perpetual statute, for the children of Israel to keep throughout their generations (18:11, 19, 23).

VII. THE WATER FOR IMPURITY

Chapter nineteen of Numbers is a very peculiar chapter in the Bible. It is not easy to understand why this chapter is here. In this chapter a heifer is burned with other items, and the ashes are used to make a water for impurity. By reading the whole chapter we can understand that the impurity, the uncleanness, refers mainly to the filthiness of death. This water is a provision to get rid of the effect and impurity of death.

Immediately after the rebellion in chapter sixteen, death was everywhere. In one day fourteen thousand seven hundred people died, and their carcasses lay everywhere. In many of the tents in the camp, there were dead bodies. A man became contaminated by touching a dead body (19:11), by being present when a person died (v. 18), or by entering the tent where a dead body had been (v. 14). The entire population of two million Israelites was under the effect of death. They were all in a situation of impurity. Thus, there

was the need for the water for impurity to annul the effect and impurity of death.

Probably, in Exodus and Leviticus God did not have the thought concerning the water for impurity, because in those times there was not such a popular, universal death as in Numbers. In Numbers 19 death overshadowed the entire people of God. After the death of the fourteen thousand seven hundred, virtually all the tents and every vessel in the tents became contaminated. Wherever anyone went or whatever he touched, he became unclean.

In chapter seventeen, the budding rod was a vindication of the priesthood. Then, in chapter eighteen, the regulations were restated as a reconfirmation of the compensation to the priests and the Levites so that the problem would be settled forever. Finally, in chapter nineteen, the water for impurity was invented to deal with the universal effect of death among God's people.

A. Its Composition

Let us first consider the composition of the water for impurity and see how this water was composed.

1. A Heifer

"This is the statute of the law which Jehovah has commanded, saying, Tell the sons of Israel to bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect, and upon which a yoke has never come" (19:2). This heifer, the principal component of the water for purification, signifies Christ for our redemption.

a. Red

The color red signifies the likeness of the flesh of sin, for the bearing of man's sin outwardly. When Christ was incarnated, He became in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3).

b. Without Blemish

The heifer was without blemish. This signifies that Christ

was without sin. Although Christ was in the likeness of the flesh of sin, within Him there was no sin. He did not have the sinful nature.

c. Having No Defect

The heifer had no defect. This indicates that Christ was perfect.

d. Having Never Been under a Yoke

The heifer had never been under a yoke. This signifies that Christ was never used by anyone, especially by or for God's enemy, Satan.

e. Slaughtered outside the Camp before the Priest

"You shall give her to Eleazar the priest, and she shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered before him" (Num. 19:3). Christ was crucified outside the camp (Heb. 13:12), on Calvary, a little mount outside the city of Jerusalem.

f. Some of Her Blood Sprinkled by the Priest toward the Front of the Tent of Meeting Seven Times

"Eleazar the priest shall take some of her blood with his finger, and shall sprinkle some of her blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times" (Num. 19:4). On the day of propitiation, the blood of propitiation was brought into the tabernacle (in the middle of the camp) and was sprinkled upon the ark and toward the veil (Lev. 4:5-7; 16:14-15). However, the heifer was slaughtered outside the camp, far away from the tent of meeting, yet the blood was sprinkled seven times toward the front of the tent of meeting.

g. Her Skin, Flesh, and Blood, with Her Dung, Burned in the Sight of the Priest

Her skin, flesh, and blood, with her dung, were to be burned in the sight of the priest (Num. 19:5).

2. Cedar Wood, Hyssop, and Scarlet Being Cast into the Burning of the Heifer

"The priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer" (v. 6). Cedar wood signifies Christ in His dignified humanity, hyssop signifies Christ in His humbled humanity, and scarlet signifies redemption in its highest significance. This means that the high and dignified Christ and the lowly and humbled Christ in His redemption were elements put into the composition of the water for impurity.

3. Producing Ashes for the Water for Impurity

Numbers 19:9 refers to the ashes of the heifer. The burning of the heifer with the other elements produced ashes, which signify Christ reduced to nothing. These ashes were kept for the water for impurity; it was a purification of sin, or a sin offering.

4. Living Water

Verse 17b speaks of running water. Literally, the Hebrew word translated "running" means living. This living water signifies the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christ. In the water for impurity, there is the efficacy of Christ's redemption with the washing power of the Spirit of His resurrection.

B. Its Usage

The next matter we need to see is how the water for purification was used.

1. To Be Sprinkled upon the Unclean Persons

The water for impurity was to be sprinkled upon the unclean persons: those who touched a dead body, or came into a tent or were already in a tent in which a man died, or touched one who had been slain with a sword, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave (vv. 11-14, 16-20). This is a picture of the situation of the children of Israel at that time. The uncleanness of death was everywhere.

The impurity in this chapter does not refer to sin but to death. Death comes out of sin, and sin is the root of death (Rom. 5:12). From the sin of rebellion, death became prevailing among the children of Israel. Thus, there was the need

for the water for impurity. Only the working of Christ's redemption, through His dignified and humbled humanity, with His death and the Spirit of His resurrection, could heal and cleanse the situation.

2. To Be Sprinkled upon the Tent in Which a Man Dies and upon the Open Vessels and Furnishings in It

The water was also to be sprinkled upon the tent in which a man died and upon all the open vessels and furnishings in the tent, for their cleansing (Num. 19:15, 18).

C. The Priest Who Sprinkled the Blood of the Heifer and Burned Its Skin, Flesh, and Blood, with Its Dung, the Man Who Burned the Heifer, the Man Who Gathered Up the Ashes of the Heifer, and the Man Who Sprinkled the Water for Impurity Washing Their Clothes and Bathing Themselves in Water

The priest who sprinkled the blood of the heifer and burned its skin, flesh, and blood, with its dung, the man who burned the heifer, the man who gathered up the ashes of the heifer, and the man who sprinkled the water for impurity were to wash their clothes and bathe themselves in water (vv. 7-10, 18-19). This signifies that whoever was involved with the water for impurity became unclean and needed to be washed and cleansed. After this, the entire situation of the children of Israel was cleansed from the effect of the death that came in from their sin of rebellion.

I hope that we all will keep in mind the four rebellions in chapters eleven through fourteen; the insertion in chapter fifteen, with the ordinances concerning the offerings, the keeping of the Sabbath, and the people's dress; the widespread rebellion in chapter sixteen; the vindication through the budding rod in chapter seventeen; and confirmation of the reward to the priests and the Levites in chapter eighteen. Following all this, we see in chapter nineteen the

water for impurity to cleanse away and annul the effect of the death that came from the great rebellion.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE TWENTY-NINE

JOURNEYING

(14)

Scripture Reading: Num. 20:2-13, 24; 27:12-14; 1 Cor. 10:4, 6

VIII. FURTHER FAILURES

In chapters twenty and twenty-one of Numbers, the children of Israel had further failures. In this message we will consider the failure recorded in chapter twenty, a chapter which conveys some marvelous points of the divine revelation.

A. Contending for Water

In 20:2-13 we see that the people were contending for water. While the children of Israel were journeying in the wilderness, the shortage of water was a great problem. The people numbered more than two million, and they had a great many cattle. Finding water for all these people and their cattle was a serious problem. Because there was no water for the assembly, the people "gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron" (v. 2).

1. The People Contending with Moses with Evil Words

In their contending for water (20:2-13), the people contended against Moses with evil words. "The people contended with Moses, and spoke, saying, If only we had perished when our brothers perished before Jehovah! And why have you brought the congregation of Jehovah into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for seed, or figs, or vines, or pomegranates; and there is no water to drink" (vv. 3-5). These

contending ones wished they had died under God's judgment in chapter sixteen rather than live in the wilderness without water. Their speaking here was eloquent. I wonder why they were eloquent in speaking but not in praying. Instead of contending with Moses, they should have prayed.

2. Moses and Aaron Leaving the Congregation, Going to the Entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and Falling on Their Faces

"Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the congregation to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces" (v. 6a). Having no way to deal with the situation, Moses and Aaron went to God. They did not utter anything but simply fell on their faces, and "the glory of Jehovah appeared to them" (v. 6b).

3. Jehovah Commanding Moses to Take the Rod and Speak to the Rock with Aaron before the People That the Rock Might Yield Its Water

"Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes that it may yield its water; and you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give the assembly and their cattle water to drink" (vv. 7-8). The rock typifies Christ (1 Cor. 10:4b), and the water typifies the Spirit (1 Cor. 10:4a).

4. Moses Taking the Rod, Calling the People Rebels, and Striking the Rock with His Rod Twice, and Water Coming Out Abundantly

Moses took the rod from before Jehovah, and he and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock (Num. 20:9-10a). Then Moses said to the people, "Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" (v. 10b). Having said this, "Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice; and water came forth abundantly, and the assembly drank, and their cattle" (v. 11). Moses was wrong both in word and in deed. No doubt, he

was angry with the children of Israel, and he even might have lost his temper. Whenever we are angry and do not control ourselves, it is easy for us to make mistakes. At such times we, like Moses, may speak wrongly or act wrongly.

The Bible tells us that Moses was "very meek, more than all men who were on the face of the earth" (12:3). A real man of God, Moses fell on his face before God, not saying anything. He had truly learned of God. Nevertheless, such a meek person became angry at the children of Israel. God had told him to take the rod and speak to the rock that it may yield its water. Moses could have gathered the congregation together before the rock and said, "Praise the Lord! He is good and He is gracious. He surely takes care of us. You need water, and He will supply water. We only need to speak to the rock, and the water will flow forth." How wonderful it would have been if Moses had spoken in this way! However, in his anger Moses said to the people, "You rebels." Moses did not dare to say anything to God, but when he came from the presence of God to the people, he spoke angrily to them. Then he struck the rock twice with his rod. It was not necessary for him to strike the rock once, much less twice. The rock had already been struck in Exodus 17, and God did not tell Moses to strike it again. Rather, God told Moses simply to speak to the rock. Although Moses was a faithful servant of God, in Numbers 20 he made a mistake which caused him to lose his right to enter into the promised good land.

5. God Supplying the Israelites with Manna and Water to Meet Their Proper Need, without Any Punishment, but Supplying Them with Quails to Satisfy Their Lusting after the Flesh, as a Punishment

In Exodus 16:14-18 and 17:5-6, God supplied the Israelites with manna and water to meet their proper need, without any punishment. But in Numbers 11 He supplied them with quails to satisfy their lusting after the flesh, as a punishment (vv. 4, 18-20, 31-34). In Exodus 16 and 17 God was not angry with the people. When they needed food, He sent manna, for

food is a necessity. Likewise, when they needed water, another necessity, He gladly supplied them with living water from the smitten rock. However, in Numbers 11 the people were lusting after the flesh. Because this was not a matter of necessity, He was angry with them and, in His anger and as a judgment, He supplied them with quails. Can you differentiate these two kinds of situations? When the children of Israel caused God trouble concerning necessities, He was not offended, but when they lusted, He was offended. In Numbers 20 the people contended because they did not have water. Because water was a necessity, God was not angry with them. Actually, it was His responsibility to supply them with water.

6. Moses Failing to Sanctify God in Being Angry with the People of Israel and in Wrongly Striking the Rock Twice

Moses failed to sanctify God in being angry with the people of Israel and in wrongly striking the rock twice. In being angry, he did not represent God rightly in His holy nature toward His people. In striking the rock twice, he represented God wrongly in God's action. Hence, he and his brother were punished by God by not being allowed to enter into the good land (20:12-13, 24; 27:12-14).

In Numbers 20 God was not angry with the people, but Moses was angry with them. He went to God and appealed to Him, but he did not dare to say anything. In this matter Moses was right, for we should not pray when we are angry. Concerning this, we need to remember how Elijah prayed in 1 Kings 19:14. In his prayer Elijah said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." Referring to this prayer, Paul said that Elijah was pleading with God against Israel (Rom. 11:2). Elijah's pleading was actually his accusing the people. From the case of Moses in Numbers 20 and the case of Elijah in 1 Kings 19, we learn that we should be careful whenever we pray to God concerning His people.

"Jehovah said to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (20:12). God blamed Moses and Aaron for not believing in Him and for not sanctifying Him before the people. Because he was angry when God was not angry, Moses did not rightly represent God. In his anger, Moses might have thought that the time had come for God to consume the people. God, however, realized that the problem in Numbers 20 was caused by the people's thirst. Just as a mother is not angry with a child who cries because of thirst but instead cherishes the child, so God was not angry with His thirsty people but rather assumed the responsibility of supplying them with water.

According to God's view of His people in Numbers 20, there was nothing wrong with them. The situation was similar to that in chapters twenty-three and twenty-four. Balak hired Balaam to curse Israel, but instead of cursing there was blessing. Unable to curse him whom God has not cursed (23:8), Balaam said, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob; / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel" (v. 21). In 24:5 Balaam went on to say, "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your dwelling places, O Israel!" According to Moses' view in chapter twenty, there was much trouble and iniquity among God's people, but in God's view there was neither trouble nor iniquity. This means that although Moses was usually one with God, in this instance there was a great discrepancy between him and God.

In his dealing with the matter of water, Moses was wrong. He was God's representative and had the position to represent God, but here he represented God to the people in a wrong way. At this juncture, God was not angry. This is indicated by the fact that He told Moses to speak to the rock that water might flow out of it. But Moses was offended and could not tolerate the situation. Having gathered the congregation and being angry with the people, he said, "Hear now, you rebels." By speaking to the people in this way, Moses wrongly represented God. His mistaken speaking made God common; that is, it did not sanctify God, did not make Him separate from all other gods. Therefore, in His word to Moses in

verse 12, God seemed to be saying, "Moses, you did not rightly represent Me. You gave the people a wrong impression concerning Me. In your anger you gave them the impression that I was angry with them when I was not angry. You did not sanctify Me. You did not express Me as the One who is particular and separate from all other gods. You did not present Me to the people as a God who is full of mercy and grace." The God whom Moses represented was not angry; therefore, Moses, His representative, should not have been angry either.

In verse 10 Moses called the people rebels. In verse 24 God said to Moses and Aaron, "You rebelled against My word at the waters of Meribah." Here God seemed to be saying, "You did not obey Me. Instead of doing what I told you to do, you did something else. The people were not reviling Me. There was nothing wrong with them. They simply needed water, and only I can provide water for them. The people were not at fault for being thirsty, and they were not rebelling against Me. You condemned them as rebels, but you are the ones who rebelled against My word."

In Exodus 32 Moses represented God rightly. The people's worshipping the golden calf offended God to the uttermost, and He said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (vv. 9-10). When Moses heard this, he prayed to God, saying, "Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people" (vv. 11-12). Seemingly Moses was rebelling against God's word; actually his prayer was pleasing to God's heart. Here he rightly represented God, but in Numbers 20 he forgot about sanctifying God and wrongly represented Him.

The experience of Moses in Numbers 20 is an important lesson for us in the church life today. We need to learn that,

especially when we have been offended by the saints in the church, we should not go to God for the purpose of accusing His people. If in our prayers we accuse God's people, we will offend Him. As a mother is offended when her child is accused and criticized, so God is offended when we accuse and criticize His people. Be careful when you go to the Lord concerning His people. You may think that the saints are not very good and accuse them before God. This will surely offend Him.

A crucial matter revealed in Numbers 20 is that God's nature is holy. To be holy is to be different, to be separate. As the holy One, God is different from all the false gods. The false gods are easily angry with people, but not the true God. God does not have that kind of nature. In His nature He is full of mercy, grace, love, and sympathy. He is not offended with His people when the lack of water causes them to contend. Even if He must punish His people, He punishes them sparingly. For example, Korah was devoured, swallowed up, by the earth, but a descendant of Korah became a holy man and a psalmist. This indicates that God is sparing in His judgment.

We must not give people the wrong impression concerning the God whom we serve. In order to avoid giving such a wrong impression, we should be careful whenever we are offended by some of the saints in our locality. We should not be angry with them or go to God to plead against them. If we plead against the saints, God may feel that we are accusing them and that we are not sanctifying Him. We should not be hasty in speaking about those who offend us. Rather, in representing God, we need to learn always to regard His holy nature. This is to sanctify Him. All that we say and do concerning God's people must be absolutely according to His holy nature. Otherwise, in our words and deeds we will rebel against Him and offend Him.

Inwardly God has His nature, and outwardly He has His administration, His economy, His way of action. God's word to Moses about speaking to the rock that it may flow out water was a word according to God's administration and for His economy. Thus, when Moses, in anger, acted wrongly, he broke the principles of God's economy. This should be a

warning to us not to hold on to our anger but to practice Paul's word in Ephesians 4:26: "Do not let the sun go down on your indignation."

Moses offended both God's holy nature and divine economy. He represented God wrongly, and he broke the principles of God's economy. Because of this, even though he was intimate with God and may be considered a friend of God, he lost the right to enter into the good land.

Being careful about the way we speak concerning God's people when we are offended will help us remain in the kingdom of God. Regarding this, I recommend that you consider Matthew 18:1-35, where we see that the best way to be kept in God's kingdom is to forgive others. We should not offend other saints or stumble them. Whenever we are offended or stumbled, we should be forgiving. If we know only to condemn others and have no intention of forgiving them, we will have trouble. In the church life there is the need of forgiveness.

To forgive is to forget. Suppose a particular married couple does not have the practice of forgiving and forgetting offenses. Instead of forgiving there is condemning, and instead of forgetting there is remembering. It is not likely that such a marriage will last. Even if the marriage does last, it will lack joy and happiness. If you want to have a joyful married life, you need to forgive the offenses caused by your spouse and forget them.

The church life should be a forgiving life. Concerning the Bible we should have a good memory, but concerning others' wrongdoings we should have a poor memory. This will keep us in the church life. Otherwise, we will have many negative things to say about the saints, and eventually we will forsake the church life. For the church life and in the church life, we need a forgiving spirit. Then instead of condemning the saints, we will forget their mistakes and offenses.

The blunder committed by Moses in Numbers 20 consisted in not having a positive and pleasant feeling regarding God's people. This caused him to make a serious mistake in representing God. He did not sanctify the holy God in His nature, and he did not keep God's word in His economy. My

burden in this message is simply to point out the important lesson we need to learn from Moses' failure concerning the people's contending for water.

We all need to realize that the church life is very tender and touchy and that every brother and sister in the church is likewise very tender and touchy. Sometimes we offend others because we do not remember that the church life and the saints are tender and touchy. We may think that a certain brother is very good and that he could not possibly be offended by anyone. Such a brother may be good for many years, but suddenly, because he is tender and touchy, he may get offended by someone and no longer have a positive feeling about the church life. Cases like this remind us that we need to learn always to be conscious of the tenderness and touchiness of all the saints in the church life.

In chapter twenty of Numbers, God did not come in to vindicate Moses; rather, He came in to vindicate His people. This might have been a great surprise to Moses, who probably never expected God to vindicate those whom he considered rebellious. But this is exactly what God did. In this chapter He seemed to be saying, "Moses, you have rebelled against My word. My people are not wrong—you are wrong."

Through our study of chapter twenty of Numbers, we may learn how to behave when others contend with us in the church life. The people were saying to Moses, "Where can we find water? Why did you bring us out of Egypt and lead us to a place like this? This is not a place for seed, figs, vines, and pomegranates." After the people had contended with Moses in this way, he should have gone to the Lord and said, "Lord, what should I do concerning the need of Your beloved people?" In this chapter it seems that God said to Moses, "There is no need for you to do anything. Take your rod, go to the rock, and tell the rock to flow forth water so that My people and their cattle may drink." Uttering praises to the Lord, Moses then should have simply spoken to the rock, telling it to flow forth with water. If we deal with the contending of God's people in this way today, the church life will be glorious.

There is a definite connection between Numbers and

1 Corinthians. When Paul was writing the Epistle of 1 Corinthians, it is likely that he realized that the history of Israel is a type of the church life. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 he refers to the Passover, saying, "Our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed." Then, speaking of the things that happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness, he says in 10:6, "These things occurred as types of us." In verse 11 he goes on to say, "These things happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition." This clearly indicates that there are lessons for us to learn from the journeying of the children of Israel. What happened to them may also happen to us.

The lesson we need to learn from Moses' failure in Numbers 20 is that we should be very careful when we speak about God's people. We may think that we are right and that others are wrong. However, God may come in not to vindicate us but to vindicate the ones we condemn.

In 1 Corinthians 4:3-5 we see Paul's attitude regarding judging and being judged. "To me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you or by man's day; nor do I even examine myself....He who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who shall both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then there will be praise to each one from God." "Man's day" in verse 3 is the present age in which man judges, in contrast to the Lord's day (1 Cor. 3:13), which will be the coming age, the kingdom age, in which the Lord will judge. Now, in the day of man, man exercises judgment, but in the day of the Lord, the Lord will exercise judgment. In the church life today, we should not condemn others but forgive them and forget their offenses. Do not keep a record in your memory of others' offenses. Remembering offenses is risky, for it may cause you to lose your birthright, to lose your right to the enjoyment of Christ as the good land.

My aim in this Life-study of Numbers is not to teach the Bible merely in a doctrinal way. I hope that from this word on Numbers 20 we all will receive some light and revelation which will help us in our present, practical Christian life and church life. From the type in this chapter, we may learn to

have regard for God's nature and for His administration among His people. If we learn this lesson, we will be careful about speaking in a negative way concerning God's people.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY

JOURNEYING

(15)

Scripture Reading: Num. 20:2-13, 24; 27:12-14; 1 Cor. 10:4, 6

In chapter twenty of Numbers there are two lines: the line of life and the line of the types. In this message I would like to give a word concerning the types.

7. The Significance of the Types

According to the typology in this portion of the Word, water signifies the Spirit of life, or the life in the Spirit. Since the divine life and the divine Spirit are one, the water here signifies both life and the Spirit. The problem in Numbers 20 was due to the lack of the Spirit of life. This indicates that whenever God's people are short of the Spirit of life, they will have trouble. Most of the problems in the church life are caused by the shortage of the Spirit of life. If we have such a shortage, we will either blame others or contend with God.

In Numbers 20 we are shown the way to receive the Spirit of life. In verse 8 God said to Moses, "Take the rod, and gather the assembly, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes that it may yield its water." God's word to Moses indicates that we need to apply the death of Christ to our present situation. To "take the rod" is to apply the death of Christ to ourselves. In Exodus 17 the rod was used to smite, to strike, the rock. There, the rod was in the hand of Moses, who represented the law. Christ was smitten by the law; He was cleft in order that the Spirit of life might flow out of Him. Since the rock had already been smitten in Exodus 17, there was no need for it to be smitten again in Numbers 20. Christ, typified by the rock, should be crucified only once. In striking the rock a second time, Moses made a serious

mistake. This act was against God's economy. In God's economy Christ should not be crucified more than once.

In 1 Corinthians 10:4 Paul, speaking of the children of Israel, says, "They drank of a spiritual rock which followed them, and the rock was Christ." This reveals that Christ has been crucified to become the rock which follows His people. We may say that He is the "following rock." This means that He is the life-giving Spirit, who is always with us to supply us with the water of life. Christ was crucified under the rod of the law, and now He is the following rock, the life-giving Spirit.

In order to meet our need for the Spirit of life, we should not ask Christ to be crucified again for us. We should simply take up the rod; that is, we should apply Christ's death to our situation. When we do this, we will experience the crucified Christ, the Christ who is emphatically presented by Paul in 1 Corinthians. For instance, in this epistle Paul says, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ, and this One crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul's word indicates that he took the rod, the death of Christ, and applied it to the Corinthians so that through Christ's death they could receive the Spirit.

Now that the Spirit has been given, there is no need for Christ to be crucified again that the living water may flow forth. To have the living water, we simply need to take the rod and apply it to our situation today. We also need to speak to the rock. Speaking to the rock is a matter of believing. Furthermore, speaking to the rock indicates that we have prayed, not in the way of begging but in the way of believing that the Spirit has already been given.

Through the crucifixion of Christ living water has flowed out of Christ. This is clearly revealed in John 19:34. "One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water." Today we need only to speak to the rock, and the water will flow again from the rock. We may say, "Praise the Lord that the Spirit is here!" This is to speak to the rock that the water may flow into us to be our supply. This is the way to apply the death of Christ to our situation that we may have the Spirit of life.

In our hymnal there is an excellent hymn with deep spiritual significance on the relationship between the cross and the Spirit (*Hymns*, #279). Stanza four of this hymn says that we must go through the Jordan before we can be anointed from above, that we must be baptized in death before we can experience the Dove. Here Jordan signifies death, and the Dove signifies the Spirit. If we pass through the river of death, we will receive the living Dove.

The problems in the church life are solved when we have an abundance of the Spirit of life. The problems between us and others and between us and God are due to our shortage of the Spirit of life. The reason we are short of the Spirit of life is that we are lacking in applying the death of Christ to our present situation. If most of the saints in a local church do not apply the death of Christ, that church will have many problems. But if we apply the death of Christ to ourselves, this application will bring in the living water to supply our need and solve our problems. Then, with our need supplied and our problems solved, we will live a victorious life in the church.

At this point I would like to say a further word concerning God's holiness and fairness in taking care of the necessities of His people. When God's people were contending for their necessities, God was not offended but was fair in taking care of these necessities. But when the people were lusting according to the flesh, God was angry with them. We may compare Him to a nourishing mother who sympathizes with the needs of her child. When her child cries out for milk, she will be sympathetic toward the child, cherish him, and supply milk to make him happy. This does not mean, however, that she loves her child blindly and does not discipline him when he is naughty. Concerning certain things the mother will cherish her child, but concerning other things she will discipline him.

A mother's care for her child is an illustration of what God is in His nature. It is God's nature to be fair. When His people were contending for food, He was not angry with them but supplied them with manna. When they were contending for water, He was likewise not angry with them but supplied

them with water. However, when they were contending according to their lust, He punished them.

God is not only fair but also rich and bountiful. In his anger with the children of Israel, Moses surely did not remember that God is bountiful and that He can supply His people's need under any circumstances. Whether or not there is rain or water, He can satisfy the desperate need of His people for water.

God is fair, rich, bountiful, loving, kind, and gracious. In order to serve Him, we must know Him in all these aspects. Because He is fair, bountiful, and gracious, He has no problems with His people when they contend for food and water. Since He is not angry with His people when they contend for their necessities, those who serve Him should likewise not be angry with them in such a situation.

Serving God involves caring for God's people. Therefore, it is not sufficient for us simply to be right with God; we must also be right in our attitude toward God's people. Our attitude toward God's people should be according to God's nature. In Numbers 20 Moses should have had such an attitude toward the children of Israel. He should have realized that the people were in need of water. He should have also considered that since water is a necessity, God in His fairness would not be angry with His people but would instead supply them with water. They were not contending for their lust—they were contending for their need. In this matter Moses should have had regard for God's nature and should not have cared for his own feeling. Because Moses cared for his feeling and not for God's nature, he was offended and became angry. God, however, did not have a problem with His people on this occasion. In contrast to Moses, who was angry, God was fair, bountiful, and loving.

In this message I am especially concerned about the young saints, who have a long spiritual journey ahead of them. In order to complete this journey in a proper way, we need to know God in His nature, especially in relation to His people. Whether or not our service to the Lord is lasting will depend on our attitude toward His people. Our attitude toward the people of God must be according to God's holy nature. In

order to be right in our attitude, we must know God's nature. We need to realize that in His nature God is fair, bountiful, rich in supply, loving, gracious, and merciful. Whenever we see something in God's people which, to our view, is not right, we need to consider the situation according to God's nature. If we do this, we will be right in relation to God's people. Otherwise, we will be wrong and fail to sanctify Him.

To sanctify God means to respect and have regard for His holy nature. God is altogether different from everyone. He is different not only from the false gods but also from every human being. Since God is different from everyone, we must not make Him common. We must not lower Him to our level. He is special and particular, and we must sanctify Him, considering Him according to what He is in His nature. Furthermore, our attitude toward God's people should not be according to our feeling and preferences but according to God's nature. Whenever we are about to deal with His people, we must be mindful of God's nature. Then we will be preserved from the serious mistake of failing to sanctify Him in what He is.

God has His economy, and His economy includes all His actions. The actions of God's economy are mainly related to Christ and to His Body, the church. Therefore, if we would act according to God's economy, we must have much consideration concerning Christ and the church.

Sometimes the situation in the church is not pleasant because among the saints there is much contending. What is the reason for this contending? The reason may be that the people of God are short of the living water, short of the Spirit of life. The way to deal with this shortage is to speak to Christ, for He is the rock that continually follows the church.

Having accomplished everything related to God's economy, Christ is now in the heavens and in us, waiting to be the supply to meet our need. To receive this supply, there is no need for us to beg or even to pray. We should simply speak a direct word to Christ as the smitten rock. We may say that this kind of speaking is actually the issuing of an order. Do you believe that you can order Christ to supply you with living water? We should all believe this, realizing that Christ

is happy to hear this kind of command. As an illustration, consider once again the relationship between a mother and her small child. The child may say, "Mommy, I need water. Give me a glass of water." The mother is happy to meet the need of her children. In like manner, the Lord is happy to supply us with living water to meet our need.

In Exodus 17 Christ in crucifixion is typified by the smitten rock, and in Numbers 17 Christ in resurrection is typified by the budding rod. First, as the rock, Christ was struck by the rod in the hand of the law. Then, in resurrection, He became the budding rod, blossoming and bearing fruit. As the budding rod, He is present with us to be our supply. The main thing that now issues from Him for our supply is living water—the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit. Today we do not need to beg Him for living water or wait for Him to supply us with water. We just need to come to Him and say, "Lord, I need Your Spirit. Lord, give me the Spirit of life." We all need to know the Lord in this aspect, knowing Him according to God's economy.

The Pentecostal people do not know this aspect of the Lord Jesus. They think that to receive the Spirit we must wait on the Lord, perhaps with fasting. But according to the revelation in the Bible, such waiting is not necessary. Christ has accomplished everything for us, and, as the One who is both in the heavens and in us, He is ready to supply us. There is no need to wait on Him—He is waiting on you. He is waiting for you to speak to Him, saying, "Lord, give me Your Spirit." As soon as you speak to Him in this way, you will receive the Spirit of life.

The rock in Numbers 20 signifies the crucified and resurrected Christ. Such a Christ is the ready Christ. He is ready to give you whatever you need. You need manna, and He is the manna. You need living water, and He is the living water. Tell Him to give you what you need. He is waiting for you to do this.

Whenever we speak to Christ as the rock, telling Him to give us living water, we must have the rod in our hand. This means that as we speak to the rock, we must apply the death of Christ to ourselves and realize that we are crucified

persons. Christ was crucified, and we should be identified with Him in His death. If we do not apply the death of Christ to ourselves, the supply of living water will not come. Let us take the rod and keep it in our hand and say, "Lord Jesus, I apply Your death to myself, and I ask You to give me Your Spirit."

Applying the death of Christ to ourselves as we ask Him for the Spirit of life is altogether according to God's economy. However, not many Christians, including those among us, know God's nature and economy to this extent. For this reason, most believers do not know what is revealed in chapter twenty of Numbers. May our eyes be opened to see what this chapter indicates concerning God's nature and economy! May we see that our attitude toward God's people must be according to His nature, and may we also see that, in God's economy, the way to receive the living Spirit as the supply of life is to apply the death of Christ to ourselves and then simply ask for the Spirit of life.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-ONE

JOURNEYING

(16)

Scripture Reading: Num. 21:4-9; 20:1, 22-29; 27:12-14; 20:14-21; 21:10-20; 33:1-49

In chapters twenty and twenty-one of Numbers, there are some important matters which we need to see. These matters are treasures, and we need to have the insight to see their preciousness. For example, Numbers 20 shows us the divine way to receive the divine supply, the way to receive the bountiful supply of the Spirit. In the New Testament we do not have a chapter that reveals as clearly as Numbers 20 the way to receive the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Philippians is a book on receiving the bountiful supply of the Spirit, but not even in this book do we have the precious matter revealed in Numbers 20. In this message we will endeavor to see the treasures in Numbers 21.

B. Speaking against God and Moses

1. Because the Way Was Hard, the People Being Impatient and Speaking against God and Moses, Mainly concerning the Food Supply

It is enlightening to compare Numbers 20 and 21. Both chapters speak of the people's contending. In Numbers 20 the children of Israel were contending for water. This contending was fair because it came from the people's thirst. In Numbers 21 the children contended again, but this time their contending was not fair, because it came from the people's impatience. God did not punish the people for their contending in chapter

twenty, but He did punish them for their contending in chapter twenty-one.

God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt and had brought them into the wilderness, where the way was rough and very difficult. "The soul of the people became impatient because of the way" (21:4b). The way was harsh, and their patience was exhausted. In their impatience they "spoke against God and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread and no water, and we loathe this contemptible bread" (v. 5). From God's point of view, this contending, unlike the contending for water, was not fair. God had not promised that the way through the wilderness would be easy. They should have anticipated a difficult journey. Therefore, God was not happy with them and He punished them.

2. Jehovah Sending Fiery Serpents to Bite the People, so that Many of Them Died

In chapter twenty Moses was angry with the people, but God was not angry with them. In chapter twenty-one Moses was not angry with them, but God was angry. "Jehovah sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died" (21:6). This was a serious punishment, a punishment that caused death to the contending people.

3. The People Repenting to Moses and Asking Him to Pray That God Would Take Away the Serpents from Them

"The people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against Jehovah and against you. Pray to Jehovah, that He take away the serpents from us" (v. 7). In all their journeying, this is the first time the children of Israel confessed their sins. Having confessed their sin in speaking against God and Moses, they asked Moses to pray for them, and he did so.

4. Jehovah Commanding Moses to Make a Fiery Serpent and Set It on a Pole That Everyone Who Was Bitten Might Look at It and Live

"Jehovah said to Moses, Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived" (vv. 8-9). This bronze serpent typifies Christ (John 3:14), and the pole typifies the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). In typology bronze, or brass, signifies judgment. The Hebrew word translated "looked at" in Numbers 21:9 may also be rendered "regarded," or "looked intently at."

The bronze serpent is a type, and in John 3:14 the Lord Jesus applies this type to Himself. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." The bronze serpent had the form of a serpent but not the poisonous nature of a serpent. This is a full type of Christ coming in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3) to be our replacement. In Numbers 20 we have a type of Christ as the crucified and resurrected One flowing out the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit, but in Numbers 21 we have a type of Christ as our replacement and substitute.

When the children of Israel were bitten by the fiery serpents, they became serpents in the eyes of God. They were serpentine and had the serpentine nature. The bronze serpent, however, had only the form of a serpent but not the nature of a serpent. Therefore, the bronze serpent could be a type of Christ, who had the form, the likeness, of the flesh of sin but not the sinful nature of the flesh of sin. The bronze serpent was put on a pole, which signifies the cross. Thus, in the wilderness there was a bronze serpent on a pole, portraying, in type, a replacement on a cross. The bronze serpent on the pole indicated that the children of Israel, who had become serpentine, were put on the pole where they were replaced by something that had the form but not the nature of a serpent.

Long after Numbers 21 was written, Christ came, and in His conversation with Nicodemus He referred to the type of

the bronze serpent. The Lord Jesus seemed to be saying to him, "Nicodemus, the picture of the bronze serpent on a pole signifies what I will be for you. That serpent was the replacement of your forefathers so that they could be saved from death and have life. I will do the same for you. I will die on the cross as your replacement so that you may have eternal life."

At the time the Lord Jesus spoke this word to Nicodemus, it is not likely that he understood it. Nicodemus surely did not regard himself as a serpent but as an ethical gentleman who came to the Lord Jesus for the purpose of receiving teachings about his behavior. However, in His word concerning the bronze serpent, the Lord Jesus appeared to be saying to Nicodemus, "You should not consider yourself a gentleman but realize instead that you are a serpent. You became a serpent when in the garden Adam was bitten by the serpent. Because you have a serpentine nature, I have come not to teach you but to be your replacement. In the eyes of God, you are a serpent. As your replacement, I will be lifted up in the form of a serpent." It is a great blessing for us to know that, as the fulfillment of the type of the bronze serpent, Christ came in the likeness of the flesh of sin to die on the cross as our replacement and substitute.

When Adam was bitten by the serpent, we all became serpents. Christ has come to be our replacement, and we have believed into Him. At this point we need to ask an interesting question: Are we who believe in Christ still serpents? The answer to this question depends on whether, in our experience, we are in John 3, which speaks of the bronze serpent, or in John 7, which speaks of coming to the Lord and drinking (vv. 37-39). If we are drinking of the living water, then we are no longer serpents. But if we are short of the living water, then we are contending serpents.

Christ today is no longer the bronze serpent—He is the life-giving Spirit. The One who died for us on the cross in the form of a serpent, in the likeness of the flesh of sin, has passed through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). This means that He has changed His form. When He died on the cross, as indicated in John 3,

He was in the form of a serpent, but when He came back to His disciples, as revealed in John 20, He was the life-giving Spirit. What kind of Christ is He to you today? Is He a bronze serpent or the life-giving Spirit?

As a believer in Christ, are you still a serpent? The answer depends on whether you are dry, lacking the life-giving Spirit, or are drinking of the Spirit. Apart from the life-giving Spirit, we are contending serpents. In the church life we may be either contending serpents or life-giving-Spirit drinkers. May we all be those who drink of the all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit!

IX. THE RESULT OF THE FAILURES

On their journey, the children of Israel had a number of failures. The book of Numbers shows us that the result of those failures was death, not only of the common Israelites but also of Miriam (20:1), Aaron (20:22-29), and Moses (27:12-14). Miriam, Aaron, and Moses were leaders among the people. Miriam was a prophetess, Aaron was the high priest, and Moses was the unique leader. The result of their failures was death. This should be a warning to us today. We should be careful concerning failures, because failures result in death.

X. FURTHER JOURNEYING

A. The Hindrance of Edom

In the further journeying of the children of Israel, there was the hindrance of Edom (20:14-21). Edom consisted of the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. The children of Israel were descendants of Jacob. Thus, there was a close relationship between Israel and Edom. In Numbers 20 Israel tried to get help from Edom. However, Edom refused to offer help to the children of Israel.

In typology, Israel may signify our spirit, and Edom may signify our flesh. Israel's trying to get help from Edom signifies that we may sometimes try to help our spirit by depending on our flesh. Our flesh, however, will never help

our spirit. We should be those who are in the spirit and who do not try to get help from the flesh.

B. Arriving at the Top of Pisgah

Eventually, the children of Israel arrived at the top of Pisgah (21:10-20). Pisgah was the mountain on which Moses was standing when he saw the good land.

1. Passing by the Well of Beer

On their journey to Pisgah, the children of Israel passed by the well of Beer, where Jehovah commanded Moses to gather the people together that He might give them water. This well typifies Christ (John 4:11-12), and the water from this well typifies the Spirit (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39). In Numbers 21, therefore, Christ is typified both by the bronze serpent and by the well. As the bronze serpent Christ is for our replacement, and as the springing well He is for our enjoyment.

2. Israel Singing to the Well

In Numbers 21:17 and 18 Israel sang a song to the well: "Spring up, O well! Sing to it! / The well which the leaders dug, / Which the nobles of the people hollowed out / With the scepter and with their staves." (For a hymn on the spiritual significance of digging the well, see *Hymns,* #250.) According to this song, the well was dug by the leaders and the nobles. Those today who seek after the Spirit and take the lead to dig the well are noble and are leaders.

XI. THE STATIONS OF THE JOURNEY

A. In Total, Forty-two Stations, from the Land of Slavery to the Land of Rest

In this message I would also like to say a word concerning the stations of the journey made by the children of Israel. According to Numbers 33:1-49, there were a total of forty-two stations, from the land of slavery to the land of rest.

The record of these forty-two stations does not mention anything about the failures of the people. If we had only the record in Numbers 33, we would think that in their journey

the children of Israel were altogether aggressive, positive, and successful, going from one station to another until they reached their goal—the land of rest. As a result of our reading of Numbers 1 through 33, we may have the opinion that there was nothing good with the children of Israel. But chapter thirty-three shows us that in the eyes of God the record regarding them is positive. This indicates that, in His view, God always considers His people in a positive way. God looks at His people not from the angle of the bad but from the angle of the good.

You need to be mindful of this whenever you are tempted to criticize a particular local church. Whether the church is marvelous or pitiful actually does not depend on what the church is; rather, it depends on what you are. If you have a negative attitude and view the church from a negative angle, you will not see anything good in the church. If you have a positive attitude and view the church from a positive angle, you will say that the church is marvelous. Concerning the church life in our locality, we should not be defeated or disappointed, and we should not lose heart. We need to view the churches in a heavenly way and realize that all the local churches are parts of the coming New Jerusalem.

From our study of the book of Numbers, we need to learn that the way we look at God's people is a serious matter. Perhaps in your eyes God's people are not very good. But God sees them as chosen, redeemed, saved from the bondage of the fall, enjoying Christ, being built up with the Triune God, formed into an army to fight for God, and prepared by God to possess the all-inclusive Christ as the good land. If we see God's people in this way, we will not lose heart or be discouraged concerning the church life.

B. Typifying Forty-two Generations, from Abraham to Christ

The forty-two stations in chapter thirty-three typify forty-two generations, from Abraham to Christ (Matt. 1:17). At the conclusion of the journey of God's people in the Old Testament, there is a record of the forty-two stations. At the beginning of the New Testament, there is a record of the

forty-two generations. The goal of the forty-two stations was the good land, and the goal of the forty-two generations was Christ. The correspondence here indicates that God's intention is to bring all His people to the good land as the goal. Today Christ is our good land, our land of rest.

In the Old Testament the goal was at the end, but in the New Testament the goal is at the beginning. This means that we, the believers in Christ, begin from the goal. This may be compared to the significance of the Sabbath in Genesis. The Sabbath was the result of God's work. He worked for six days, attained His goal, and rested on the seventh day. This means that for God the Sabbath came as the result of His work. But man's relation to the Sabbath is very different. For man, the Sabbath is not an ending but a beginning. Man was created on the sixth day, probably late in the afternoon. This means that soon after man came from the creating hand of God, the day became the Sabbath, and this day signified not the ending of man's work but the beginning of his enjoyment. Therefore, to the working God the Sabbath is a result, but to the enjoying man the Sabbath is a beginning. The principle is the same with God's goal of bringing us into Christ as the good land. For us today, this goal is not a result—it is a beginning. Where are you—in the result or in the beginning? The best way to answer this question is to say we are in the result which, for us, is the beginning.

This principle applies to everything in the spiritual field. To God, the goal is the result; to us, the goal is the beginning. We do not make a long journey to reach the goal. Instead, we begin at the goal and then go forward in our Christian walk.

The forty-two stations in Numbers 33 correspond to the forty-two generations in Matthew 1. The end of both is Christ. The end of the forty-two stations was the good land, which typifies Christ, and the end of the forty-two generations is Christ Himself. Christ to us is the reality of the good land. In the Old Testament God's people journeyed and then arrived at the goal. But in the New Testament we, the believers, are already in the goal, we are enjoying the goal, and our

enjoyment of the goal becomes our supply as we walk along the way.

The New Testament was written in such a way as to show us, in Matthew 1, that the goal, the result, is attained only after a long journey lasting forty-two generations. The result—Christ—is here today. There is no need to wait for the future to reach the goal, to enter into the result. No, we begin with the result. When we were baptized into Christ, we were baptized into the result. Everything has been completed, and everything concerning our enjoyment of Christ has been prepared and is now on the "table." We simply need to come and dine and enter into the enjoyment of Christ.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-TWO

FIGHTING

(1)

Scripture Reading: Num. 21:1-3, 21-35

In this message we will begin to consider the fighting of the children of Israel.

Numbers 21:1-3, 21-35 reveals that the children of Israel defeated the kings of Arad, of the Amorites, and of Bashan. These kings were gate guards of the good land; their territory was east of the Jordan. In order for the children of Israel to enter into the good land, they had to pass through the territory controlled by these kings who were guarding the land of Canaan for Satan. These kings, therefore, were gate guards of the kingdom of darkness, and they had to be defeated before the children of Israel could enter into the land usurped and occupied by Satan.

What does Canaan signify in typology? A common, shallow understanding is that Canaan signifies heaven. Certain hymns speak of crossing "the cold waves of Jordan" on the way to heaven. This understanding of the spiritual significance of Canaan surely is not accurate. In the land of Canaan there were all kinds of enemies. If Canaan signifies heaven, this would mean that there are enemies in heaven. If this were the situation, heaven would not be a pleasant place, and no one would want to go there.

In typology, Canaan signifies the aerial part, the heavenly part, of the dark kingdom of Satan. Matthew 12:26 indicates that Satan has a kingdom. As the ruler of this world (John 12:31) and as the ruler of the authority of the air (Eph. 2:2), Satan has his authority (Acts 26:18) and his angels (Matt. 25:41), who are his subordinates as principalities, powers,

and rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. 6:12). Hence, he has his kingdom, the authority of darkness (Col. 1:13). Satan and his kingdom are at war, at enmity, with God and His kingdom. Formerly, we were in the kingdom of Satan, but God's salvation has brought us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:13). Now we are no longer in the kingdom of Satan but are in the kingdom of God.

The point we would emphasize here is that Canaan does not signify heaven in a positive sense; on the contrary, Canaan typifies the main part, the leading part, the aerial part, of Satan's kingdom, with its authorities and rulers. In typology, the giants in the land of Canaan signify the evil angels, the rebellious angels who follow Satan (Rev. 12:4, 7).

During the past twenty-five years, we have stressed the fact that Canaan, the good land, is a type of Christ. Now we are saying that Canaan is a type of the kingdom of Satan, with its evil spirits. This may seem contradictory, but actually it is not. If we study the typology carefully, we will see that Canaan has two features. On the one hand, Canaan is a land of riches, as revealed in Deuteronomy 8. Using this portion of the Word as the basis, we released the messages that have been printed in the book *The All-inclusive Christ.* On the other hand, Canaan was a land full of evil persons and enemies, all of whom were to be eradicated by the children of Israel. This feature, or aspect, of Canaan signifies the most evil part of Satan's dark kingdom. As we consider these two features of Canaan, we see that whether or not we can enjoy Christ as the all-inclusive land depends on whether or not we defeat the enemies typified by the Canaanites. This indicates that the church as a whole, including all the members, should engage in the spiritual warfare revealed in Ephesians 6.

Ephesians is a book on the all-inclusive Christ. Ephesians 3:8 tells us that the riches of Christ are untraceable. In order to enjoy such a Christ, we need to fight against the spiritual enemies, against "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12). We must defeat and crush the enemies signified by the king of Arad, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king

of Bashan. We all need to keep in mind that the Canaanites typify the fallen angels, who have become the powers, rulers, and authorities in Satan's kingdom, and that a war is raging between these evil spirits and the church. The typology in Numbers 21 shows us how to fight in this war. The slaughtering of the gate guards in this chapter indicates our need to defeat the evil spirits in the kingdom of Satan. It is helpful to have this view as we now consider 21:1-3, 21-35.

I. DEFEATING THE KING OF ARAD

In 21:1-3 the children of Israel defeated the king of Arad.

A. The Canaanite, the King of Arad, Fighting against Israel and Taking Some of Them Captive

"When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the Negev, heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim, he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive" (v. 1). This portrays an aspect of the history of the church. Some saints in the church have been taken captive by the evil spirits.

B. Israel Vowing a Vow to Jehovah That if Jehovah Would Give the People of Arad into Their Hand, They Would Utterly Destroy Their Cities

"Israel vowed a vow to Jehovah, and said, If you will indeed give this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities" (v. 2). Israel vowed to destroy not only the people of Arad but also their cities. This indicates that we need to fight against the evil spirits, defeat them, and take over their territory. We need to exercise our Christ-given authority over the aerial powers.

C. Jehovah Hearkening to Israel and Giving Over the Canaanites, and Israel Utterly Destroying Them and Their Cities

"Jehovah hearkened to the voice of Israel, and gave over the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their

cities" (v. 3). This indicates that Arad, the first of the gate guards, was defeated by the children of Israel. I hope that the scene here will help us to see the vision of the church's warfare against the evil spirits in the air.

II. DEFEATING SIHON KING OF THE AMORITES

In 21:21-32 the children of Israel defeated Sihon king of the Amorites (Gen. 15:16).

A. Israel Sending Messengers to King Sihon, Asking for a Way to Pass through His Land

"Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, Let me pass through your land; we will not turn aside into field or vineyard; we will not drink the water of a well; we will go by the king's highway, until we have passed through your territory" (Num. 21:21-22). Since Sihon is a type of the evil spirits, these verses indicate that sometimes we may ask the evil spirits to give us a way through their territory.

B. Sihon Not Being Willing to Allow Israel to Pass through His Territory and Gathering All His People to Fight against Israel

"Sihon would not grant Israel to pass through his territory. And he gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel to the wilderness, and came to Jahaz, and fought against Israel" (v. 23). This portrays something that actually may take place in the spiritual realm. We may speak to the evil spirits, asking them to give us a way through their territory, but this stirs them to fight against us.

C. Israel Slaying Him, Taking Possession of His Land, and Dwelling in the Land of the Amorites

Israel slew Sihon, took possession of his land, and dwelt in the land of the Amorites (vv. 24-32). This indicates that after we engage in spiritual warfare against the evil spirits, part of the territory of Satan in the air becomes ours.

Throughout the centuries, some of the saints have fought in such a way against the evil powers in the air.

III. DEFEATING OG, THE KING OF BASHAN

According to 21:33-35, the children of Israel also defeated Og, the king of Bashan. Bashan, which is mentioned several times in the Psalms, is a mountain standing in opposition to God's dwelling place. Thus, Bashan is a type of the satanic authority in the air.

King Og and all his people came to do battle against Israel at Edrei (v. 33). Jehovah said to Moses, "Do not fear him; for I have given him into your hand, as well as all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon" (v. 34). Therefore, Israel slew Og, his sons, and all his people, until there was none left, and possessed his land (v. 35).

If we understand these verses regarding the three gate guards as typifying the church's spiritual warfare against the evil spirits in the air, we will obtain much that is profitable from these verses. Today we must fight against the evil spirits and defeat them so that we may gain more territory for God's kingdom.

In our Christian experience we may not have much realization concerning the spiritual warfare about which we have been speaking. When we think of spiritual warfare, we may have in mind the warfare between our spirit and our flesh or the struggle against sin and worldliness. However, the war against sin, the world, and the flesh is the lower part of the spiritual warfare. The higher part of the spiritual warfare is the fighting in the spiritual realm against evil spirits and demons.

In the spiritual world there is a territory usurped and occupied by Satan and his followers. Paul had an excellent understanding of this and spoke much concerning it. Now we need to learn about this spiritual reality, which is Satan's kingdom, the kingdom of darkness. Within this kingdom there are the fallen angels and the demons. Whereas the fallen angels are in the air, the demons are in the water. Both the angels and the demons, as followers of Satan, are working

on fallen human beings to make them subjects in Satan's kingdom. The fallen angels in the air—the rulers, powers, and authorities of the kingdom of Satan—rule the entire world, and the demons are their helpers, helping the fallen angels to usurp human beings. Thus, the kingdom of Satan comprises evil angels, demons, and fallen human beings.

The New Testament tells us that God has appointed His people to fight against the kingdom of Satan. He has assigned them the responsibility of engaging in spiritual warfare. The history of Israel's fighting against the Canaanites is a type, a picture, of the warfare raging today between us and the fallen angels and the demons. If we read Numbers 21 from this perspective, we will see a vision concerning spiritual warfare.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-THREE

FIGHTING

(2)

Scripture Reading: Num. 22:1-40; 2 Pet. 2:15-16; Jude 11

IV. THE HARASSMENT BY BALAK AND BALAAM

Chapters twenty-two through twenty-five of Numbers deal with the harassment by Balak and Balaam. In this message we will consider the matter of Balak's evil intention (22:1-40).

A. Balak's Evil Intention

In Numbers 22 the enemy changed not only his way of fighting but also his mode of fighting. At first, in Exodus, Satan used the Egyptian army to frustrate the children of Israel. When they were about to cross the Red Sea, the Egyptians were right behind them. Later, in the wilderness, God's people had to fight against Amalek (Exo. 17:8-16). As we saw in the last message, the Israelites also fought and defeated the kings of Arad, the Amorites, and Bashan, destroying their cities and taking possession of their land (Num. 21:1-3, 21-35). After defeating these three kings, the children of Israel were ready to cross the Jordan and enter into the good land. The enemy, therefore, changed his mode of fighting against Israel.

1. Balak, the King of Moab, Joining with Midian, and They Sending Their Elders to Induce Balaam to Come and Curse Israel for Them

"Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was very afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was distressed because

of the sons of Israel" (vv. 2-3). Balak, the king of Moab, was terrified by the children of Israel and their victories. He was afraid that they would defeat him and take over his territory. "Moab said to the elders of Midian, This congregation will now lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field" (v. 4a). Balak seemed to be saying, "This mighty people will devour me and my land. What can I do to fight against them?" Realizing that he could not defeat Israel militarily or politically, Balak decided to take the religious way.

As Numbers 22 indicates, the religious way is linked to both Moab and Midian. Moab was a son born of Lot and one of his daughters through incest (Gen. 19:30-38). Hence, Moab represents the fruit of fleshly lust. Midian was very close to the children of Ishmael, who represents the flesh, in contrast to Isaac, who represents that which is born of the Spirit. Midian, no doubt, also signifies the flesh. Balaam had much to do with Moab and Midian, for Balak used them to induce Balaam to come and curse Israel. These four—Balak, Moab, Midian, and Balaam—became one.

When the elders of Moab and Midian came to Balaam, he said to them, "Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, as Jehovah speaks to me" (Num. 22:8a). Balaam was saying that he would speak to God and see what God would say. Balaam seemed to be quite spiritual. At the least, he was quite religious. Balaam, however, was definitely wrong. He knew that Balak wanted him to curse God's people, the children of Israel (v. 6). If Balaam had been faithful to God, he would have said, "Balak, as long as you are planning to destroy Israel, I can have nothing to do with you. I love God, and the children of Israel are God's people." But even though Balaam knew that Balak's evil intention was to damage God's people, Balaam nevertheless told the messengers that he would ask God whether he should go with them or not. How ridiculous!

We today may do something that is just as ridiculous as what Balaam did. For example, suppose someone suggests that you participate in a certain kind of worldly entertainment, and you tell that person that you would like to consider

the matter before the Lord and see whether or not the Lord would agree with such participation. In principle, this kind of considering before the Lord would be the same as Balaam's in Numbers 22.

Let us take as another illustration the way we style our hair. Is the Lord happy with your hair style? Suppose a sister wants to style her hair in a very worldly way. She knows that the Lord does not agree with this style, but she tries to pray about it anyway. Her consideration is the same in nature as Balaam's.

There may be many occasions when we know that doing a particular thing is not of the Lord, yet we still try to seek the Lord's leading in the matter. Although we know that the thing is wrong, we may ask the Lord whether we should do it or not. This can lead to self-deception. In Numbers 22 Balaam was actually engaging in self-deception.

2. God Stopping Balaam from Going

In 22:9-14 God stopped Balaam from going. God said to him, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed" (v. 12). Balaam then told the officers of Balak that the Lord would not allow him to go with them.

3. Balak Again Sending Officers, More in Number and More Honorable Than the Former, to Induce Balaam

Balak was really devilish. When the officers told him that Balaam had refused to come with them, Balak again sent officers, more in number and more honorable than they, to induce Balaam to come (vv. 14-15). These officers might have come to Balaam with presents from Balak. They spoke to Balaam on Balak's behalf, urging Balaam to curse the children of Israel for Balak.

"Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of Jehovah my God, to do less or more. Now, therefore, stay here tonight also, that

I may know what more Jehovah will speak to me" (vv. 18-19). If Balaam had been faithful, he would have told Balak's officers that the Lord would not let him go with them. Instead, he told them that he would go to the Lord again and seek His leading. This also was a matter of Balaam's self-deception.

4. God Allowing Balaam to Go, and Balaam Going

God allowed Balaam to go, and Balaam went (vv. 20-21; 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11). God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "If the men have come to call you, rise, go with them; but only what I tell you, that shall you do" (Num. 22:20). Balaam, therefore, went with the rulers of Moab (v. 21).

Balaam might have taken the Lord's word to him as the basis for saying that in going with Balak's officers he was doing God's will. Actually, Balaam was pursuing his own will, not God's will. Because he desired to go with Balak's officers, God told him to go. Our situation today may be similar. If we want to do a certain thing and even insist on doing it, the Lord may eventually allow us to do it.

5. God's Anger Burning against Balaam because He Went, and the Angel of Jehovah Standing in the Way as His Adversary and Using the Ass He Rode On to Speak to Him

"God's anger burned because he went; and the Angel of Jehovah took His stand in the way as his adversary" (v. 22a). When the ass on which Balaam was riding saw the Angel of Jehovah, she pushed against the wall (v. 25). When she saw the Angel of Jehovah again, she lay down under Balaam (v. 27). Eventually, because Balaam was striking the ass with his staff, God opened the mouth of the ass, and she spoke to Balaam (vv. 28-30). This was a genuine miracle. Then "Jehovah unveiled the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the Angel of Jehovah standing in the road and His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head, and fell on his face" (v. 31).

Notice that in our text the Angel of the Lord is capitalized to indicate that this angel is Christ. In the Old Testament the expression "the Angel of Jehovah" refers to Christ. For

example, when Moses was called by God, he was called directly by the Angel of Jehovah, directly by Christ (Exo. 3:2, 4). If we read Numbers 22 carefully, we will see that the Angel of Jehovah here is the very God Himself. The Lord Himself was dealing with this greedy prophet.

6. Balaam Knowing That It Was Wrong to Go, and the Angel of Jehovah Allowing Him to Go and Charging Him to Speak Only What the Angel of Jehovah Would Speak to Him

Although Balaam came to know the real situation, seeing that the Angel of Jehovah was standing in the road in front of him, he did not go back. Instead, he kept on going. Balaam knew that it was wrong to go. He said to the Angel of Jehovah, "I have sinned, for I did not know that You stood against me in the road. Now therefore, if it is evil in Your sight, I will go back again" (v. 34). However, the Angel of Jehovah allowed him to go but said to him, "Only the word which I will speak to you, that shall you speak" (v. 35).

7. Balak Welcoming Balaam at the Capital of Moab

When Balaam appeared, Balak welcomed him at the capital of Moab (vv. 36-40). As we will see in the following messages, Balak did not get what he wanted, but God gained what He wanted. Although Balaam was a greedy prophet, he was still under God's control.

The record concerning Balaam in Numbers 22 contains a valuable lesson that we all need to learn today. The lesson here is that we should not seek the Lord's will as long as we have the desire to do certain things. If we have a particular desire, yet still want to seek God's will, the result may be self-deception. We need to learn to seek the Lord's will without having any other desire. This means that we should be able to pray in simplicity, "Lord, I am here seeking Your will. My only desire is to know Your will and do it." If this is our situation, we will eventually know the Lord's will. However, if we seek the Lord's will but are actually inclined

to carry out our own desires, we may deceive ourselves, even as Balaam deceived himself.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FOUR

FIGHTING

(3)

Scripture Reading: Num. 22:41—23:26

B. Balaam's Prophesying in Parables

In the foregoing message we saw Balak's evil intention. In this message we will begin to consider Balaam's prophesying in parables (22:41—24:25). The Hebrew word translated "parable" in 23:7, 18; 24:3, 15, 20, 21 may also be rendered "proverb." Here we prefer to use the word parable. Balaam's prophecies were not proverbs; they were parables.

1. The First Parable

Balaam's first parable is in 22:41—23:12.

a. Balak Bringing Balaam Up to the High Places of Baal

"In the morning Balak took Balaam and brought him up to the high places of Baal; and from there he saw the extremities of the people" (22:41). In the Old Testament the high places were places where people worshipped idols. "Baal" was the name of an idol. Therefore, the high places of Baal were places where people worshipped the idol of Baal.

b. Balaam Asking Balak to Build for Him Seven Altars and Provide for Him Seven Bulls and Seven Rams

"Balaam said to Balak, Build for me here seven altars, and provide for me here seven bulls and seven rams. And Balak did as Balaam had spoken" (23:1-2a). Balaam's word

indicates that the worship in which he was involved was a mixture. It is according to God's way to build an altar. However, here Balaam mixed the worship of God with the worship of Baal.

"Balak and Balaam offered on each altar a bull and a ram" (v. 2b). To whom did they offer—to Jehovah or to Baal? Because of the mixture of the worship of God and the worship of Baal, it is difficult to determine to whom Balak and Balaam offered these offerings.

Such a mixture in worship can also be found in Catholicism. In the Catholic Church offerings are offered, but it is not clear to whom they are offered. Apparently, the offerings in the Catholic Church are offered to God; actually, these offerings are offered to different idols and images. Thus, the Catholic religion has mixed the worship of God with the worship of idols. In actuality, this worship is not even a mixture, for it is the worship of idols.

c. Balak and All the Rulers of Moab Standing beside Balaam's Burnt Offering, and Jehovah Putting a Word in Balaam's Mouth, and Balaam Prophesying in a Parable

Balak and all the rulers of Moab stood beside Balaam's burnt offering (vv. 3, 6). Jehovah put a word in Balaam's mouth, and Balaam prophesied in a parable (vv. 4-5, 7-10).

The situation here was quite strange. The offerings were not offered to Jehovah; rather, in an ambiguous way, they were offered to Baal. Nevertheless, for the sake of His people Israel, God ruled over Balaam. No doubt, Balaam had the desire and the intention in his heart to curse Israel that he might please Balak and receive more money. But as the One who was watching and ruling, the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and Balaam had no choice but to speak God's word.

The word in verses 7 through 10 was surely inspired by God. The human mind is not able to compose such a parable, a parable which Balaam spoke as a prophecy. This is strong evidence that the Bible was inspired by the living, almighty,

and speaking God. Let us now look into certain aspects of Balaam's first parable.

Balak had said to Balaam, "Come, curse Jacob for me, / And come, denounce Israel" (v. 7b). However, this was impossible. Balaam said, "How can I curse him whom God has not cursed? / How can I denounce him whom Jehovah has not denounced? / For from the top of the rocks I see him, / From the hills I behold him. / Behold, a people that will dwell alone, /And will not reckon themselves among the nations!" (vv. 8-9). The word about the children of Israel's dwelling alone and not reckoning themselves among the nations indicates that they were a holy, sanctified people, a people set apart from the nations.

In verse 10 Balaam went on to say, "Who can count the dust of Jacob, / Or number the fourth part of Israel? / Let me die the death of the upright, /And let my end be like theirs!" Here we see the blessing of increase. Jacob, like the dust, will be numberless, countless. No one will be able to count even the fourth part of Israel. Furthermore, the word concerning the death of the upright is a word of great blessing and appreciation.

The first parable was a blessing upon the children of Israel as a separate people, a particular and special class of people who dwell alone and who are not reckoned among the nations. Because this people will be blessed with abundant increase, no one will be able to number them. After uttering this great blessing, Balaam expressed his appreciation of Israel.

d. Balak Complaining to Balaam That He Had Blessed Israel instead of Cursing Them

Balaam's word of blessing and appreciation concerning Israel offended Balak. This was the reason Balak said to him, "What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and you have altogether blessed them!" (v. 11). To this Balaam replied, "Must I not take heed to speak what Jehovah puts in my mouth?" (v. 12).

2. The Second Parable

In 23:13-26 we see Balaam's second parable.

a. Balak Bringing Balaam to the Top of Pisgah, Building Seven Altars, and Offering a Bull and a Ram on Each Altar

"Balak said to him, Come with me to another place, from which you may see them; you shall see only the edge of them, and shall not see them all; then curse them for me from there. And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar" (vv. 13-14). Balak brought Balaam to another place, a mountain, and, as in verses 1 and 2, built seven altars.

b. Balak and All the Rulers of Moab Standing beside Balaam's Burnt Offering, and Jehovah Putting a Word in Balaam's Mouth, and Balaam Prophesying in a Second Parable

Again, Balak and all the rulers of Moab stood beside Balaam's burnt offering, and again Jehovah put a word in Balaam's mouth, and Balaam prophesied in a second parable (vv. 15-24).

One of the most striking lines in this parable is in verse 21: "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob; / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel." How could Balaam speak such a word, since Israel was not perfect and since God could see all the iniquities of His people? The answer is that this word was spoken not according to the human view but according to the divine view. God's view is different from our view. If we realize this, we will be careful whenever we speak of the defects of the saints. According to our view, a certain saint may have many defects, but according to God's view, this saint is perfect.

How can we reconcile the word in verse 21 with the obvious fact that the children of Israel had many iniquities? This apparent contradiction is reconciled by the fact that God's redeemed people have a twofold status: their status in themselves and their status in God's redemption. This is our situation as believers today. In ourselves we have many defects, but in God's redemption and in Christ we have no defects. When God looks at us, He does not see us according to what we are in ourselves but according to what we are in

Christ. God does not look at what His redeemed people are in themselves. We may even say that He has forgotten what we are in ourselves. Our basis for saying this is that God has forgiven us, and when God forgives, He forgets (Heb. 8:12). God has put us all into Christ (1 Cor. 1:30). Since He has put us into Christ, when He looks at us, He sees us in Christ. God's view of us is that in Christ we do not have any iniquity.

The principle is the same with God's view of the church life. According to our view, the church life may be very poor. But according to God's view, the church life is glorious. God has not beheld iniquity in the church.

Numbers 23:21 says that God has not seen trouble in Israel. Here the word *trouble* means hard things, evil things that cause people to be troubled. This kind of trouble is even worse than iniquity. In the sight of God, there was neither iniquity nor trouble in His people Israel.

In the same principle, God does not see iniquity or trouble in the church life, because the church is in Christ. In Christ we have been chosen, redeemed, and saved from the bondage of the fall. Therefore, according to God's view, we have been brought out of the fall, out of condemnation, and out of ourselves. Therefore, we may say that in Christ the church life is glorious. The first line in the chorus of a hymn on the church *(Hymns,* #1221) speaks of the "glorious church life." Since the church life is glorious only in Christ, I suggest that we add the words "in Christ" at the end of this line and sing, "Glorious church life in Christ!" We may want to make a further adjustment and sing, "Glorious church life, in Christ but not in ourselves!" In ourselves the church life is not glorious, but in Christ the church life truly is glorious.

God surely had the standing to say that He did not behold iniquity in Jacob nor see trouble in Israel. His people had been redeemed and forgiven; therefore, God could say that they were without iniquity. Balaam, under the control and inspiration of God, had no choice except to declare that God did not behold iniquity or see trouble in the children of Israel.

In Numbers 23:21 Balaam also said, "Jehovah their God is with them, /And the shout of a king is among them." Who

is this king? I believe that, ultimately, this king refers to Christ. Thus, for the shout of a king to be among them means that the shout of Christ is among them.

Verse 22 speaks of God's bringing His people out of Egypt. This verse also tells us that Israel "has as it were the horns of the wild ox." Verse 23 says that there is neither enchantment nor divination against Israel, for "it shall be said of Jacob /And of Israel, What God has wrought!" Finally, in verse 24 the second parable concludes: "Behold, a people rises up as a lioness, /And lifts himself as a lion; / He shall not lie down till he devours the prey, /And drinks the blood of the slain." The lioness, the lion, and the horns of the wild ox all refer to the fighting of the people of Israel.

c. Balak Speaking to Balaam

After Balaam uttered his second parable, Balak said to him, "Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all" (v. 25). Here Balak was telling Balaam to be neutral concerning God's people.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-FIVE

FIGHTING

(4)

Scripture Reading: Num. 23:27—24:25; 31:8

In this message we will consider Balaam's third and fourth parables.

3. The Third Parable

In 23:27—24:13 we have Balaam's third parable.

a. Balak Bringing Balaam to the Top of Peor

Balak said to Balaam, "Come now, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse them for me from there" (23:27). Then Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor (v. 28).

b. Balaam Asking Balak to Build for Him Seven Altars, to Provide for Him Seven Bulls and Seven Rams, and to Offer a Bull and a Ram on Each Altar

"Balaam said to Balak, Build for me here seven altars, and provide for me here seven bulls and seven rams. And Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar" (vv. 29-30). The offering of the bulls and the rams was ambiguous; it is not clear to whom they were offered.

c. Balaam Seeing That It Pleased Jehovah to Bless Israel, Not Going to Seek for Omens but Setting His Face toward the Wilderness

"When Balaam saw that it pleased Jehovah to bless Israel, he did not go, as at other times, to seek for omens" (24:1a).

Rather, Balaam set his face toward the wilderness, lifted up his eyes, and saw Israel dwelling according to their tribes (vv. 1b-2).

d. The Spirit of God Coming upon Balaam, and Balaam Prophesying in a Parable

The Spirit of God came upon Balaam, and he took up his parable and said, "The word of Balaam the son of Beor, / The word of the man whose eye is opened, / The word of him who hears the speaking of God, / Who sees the vision of the Almighty, / Falling down, but having his eyes uncovered" (vv. 3b-4). The phrases "whose eye is opened" and "who hears the speaking of God" indicate that the prophet was on the alert. His falling down with his eyes uncovered indicates that he cooperated with God.

In verse 5 Balaam says, "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your dwelling places, O Israel!" This reminds us of Balaam's word concerning Israel in his first two parables. In the first parable he said, "Behold, a people that will dwell alone, /And will not reckon themselves among the nations" (23:9b). This word indicates that Israel is a holy people, a people separated, or sanctified, unto God. In the sight of God, Israel stands alone. According to God's view, Israel, even today, is not reckoned among the nations. If we have God's view, we will regard Israel as a particular and separate people, as a sanctified and holy nation. In his second parable Balaam said, "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob; / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel" (23:21a). This means that, in the sight of God, Israel is without fault.

The first parable reveals that Israel is holy, and the second, that Israel is perfect. Now we need to see that, according to the third parable, Israel is beautiful. Israel's beauty is indicated by the word "fair." In the sight of God, Israel is holy, sinless, and beautiful. In standing she is holy, in kind she is perfect, and in appearance she is beautiful. This reveals that God has chosen, redeemed, saved, separated, uplifted, perfected, and beautified this people.

According to the Bible, this will be the actual situation of Israel during the millennium. The Jews are not welcomed by the nations in this age, but they will be welcomed by the nations after the Lord Jesus comes back. God promised that the descendants of Abraham would be a blessing to all the nations (Gen. 12:2-3). Eventually the Jews will be fully blessed by God, and they will be a blessing to the entire human race.

In Numbers 24:6 Balaam continues his description of Israel: "Like valleys that stretch afar, / Like gardens beside a river; / Like aloes that Jehovah has planted, / Like cedar trees beside the waters." Here Israel is likened to valleys, which usually are green, and to gardens beside a river. Aloe is a plant known for its healing effect. (The Lord Jesus was buried with aloes—John 19:39.) After the coming back of the Lord Jesus, Israel will be a healing to the nations, and that healing will be a great blessing.

Numbers 24:7a says, "Water shall flow from his buckets, / And his seed shall be in many waters." This indicates that Israel will have an abundant supply of water. The water of a country is related to the riches of that country. The more water a nation has, the more riches it will have. Without water, the land would be a desert.

In verse 7b Balaam goes on to say, "His king shall be higher than Agag, /And his kingdom shall be exalted." Agag was the king of the Amalekites. Balaam's word here is a prophecy that eventually has its fulfillment in Christ.

Verses 8 and 9 are somewhat a repetition of 23:22 and 24. Both portions say that God brings Israel out of Egypt and that Israel has "as it were the horns of the wild ox." Furthermore, in both portions Israel is likened to a lion and a lioness.

e. Balak's Anger Burning against Balaam

Balaam ended his third parable with a word concerning blessing and cursing: "Blessed is he who blesses you, /And cursed is he who curses you" (24:9b). This bothered Balak. "Balak's anger burned against Balaam, and he struck his hands together" (v. 10a). Then he said to Balaam, "I called

you to curse my enemies, and you have altogether blessed them" (v. 10b).

f. Balaam's Answer to Balak

To Balak's angry outburst, Balaam responded by saying, "Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, saying, If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of Jehovah, to do either good or bad on my own; what Jehovah speaks, that will I speak?" (vv. 12-13).

4. The Fourth Parable

In 24:14-25 we have Balaam's fourth parable.

a. Balaam Saying to Balak That He Was Going to His Own People and That He Would Advise Balak as to What Israel Will Do to Balak's People in the Latter Days

In verse 14 Balaam said to Balak, "Now, I am going to my people; come, I will advise you as to what this people will do to your people in the latter days." Balaam not only blessed Israel but also prophesied that Israel would be blessed further and that Israel's blessing would be a damage to Balak and his people.

b. Balaam Prophesying in a Parable

In verse 17 Balaam says, "I see him, but not now; / I behold him, but not nearby. /A Star shall come forth out of Jacob, /And a Scepter shall rise out of Israel; /And He shall crush the corners of Moab, /And break down all the sons of Sheth." Both the Star and the Scepter refer to Christ. The Scepter is Christ as the One with power and authority. In this prophecy, therefore, Balaam speaks of Christ. The greatest blessing to the children of Israel is Christ. As the Star and the Scepter, Christ will be the almighty One with all-inclusive power and authority. This Christ will crush the corners of Moab, one of Balak's countries, and will break down all the sons of Sheth.

In verses 18 and 19, Balaam continues, saying, "Edom

shall be dispossessed, / Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. / But Israel shall do valiantly; / By Jacob shall dominion be exercised, /And those who remain from the cities shall be destroyed!" "His enemies" in verse 18 are Christ's enemies. These enemies will be destroyed, but because of Christ Israel will remain. After these nations have been destroyed, Israel will remain with Christ. Christ will surely be Israel's greatest blessing. This prophecy, as the New Testament indicates (see Rom. 11), will be fully fulfilled in the coming days, that is, in the millennium.

c. Balaam Prophesying in a Parable concerning Other Peoples

In verses 20 through 25, Balaam prophesies in a parable concerning other peoples. These verses help us to realize that God is over all. All the nations are under His control and reign for the fulfillment of His purpose. He rules over the nations that His economy may be accomplished among the nations through Israel.

C. Balaam's Death

Numbers 31:8 speaks of Balaam's death. Balaam, who was a kind of prophet of God, had a pitiful ending. He was killed by Israel among the Midianites.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SIX

FIGHTING

(5)

Scripture Reading: Num. 25:1-18; 31:2; Rev. 2:14b

In this message we will consider Israel's fall into fornication and idolatry. However, I would first like to review the crucial matters, the intrinsic elements, in chapters twenty through twenty-four of Numbers.

In typology, these five chapters present us a picture of Christ and the church. Chapter twenty shows us Christ as the smitten rock who, in resurrection, is flowing out living water to meet our need (v. 8). Christ has been smitten, crucified, and there is no need for Him to be smitten again. Now He is in resurrection flowing with living water to quench people's thirst. The crucified and resurrected Christ is here to meet us in our need. As long as we have Him, God has no problem with us and we have no problem with God.

In chapter twenty-one we have further aspects of Christ. First, as the bronze serpent, Christ is our replacement (vv. 8-9). He became the same as we in nature with the exception that in Him there was no sin. He was in the likeness of the flesh of sin (Rom. 8:3), but He did not have the sinful nature, just as the bronze serpent had the form of a serpent without having the poisonous nature of a serpent. Because Christ came in the likeness of the flesh of sin, He could be our replacement, bearing God's judgment and accomplishing redemption. As our replacement, Christ has solved not only the outward problem of sins but also the inward problem of our sinful nature. Having solved these problems through His crucifixion, in resurrection this One has become a fountain, a well (Num. 21:17), springing up with living water, which

is the consummated Spirit of the processed Triune God. In our experience we need to dig this well (v. 18). If we dig the well, we will become nobles and leaders. Furthermore, as Numbers 33 indicates, Christ is our destination, our land of rest. Therefore, Christ is our replacement, our well, and our land of rest. When we enjoy Him as our land of rest, we do not have any lack or shortage.

In Numbers 23 and 24 we have four parables spoken by Balaam, a Gentile prophet. These parables reveal much concerning the church, with the fourth parable revealing something concerning Christ.

Let us first consider what these parables show us concerning the church. "Behold, a people that will dwell alone, / And will not reckon themselves among the nations!" (23:9b). This indicates that the church is composed of a separate people, a particular people, a people sanctified to God. The church is not mixed with the nations but stands alone. "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob; / Nor has He seen trouble in Israel" (23:21a). This indicates that, in the sight of God, the church is perfect, having no iniquity. The church is perfect because the church is in Christ. "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, / Your dwelling places, O Israel!" (24:5). This indicates that in appearance the church is beautiful. In summary, we see in the first parable that the church has a particular standing; in the second parable, that the church is perfect in the sight of God; and in the third parable, that the appearance of the church is fair, beautiful.

Balaam's fourth parable contains a prophecy concerning Christ (24:17). A church that is sanctified, perfect, and beautiful is a church that is full of Christ. The church can be holy, perfect, and beautiful because the church has Christ. Christ is the content of the church. Christ is the constituent of the church and every part of the church. In the church as the new man Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10-11).

The Christ prophesied in Numbers 24:17 is not an earthly Christ but a heavenly Christ. He is the Star that comes forth out of Jacob and the Scepter that arises out of Israel. Out of the church comes forth the Christ who is the Star, and this Star is the Scepter. This means that the heavenly Christ

is the authority in the universe. Today Christ is our Star, but in the future He will be the Scepter, the One with universal authority.

In Balaam's prophetic parables we see not only certain aspects of Christ and the church but also many of the riches related to the church. The church "has as it were the horns of the wild ox" (23:22; 24:8). This indicates that the church is victorious. The church is also likened to a lion and a lioness (23:24; 24:9). This is a further indication that the church is victorious. Numbers 24:6 and 7 speak of "valleys that stretch afar," "gardens beside a river," and water that flows from buckets. This reveals that the church is like a garden, that the church has valleys, and that in the church there is an abundance of water.

Ephesians is a heavenly book on the church, but we do not find in Ephesians the aspects of the church presented in Balaam's parables in Numbers 23 and 24. Ephesians does not tell us that the church is a garden by a river or that in the church water flows from buckets. Moreover, Ephesians does not reveal that the church has valleys or that we in the church are lions and lionesses. In the church there are lions that can devour the enemy. Even Moab realized that God's people are like an ox that licks up the grass of the field (Num. 22:4). If we see the church as it is revealed in Numbers, we will not despise the church or look down on the church.

Seemingly Numbers is merely a book of history concerning Israel's journey in the wilderness. However, the intrinsic contents, the intrinsic constituents, of this history are nothing other than Christ and the church.

Having seen the picture of Christ and the church presented in Numbers 20—24, let us now go on to consider 25:1-18.

D. Israel's Fall into Fornication and Idolatry

Numbers 23:21 says that God has not beheld iniquity in Jacob. In Numbers 25, however, we have a record of Israel's iniquity. This iniquity comprises two ugly things: fornication, which destroys the person of the God-created man, and

idolatry, which insults the divine person of God. According to the record of the Bible, fornication and idolatry go together. Where there is fornication, there is idolatry. The Roman Catholic Church is an illustration of this. In the New Testament the Catholic Church is likened to Jezebel, a woman of fornication (Rev. 2:20). Furthermore, in the Catholic Church there is idolatry. For example, in his book *The Great Prophecies*, G. H. Pember points out that even Buddha, under the name of Saint Josaphat, has entered into Catholicism. In the Catholic calendar there is a saint named Josaphat, whose story is actually that of Buddha.

Balak was unable to defeat Israel militarily or politically. Neither could he defeat Israel through the use of religion. Therefore, under the influence of Balaam (Rev. 2:14), he induced Israel to fall into fornication and idolatry. It is likely that Balak and Balaam joined in a conspiracy and plotted against Israel, with Balaam being Balak's counselor and advisor, teaching Balak how to stumble God's holy, perfect, and beautiful people. The plot was initiated by Balaam, and it was put into practice by Balak. Israel's positive characteristics were annulled by the fall into fornication and idolatry. Instead of being holy, perfect, and beautiful, they became a people of fornication and idolatry.

1. The Israelites Committing Fornication with the Daughters of Moab and Yoking Themselves to Baal of Peor

"While Israel dwelt in Shittim, the people began to commit fornication with the daughters of Moab. And these invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods; and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. Thus Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor" (Num. 25:1-3a). These verses indicate that those who committed fornication became yoked to Baal, the god of fornication. Hence, there was a combination of fornication and idolatry. The worshippers of Baal were fornicators, and they induced others to commit fornication with them and to worship the idol of fornication. This was the evil counsel of Balaam (31:16).

2. Stumbling over the Stumbling Block Set by Balak, Who Was Taught by Balaam

Revelation 2:14 speaks of "the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication." Balaam taught Balak how to use idolatry and fornication to stumble Israel.

3. The Anger of Jehovah Burned against Israel

"The anger of Jehovah burned against Israel" (Num. 25:3b). He commanded Moses to take all the leaders of the people and hang them in the sun (v. 4). To be hanged in the sun was a great public shame. Moses then commanded the judges of Israel to slay every Israelite male who had yoked himself to Baal of Peor (v. 5). Moreover, twenty-four thousand people were killed by a plague (v. 9).

4. The Sin of Zimri and the Holy Jealousy of Phinehas

Numbers 25:6-15 tells us of the sin of Zimri and the holy jealousy of Phinehas. Zimri committed fornication with a Midianite woman (vv. 6, 14-15). The priest Phinehas, who had a holy jealousy for God, killed them both (vv. 7-8). This was not murder, a killing forbidden by the law. On the contrary, it was a sanctified killing, a killing sanctified by God. In verses 10 through 13 we see that Jehovah rewarded Phinehas for this sanctified killing. The reward was the covenant of a perpetual priesthood to Phinehas and to his seed.

5. The Revenge of Jehovah on the Midianites

In 25:16-18 and 31:2 we see the revenge of Jehovah on the Midianites because of the deceits with which they deceived the Israelites.

In Balaam's prophecies all the points concerning Israel are very positive. Immediately after these prophecies we have a chapter showing us what kind of people the children of Israel actually were according to their nature. God's view of Israel, revealed in Balaam's parables, is altogether positive.

But the actual situation and condition of Israel were extremely negative. In actuality, the children of Israel were a people of fornication and idolatry.

The Bible presents a full record of the aspects and statuses of God's people, revealing what we are in Adam and what we are in Christ. Numbers 25 exposes what we are in our Adamic nature—people of fornication and idolatry. According to our Adamic nature, we are worthy only of being slain and hanged in the sun. God is jealous, and His jealousy burns upon us. In His burning jealousy He will not spare anything of the Adamic nature.

Chapters twenty-two through twenty-five give us a clear view of Israel. In the sight of God, the people were heavenly, but according to their real nature, they were fallen and sinful. The situation is the same with the believers today. On the one hand, in Christ we are wonderful; on the other hand, in ourselves we are people of fornication and idolatry whose fate is to be judged by God.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

FIGHTING

(6)

Scripture Reading: Num. 26:1-65

God created the universe in such a way that we have both day and night. The principle is the same in our spiritual experiences: we have both nights and days. The experience described in Numbers 25 was in the night, but in Numbers 26 we have something related to the day.

V. THE RENUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE

Chapter twenty-six is devoted to the renumbering of God's people.

A. After the Purification by the Plague on the Fornicators and Idolaters

The renumbering in chapter twenty-six took place immediately after the purification by the plague on the fornicators and idolaters (v. 1a). The failure in chapter twenty-five was the greatest failure of God's people in the wilderness. This is proved by the fact that twenty-four thousand people died by the plague (25:9). This plague was a purification of God's people, and this purification was a sifting that dealt with the mixture among them.

Numbers 11:4 speaks of "the mixed multitude." This indicates that among the congregation of the children of Israel there was a mixture. Some impure ones had become mixed with the people of God.

Since the history of Israel is a complete type of the church, the mixture among the children of Israel is a type of the mixture in the church. There will often be some kind of

mixture in the church life. Even with the apostles chosen by the Lord Jesus there was one— Judas—who was not pure. Acts 5 indicates that, at the very beginning of the church life, there was mixture in the church in Jerusalem. The mixture there was with Ananias and Sapphira, who were genuine believers but were not pure. Furthermore, the last of the epistles written by Paul, 2 Timothy, has much to say concerning mixture. Some, like Alexander the coppersmith (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:14-15), hated Paul and opposed him to the uttermost. Many of those in Asia who had been raised up by Paul turned away from his ministry (1:15), and Demas, a co-worker, because of his love for the present age, forsook Paul (4:10). The point here is that there is mixture among God's people, and God uses the failure and turmoil among His people to purify them.

After the great failure in Numbers 25, the children of Israel were purified. The punishment in chapter twenty-five was the last purification of the children of Israel before they entered into the good land. The twenty-four thousand who were killed by the plague should have included some of those who had been condemned for their failure in chapter fourteen. Those who survived all the purifications in the wilderness, especially the last and greatest purification, were a purified people. These purified ones needed to be renumbered.

This renumbering implies some amount of replacement and re-formation. There was the need to replace all those in the army who had died. Also, there was the need for the army to be re-formed. From this we see that the renumbering was very significant.

B. In the Plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho

The first numbering had taken place in the wilderness of Sinai (1:1-2). The renumbering took place in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho (26:3, 63). This indicates that the place of the renumbering was at the entrance to the good land.

C. For the Inheriting of the Land through Fighting

The first numbering was for the formation of the army

(1:3). The renumbering was for the inheriting of the land (the enjoyment of Christ). The renumbering had the fighting and the distribution of the land as its goal (26:53). The aim was to gain the good land and distribute it so that all the people could share it and enjoy it.

The purpose of the first numbering was absolutely for the formation of the army to follow Jehovah, to journey with Him, and to fight for His kingdom. We may say that the first numbering was for the way to reach the goal. The second numbering, however, was for the goal of entering into the good land. This, of course, still required fighting. In our Christian life there is always the need to fight. In order to fight, we need to watch, pray, and be one with the Lord all the time.

D. According to the Fathers' Houses, Age, and the Recognition by the Authorities

"Take the sum of all the assembly of the sons of Israel, from twenty years old and above, by their fathers' houses, all in Israel who are able to go forth to war" (26:2). Here we see that the people were numbered according to the fathers' houses. In order to be numbered, one could not be adopted but had to be born into the house of his father.

The father's house is a matter of life and of the fellowship of life. To be a member of a certain house is to have the life of that house with its fellowship. Those who are in the same family have the life of that family; they also participate in the fellowship of that family, which is a fellowship of life.

The matters of the life of God's house and the fellowship of this life are revealed in the writings of John. In the Gospel of John we see the life of God's house, and in John's epistles we have the fellowship of the children of God in the Father's house.

In order to be numbered, the children of Israel were required to be in the fellowship of the life of their fathers' house. The renumbering, therefore, was not a superficial thing but something intrinsic. It was based on life and on the fellowship of life.

The renumbering was also according to age (maturity). An

Israelite who was under the age of twenty could not be numbered. From this we see that in order to be numbered one had to grow in life to maturity. The standard was strict and required not only life and the fellowship of life but also the maturity in life.

Furthermore, the renumbering required the recognition by the authorities. Here we have the matter of divine authority, in particular, deputy authority. We cannot deny the fact that among God's people there is such a thing as deputy authority, that is, the authority of God delegated to His representatives. We find such deputy authority both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Concerning the renumbering of the people in Numbers 26, the deputy authorities were to recognize the things that were done according to God's regulations.

E. The Numbering of the Twelve Tribes

In 26:5-51 we have the numbering of the twelve tribes, with the number being 601,730. If we compare the second numbering with the first, we will see that some tribes decreased, whereas other tribes increased.

1. From Twenty Years Old and Above

Those numbered had to be twenty years old and above (v. 2). This means that they had to be mature for fighting.

2. Some of the Daughters Being Numbered

Verses 33 and 46 indicate that some of the daughters were numbered. Their being numbered was for inheriting the land.

F. The Regulation for the Distribution of the Land

In verses 52 through 56 we have the regulation for the distribution of the land.

1. According to the Number of People

"To these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; each shall be given its inheritance

according to its numbers" (vv. 53-54). These verses indicate that the distribution of land to each tribe was according to the number of people in the tribes. This means that the distribution was according to the increase of life. Those with a greater increase were to receive a larger inheritance.

2. By Lot, according to the Names of the Tribes of the People's Fathers

"The land shall be divided by lot, according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. Their inheritance shall be divided according to lot between the larger and the smaller" (vv. 55-56). This distributing of the land by lot was according to the blessing under God's sovereignty, whereas the distributing of the land according to the number of people was a matter of human responsibility. On the one hand, the people had to bear the responsibility to have the increase in number. On the other hand, God ordained that the land be distributed according to the blessing under His sovereignty. Therefore, the distribution of the land depended both on human responsibility and on divine sovereignty.

G. The Numbering of the Levites

The children of Israel were a peculiar people, a people who were for God and thus stood apart from the nations. Among this peculiar people there was an extraordinary tribe—the Levites—and this tribe was not numbered among the sons of Israel. The Levites were the tribe which was closest to God and which served God as the replacement of all the Israelites.

In verses 57 through 62 we have the numbering of the Levites, who were not to have a portion of the land. "Those numbered of them were twenty-three thousand, every male from a month old and above; for they were not numbered among the sons of Israel, because there was no inheritance given to them among the sons of Israel" (v. 62).

H. Not One Being in the First Numbering except Caleb and Joshua

Among all those who were included in the second numbering, none had been in the first numbering, except Caleb and Joshua. This means that only Caleb and Joshua were numbered twice. With the exception of these two, all those in the first numbering, including Moses and Aaron, were not in the renumbering.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

FIGHTING

(7)

Scripture Reading: Num. 27:1-11

VI. THE STATUTE OF JUDGMENT FOR THE WOMEN'S INHERITING OF THE LAND

In 27:1-11 we have the statute of judgment for the women's inheriting of the land.

A. The Request of the Daughters of Zelophehad

The daughters of Zelophehad said, "Why should the name of our father be taken away from his family, because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers" (v. 4). According to God's ordination, only males had the right of inheritance. Here, however, some females requested an inheritance. As we will see, God honored their request.

1. Of One of the Families of Manasseh the Son of Joseph

Verses 1 through 4 speak of the request of the daughters of Zelophehad. They were of one of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph. This is a type related to life and the fellowship of life. The fact that the daughters of Zelophehad were of one of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph indicates that they were in the life and the fellowship of life of the proper origin.

In the Bible, inheritance is determined according to genealogy. A genealogy is a matter of life, and this life is related to tribes, houses, and families. The basic concept in the typology in Numbers 27 is concerned with life. Everything

related to us in Christ involves the life which we have received in Him.

Life has its source, and life is received by us in a certain way, through a particular channel. The way we receive the divine life is very important. As believers in Christ, we all have received the divine life, but there is a difference in the means or the channel through which we have received this life. The means of receiving the divine life involves the matter of our spiritual family.

According to the type in Numbers, which is concerned with both the source of life and the means of receiving life, who we are and what we will be depend on our family. It matters a great deal through whom we were saved and received the Lord Jesus, for the Christian life with its activities depends on the source of life and the channel of life. This is the reason we are told, in the type, that the numbering of the people was carried out according to the houses of their fathers. This is a basic requirement. Anyone who did not have a house, even though he was a genuine Israelite, did not have a genealogy and was not qualified to be numbered. In order to be numbered, an Israelite had to have a strong standing related to the source of life and the channel of life. The principle is the same with us today. We must have a strong standing in the source of life, and we must have a proper channel for the receiving of the divine life. This channel is the means by which we came into existence in the divine life.

2. Being Females

The request in 27:4 was made by five females. The females signify the weaker ones. In the sight of God, we all are females. This means that in ourselves we all are the weaker ones, even the weakest ones. Only Christ is the strong One.

Spiritually speaking, in the entire universe there is only one male—God embodied in Christ. Christ, therefore, is the unique Husband. All the believers, including the brothers, are females. In God's creation I am a male, but in God's new creation I am a female. The five daughters of Zelophehad typify us, and their request is for us all.

3. Having the Desire to Possess Their Father's Inheritance

The daughters of Zelophehad had the desire to possess their father's inheritance. In typology, this signifies having regard for the inheritance—grace—given by God; it signifies the desire to inherit God's grace, to inherit Christ as the grace given to us by God. We all need to learn to make this kind of request. The desire to possess Christ as our enjoyment is marvelous, and it is pleasing to God.

Apparently the daughters of Zelophehad were requesting something for themselves. (God is not pleased with a request that is for ourselves.) Actually, they were requesting something for the sake of their father, who had daughters but no sons (v. 4a). In the law there was a statute which said that if a married man died without a male heir, his inheritance with his wife was to go to his brother, who, with the wife, was to beget a son for the first brother. A son born of the first brother's wife through the second brother was to bear the name not of the second brother but of the first, so that the name of the first brother would remain among the people of God. In this way there would be a descendant for the remembrance of the first brother. The concern of the daughters of Zelophehad was that their father's name would be taken away from his family and that his inheritance would go to someone outside his family. They wanted their father's inheritance to go to someone born for him that his name may be remembered among his tribe. Their request, therefore, was not for themselves but for their father. Making a request based on life, they wanted the name of their father to be remembered.

This kind of request is pleasing to God. He does not want any of His children to be without a descendant. Rather, He wants His children to remain in the history of His people. If one of His people does not have a descendant, He likes to find a way to provide a descendant for him so that he will be remembered in the history of His people.

B. God's Statute of Judgment

When Moses brought the case of the five daughters of

Zelophehad before Jehovah (v. 5), He said to him, "The daughters of Zelophehad speak rightly; you shall surely give them possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them" (v. 7). The Lord seemed to be saying, "Their request is right. It is pleasing to Me. I do not like to see one of My people dying without having a remembrance in the history of My people. The request of the five daughters is according to My desire."

The five daughters were given an inheritance among their father's brothers. There was, however, a binding term. This term, or condition, was that the daughters were not to marry outside their tribe (36:2-3, 6-7).

We may apply the type in 27:1-11 to our situation as believers today. In Christ we have the right to inherit the divine things. We need to request our rightful inheritance, and God will approve this request. However, there is a condition that we must fulfill: we must not marry outside our "tribe." Our tribe today is Christ and the church.

In verses 8 through 11 we have further aspects of this statute of judgment. If an Israelite died and had no sons, his inheritance would be given to his daughters (v. 8). If he had no daughters, his inheritance would be given to his brothers (v. 9). If he had no brothers, his inheritance would be given to his father's brothers (v. 10). If his father had no brothers, his inheritance would be given to his nearest relative of his family (v. 11). This typifies that the possession of the enjoyment of Christ must be based on our relationship in life.

The kind of relationship in life we have will determine the kind of enjoyment we will possess. This means that the degree of our relationship in life determines the amount of our enjoyment of Christ.

The enjoyment of Christ may differ both in kind and in degree. If our experience of life is high, then our enjoyment of Christ will also be high. But if our experience of life is low and very limited, then our enjoyment of Christ will also be low and very limited. The enjoyment of Christ is measured by our experience of life.

This portion of Numbers concerning the statute of

judgment for the women's inheriting of the land actually concerns Christ and the church. Perhaps you are wondering where we can see Christ and the church in 27:1-11. These verses often refer to the inheritance, meaning the inheritance of the good land. In typology, the good land signifies Christ, and the inheritance of the good land signifies our enjoyment of Christ. Hence, in these verses Christ is typified by the inheritance of the good land. But where do we see the church? The church is signified by the father's house, which is mentioned in 26:2 and which is implied and assumed in chapter twenty-seven. The church today is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), and we who once were strangers and sojourners are now "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). We all are members of our Father's house. As members of the household of God, we have the real source of life and the channels, the means, of receiving life.

Although we have the right to enjoy the inheritance of the good land, in order to execute this right, we need the house and the channels. Apart from the house and the channels, we cannot exercise our right of inheritance. We need the source and the channels. The source is life, and the channels are the fellowship of life. Many of us can testify that in the church we have received the divine life and have enjoyed the fellowship of the divine life.

The receiving of the divine life and the enjoyment of the fellowship of the divine life result in the enjoyment of Christ. Some dissenting ones, however, have a wrong concept concerning the enjoyment of Christ. They claim that we should not care for any work but should care only for the enjoyment of Christ. The kind of enjoyment promoted by them is unbalanced. According to John 15, the proper enjoyment of Christ is a balanced enjoyment, for it is related to fruit-bearing. The enjoyment of Christ that is without fruit-bearing is improper and unbalanced. Actually, this so-called enjoyment of Christ is wrong and unreal. The Bible reveals that if we have the real enjoyment of the good land, we will have produce. If someone claims to enjoy his inheritance of the good land but never has a harvest, we may rightly question what kind of enjoyment he is talking about. His enjoyment

may be improper and even false, for it is an enjoyment without a harvest. A timely harvest is the proof of our enjoyment of Christ as the good land.

The typology in Numbers reveals that if we are to enjoy Christ as our inheritance, participating in the riches of Christ, we must have the church life. In order to enjoy Christ, we must have the church life. The church life is somewhat related to our fellowship with those who are close to us. Numbers 27:8-11 indicates that the possession of the inheritance, the possession of the enjoyment of Christ, is based on our relationship in life. Perhaps it is better to replace *relationship,* a human word, with *fellowship,* a divine word. Our fellowship with the saints in the church is a kind of relationship. We must have this relationship, this fellowship, if we are to have the enjoyment of Christ. If we lose our fellowship with the saints, we will also lose our enjoyment of Christ. From this we see that it is risky and dangerous to give up the church life, as some dear ones have done. Those who give up the church life with the fellowship of life spontaneously lose their right to inherit the enjoyment of Christ. May we all be enlightened concerning this crucial matter and remain in the fellowship of life with the saints, the members of God's great family.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE THIRTY-NINE

FIGHTING

(8)

Scripture Reading: Num. 27:12-23

VII. THE DEATH AND SUCCESSOR OF MOSES

In this message we will consider the death and successor of Moses.

A. The Death of Moses

At the time of Numbers 27:12-23, Moses was one hundred twenty years old. Knowing that Moses was very old and that he could die at any time, thoughtful Israelites must have been concerned about God's people and about God's move with His people. They might have said to themselves: "What will happen when Moses is gone? Who will be his successor?"

Actually, there was no need for the Israelites to worry about this. They could be at peace and enjoy the Lord's presence, confident that He knows everything and that He would take care of the situation. This should also be our attitude in the church life today. Are you worried about the church? Do you think such worry is justified by God? Our kind of concern for the church and worry about the church may not be justified by God. Instead of justifying our worry, He might say: "Be at peace. Do not worry about the turmoil. I know the situation."

1. Jehovah Telling Moses to Go Up to the Mountain of Abarim and See the Land

Jehovah told Moses to go up to the mountain of Abarim and see the land which He had given to the sons of Israel

(v. 12). Moses could only see the land; he was not permitted to enter into it.

2. Moses to Be Gathered to His Forefathers

The Lord said to Moses, "When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was gathered" (v. 13; 20:24-29). This verse says not that Moses would die but that he would be gathered. This gathering was somewhat like a harvesting. Moses was "ripe," and soon he was to be "harvested." This gathering, this harvesting, was to be the end of Moses' life.

3. Moses Having Rebelled against God's Word

Moses could not enter into the good land because, in the wilderness of Zin, he had rebelled against God's word to sanctify Him at the waters before the eyes of Israel (v. 14; 20:10-13). Moses had acted contrary to God's nature and God's economy. This serious failure caused him to lose the right to enter into the land of Canaan. However, the fact that Moses could not enter into the good land because of this failure does not mean that he will not be in the millennial kingdom. Matthew 16:28—17:4 indicates that Moses will surely be in the kingdom.

Did Moses have a glorious end? It seems that, because of his mistake, his ending was not glorious. To be sure, there was not a celebration. Due to his failure, his ending was not glorious, but his ministry certainly was glorious.

B. The Successor of Moses

1. Moses Asking Jehovah to Appoint a Man over the Assembly of Israel

Moses said to Jehovah, "Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly, who will go out before them and come in before them, who will lead them out and bring them in; that the assembly of Jehovah may not be as sheep which have no shepherd" (vv. 16-17). Moses' concern was not for himself and for the loss of the right to enter into the land. He was not the kind of person who cared so much for himself and his situation. Although he was very

old, he was concerned for God's people, realizing that they would be in need of a shepherd.

2. Jehovah Telling Moses to Lay His Hand upon Joshua and Charge Him to Be His Successor

a. Joshua Being a Man in Whom the Spirit Was

Jehovah told Moses to take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom the Spirit was, lay his hand upon him, cause him to stand before Eleazar the high priest and all the assembly, and charge him in their sight to be the successor (vv. 18-19).

b. Moses Bestowing Some of His Majesty upon Joshua

"You shall bestow upon him some of your majesty, that all the assembly of the sons of Israel may obey" (v. 20). Majesty here signifies honor and glory.

c. Joshua to Stand before Eleazar the Priest, Who Would Inquire for Him by the Judgment of the Urim before Jehovah

"He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, and he shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah; at his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the sons of Israel with him, even the whole assembly" (v. 21). Exodus 28:30 speaks of putting the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate of judgment, which was worn by the high priest. The breastplate contained twelve stones, and on each stone was written the name of one of the twelve tribes. In David Baron's book *The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew* there is an appendix with an article on the Urim and the Thummim. According to this article, the twelve names on the breastplate included eighteen of the twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The remaining four letters were put on a piece called the Thummim. The Hebrew word Thummim means perfecters or completers. Thus, on the breastplate with the additional piece called the Thummim, all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet could be found. These letters could be used to spell out words and sentences.

Furthermore, according to this article, the Urim was an

illuminator inserted into the breastplate underneath the twelve stones. In Hebrew the word Urim means lights or illuminators. This article goes on to say that the Urim had twelve illuminators, one to illuminate each piece of stone on the breastplate. When the Urim and the Thummim were added to the breastplate, they caused it to become the breastplate of judgment.

When God brought His people into the wilderness, He spoke to them through Moses. God spoke to Moses face to face. But Joshua, Moses' successor, was to receive guidance not from God by His direct speaking in the way He spoke to Moses, but by the Urim and the Thummim on the breastplate worn by Eleazar the priest. Whenever Joshua needed guidance concerning the move of the people, he had to go to the high priest, who then received guidance from God by means of the Urim and the Thummim.

Although Joshua was made the leader, he did not have the right to receive the divine instructions directly. Instead, the high priest received God's instructions and then passed them on to Joshua, who was responsible for their execution. Whereas the high priest had the right to receive the divine instructions, he did not have the right or the authority to execute these instructions. The authority to execute the divine instructions was given to the leader, to Joshua. The people would then go out and come in according to the instructions given to the priest and executed by Joshua.

God's government among His people was a matter not of autocracy or democracy but theocracy. This divine government, this theocracy, was carried out through the coordination of the high priest, who received God's instructions, and the leader, who executed these instructions.

When Moses was leading the people in the wilderness, the divine government did not depend on the coordination of two persons, the high priest and the leader, but on one person—Moses. Moses was the leader, and he also functioned as a priest. (Aaron did not help much.) After Moses, however, the divine government depended on the two persons of the high priest and the leader. This was the case throughout the generations in the Old Testament, the only exception being

the time when David served as both the leader and as the priest wearing the ephod (a vest worn over the priest's robe). When the children of Israel came back from captivity, Joshua was the high priest and Zerubbabel, a royal descendant, was the leader. The two worked together to execute the theocracy, the divine government.

3. Moses Doing as Jehovah Commanded Him

Moses did as Jehovah commanded him. "He took Joshua and caused him to stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly; and he laid his hands upon him, and charged him as Jehovah had spoken through Moses" (Num. 27:22-23).

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY

FIGHTING

(9)

Scripture Reading: Num. 28:1-31

VIII. THE STATUTES

Numbers 28:1—30:16 deals with the statutes concerning the offerings (28:1—29:40) and concerning vows (30:1-16). In this message we will begin to consider the statutes concerning the offerings.

A. Concerning the Offerings

1. The Offerings by Fire, God's Satisfying Fragrance—God's Food

Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, "Command the sons of Israel, and say to them, My offering, My food for My offerings by fire, My satisfying fragrance, you shall observe to offer to Me at its appointed time" (28:2). In this verse God speaks of His food. It seems that He is asking His people not to forget His food. He wants them to remember to give Him something to eat. Here God seems to be saying to His people, "I have done a great deal for you. I have prepared food and drink. Now I ask you to take care of My food. My food is the offerings you present to Me. These offerings are My satisfying fragrance." God wanted Moses, before he was gathered to his fathers, to charge the people to take care of God's food, to offer food to Him at the appointed time. Have you ever heard that God wants something to eat? As we are eating our food, we need to remember that God also desires food and that we need to prepare something for Him to eat.

Hebrews 10:5-9 indicates that Christ is the reality of and

the replacement for the Old Testament offerings. Verses 8 and 9 say, "Sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not desire nor take pleasure in (which are offered according to the law); then He said, Behold, I come to do Your will. He takes away the first that He may establish the second." The will of God here is to take away the first, the animal sacrifices of the old covenant, that the second, the sacrifice of Christ of the new testament, may be established. The new testament offerings are Christ Himself. Today God's desire and pleasure are not in animal sacrifices; God's desire and pleasure are altogether in one person—Christ.

Before we consider further the matter of God's food in Numbers 28, let us consider the sequence of chapters twenty-five through twenty-eight. In chapter twenty-five the children of Israel had a great failure, falling into fornication, a damage to their humanity, and into idolatry, an insult to God's person. As a result of this failure, twenty-four thousand Israelites died by the plague. If we had been there, we might have thought that, due to this pitiful situation, God was finished with His people, upon whom He had been working for so long and for whom He had done so much.

God, however, was not finished with the children of Israel. This is proved by the renumbering in chapter twenty-six. God still had His number, and the total of those numbered in chapter twenty-six was nearly the same as the total in chapter one (26:51; 1:46). At the time of the first numbering, there had not been any trouble or reduction in number through God's punishment. The renumbering took place after much trouble and reduction through judgment. Nevertheless, in spite of all the trials, turmoils, temptations, failures, and reductions, God still had almost the same number for Himself as He had had in the beginning. Regardless of what the enemy had done and regardless of the people's failures, God, by His sovereign grace and acts, still had a number greater than six hundred thousand.

After the renumbering in chapter twenty-six, we have in 27:1-11 the statute of judgment for the women's inheriting of the land. The five daughters of Zelophehad came to Moses

with the request that, since there were no male heirs, they be allowed to possess their father's inheritance. Their request, which was actually related to gaining more of Christ, was granted, for they had a high and pure motive—regard for the inheritance (grace) given by God.

Numbers 27:12-23 is concerned with the death of Moses and with Moses' successor. Moses was one hundred twenty years old, and the Lord told him that the time had come for him to be gathered to his people. His going raised the question of leadership. Who would be his successor? When God told him that he would now be gathered to his people, Moses said, "Let Jehovah, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly, who will go out before them and come in before them, who will lead them out and bring them in; that the assembly of Jehovah may not be as sheep which have no shepherd" (vv. 16-17). This indicates that Moses did not consider his loss of the leadership. His heart was not set on his situation but on God's people. Moses seemed to be saying to the Lord, "It is right and fair for me to be gathered to my people. But, Lord, who will take care of Your people? If the people do not have someone to lead them out and bring them in, they will be as sheep without a shepherd." The Lord responded to Moses' word by telling him to take Joshua and cause him to stand before the priest and the whole assembly, to lay his hands on him in order to bestow upon Joshua some of his majesty, and then to charge him to be the leader (vv. 18-23). In this way God raised up a new leader.

At the end of chapter twenty-seven we see a wonderful picture—a picture of a new people, a new army, and a new leader. The new people had been renumbered, the new army had been re-formed and strengthened, and the new leader had been appointed to serve, not by himself but with Eleazar the priest, who would receive divine instructions by means of the Urim and Thummim. This means that there was among the people a new theocracy. Hence, at the end of this chapter we see a new people, a new army, and a new theocracy.

After all the events recorded in chapters twenty-five through twenty-seven, in chapter twenty-eight we have the crucial matter of God's food. At the beginning of this chapter,

God came in and seemed to say to the people, "Do you have everything you need? Are you satisfied and happy? How about Me and My satisfaction? You need to take care of My food. I have been taking care of you for years. I have prepared everything for you in a new, complete way, and now you are ready to possess the land which I promised to your forefathers. I ask you not to forget Me. Remember that I am hungry and that I need My food."

God is hungry and wants to eat. Although He is almighty, He cannot provide Himself something to eat. His food must come from His people. This is why He said, "My offering, My food for My offerings by fire, My satisfying fragrance, you shall observe to offer to Me" (28:2).

2. Offered to God at Their Appointed Time

God's food was to be offered to Him "at its appointed time" (v. 2b). As we will see, God needs to eat daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. He wants to enjoy something daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly. God's yearly food is related to the annual feasts.

a. A Continual Burnt Offering for Every Day

Numbers 28:3-8 speaks of the continual burnt offering for every day. This daily offering consisted of two lambs a year old without blemish (v. 3). One lamb was offered in the morning with a meal offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mingled with oil, and its drink offering of a fourth of a hin (vv. 4, 7). The other lamb was offered at dusk with the same meal offering and drink offering (v. 8). The drink offering was to be poured out to Jehovah in a holy place. (For the details on the offerings, you may consult the *Life-study of Leviticus*.) This was God's daily food, food that included meat, bread (the meal offering), and drink.

b. A Burnt Offering for Every Sabbath

In addition to the continual burnt offering for every day, there was a burnt offering for every Sabbath (vv. 9-10). This offering was two lambs a year old without blemish, with a

meal offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour and its drink offering.

c. A Burnt Offering for the Beginning of Every Month

There was also a burnt offering for the beginning of every month (vv. 11-15). In His creation, God has ordained that there should be twelve months in a year. At the beginning of every month, God wanted to eat something particular, and His people were required to prepare this food for Him. First, this burnt offering included two young bulls with a meal offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour and its drink offering of half a hin of wine for each bull. Second, the people were also to offer a ram with a meal offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour and its drink offering of a third of a hin. In addition, this monthly burnt offering included seven lambs a year old without blemish, with a meal offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour and its drink offering of a fourth of a hin for every lamb. Furthermore, in contrast to the daily and weekly burnt offerings, the monthly burnt offering had to include a male goat for a sin offering. God, of course, has nothing to do with sin. However, the serving ones were sinful and needed redemption in order to be qualified to serve God. If we would serve God by offering to Him His food, we need to offer a sin offering.

d. A Burnt Offering Following the Passover

The offerings in Numbers 28 and 29 follow two lines—the line of ordinary human life and the line of the yearly feasts. The offerings for ordinary life are daily, weekly, and monthly, but the offerings for the feasts are yearly.

Concerning the annual feasts, we need to see that they correspond to our spiritual experience. Our spiritual life begins with the Passover and consummates at Pentecost (the feast of weeks). At Pentecost we have the fullness of the consummated Spirit to be our enjoyment and also to be God's food. The sequence of these feasts is marvelous and full of significance.

In 28:16-25 we have the burnt offering following the Passover. The Passover was only one day, the fourteenth day

of the first month. The fifteenth day of this month was the beginning of the feast of unleavened bread, a feast which lasted seven days. On the first and seventh days of this feast, there was to be a holy convocation, and on those days no laborious work was to be done. Instead of work, there was to be rest and enjoyment. The offering for every day of the seven days was the same as that offered at the beginning of each month.

e. A Burnt Offering for the Feast of Weeks

Numbers 28:26-31 is concerned with the burnt offering for the feast of weeks. This burnt offering was offered in the day of the first fruits, that is, the fiftieth day of the feast of weeks (v. 26), when a new meal offering was offered to Jehovah (Lev. 23:10-11, 15-16). A holy convocation was held on the same day with no laborious work. The offering for the feast of weeks was the same as that offered at the beginning of the month.

God needs daily food, weekly food, monthly food, and yearly food. In addition to enjoying ordinary food, God wants to enjoy food at the yearly feasts. We have pointed out that these feasts correspond to our spiritual experience. The Passover typifies Christ, who is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7), and Pentecost typifies the processed Triune God, who has become the consummated, life-giving, dispensing Spirit. Such a Spirit is the fullness of the Triune God and also the consummation of our enjoyment of Christ.

All the offerings in Numbers 28, which are God's food, point to Christ. This indicates that Christ is not only our food but also God's food. God and we enjoy the same food—Christ. The center of Numbers 28 is Christ. Christ is the intrinsic substance of this chapter.

Christ is also the peace that enables us to have fellowship with God. The best fellowship involves eating. If we would enjoy the best fellowship with God, we need to serve Him with Christ as His food. Then as we are having fellowship with God, we and God will have the mutual enjoyment of Christ by eating and drinking Him.

Although Christ is God's food, He is not God's food in a direct way. Rather, Christ is God's food served to God by us.

Eventually, however, God's food also becomes our food. If we carefully read the book of Leviticus, we will see that the burnt offering is to be wholly and absolutely burned for God's satisfaction. No portion of the burnt offering is to be eaten by the ones who offer it. However, the burnt offering is accompanied by a meal offering, a large portion of which is for the offerers. This indicates that when we serve God, offering Christ to Him as His food, God takes care of us. God seems to say, "You serve Me with My food, and now I would like to share a portion of this food with you." In this way we enjoy Christ with God. As we are feasting, God also is feasting. He is feasting with us, and we are feasting with Him. In mutuality, God and we feast together on the all-inclusive Christ.

The burnt offering typifies Christ as the One who, as a man, is absolutely for God and who satisfies Him. The meal offering typifies Christ in His perfect, fine, balanced humanity. The drink offering typifies Christ's pouring Himself out for God. When Christ was dying on the cross, He was pouring Himself out as a drink offering to God. The sin offering typifies Christ as our sin offering redeeming us back to God and solving the problem of our sin, sins, and failures. With Christ as all these offerings, we may now enjoy Christ with God. First, we enjoy Christ as the One given to us by God. Having experienced Christ, we present Him to God as His food, and then God shares with us a portion of the Christ we have offered to Him.

At this point, I would like to say a further word concerning the first four of the seven yearly feasts, from the Passover to the feast of weeks, which is the feast of Pentecost. The Passover signifies the beginning of our Christian life. Christ became the Lamb of God who took away our sin and our sins so that God, in His righteousness, might pass over us. As a result, we have been saved, justified, and regenerated. This is the beginning of our Christian life.

Immediately after we were saved, we have to keep the feast of unleavened bread. To be unleavened is to be without

sin. The feast of unleavened bread indicates that after we have been saved and regenerated, we should live a life without sin.

In 1 Corinthians 5:7b and 8 Paul refers both to the Passover and to the feast of unleavened bread. "Indeed our Passover, Christ, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and evil, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." In this Passover Christ is not only the Lamb but the entire Passover. To be our Passover, He was sacrificed on the cross for our redemption and reconciliation to God. The feast of unleavened bread lasted for seven days, a period of completion, signifying the entire period of our Christian life, from the day of our conversion to the day of our rapture. This is a long feast, which we must keep, not with the sin of our old nature, the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread, which is the Christ of our new nature as our nourishment and enjoyment. Only He is the life supply of sincerity and truth, absolutely pure, without mixture, and full of reality.

The Christian life results in the church life. This result involves a number of matters. In particular, it involves Christ's resurrection. After the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread, there was the feast of the first fruits. The day of the first fruits was the day on which Christ was resurrected, becoming the first fruit to be offered to God. According to the New Testament, through Christ's resurrection we, the believers in Christ, have been produced to be the living members for the constitution of the Body of Christ. The members of the church have been produced by, with, and in Christ's resurrection.

Although the producing of the church began with Christ's resurrection, the formation of the church did not take place until Pentecost, fifty days after the Lord's resurrection. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit as the all-inclusive Spirit of the processed and dispensing Triune God was poured out for the formation of the church. The Spirit is the realization of the resurrected Christ, Christ in another form; for in resurrection Christ has become the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit, who is actually

Christ Himself, was poured out upon the members of Christ, who were produced through His resurrection. In this way the church was formed.

The formation of the church was of two parts or two sections—the Jewish part and the Gentile part. These two parts of the church, which are represented by the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 2) and by those in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), are typified by the new meal offering of two loaves of bread baked with leaven offered to God at the feast of Pentecost (Lev. 23:16-17). The fact that these two loaves were baked with leaven indicates that those who form the two sections of the church still have sin (e.g., the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 and the murmuring concerning food in Acts 6). Nevertheless, these two loaves formed the new meal offering, which signifies the church as the enlargement of Christ.

Let us now summarize the significance of these four feasts. The feast of the Passover was fulfilled on the day of Christ's death (Matt. 26:2, 17-19, 26-28). In the Passover we were saved, justified, and regenerated. Following this, the feast of unleavened bread is for us to live a life without sin. This means that the feast of unleavened bread is being fulfilled in the church age. The feast of the first fruits was fulfilled on the day of Christ's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). The feast of Pentecost was fulfilled fifty days after Christ's resurrection, on the day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; cf. 1:3). In Christ's resurrection on the day of the first fruits, the members of Christ were produced for the formation of the church. Then on the day of Pentecost the resurrected and ascended Christ poured out Himself upon His members in the form of the consummated, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit to form the church. This is the significance of the festivals from the Passover to Pentecost.

In each of these festivals there is food for God. When we were saved, we became God's food in Christ. As we grow in life, we produce more food for God's satisfaction. In every step of the Christian life, there is something for God's satisfaction, for we are the factors of His satisfaction.

Eventually, on the day of Pentecost, there are two loaves, signifying the two parts of the church, for God's satisfaction.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-ONE

FIGHTING

(10)

Scripture Reading: Num. 29:1-40

In this message we will consider further the statutes concerning the offerings in Numbers 28 and 29.

The first four feasts, which are in the first half of the year, have already been fulfilled, but the last three feasts, which are in the second half of the year, will be fulfilled in the future. The first four feasts have been fulfilled through Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. The last three feasts are related to the Lord's second coming and will be fulfilled at the time of the Lord's coming back.

f. A Burnt Offering for the Day of the Blowing of Trumpets

Numbers 29:1-6 speaks of the burnt offering for the day of the blowing of trumpets. This day was the first day of the seventh month, the beginning of the second half of the year. On this day a holy convocation was to be held with no laborious work. There was no need of human labor because everything had been done by God Himself. The offering for this feast was the same as that offered at the beginning of the month, with the exception that one young bull was offered instead of two.

g. A Burnt Offering for the Day of Propitiation

There was also to be a burnt offering for the day of propitiation (vv. 7-11). On the cross, Christ accomplished propitiation. To propitiate is to appease. Propitiation is not a matter of propitiating God but of propitiating the situation

between us and God. We should not think that God was angry with us and needed to be appeased. No, God loves the world, and propitiation is needed because of our fallen situation, not because God is angry. Our situation was full of problems, full of sins, and needed to be propitiated. Through His death on the cross, Christ dealt with our sins, and in so doing He propitiated our situation with God so that we could be redeemed, forgiven, and justified. When we repented, believed in Christ, and received Him as our Savior, we experienced this feast.

The feast of propitiation has a double application. Spiritually this feast has been applied to us, and literally it will be applied in the future to the Jews. After the Lord Jesus has descended from the air to the earth, the Jews will repent, mourn, and return to God, receiving Christ as their Savior. This will be the literal fulfillment of the feast of propitiation.

The feast of propitiation was on the tenth day of the seventh month. A holy convocation was held with no work. On this day, the people afflicted themselves, that is, they repented, mourned, and felt sorrowful for their sin. The offering on this day was the same as that offered at the beginning of the month, with the exception that one young bull was offered instead of two.

h. A Burnt Offering for the Feast of Tabernacles

In Numbers 29:12-38 we have the burnt offering for the feast of tabernacles. This feast lasted seven days, beginning from the fifteenth day of the seventh month. A holy convocation was held on the first day with no laborious work. The offerings, which typify different aspects of Christ, consisted of two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish and thirteen young bulls on the first day, reduced by one bull on each of the six succeeding days, with their meal offering and drink offerings, as a burnt offering. In addition, a male goat was offered as a sin offering. On the eighth day, which signifies resurrection, a solemn assembly was held. The offering on this day was the same as that

offered at the beginning of the month, with the exception that one bull was offered instead of two young bulls.

The feasts of the blowing of trumpets, propitiation, and tabernacles all took place within a brief period of time in the seventh month. The fulfillment of these feasts will take place nearly at the same time. The feast of the blowing of trumpets will be fulfilled at Christ's coming back (Matt. 24:31), when God will call the Jews together from their dispersion back to the land of their fathers. The feast of propitiation will be fulfilled on the day of Israel's return to God, after they have been gathered back to their fathers' land (Rom. 11:26-27; Zech. 12:10-14). The Jews will afflict themselves by praying, fasting, and repenting. Then God will forgive them, and the feast of propitiation will be applied to them. Finally, the feast of tabernacles will be fulfilled in the coming millennium for a thousand years as a conclusion of all the ages of God's old creation. The fulfillment of this feast will be a dispensational, joyful blessing for God's redeemed people to enjoy with God for a full period of time in God's old creation.

i. Offerings in Addition to the People's Vows and Their Freewill Offerings

All the offerings for every day, for every Sabbath, for the beginning of every month, and for all the yearly feasts were offered for the people's burnt offerings, meal offerings, drink offerings, and peace offerings, in addition to their vows and their freewill offerings (Num. 29:39-40). The people offered certain offerings as a fulfillment of their duty or responsibility. Those offerings were a fulfillment of their vows. They could also present offerings of their own free will. However, all the offerings described in chapters twenty-eight and twenty-nine were in addition to their vows and freewill offerings.

We need to see that, according to these chapters, God's food is related to three things. First, God's food is related to the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly life of His people. Second, God's food is related to the spiritual life of the believers from the Passover through the feast of Pentecost,

including the feast of unleavened bread and the feast of the first fruits. Each of these four feasts involves life. This means that in the Christian life there is a particular kind of food for God. Third, God's food is related to His people Israel. Christ will come back to blow the trumpet to gather the people of Israel back to their fathers' land. Then there will be a day for their propitiation. On that day, they will afflict themselves and repent, and Christ will be their propitiation. This propitiation will lead to the feast of tabernacles. At the time of this feast, Israel will be at peace with God and enter into God's enjoyment. The feast of tabernacles will be not only the last feast but also the conclusion of God's work in the old creation.

In God's old creation there are four ages: the age before the law, from Adam to Moses; the age of the law, from Moses to Christ's first coming; the age of grace, from Christ's first coming to His second coming; and the age of the millennium, the kingdom of the thousand years. These four ages are crucial steps of God's work in the old creation for the new creation. In each of these four ages, God uses the old creation as the material for the producing of a new creation. The consummation of God's new creation will be the New Jerusalem. Those believers who are overcomers in the age of grace will enjoy the New Jerusalem during the millennium. Eventually, after the millennium, all of God's people will be fully perfected and consummated to be the New Jerusalem.

In the present age, the age of grace, we are enjoying Christ as our Passover, as our unleavened bread, and as the firstfruit offered to God in resurrection. Eventually, we offer Christ to God as our Pentecost, which is the consummation of God's work for His new creation. The food offered to God by the believers who experience Christ as the reality of all the feasts from Passover to Pentecost has nothing to do with the old creation but is altogether in the new creation. Eventually, the church in this age of grace will consummate God's will in His new creation. The church will be matured and will be raptured to be one with Christ in His joyous wedding. Then the church will come down with Christ to the earth, at which time He will blow the trumpet to gather the Israelites back

to the land of their fathers. Christ will then be their propitiation, and the feast of tabernacles will begin.

At this juncture, I would like to ask a question: What is God's food? What is God's food in our daily life, in the Christian life, and in the life of Israel? To be sure, we all would say that God's food is Christ. But this raises another question: In what way is Christ God's food? Christ is God's food in the way of His fulfilling God's eternal economy. God desires to have His economy fulfilled by Christ, with Christ, and in Christ. This is the way Christ is God's food.

The more we enjoy Christ and experience Christ, the more we fulfill God's economy, and the more we participate in the fulfillment of God's economy, the more we will be able to offer Christ to God as food. Our being resurrected with Christ in His resurrection and our being saved are parts of the fulfillment of God's economy. The exercise of our New Testament priesthood to preach the gospel by visiting people, helping them to believe in the Lord Jesus, and baptizing them is also a part of the fulfillment of God's economy. Likewise, living a life in Christ without sin after we have been saved is a part of the fulfillment of God's economy with Christ, by Christ, and in Christ. In all these matters Christ is food for God.

Both the church and Israel are great parts of the fulfillment of God's economy. When the church was formed on the day of Pentecost and so many were baptized into one Body, God enjoyed a wonderful feast. Israel's being gathered, their repenting, and their being propitiated at the time of the Lord's coming back will be further parts of the fulfillment of God's economy. Once again, Christ will be enjoyed by God's people and also by God Himself. In these matters related to Israel, Christ will be God's food. Furthermore, in the millennium and for eternity in the New Jerusalem, Christ will be God's food.

In Numbers 28 and 29 there are three sections—the sections pertaining to daily life, to the Christian life, and to the future of Israel. Each section is for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy in which Christ is the centrality and the universality. Because Christ is everything for the

fulfillment of God's economy, He is God's food, God's satisfaction. For eternity Christ will be God's satisfaction, and for eternity we will enjoy the Christ who satisfies God. Hallelujah for the Christ who is God's food and also our food!

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-TWO

FIGHTING

(11)

Scripture Reading: Num. 30:1-16

Numbers 28:1—30:16 is a section dealing with statutes, which are additional laws. These statutes concern two matters: offerings (28:1—29:40) and vows (30:1-16).

B. Concerning Vows

The statutes concerning vows follow the statutes concerning the offerings, which are God's food. It is our duty, our responsibility, to present the offerings to God, whereas vows are voluntary. God wants us to do something more than carry out our duty and responsibility to fulfill His requirements. He would like us to do something additional—to make a vow to Him. An example of a particular vow is the vow of the Nazarite in Numbers 6.

In the church life today, we also have the two matters of fulfilling God's requirements and of making a vow to Him. If we simply fulfill God's requirements, we have not yet come up to the highest standard. We need to make a vow to God, volunteering ourselves in a definite and particular way.

According to church history, all those who were used by God to fulfill His New Testament ministry were volunteers. They not only fulfilled God's requirements but also volunteered to make a vow to Him. John Nelson Darby is an example of such a person. He fulfilled God's requirements, and he also made a vow, for the sake of the need in the church life, to remain unmarried.

The extent to which the Lord will use us depends on our vow. Of course, a vow is not limited to the matter of marriage.

We may make a vow to the Lord regarding many different things. The higher our vow is, the more the Lord will use us.

I hope that many of the young people in the Lord's recovery will be touched and inspired to make a vow to God. The Lord's recovery needs young people who have made vows to God. A young person who volunteers to make a vow may say, "Lord, by Your mercy and grace I have fulfilled Your New Testament requirements. But I would like to do something additional. I would like to make a vow to live for You absolutely." We all need to make some kind of vow to the Lord.

1. A Man Vowing a Vow to Jehovah or Swearing an Oath to Bind Himself by a Pledge

A man vowing a vow to Jehovah or swearing an oath to bind himself by a pledge was not to break his word (Num. 30:1-2a). Rather, he was to do according to all that proceeded out of his mouth (v. 2b). This indicates that when we make a vow to God, we must keep it. If we break our word, we will suffer loss.

2. A Woman Vowing a Vow to Jehovah and Binding Herself by a Pledge While in Her Youth within Her Father's House

Numbers 30:3-5 speaks of a woman vowing a vow to Jehovah and binding herself by a pledge while in her youth within her father's house. In such a case, the final decision was to be made by her father. Here the woman signifies a believer, and the father signifies God the Father. In the sight of God, all believers are females. The final decision concerning any vow we make to God will be decided by the Father.

3. The Vow of a Married Woman Being Decided by Her Husband

In verses 6 through 8 we see that the vow of a married woman was to be decided by her husband. The husband here signifies Christ the Lord. As believers, we all have God as our Father and Christ as our Lord. As females who are in the house of our Father and who have Christ as our Husband, we do not have the right to make the final decision concerning

our vows. The final decision should be made either by God the Father or by Christ the Lord.

4. The Vow of a Widow or of a Divorced Woman

The vow of a widow or of a divorced woman was to stand against her, and she was required to fulfill it (v. 9). But if her vow or oath was made in her husband's house, her husband was to be the deciding one (vv. 10-15). This indicates that in relation to God the Father and Christ the Lord, the believers have lost their human rights. Neither before God the Father nor before Christ the Lord do we have any rights.

Numbers 30:3-15 reveals how strict God is in the matter of authority. A young woman living in her father's house had to submit to her father. A married woman had to submit to her husband. However, a widow or a divorced woman was on her own. I do not want to be like a widow or a divorced woman. I prefer to have a father—God the Father—and a husband—Christ the Lord. How good it is to have God as our Father and Christ as our Husband! Because I have God as my Father and Christ as my Husband, I can be at peace. The worldly people, on the contrary, behave like widows and divorced women. Instead of having God as their Father and Christ as their Lord, they stand by themselves, bearing their responsibility. We are different from the worldly people. We are females with the Father and the Lord. We should bring everything to and let the final decisions be made by our Father and our Husband.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-THREE

FIGHTING

(12)

Scripture Reading: Num. 31:1-12

In this message we will begin to consider the overcoming of the Midianites by the children of Israel (31:1-54).

IX. OVERCOMING THE MIDIANITES

Chapters twenty-seven through thirty cover the matters of the renumbering, the statute of judgment for women's inheriting the land, the death and successor of Moses, the statutes concerning the offerings as God's food, and the statutes concerning vows. In chapter thirty-one we see that there was the need for the children of Israel to overcome the troublesome Midianites. This enemy had to be defeated. Otherwise, when God's people were about to enter into the good land, the Midianites would have been behind them, and that would have caused serious trouble. This enemy had to be defeated. Therefore, God charged Moses to destroy the Midianites.

A. The Midianites

What do the Midianites signify? In typology, the Midianites signify the filthiness of the lust of the flesh, which is related to the devil Satan and the world. With the flesh there is lust, and with lust there is filthiness, defilement, which is related to Satan and the world.

The Old Testament gives us a picture of the Midianites. The Midianites were descendants of Abraham, born of his second wife, Keturah. Hence, by nature they were close to the Israelites in the flesh (Gen. 25:1-2). The Midianites were united with the Moabites, the descendants of Lot through

incest in the lust of the flesh (Num. 22:3-4, 7; Gen. 19:30-38). Furthermore, the Midianites were one with the Ishmaelites, the descendants of Abraham by the flesh, who sold Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 37:27-28, 36). The Midianites were also connected with the Amalekites, the descendants of Esau (Judg. 6:3, 33; Gen. 36:12). Finally, the Midianites produced Balaam, who ensnared the children of Israel in fornication and idolatry (Num. 22:7; 31:16).

We need to realize that as we are pursuing the Lord's interests, there is an enemy—the filthiness of the lust of the flesh signified by the Midianites—right behind us. This enemy has a number of evil relatives and associates. Moreover, with this enemy, this filthiness, a false prophet is hidden. This false prophet seeks to ensnare us and frustrate us from fulfilling God's desire.

B. The Commandment of Jehovah to Avenge the Sons of Israel on the Midianites

In verses 1 and 2 we have the commandment of Jehovah to avenge the sons of Israel on the Midianites. By ensnaring the sons of Israel in fornication and idolatry, the Midianites offended Israel to the uttermost, with the result that more than twenty thousand lives were lost. God would not forget that and He charged Moses to avenge Israel on the Midianites. The Midianites were to be defeated and completely destroyed.

C. The Strategy of Moses

In verses 3 through 6 we see the strategy of Moses in dealing with the Midianites. "Moses spoke to the people, saying, Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian, to execute Jehovah's vengeance on Midian. You shall send a thousand from each of all the tribes of Israel to the war" (vv. 3-4). Therefore, out of the thousands of Israel, there were twelve thousand armed for war (v. 5). In addition, Moses sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the war, "as well as the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand" (v. 6). Because Phinehas had a heart filled with God's jealousy and had done something very acceptable to God when Israel fell into fornication and idolatry,

God wanted Moses to send him out with the vessels of the sanctuary and with the trumpets. The vessels were for protection, and the trumpets were for sounding the alarm. Phinehas must have had a sober mind and good discernment to see the way to protect the army of God and to know at what time and concerning what matters to sound the alarm.

Moses' strategy in fighting against the Midianites required that the children of Israel be in one accord with no dissenting opinions. In the record here we cannot see any opinion, even though there must have been many wise men among the more than six hundred thousand who had been renumbered. If we had been there, we might not have agreed with Moses' charge to send a thousand from each tribe to war. Instead, we might have proposed that, since the tribes differed in number, the larger tribes should provide more armed men and the smaller tribes should provide fewer. We might have thought that Moses was too old to discern the situation and to devise the right strategy. A proposal such as this is actually a cloak covering an opinion. In Numbers 31, however, no one, not even the women, expressed an opinion. The people acted according to Moses' strategy. This indicates that they were in one accord.

We also need to be in one accord for the Lord's move in His recovery today. In 1984, after studying the situation of the Lord's recovery, I came to realize that there was the need for us to take a new way. For this new way, we need to be in one accord. Concerning this, I had the burden to call the elders together for some urgent meetings. In these meetings, which were held in February 1986, I spoke on the matter of one accord for the Lord's move. I told the brothers that I did not expect everyone to take the new way, but that my hope was that no one would criticize this way or oppose it. Criticism and opposition cause trouble and result in division. Using Gideon's army as an illustration, I pointed out that this army defeated the enemy for the nation of Israel. I also said that a church that does not follow the new way is still a church, just as the Israelites who were not in Gideon's army were still Israelites. My hope was that many would join me in the army to fight for the Lord's interests and that the remainder of the saints,

instead of criticizing or opposing, would support the army. Nevertheless, soon after the start of the training in Taipei in August of the same year, certain brothers "jumped the gun" and, not waiting to see what the result of the training would be, began to criticize and oppose it. First these brothers criticized, and then they opposed. This was followed by their attacking the Lord's recovery and their efforts to destroy it. We need to learn from this that, in order to be in one accord for the Lord's move, we should not express our opinion but come back to the Word.

I believe that Israel's victory over the Midianites was due to the fact that the children of Israel were in one accord. Both those who went out to fight in this war and those who did not were one with Moses. To be sure, many of those who stayed home prayed for those who went forth to fight. Eventually, because the people were in one accord, the plunder was distributed not only among those who fought but also among those who stayed home. There was one accord among the fighters, and there was one accord also among the rest of the children of Israel, including the women. All the people, the older ones and the younger ones alike, were in one accord. For this reason, they gained the victory.

D. The Victory of the Israelites over the Midianites

Numbers 31:7-12 describes the victory of the Israelites over the Midianites. The Israelites slew every male among the Midianites (v. 7). They also slew Balaam and the five kings of the Midianites (v. 8). Furthermore, the Israelites took captive the women and children of the Midianites and took as plunder all their cattle, livestock, and goods (v. 9). They also burned all the cities of the Midianites and all their encampments (v. 10), and then they brought all the spoil and all the plunder to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the assembly of the sons of Israel (vv. 11-12). All this was due to the one accord among the children of Israel.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-FOUR

FIGHTING

(13)

Scripture Reading: Num. 31:13-54

In this message we will continue to consider the overcoming of the Midianites by the children of Israel.

E. The Purging and the Purification of the Captives and the Spoil

According to 31:13-24, both the captives and the spoil had to be purged and purified.

1. Killing Every Male among the Little Ones and Every Woman Who Had Been Married

Moses commanded that every male among the little ones and every woman who had been married should be killed (vv. 13-18). If we do not have a spiritual view of the situation, we might think that this command was cruel and inhuman. But if we do have a spiritual view, realizing that the Midianites typify the filthiness of the lust of the flesh, we will admit that Moses' command was proper.

2. Those Who Had Killed Any Person and Those Who Had Touched Any Slain Person Encamping outside the Camp Seven Days and Purifying Themselves and Their Captives

Verse 19 says, "Encamp outside the camp seven days; whoever of you has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day." Those who had killed someone and those who had touched a slain person had become defiled and needed to be purified. This purification took place on the

third day and again on the seventh day. In typology, the third day signifies resurrection, and the seventh day signifies completion.

3. Purifying Every Garment, Every Article of Skin, All Work of Goats' Hair, and Every Article of Wood

The people were required to purify every garment, every article of skin, all work of goats' hair, and every article of wood (v. 20). These things were purified with water, since they could not pass through fire.

4. Purging and Purifying All Metal and Purifying Whatever Could Not Stand the Fire

All the metal—gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, and lead—were to be purged by passing through fire and then purified with the water for impurity. Whatever could not stand the fire was to be purified by passing through water.

5. Washing Their Clothes on the Seventh Day

"You shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you shall be clean; and afterward you shall come into the camp" (v. 24). This washing of their clothes signifies the washing of our behavior and of all that we are.

All these matters concerning the purging and purifying of the captives and the spoil show us that everything related to God must be clean, having been purged, purified, or washed. We must keep this principle in touching things which are related to God. Whatever has been defiled, contaminated, by death must be purged or purified or washed.

F. The Distributing of the Plunder, Both of Man and of Cattle

In 31:25-47 we have the distributing of the plunder, both of man and of cattle.

1. Half Given to Those Who Went to War and Half to All the Assembly

"Take the sum of the plunder that was taken, both of

man and of beast, you and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers' houses of the assembly; and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who engage in battle and went out to the war and all the assembly" (vv. 26-27). Here we see something marvelous: the fighters received half of the plunder, and the other half was given to those who stayed behind and who probably prayed for the ones who went out to war.

2. One out of Five Hundred of the Persons and of the Cattle from the Portion for the Men Who Went to War Being Given to Jehovah as a Tribute

"Levy for Jehovah a tribute from the men of battle who went out to the war, one out of five hundred, of the persons and of the oxen and of the asses and of the flocks" (v. 28). This tribute was to be a kind of memorial before God.

3. The Tribute for Jehovah Going to Eleazar the Priest as a Heave Offering of Jehovah

"Take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering of Jehovah" (v. 29). Because Eleazar the priest was one with Jehovah, whatever was given to Jehovah as a tribute by the fighters went to Eleazar the priest. What was given to Eleazar became a heave offering. This signifies that the tribute was put into ascension for a memorial before Jehovah and that this eventually became the high priest's portion.

4. One out of Fifty from the Half for the Assembly Being Given to the Levites Who Keep the Charge of the Tabernacle of Jehovah

"From the half of the sons of Israel you shall take one drawn out of every fifty, of the persons, of the oxen, of the asses, and of the flocks, of all the cattle, and give them to the Levites who keep the charge of the tabernacle of Jehovah" (v. 30). Thus, the high priest received his portion, and the Levites received their portion. This was according to Moses' wisdom, which he received from God.

The distribution of the plunder included all kinds of

persons among the Israelites. This distribution covered those who went to war and those who stayed back. It also covered the high priest and the Levites. Regarding the distribution of the plunder, there is no record of any opinion or proposal. The people received their portion without expressing any opinion and without making any proposal.

G. The Offering to Jehovah by the Officers of the Army

Verses 48 through 54 speak of the offering to Jehovah by the officers of the army.

1. Offered Because Not Even One Man of Their Army Was Missing

The officers and the captains said to Moses, "Your servants have taken the sum of the men of the battle who are under our authority, and there is not a man missing from us" (v. 49). This was the reason the officers brought an offering to Jehovah. The officers were not required to make such an offering; they did this voluntarily out of their own initiative.

2. Articles of Gold to Make Propitiation for Themselves before Jehovah

"We have brought Jehovah's offering, what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces, to make propitiation for ourselves before Jehovah" (v. 50). This indicates that the officers were sensitive and knowledgeable, knowing their condition before God. They realized that there was something concerning them which was not right or fitting and that they needed to make propitiation for themselves before God so that their situation with God could be appeased. This propitiation was made with articles of gold.

3. Moses and Eleazar the Priest Receiving the Articles of Gold as the Heave Offering Offered to God and Bringing Them into the Tent of Meeting as a Memorial

Moses and Eleazar the priest received from the officers the articles of gold as the heave offering offered to God and

brought them into the tent of meeting as a memorial for the sons of Israel before Jehovah (vv. 51-54). Their offering was a heave offering, something in ascension.

In 31:13-54 we see a beautiful picture of one accord. The situation among the different categories of people was peaceful, pleasant, and harmonious. Also, the situation of the people with God was peaceful. The entire situation was pleasant because they were all in one accord.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-FIVE

FIGHTING

(14)

Scripture Reading: Num. 32:1-42

In this message we will begin to consider the prearrangement of the distribution of the good land (32:1-42; 33:50—36:13).

X. THE PREARRANGEMENT OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE GOOD LAND

The last five chapters of Numbers, the best portion of the book, cover the prearrangement of the good land. This prearrangement typifies the sharing of the enjoyment of the rich Christ.

A. Concerning the Land East of the Jordan

The good land was on both sides of the river Jordan, on the east and on the west. The land west of the Jordan is better than the land east of the Jordan. Numbers 32:1-42 concerns the land east of the Jordan.

1. The Request of the Two Tribes, Reuben and Gad

a. A Desire to Receive What God Had Promised

The request of the two tribes, Reuben and Gad (vv. 1-5), was not wrong, but neither was it right. Their desire was to receive what God had promised, according to their choice as the best, not according to God's choice as the best. The desire to receive what God had promised was not wrong. However, they were not right in wanting to receive this according to their choice as the best. Eventually, their land was the first part of the land of Israel to be taken over by the Gentile

invaders from the east. The tribes of Reuben and Gad suffered, and this suffering was related to their having their own choice.

In spiritual matters it is terrible to do things according to our choice. Whatever is according to our choice will not turn out to be profitable. We may think that our choice is the best, but it is actually the worst. Therefore, in spiritual matters we should try not to act according to our choice. It is much better for us to leave matters in the hand of the Lord and let Him do according to His choice.

b. Because of What They Had and of What They Saw

The two tribes made their request because of what they had (a very great multitude of cattle—v. 1) and because of what they saw (a land good for livestock—v. 4). This was the reason for their choice.

Self-choice, even in the church life, comes from two things—considering what we have and need and considering how a particular situation or opportunity that we see in front of us fits in with our needs. This should not be our situation in the church life or in the service of the Lord. Both in the church life and in the Lord's work, we need to resist the temptation to have our self-choice for the purpose of taking care of our own welfare.

We need to learn the lesson of not considering what we have or what is in front of us but leaving our future in the hand of the Lord. We should not try to have our own choice in the church life or in the Lord's service. If you insist on having your own choice, be prepared to suffer as a result. Our choice is not the best selection. We are shortsighted and somewhat selfish, so it is difficult for us to be pure in motive, desire, intention, goal, and purpose. We should be willing to give up our choice and tell the Lord that we do not have any choice of our own.

c. Without Crossing the River Jordan

The land requested by Reuben and Gad could be reached without crossing the river Jordan. Without crossing the Jordan signifies without having the old man dealt with and buried. Only after we have had the old man dealt with

and buried are we in a position to talk about possessing the good land for our enjoyment.

d. Receiving the Promise of the Good Land Not with the Body of the Children of Israel

Reuben and Gad did not receive the promise of the good land with the body of the children of Israel. This signifies receiving the enjoyment of Christ separately, without the Body of Christ.

2. The Rebuking and Warning of Moses

In verses 6 through 15 we have the rebuking and warning of Moses.

a. Rebuking Them for Their Selfishness

"Moses said to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Reuben, Shall your brothers go to the war while you stay here?" (v. 6). Here Moses was rebuking them for their selfishness. Moses seemed to be saying, "You are considering the welfare of your tribes. What about the other tribes? If the other tribes follow your pattern, every tribe will have its own choice, and we will not have a way to distribute the land."

b. Warning Them with the Pitiful Story of Kadesh-barnea

In verses 7 through 15 Moses warned Reuben and Gad with the pitiful story of Kadesh-barnea, a story of unbelief. In verse 7 he said to them, "Why will you discourage the heart of the sons of Israel from going over into the land which Jehovah has given them?" Moses might have thought that they were afraid of the giants in the land and that this fear would have discouraged all the other tribes.

3. The Promise of the Two Tribes

In verses 16 through 19 we have the promise of the two tribes, who had reasons for their choice. Those who have their own choice will always have much to say to justify their choice.

a. That They Would Build Sheepfolds There for Their Livestock and Cities for Their Little Ones

"They approached him and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock and cities for our little ones" (v. 16). They were concerned for their livestock and their little ones, but they did not seem to think about the livestock and little ones of the other tribes.

b. That They Would Be Ready and Armed to Go before the Sons of Israel until They Had Brought All the People to Their Place

"We ourselves will be ready and armed to go before the sons of Israel, until we have brought them to their place" (v. 17a). This word indicates that they thought of themselves as quite capable, able to bring all the people to their place. In their self-confidence they dared to make such a promise. Instead of saying, "until we have brought them to their place," they should have said, "until the Lord has brought them to their place."

c. That They Would Not Return to Their Homes until the Sons of Israel Had Inherited Each His Inheritance

"We will not return to our homes until the sons of Israel have inherited each his inheritance" (v. 18). This sounds fair, but it was nevertheless their own choice and therefore was not the best arrangement.

d. That They Would Not Inherit with the Sons of Israel on the Other Side of the Jordan and Beyond

"We will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan to the east" (v. 19). This promise seems fair and reasonable.

4. The Permission of Moses

Verses 20 through 42 speak of the permission of Moses.

a. Agreeing with Their Promise

Moses was moved by the word of Reuben and Gad and agreed with their promise (vv. 20-22). This proves that Moses was not a dictator but that he was willing to accept others' reasonable proposals and opinions.

b. With a Condition

Moses' permission was given with the condition that every armed man of theirs would pass over the Jordan before Jehovah, until He had driven His enemies from before Him and the land was subdued before Him. Then, after that, they would return and be free of obligation to Jehovah and to Israel (vv. 21-22). Reuben and Gad had said, "until we have brought them to their place," but Moses said, "until He [Jehovah] has driven out His enemies from before Him and the land is subdued before Jehovah." This would be due to Him, not to Reuben and Gad.

In verse 22 Moses uses the word *obligation*. Whenever we have our own choice, we will owe something for our choice and will be under some kind of obligation. In serving the Lord, we need to learn never to be obligated in this way. We need to learn not to have our own choice and thereby not to be obligated to God and to His people.

c. Allowing Them to Build Cities for Their Little Ones and Folds for Their Sheep

In verse 24 we see that Moses allowed them to build cities for their little ones and folds for their sheep.

d. Giving Command to Eleazar the Priest, to Joshua the Son of Nun, and to the Heads of the Fathers' Houses of the Sons of Israel

Moses gave command to Eleazar the priest, to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' houses of the sons of Israel concerning the two tribes, regarding their keeping their promise to Moses (vv. 28-32). These two tribes were obligated to remember their promise and to fulfill it.

e. The Land Given to the Two Tribes and to the Half-tribe of Manasseh the Son of Joseph

According to verses 33 through 42, Moses gave to the two tribes and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land and its cities with their territories.

It may seem that in this chapter a good settlement was made concerning the request of the two tribes, Reuben and Gad. Actually, this situation was not pleasant, for these tribes were standing for themselves.

This may also be our situation in our married life and church life. Often in making a choice a brother will care not for his wife but for himself. He may say that he is for his wife, but deep in his heart he is for himself. Likewise, as the elders from various churches are having fellowship, the elders of each church may stand for themselves and their interests, not for the other churches, with each elder claiming that his concern is for the Lord's purpose and the building up of the Body. These illustrations show us that it is difficult for us not to have our own choice. It is a terrible thing to have our self-choice. Instead of having our own choice, we should leave the matter to the Lord.

If in the Lord's recovery our standing is that we will not have our own choice but leave the choice to the Lord, there will not be any problems among us. However, if we have our own choice, there will eventually be problems and suffering. Let us learn not to follow Reuben and Gad, but to follow the other tribes who allowed the Lord to make the choice for them. Let us wait for the lot and not have our own choice.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-SIX

FIGHTING

(15)

Scripture Reading: Num. 33:50-56; 34:1-29

In this message on the prearrangement of the distribution of the good land, we will consider the statutes for inheriting the good land (33:50-56) and the boundaries of the good land and its distributors (34:1-29).

B. The Statutes for Inheriting the Good Land

1. Given to Moses in the Plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho

These statutes were given to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho (33:50), a land that has been the scene of much trouble. Even today, the land east of the Jordan is a land of troubles.

2. The Sons of Israel Driving Out All the Inhabitants of the Land, Destroying All Their Figured Stones and Molten Images, Demolishing All Their High Places, and Taking Possession of the Land and Settling in It

Jehovah commanded Moses to say to the people, "When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images, and demolish all their high places; and you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it" (vv. 51-53). These verses reveal that, after driving out the devilish inhabitants of the land, they were to destroy all the idols and high places, the

places where the idols were worshipped. Only then would they be qualified to take possession of the land and enjoy it.

The principle is the same concerning our enjoyment of Christ today. Christ has been given to us as our portion for our enjoyment, yet there is a condition which we must fulfill in order to have this enjoyment. This condition is that we cooperate with God's ordination to drive out everything in us which is other than God and Christ. This means that we must destroy all the idols within us. An idol is anything other than God that occupies us. A degree, a good job, a nice house, a position or rank, a good name—all these can become idols occupying us. We must destroy any idols that may be in us and not leave any ground within us for the worship of idols. Without dealing with the idols in us, we cannot have the genuine enjoyment of Christ.

Some may talk about the enjoyment of Christ, but for them this is merely a slogan. Whether or not we can have the real enjoyment of Christ depends upon the extent to which there is a clearance of our inner being. Today Christ as the good land is in us, but the enjoyment of this good land requires an absolute clearance of anything other than God that occupies us. To give even a little ground to the worship of something other than God will annul our enjoyment of Christ. May we all have a thorough clearing away of every kind of idol so that we can enjoy Christ as the good land.

3. Inheriting the Land by Lot according to Their Families

"You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; for a large one you shall enlarge his inheritance, and for a small one you shall decrease his inheritance; wherever the lot falls to any man, that shall be his; according to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit" (v. 54). Here we see that the children of Israel were to inherit the land according to two things: according to their tribes and according to the lot. The size of the tribes was a matter of the increase in life, and the lot was a matter of God's sovereignty. This indicates that the enjoyment of Christ today

mainly depends on our increase in life and on God's sovereignty.

4. The Consequences of Not Driving Out the Inhabitants of the Land from before Them

In verses 55 and 56 we see the consequences of not driving out the inhabitants of the land from before them. If God's people had not driven out the inhabitants, those whom they had allowed to remain would have been as pricks in their eyes and as thorns in their sides. Moreover, these inhabitants would have troubled them in the land where they dwelt, and God would have done to them as He thought to do to those inhabitants. This means that the portion of the Gentiles under God's curse would have become the portion of Israel.

C. The Boundaries of the Good Land and Its Distributors

1. The Boundaries of the Good Land

Numbers 34:1-15 speaks of the boundaries of the good land. The boundaries of the land of Canaan signify Christ in His resurrection and ascension.

a. The Southern Boundary

The southern boundary (vv. 3-5) was from the wilderness of Zin along the side of Edom; from the end of the Salt Sea (the Dead Sea) on the east, turning south to the ascent of Akrabbim, crossing to Zin, ending south of Kadesh-barnea; then extending to Hazar-addar, crossing over to Azmon, turning from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and ending at the Great Sea (the Mediterranean Sea).

b. The Western Boundary

The western boundary (v. 6) was along the Great Sea and its coast, from the south to the north. The Great Sea signifies the all-inclusive death of Christ.

c. The Northern Boundary

The northern boundary (vv. 7-9) was from the Great Sea to Mount Hor, from Mount Hor to the entrance of Hamath,

the end being at Zedad, extending to Ziphron, and ending at Hazar-enan.

d. The Eastern Boundary

The eastern boundary (vv. 10-12) was from Hazar-enan to Shepham, going down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain, reaching to the slope of the Sea of Chinnereth (the Sea of Galilee) on the east, going down to the Jordan (signifying the death of Christ), and ending at the Salt Sea.

The best part of the good land is surrounded by two seas—the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea—and a river—the Jordan. These two seas and this river all signify the death of Christ. This indicates that the enjoyment of Christ is closely related to His death. Our enjoyment of Christ, therefore, must be in the sphere, the territory, of His death.

The borders of the good land also indicate that it is an elevated, uplifted land. This signifies the ascended Christ, the heavenly Christ. The Christ whom we enjoy in His riches is a resurrected and ascended Christ. The Christ who was crucified and buried has come into us in resurrection, and now we are in His ascension, enjoying Him as the uplifted land with all its riches.

e. The Boundaries of the Land to Be Given to the Nine and a Half Tribes

"Moses commanded the sons of Israel, saying, This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which Jehovah has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe; for the tribe of the sons of Reuben by their fathers' houses and the tribe of the sons of Gad by their fathers' houses and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance; the two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise" (vv. 13-15). Verses 1 through 12 describe the boundaries of the land to be given to the nine and a half tribes. The land given to the two and a half tribes, the land which was according to their choice, could be reached without crossing the Jordan. This indicates that it was outside the death of Christ and thus was not actually a part of the good land. Our self-choice

is likewise outside the death of Christ and therefore has nothing to do with the real enjoyment of the rich Christ. If we do not pass through the death of Christ, we cannot enter into His resurrection and ascension. This shows us that we should not have our own choice. Whenever we have our choice, we are outside the death of Christ and, as a result, are not in the realm of His resurrection and ascension to enjoy Him as the heavenly, elevated One.

As indicated by the type of the good land, the Christ assigned to us through God's ordination is a great Christ, a vast Christ. However, the size of the Christ whom we actually experience depends on us. In Himself, Christ is universally vast and does not vary in size, but our experience of this Christ may vary greatly and be different in size. For some, Christ may be only a narrow strip of land; for others, He may be a very large territory. Just as our experience of Christ as the offerings may be in different sizes—a ram, a lamb, or a pigeon—so our experience of Christ as the good land may also vary in size.

2. The Distributors of the Good Land

In verses 16 through 29 we have the distributors of the good land. The leaders of the two and a half tribes are not included in the list of distributors. The two and a half tribes possessed something, but what they possessed was not part of the good land. In principle, this may also be our situation in the church life. We may have our choice and gain something. What we gain may seem to be according to God's promise, but actually it is merely something according to our own choice and cannot be reckoned as a part of God's promise.

a. Eleazar the Priest and Joshua the Son of Nun

"These are the names of the men who shall divide the land to you for an inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun" (v. 17). Eleazar and Joshua both typify Christ. On the one hand, Christ is our Priest; on the other hand, He is our Leader.

b. One Leader of Every Tribe

Verse 18 says, "You shall take one leader of every tribe, to divide the land for an inheritance." In verses 19 through 28 we have a list of these leaders: Caleb, of the tribe of Judah, being the first; Shemuel, of the tribe of Simeon; Elidad, of the tribe of Benjamin; Bukki, of the tribe of Dan; Hanniel, of the tribe of Manasseh; Kemuel, of the tribe of Ephraim; Elizaphan, of the tribe of Zebulun; Paltiel, of the tribe of Issachar; Ahihud, of the tribe of Asher; and Pedahel, of the tribe of Naphtali. "These are the men whom Jehovah commanded to divide the inheritance for the sons of Israel in the land of Canaan" (v. 29).

There should be some significance in the fact that this list does not include the names of the leaders of the two and a half tribes. I believe that their names do not appear because these tribes made their own choice. Today, if we have our self-choice, our names may not be included on God's "list." Concerning this, we should not care about man's opinion, appraisal, appreciation, criticism, and condemnation. Today is "man's day" (1 Cor. 4:3), the present age in which man judges. Let us wait for the day of the Lord when He will judge (1 Cor. 4:4-5). Only the Lord is qualified to give the final word. Therefore, let us learn not to have our self-choice, which keeps us outside the death of Christ. We should care for the Lord's choice, not for our choice, and let our names be on His list, not on our list.

c. The Difference between the Leaders in Chapter One and in Chapter Thirty-four

Finally, we need to see that there is a difference between the leaders in Numbers 1 and in Numbers 34. The leaders in chapter one were for the numbering; the leaders in chapter thirty-four were for the distribution of the good land. Both the boundaries of the good land and the distributors of the good land are significant.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-SEVEN

FIGHTING

(16)

Scripture Reading: Num. 35:1-34

In this message we will consider the cities given to the Levites and the cities of refuge.

D. The Cities Given to the Levites and the Cities of Refuge

1. The Cities Given to the Levites

The Levites were not priests directly but were the serving ones of the priesthood. This means that they served the priesthood. In the priesthood, or in the ministry of the priests, there were many business affairs that required the service of the Levites. The Levites, therefore, were a tribe separated to these business affairs. As such a separated tribe, the Levites were not given a portion of the good land. However, God ordained that cities with their suburbs should be given to them.

a. Forty-eight Cities Given to the Levites

Forty-eight cities from the inheritance of the possession of the sons of Israel were to be given to the Levites for them to dwell in (vv. 7, 2a). Forty-eight is a meaningful number. According to its spiritual significance, this number can be composed in two ways. The first way is six multiplied by eight. The number six denotes man, who was created by God on the sixth day. God spent six days in creating the old creation, and man was the completion of God's creation. The number eight signifies resurrection. The eighth day, the day after the Sabbath, was the beginning of a new week. The

man who was created on the sixth day became fallen. However, man has been saved in resurrection and into resurrection.

The forty-eight cities given to the Levites signify the natural man, who became fallen, being brought into resurrection through the Levitical service. The Levitical service was a service to the priesthood, and the goal of the priesthood was to bring fallen man back to God in resurrection. The number of cities given to the Levites thus signifies the purpose of the Levitical service.

The number forty-eight is also composed of four multiplied by twelve. Like the number six, the number four also signifies man as God's creature. Twelve is the number of perfection and completion in God's eternal administration. Hence, the number forty-eight as composed of four multiplied by twelve indicates that man, created by God, will be perfected and completed in the eternal administration of God.

b. The Pasture Lands Given to the Levites

Pasture lands of three thousand cubits from the wall of the city outward all around each city were also to be given to the Levites for their cattle, livestock, and animals (vv. 2b-5). This was a rather large piece of land, and it indicates that God's giving is without scarcity. God's gift is always plentiful.

c. The Large Tribes Giving More and the Smaller Tribes Giving Fewer

For the forty-eight cities given to the Levites, the large tribes were to give more and the smaller tribes fewer (v. 8). This was right and fair, and it was according to the riches given by God. How much we can give and should give depends upon how much God has given us. If God gives us a large amount, we should give more. If He has given us a smaller amount, we may give less.

d. The Forty-eight Cities Given to the Levites to Be Scattered among Israel

The forty-eight cities given to the Levites were to be

scattered among Israel, changing Jacob's curse on Levi in Genesis 49:7 into a blessing. According to the Bible, it is a blessing to be gathered but a curse to be scattered. As Jacob was blessing his twelve sons, he pronounced a curse on Levi, saying that because of his cruelty he would be scattered. In Numbers 35 the forty-eight cities were also to be scattered among Israel. In this way the curse on Levi was changed into a blessing.

e. Six Cities to Be the Cities of Refuge

Out of the forty-eight cities given to the Levites, six were to be the cities of refuge (v. 6).

2. The Cities of Refuge

Numbers 35:9-34 speaks of the cities of refuge.

a. To Be Selected after the Sons of Israel Crossed the Jordan into the Land of Canaan

The cities of refuge were to be selected after the sons of Israel had crossed the Jordan into the good land (vv. 10-11a). This indicates that the land east of the Jordan was not a part of the land of Canaan.

b. The Manslayer Who Killed Any Person without an Intent Fleeing to One of the Cities of Refuge

The cities of refuge were provided so that the manslayer who killed any person without an intent might flee there (v. 11b). Verse 12 says, "The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the assembly for judgment." In this way, a manslayer could be protected from the avenger.

c. The Cities of Refuge to Be Six

The cities of refuge were to be six, three beyond the Jordan and three in the land of Canaan (vv. 13-14).

1) The Significance of the Number Six

The number six signifies man, who was created by God on the sixth day (Gen. 1:26-27, 31), making mistakes.

2) The Significance of the Number Three

The number three signifies the Triune God as the refuge for the man who makes mistakes. God regards us as those who make mistakes, and He has ordained that there be a refuge into which we may flee.

3) The Significance of the Number Two

The number two (the two sets of three cities each) signifies a testimony standing in the universe.

d. The Cities of Refuge Being Not Only for the Sons of Israel but Also for the Strangers and Sojourners among Them

The cities of refuge were to be not only for the sons of Israel but also for the strangers and sojourners among them (Num. 35:15). This signifies that the Triune God as the refuge for the mistake-making man is for all mankind. Today we all, both Jews and Gentiles alike, have a refuge, a place of protection, in the Triune God.

e. The Cities of Refuge Not Being for Those Who Killed with an Intent

The cities of refuge were not for those who killed with an intent (vv. 16-21). Adam sinned without intent, and we, the descendents of Adam, have sinned in the same way. Our sinning today is foolish and nonsensical. Therefore, in the sight of God, we are those who sin without intent, and He considers our sinning as being without intent.

f. The Cities of Refuge Being Only for the One Who Killed a Man without an Intent

The cities of refuge were only for the one who killed a man without an intent, that he might be free from the hand of the avenger of blood, under the judgment of the assembly

(vv. 22-25a). This means that the one who fled to a city of refuge was not judged immediately. Rather, the assembly, the congregation, was to have a group to judge whether or not one's fleeing to the city of refuge was legitimate.

g. The Rescued Killer Remaining in the City of Refuge and Living in It until the Death of the High Priest

The rescued killer was to remain in the city of refuge and live in it until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil, and after the death of the high priest he could return to the land of his possession (vv. 25b-29). The high priest here signifies Christ, who died for our sins. The Old Testament saints like Abraham, David, and Isaiah remained, spiritually speaking, in the city of refuge until Christ died. This was a refuge prior to direct salvation. Since Christ, our High Priest, has died, He is our refuge, not in the Old Testament sense but in the New Testament sense. This refuge is a matter of direct salvation. Christ has died and has resurrected, and now we are in Him, not merely as a refuge in the Old Testament sense but as our direct salvation. Christ is both the refuge and the direct salvation. Before His death, He was the refuge for the Old Testament saints. But now, after His death, He is our direct salvation.

h. The One Who Murdered with an Intent to Be Put to Death at the Mouth of Witnesses

The one who murdered with intent was to be put to death at the mouth of witnesses; however, no one was to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness (v. 30).

i. No Ransom to Be Accepted for the Life of a Murderer

No ransom was to be accepted for the life of a murderer, who was guilty of death and who was to be put to death (v. 31).

j. No Ransom to Be Accepted for Him Who Had Fled to His City of Refuge

Verse 32 says, "You shall accept no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell

in the land before the death of the priest." If a member of his family tried to ransom him, that ransom would not be accepted. Since no ransom was to be accepted, the one who fled to a refuge city had to remain there until the death of the high priest. Spiritually speaking, for the Old Testament saints, the refuge city was like the fold in John 10. Those saints had to remain in this refuge, in this fold, until Christ, the High Priest, had died. No ransom could have released them before the time of Christ's death.

k. The Good Land Not to Be Polluted and Defiled by the Blood for Which No Propitiation Had Been Made

"Thus, you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land, and no propitiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of him who shed it. And you shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I Jehovah dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel" (vv. 33-34). The land in the midst of which the Lord dwelt was not to be polluted or defiled by the shedding of blood for which no propitiation had been made. If the people followed the regulations concerning the cities of refuge, there would be no blood shed for which there was no propitiation. Then the entire land would be clean in the sight of God.

In human history, other than the nation of Israel, there has never been a country with the kind of regulations found in chapter thirty-five of Numbers. These regulations include giving forty-eight cities to God's serving ones, designating six of these cities as cities of refuge, and requiring that the one who legitimately fled to one of these cities had to remain there until the death of the high priest. The regulations in this chapter bear a divine significance and reveal God's mercy, grace, wisdom, and sovereignty. As the book of Numbers reveals, in that narrow strip of land, the land of Canaan, God exercised His mercy, grace, wisdom, and sovereignty. Surely this book was inspired by God! If there were no God, such a book could never have been written.

Only through God's mercy, grace, wisdom, and sovereignty can we understand the book of Numbers.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-EIGHT

FIGHTING

(17)

Scripture Reading: Num. 36:1-13

Before we consider chapter thirty-six of Numbers, I would like to say a further word on two matters concerning the refuge cities in chapter thirty-five.

First, according to 35:25b-29, the rescued killer was to remain in the city of refuge and live in it until the death of the high priest, who signifies Christ, who died for our sins. Since we, the believers in Christ, have God's direct salvation, how should we apply the type of remaining in the refuge city until the death of the high priest? In the Old Testament time, Christ had not yet died, and those who fled into Him as their refuge had to wait there until He came and died on the cross. For the Old Testament saints, therefore, the refuge was like the sheepfold in John 10:1, which signifies the law, or Judaism as the religion of the law, in which God's chosen people were kept and guarded in custody and ward until Christ came.

Since the Old Testament age is over, do we today still have a city of refuge, or do we only have God's direct salvation? I would like to answer this question in relation to the assurance of salvation. As far as the forgiveness of sins and the assurance of salvation are concerned, many believers are still in the Old Testament. They seem to be waiting for this assurance to be given some time in the future. For example, if you ask such a believer if his sins have been forgiven, he might say, "I do not know. I have fled into Christ and I am in Christ, but I am not sure that my sins are forgiven. I may not have this assurance until I die. Only then will I know for sure that I am going to heaven." Such a

believer is taking Christ as his city of refuge. However, we who believe in Christ may have the assurance of salvation and the assurance that our sins have been forgiven. We should be able to say to those who have fled into Christ as their refuge city, "Since you have entered into Christ and are in Him, your sins have been forgiven. Christ has already died for you and for your sins. His redeeming death on your behalf has already been accomplished. Since Christ died for your sins, your sins have surely been forgiven." A believer who receives this word will no longer be like the Old Testament saints waiting in the city of refuge but will enjoy God's direct salvation.

The point we need to see here is that there is an important, dispensational difference in the significance of the refuge cities for the Old Testament saints and for us today. In the Old Testament age, the refuge cities were places in which to hide and to wait for the death of the high priest. Those who enter into Christ today may do so with the assurance that He has already died and that their sins have already been forgiven. Christ died for us even before we were born. Now we simply need to apply what He has done for us, saying, "O Lord Jesus, I love You. You died for me before I was born. Hallelujah, my sins have been forgiven, and I have been released!"

Second, God ordained that there were to be six refuge cities, three beyond the Jordan and three in the land of Canaan. This arrangement was according to God's creation and sovereignty. God created the river Jordan and the land on the east and on the west of the Jordan. In type, the two groups of three refuge cities testify and declare to the universe that the Triune God is living on earth among human beings to be their city of refuge.

Furthermore, the distribution of the six refuge cities in different places indicates that the Triune God is near and available. No matter where we may be, Christ, the embodiment of the Triune God, is near and available. Because He is everywhere, He is wherever we may be. The Triune God has spread among men to be a city of refuge for all those who make mistakes. We all have made mistakes and continue

to make mistakes daily, but the Triune God has spread to the very place where we are. Now we simply need to turn to Him and come into Him.

Now, as the final matter pertaining to the prearrangement of the distribution of the good land, let us consider the statute in 36:1-13.

E. A Further Statute concerning the Females among Israel Inheriting the Good Land

We might think that the book of Numbers should end with the cities of refuge in chapter thirty-five. However, the last matter to be covered in this book is a further statute concerning the females among Israel inheriting the good land. Because this matter had yet to be settled, God authorized Moses to add a portion to deal with it.

1. The Five Daughters of Zelophehad Having Requested Land for Their Father's Family

In 27:1-11 the five daughters of Zelophehad had requested land for their father's family. There is nothing wrong with this request.

2. The Heads of the Fathers' Houses of the Families of the Sons of Joseph Requesting the Same Kind of Land for Their Tribe

The heads of the fathers' houses of the families of the sons of Joseph requested the same kind of land for their tribe. These heads of the fathers' houses were making a counterclaim, saying that if the daughters of Zelophehad married outside their tribe, the inheritance given to them might be given to another tribe. In such a case, their own tribe would have lost land.

Here we see a difference between the view of the sisters and the view of the brothers. Often the sisters are finer than the brothers in their concept and opinion; however, the sisters may be shortsighted. The daughters of Zelophehad were very fine in their concept, considering their father's house, but they were shortsighted, not considering the tribe as a whole. The heads of the fathers' houses had a view concerning the

whole tribe and therefore requested the same kind of land for their tribe. They asked Moses to seek God for a way not only to provide an inheritance for the daughters of Zelophehad but also to keep the land in their tribe.

a. Jehovah Having Commanded Moses to Give the Inheritance of Zelophehad Their Brother to His Daughters

Jehovah had commanded Moses to give the inheritance of Zelophehad their brother to his daughters (36:2). This was God's ordination, His care for the five daughters, and it was, of course, absolutely right.

b. The Daughters Marrying Any of the Sons of the Other Tribes

In verse 3 the heads of the fathers' houses of the families of the sons of Joseph said that if the daughters married any of the sons of the other tribes, then the daughters' inheritance would be taken from the inheritance of their tribe and added to the inheritance of the tribe to which the daughters belonged.

c. The Jubilee Coming and the Daughters' Inheritance Being Added to the Inheritance of the Tribe to Which They Belonged

Verse 4 goes on to say that when the jubilee came, then the daughters' inheritance would be added to the inheritance of the tribe to which they belonged, and their inheritance would be taken from the inheritance of the tribe of their fathers. This word shows foresight into how the loss of the inheritance would affect the tribe as a whole.

3. A Statute Being Given to the Sons of Israel according to the Word of Jehovah

In verses 5 through 9 a statute was given to the sons of Israel according to the word of Jehovah.

a. Allowing the Daughters of Zelophehad to Marry Only Those within the Family of the Tribe of Their Father

"Moses commanded the sons of Israel according to the word of Jehovah, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph has spoken rightly. This is what Jehovah commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them marry those who are good in their eyes; only, they shall marry within the family of the tribe of their father" (vv. 5-6). God allowed the daughters to marry according to their taste but only within the family of the tribe of their father. This indicates that although the Lord gives us freedom, this freedom must be exercised within the limit, the boundary, of God's regulation.

b. The Inheritance of the Sons of Israel Not to Pass from One Tribe to Another

"The inheritance of the sons of Israel shall not pass from one tribe to another; for every one of the sons of Israel shall cleave to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers" (v. 7). This signifies that as our inheritance Christ is not transferable and that we should cleave to Him as this inheritance. Paul's word in 2 Corinthians 6:14 may help us to understand this: "Do not become unequally yoked with unbelievers." This word applies to all manner of intimate relationships between believers and unbelievers, including marriage. In principle, for a believer to marry an unbeliever is to make Christ as the inheritance transferable.

c. Every Daughter Who Possessed an Inheritance in Any Tribe of the Sons of Israel to Be Wife to One of the Family of the Tribe of Her Father

"Every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the sons of Israel shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, so that every one of the sons of Israel may possess the inheritance of his fathers. And no inheritance shall pass from one tribe to another; for each of the tribes of the sons of Israel shall cleave to its own inheritance"

(Num. 36:8-9). This was the way to keep the God-ordained inheritance from becoming transferrable.

4. According to Jehovah's Commandment, the Daughters of Zelophehad Marrying the Sons of Their Uncles, and Their Inheritance Remaining in the Tribe of the Family of Their Father

The daughters of Zelophehad did according to Jehovah's commandment to Moses, marrying the sons of their uncles (vv. 10-11). "They were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh, the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father" (v. 12). Once again we see that the freedom we have from God is not unlimited. Rather, the freedom, the liberty, we have received in Christ must always be limited by God's regulation.

5. The Case of Mary, the Mother of the Lord Jesus, Marrying Joseph Being One That Fulfilled This Statute

The case of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, marrying Joseph was one that fulfilled this statute. Hence, such a statute concerns Christ in His incarnation.

If we compare the genealogies of the Lord Jesus in Matthew and Luke, we will see that Mary was a descendant of Nathan, a son of David, and that Joseph was a descendant of Solomon, another son of David. Joseph might have come from a poor family and Mary, from a rich family. In such a case, there would have been an inheritance on Mary's side but not on Joseph's side. However, when Joseph and Mary were married, her inheritance became his. The two, Mary and Joseph, became one for the bringing forth of Jesus. This indicates that even such a statute as that in Numbers 36:1-12 concerns Christ in His incarnation. This shows that all Scripture is a record concerning Christ, directly or indirectly.

The Bible reveals Christ, and the Bible is a record concerning Christ. The statute in chapter thirty-six was actually ordained by God for Christ's incarnation. The cities of refuge in Numbers 35 are a type of Christ, and the settlement of the problem regarding the inheritance in

Numbers 36 is related to Christ. This means that even the last chapter of the book of Numbers is concerned with Christ, in particular Christ's incarnation. If Christ had not been incarnated, He could not have become the cities of refuge for the human race. Thus, in a very real sense, the refuge cities in chapter thirty-five depend upon the statute in chapter thirty-six. If we see this, we will appreciate the requests of the daughters of Zelophehad and of the heads of the fathers' houses of the families of the sons of Joseph, and we will appreciate the way this problem was solved according to the word of the Lord.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FORTY-NINE

A VITAL SKETCH OF THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BOOKS OF EXODUS, LEVITICUS, AND NUMBERS CONCERNING GOD'S ECONOMY WITH HIS CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE

(1)

Scripture Reading: Exo. 3:1-18; 19:1-6; Lev. 1:1-2; Num. 1:1

In this message we will begin to present a vital sketch of the divine revelation in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers concerning God's economy with His chosen and redeemed people. We may use four slogans to summarize certain crucial aspects of this sketch: "Purchased, redeemed, and saved from the bondage of the fall"; "Enjoying Christ, receiving revelation, and being built up in the Triune God"; "Formed into a priestly army to fight for God and to journey with God"; and "Possessed by God to possess the all-inclusive Christ as the good land." These slogans are a mingling of Old Testament typology and the fulfillment of this typology in the New Testament. This should not be surprising since the two sections of the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, are one. We may say that the New Testament is hidden in the Old Testament and that the Old Testament is manifested in the New Testament.

These four slogans apply to the saints in both the Old Testament and New Testament. The saints have been chosen, redeemed, and saved from the bondage of the fall. The Old Testament saints were saved from bondage in Egypt, and we have been saved from the bondage of Satan. Having been

saved, we are now enjoying Christ. Like the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, we have also received the divine revelation and are being built up with the processed Triune God. We are being built up with the Son as the embodiment of the Father and with the Spirit as the realization of the Son. Furthermore, we are being formed into a priestly army. The term priestly army may be an Old Testament term, but it also fits the New Testament fulfillment of Old Testament typology. This priestly army fights for God and journeys with God. While we are fighting for God and for His kingdom, we are journeying with Him. Finally, we have been prepared by God in every way to possess the all-inclusive Christ as the good land. This preparation is revealed in the last five chapters of Numbers, where we see the prearrangement of the distribution of the good land. This prearrangement was the preparation of God's people to enter into the land and possess it.

In this message and in the four following messages, we will present a vital sketch of the divine revelation in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers concerning God's economy with His chosen and redeemed people. The word economy is not used in the Old Testament, but it is found in the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul, which strongly emphasize the matter of God's economy. Although this word may not be used in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, the typology in these books unveils God's economy. God's economy is His administration with His plan, His purpose, and His arrangement to accomplish His plan and attain His purpose for the fulfillment of the desire of His heart. This desire is to have a people not only created by Him but also regenerated, sanctified, transformed, and conformed to the image of Christ as the embodiment of the processed Triune God. Eventually, this people will be brought into glory, into the expression of the Triune God. This is God's economy. In the Old Testament we have a picture of God's economy; in the New Testament we have a clear speaking concerning God's economy.

I. THE NEED OF GOD'S CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE TO RECEIVE THE DIVINE REVELATION CONCERNING GOD HIMSELF AND HIS ECONOMY FOR THEIR TRAINING AND BUILDING UP AS HIS TESTIMONY

God's chosen and redeemed people need to receive the divine revelation concerning God Himself and His economy for their training and building up as His testimony. Since God's choosing of His people is in the book of Genesis, this point covers Genesis as well as Exodus. In Genesis God's people were chosen, and in Exodus they received the divine revelation concerning God and His dwelling place.

A. After the Participation in God's Initial Salvation as Realized in the Passover

God's chosen people received the divine revelation after their participation in God's initial salvation as realized in the Passover (Exo. 12). God brought the people out of Egypt to the mountain of God, Mount Sinai, and there gave them a full revelation of His dwelling place among the human race on earth. We may say the revelation contained the "blueprints" for the building of God's dwelling place. In order to dwell among the human race, God needs a people who are not only chosen and redeemed but also ready to receive the divine revelation concerning Him and His dwelling place. As the book of Exodus shows us, God's people did receive this revelation and they built the tabernacle according to it. When the tabernacle was set up, God's glory descended upon it.

B. Through the Enjoyment of the Divine Provisions

The divine revelation was through the enjoyment of the divine provisions as tasted in the supply of the heavenly manna and the living water flowing out of the smitten rock (Exo. 16; 17:1-7).

C. Through the Experience of Being an Army That Shared in God's Fighting against His Enemies

The divine revelation was also through the experience of

being an army that shared in God's fighting against His enemies, as in their fighting against the Egyptians and the Amalekites (Exo. 14; 17:9-16).

D. Reaching and Arriving at the Mountain of God

Eventually, in Exodus 19 God's chosen and redeemed people reached and arrived at the mountain of God. When God sent Moses to rescue the children of Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh, God told Moses that after he had brought the people out of Egypt, they would serve the Lord upon this mountain (Exo. 3:12). In Exodus 19 this word was fulfilled.

1. To Receive the Divine Revelation concerning God Himself That They Might Be Separated unto the Holy God as His Sanctified People

At Mount Sinai God's people received the revelation concerning God Himself that they might be separated unto the holy God as His sanctified people (Exo. 20—24). By the revelation of God Himself, we refer to the law. The law is a portrait of God. Before the children of Israel received the revelation concerning God's building, God gave them a portrait of Himself to show them what kind of God He is. The law reveals that God is a God of love and light and that He is holy and righteous. Therefore, love, light, holy, and righteous are crucial words describing the characteristics of the almighty, Triune God. As the God of love and light, He is altogether holy; that is, He is uncommon, different, and separate from everything else in the universe. Furthermore, God is altogether righteous. He is righteous with Himself, He is righteous in all He does, and He is righteous toward man and all His creatures. This is God as He is revealed in the picture in Exodus 20—24.

In the New Testament we have a description of God, but we do not have a picture of God. John tells us clearly that God is love and light, and Paul tells us that the very God who is love and light is absolutely holy and righteous.

The Ten Commandments are a type signifying Christ as the portrait of God, as the expression of God's image.

Hebrews 1:3 says that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the express image of God's substance. Using a modern term, we may say that Christ is a photograph of God. To see Him is to see God.

The law is also a portrait of God. By studying the commandments of the law, we can see that God is love and light and that He is holy and righteous. Because the law is such a picture of God, the law was called the testimony of God (Exo. 25:16, 21; 31:18). The ark in which the law was placed was called the ark of the testimony (Exo. 25:22), and the tabernacle was called the tabernacle of testimony (Exo. 38:21). In the Psalms the law is often referred to as the testimony (Psa. 19:7; 25:10; 119:2). This testimony was a portrait, a picture, of God.

God's people received the revelation concerning God Himself so that they might be separated unto the holy God as His sanctified people. This matter is given particular emphasis in the book of Leviticus. For example, Leviticus 11:44 says, "I am Jehovah your God; you shall therefore sanctify yourselves and be holy, for I am holy."

2. To Receive the Divine Revelation concerning God's Economy That They Might Be Built Up Together with God in His Divine Trinity as His Dwelling Place on Earth for His Testimony

In addition to receiving the divine revelation concerning God Himself, the children of Israel received the divine revelation concerning God's economy that they might be built up together with God in His divine Trinity as His dwelling place on earth for His testimony (Exo. 25—40). The revelation concerning God's economy includes the revelation concerning the divine arrangement, administration, and purpose.

That God's people were to be built up together with Him is indicated by the materials which were to be used for the building of the tabernacle. For instance, the boards of the tabernacle, like the ark, were made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The boards of acacia wood are a type of God's

people, and the gold overlaying the boards is a type of the divine Person. Thus, the boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold signifies God's people being built up together with God to be His dwelling place. From this we see that not only are God's people the building materials for His dwelling place but also that God Himself is the building material.

In the tabernacle we can see a picture of the divine Trinity. It is rather easy to see that the tabernacle reveals Christ the Son. For example, the ark, the showbread table, and the incense altar all signify the Son. But where do we see God the Father and God the Spirit? The Father is signified by the gold, for in typology gold signifies the nature of God, which, no doubt, is related to God the Father. God the Spirit is signified by the oil in the seven lamps in the lampstand. If the lamps had not had oil, they would have been useless, and there would not have been any light in the tabernacle. (Here we would also point out that the lampstand, which is a single entity, signifies the Triune God. The gold signifies the Father, the form signifies the Son, and the oil signifies the Spirit.) Therefore, with the tabernacle we have the Triune God—with the Son signified by the furniture, the Father signified by the gold, and the Spirit signified by the oil—and humanity, signified by the acacia wood. This is a revelation of God's people being built up with the Triune God to be His dwelling place on earth.

The entire tabernacle was God's testimony. As we have pointed out, the two tablets of the law were called the testimony, the ark was called the ark of the testimony, and the tabernacle was called the tabernacle of testimony. For this reason, the entire tabernacle, from the inside to the outside, was considered the testimony of God. This means that the tabernacle was a portrait of the Triune God. Furthermore, the Triune God is actually His own dwelling place, for the dweller and the dwelling are one. The dweller is the dwelling place.

The forty-eight boards of the tabernacle correspond to the forty-eight cities given to the Levites. Six of these cities were to be refuge cities. The most striking point regarding the refuge cities is that they were enterable. Eventually, these

forty-eight cities of the Levites will consummate in a unique city—the New Jerusalem. The tabernacle revealed in Exodus is a miniature of this unique city. In the Old Testament God's testimony was the tabernacle, and in the New Testament it is the church, the Body of Christ. In eternity this testimony will consummate in the New Jerusalem, which is also called a tabernacle (Rev. 21:3). Thus, there was a tabernacle in the Old Testament, there is a tabernacle in the New Testament, and there will be a tabernacle in eternity. In the Old Testament the tabernacle was with the children of Israel, and in the New Testament the tabernacle is firstly Christ (John 1:14) and then the church as the enlargement of Christ. In eternity there will be the ultimate, consummate tabernacle, the New Jerusalem. In each case, the striking point is that the tabernacle is enterable. An entry into the tabernacle is available to us today. Hallelujah, the Triune God is enterable!

3. To Receive the Divine Revelation concerning God's Priesthood with All Its Offerings and Its Services

Finally, God's chosen and redeemed people received the divine revelation concerning God's priesthood with all its offerings and its services. The entire book of Leviticus is a record of this revelation.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FIFTY

A VITAL SKETCH OF THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BOOKS OF EXODUS, LEVITICUS, AND NUMBERS CONCERNING GOD'S ECONOMY WITH HIS CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE

(2)

Scripture Reading: Num. 1:1-3, 44-46

In this message we will continue to present a vital sketch of the divine revelation in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers concerning God's economy with His chosen and redeemed people.

II. THE NEED OF GOD'S CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE TO BE FORMED INTO A PRIESTLY ARMY TO CARRY OUT THE HOLY WAR

The book of Numbers as a whole reveals the need of God's chosen and redeemed people to be formed into an army to carry out the holy war.

A. To Be Numbered according to Maturity in Life

In order to be formed into a holy army, God's people must first be numbered according to maturity in life (Num. 1:3, 18).

B. To Be Built Up into One Body

God's chosen and redeemed people were also built up into one body (1:44-46). If we consider how the children of Israel were in array at the foot of Mount Sinai, we will realize that they had truly been formed into one body.

C. To Journey with God

After God's people were numbered and built up into one body, they journeyed with God. This means that they traveled with Him.

1. With the Presence of God

In their journey with God, the children of Israel had the presence of God, signified by the cloud in the day and by the fire in the cloud at night (Exo. 33:14; 40:36-38; Num. 9:15-23). The cloud and the fire were both the expression of the Triune God. The presence of the cloud and the fire indicated that as the people were journeying in the wilderness, they were journeying with God. In this journey they were led by God Himself.

2. The Angel of Jehovah to Take the Lead

As the children of Israel were journeying with God, the Angel of Jehovah took the lead (Exo. 32:34). The title "the Angel of Jehovah" is a particular title of Christ in the Old Testament, as revealed in Exodus 3. The Angel of Jehovah took the lead, always walking in front of the army of Israel.

3. Moving, Walking, and Living Together with Jehovah, the Triune God

In their journey the children of Israel were moving, walking, and living with Jehovah, the Triune God. This is a type, a picture, of our living as Christians today. Day by day we are moving, walking, and living together with the processed and dispensing Triune God.

4. To Pass through the Great and Terrible Wilderness with All Kinds of Trials, Sufferings, and Divine Care, Supplies, and Discipline

God's chosen and redeemed people passed through the great and terrible wilderness with all kinds of trials, sufferings, and divine care, supplies, and discipline (Deut. 1:19; 8:2-5). This also is a picture of our Christian life today. Some say that the Christian life is wonderful. However,

according to typology, the Christian life is a life of passing through a great and terrible wilderness. In this wilderness we have all kinds of trials and sufferings, but we also have the divine care and supplies. Moreover, because we, like the children of Israel, are often "naughty children," in addition to God's care and supplies we also have His discipline.

5. Through Forty-two Stations to Enter into Rest in the Good Land Promised by God

On their journey through the wilderness, the children of Israel passed through forty-two stations to enter into rest in the good land promised by God (Num. 33:1-49; Josh. 1:2).

D. To Fight Together with God and for God

As a priestly army, God's chosen and redeemed people fought together with God and for God. If we would fight together with God and for God today, we must first move, walk, and live with Him and also pass through many things in the wilderness. Only in this way can we be qualified to fight together with God.

The children of Israel fought not only with God but also for God. In the church life today, we should also fight for God. This indicates that our church life is actually for God and not mainly for us. However, our feeling concerning the church life may be too subjective and selfish. In the meeting someone may testify, saying, "Before I came into the church life, I was homeless. Now in the church I am at home. Oh, how good is the church life!" Yes, we are at home in the church life. Nevertheless, we need to realize that the church life is not mainly for us but for God. We should be able to say, "Lord, the church life is actually Your life. You want to live this way, and we are living together with You. If we did not live and move with You, You would not have Your satisfaction. You do not want to be alone. You have chosen, redeemed, and saved us to accompany You in Your move. Our church life, Lord, is really for You."

1. To Defeat the King of Arad and Destroy His People

In their fighting together with God and for God, the

children of Israel defeated the king of Arad and destroyed his people (Num. 21:1-3). By doing this, they overcame the first enemy among the Canaanites.

2. To Defeat Sihon King of the Amorites with His People and Og King of Bashan with His People

God's people also defeated Sihon king of the Amorites with his people and Og king of Bashan with his people (21:21-35). This means that they overcame Canaan's two gate guards.

3. To Defeat the Midianites with Their Five Kings

The children of Israel also defeated the Midianites with their five kings (31:1-12). By defeating the Midianites the people overcame Canaan's gate army.

The kings defeated by God's chosen and redeemed people signify the spiritual powers, rulers, and authorities in the air. Today we need to fight against these powers and defeat them.

4. For the Entranceinto the God-promised Good Land That the Kingdom of God Might Be Spread and Established There

The fighting of God's people against the kings was for the entrance into the God-promised good land that the kingdom of God might be spread and established there. The principle is the same with us today. When we defeat the rulers, powers, and authorities in the air, the kingdom of God surely is spread and established.

E. To Bear with Them God's Dwelling, the Tabernacle of the Testimony with the Ark of the Testimony

As the priestly army carrying out the holy war, God's chosen and redeemed people bore with them God's dwelling, the tabernacle of the testimony with the ark of the testimony. This indicates that in the church life today we are bearing God's testimony with God Himself. Upon our shoulder we not only have God's dwelling place but also the dweller, God Himself. As long as the church bears the testimony of God,

the church is God's dwelling place. Actually, the dwelling place of God is the testimony of God. Today, this testimony of God, this dwelling place of God, is upon our shoulder.

1. The Tabernacle of the Testimony Signifying God's Chosen and Redeemed People Built Up with Him as His Dwelling on the Earth

The tabernacle of the testimony signifies God's chosen and redeemed people built up with Him as His dwelling on the earth (the church in the New Testament).

Here we would point out that, spiritually speaking, the history of Israel and the history of the church are one. The history of Israel is a prefigure, and the history of the church is the reality of the prefigure. This means that what is recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers prefigures what is recorded in Acts and in the Epistles.

2. The Ark of the Testimony Signifying Christ as the Center of God's Economy among His Chosen and Redeemed People

The ark of the testimony signifies Christ as the center of God's economy among His chosen and redeemed people. Today we have the ark among us; that is, we have Christ with us in a personal way.

3. The Testimony Signifying the Law, Which Is the Portrait of What God Is

The testimony signifies the law, which is a portrait of what God is. Because the testimony, the tables of the law, was put into the ark, the ark was called the ark of the testimony.

4. The Tabernacle with the Ark Being the Testimony Borne by God's Chosen and Redeemed People

The tabernacle with the ark was the testimony borne by God's chosen and redeemed people. During the years in the wilderness, the children of Israel, who were more than two million in number, did not do anything except take care of

God's testimony. They did not engage in commerce or work to make a living. God cared for their living by sending them manna and by giving them water from the rock. For a period of forty years, God's people, with the Angel of Jehovah taking the lead, camped and journeyed in the wilderness. In the eyes of the nations, the children of Israel were wasting their time. Likewise, in the eyes of the worldly people, we in the church life who have given ourselves to bear and to care for the testimony of God are also wasting our time. In the sight of God, however, it is actually the worldly people who are idle and who are wasting their time (Matt. 20:3). Others may think that we are wasting our time, but we in the Lord's recovery are happy to use our time to care for and to bear God's testimony.

In this message we have seen a bird's-eye view of the book of Numbers. According to this view, Numbers is a record of God's chosen and redeemed people being formed into a priestly army to fight for God and to journey with God so that they may be prepared by God to possess the all-inclusive Christ as the good land.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FIFTY-ONE

A VITAL SKETCH OF THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BOOKS OF EXODUS, LEVITICUS, AND NUMBERS CONCERNING GOD'S ECONOMY WITH HIS CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE

(3)

Scripture Reading: Deut. 8:2

We come now to the third message on the vital sketch of the divine revelation in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers concerning God's economy with His chosen and redeemed people. In this message we will consider the frustrations suffered by God's people on the journey to the good land.

III. THE FRUSTRATIONS SUFFERED BY GOD'S CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE ON THEIR JOURNEY TO THE GOD-PROMISED GOOD LAND

We have seen that God's people need to receive the divine revelation concerning God Himself and His economy and also that they need to be formed into a priestly army. Now we will see that God's chosen and redeemed people also need frustrations. Do you believe that you need frustrations? Whether you believe this or not, the fact remains that frustrations occur and, in a sense, actually are needed. Let us now consider the different kinds of frustrations suffered by God's chosen and redeemed people on their journey to the God-promised good land.

A. The Exceeding Lust of the Mixed Multitude among God's Chosen and Redeemed People

The first frustration was the exceeding lust of the mixed

multitude among God's chosen and redeemed people (Num. 11:4a). Were those who were of this mixed multitude saved? This is a difficult question to answer.

Perhaps you are wondering how there could be such a mixture among God's pure people. But even among the twelve disciples chosen by the Lord Jesus there was one who was a mixture—Judas. Furthermore, the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) indicates that in the world there is a mixture of tares and wheat.

1. Stirring Up the Lust of the God-chosen and God-redeemed People

The mixed multitude lusted exceedingly, and this stirred up the lust of the God-chosen and God-redeemed people. Lust was already present with God's people, but it needed to be stirred up, and it was stirred up by the mixed multitude. It is easy for the lust among God's people to be stirred up by the mixed ones.

2. As a Little Leaven That Leavens the Whole Lump

In 1 Corinthians 5:6 Paul says, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." In Numbers 11 the mixed multitude was like leaven, and this leaven leavened the "whole lump" of God's people.

B. The Lust of God's Chosen and Redeemed People

Numbers 11:4b-15, 31-35 speaks of the lust which came directly from God's chosen and redeemed people.

1. Remembering the Egyptian Food, Which Suited Their Lust

Numbers 11:5 says, "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic." Here we see that God's people remembered the Egyptian food (the worldly taste), which suited their lust. God's people were lusting for the worldly taste.

2. Abhorring the God-given Manna

In verse 6 the people went on to say, "Now our soul is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna before our eyes." This indicates that they abhorred the God-given manna, which is a type of Christ as the bread of life. This manna was very tasteful. However, it had a heavenly taste, not an Egyptian taste. Instead of liking the heavenly taste of the God-given manna, the people abhorred it.

3. Everyone Weeping at the Entrance of His Tent

According to verse 10, everyone was weeping at the entrance of his tent. They wept because the food they had was not according to their taste.

4. The Anger of Jehovah Burning Greatly over Them, and Jehovah Striking Them with a Severe Plague

The anger of Jehovah burned greatly over the people (v. 10b), and He struck them with a severe plague (v. 33).

C. The Rebellion of Miriam

Numbers 12:1-15 records the rebellion of Miriam, who was Moses' older sister. Moses was the God-chosen leader, and Miriam was a prophetess who, after the crossing of the Red Sea, led the women in praising God (Exo. 15:20-21). Although she was Moses' sister and served together with him, she still rebelled against him. This indicates that even those who are very close to one who takes the lead among God's people may rebel against him.

1. Being Jealous of Moses' Position in the Oracle of God

Miriam rebelled because she was jealous of Moses' position in the oracle of God. She, along with Aaron, said, "Has Jehovah indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" (Num. 12:2).

2. Taking as a Cloak the Weakness of Moses in Marrying a Cushite Woman

Miriam took as a cloak for her rebellion the weakness of

Moses in marrying a Cushite woman (v. 1). I do not know why Moses did this or when he did it. Perhaps this was a weak point in Moses' life, but this weakness did not spoil his function. Miriam used this weakness as an excuse, as a standing, to rebel against Moses.

3. Being Condemned by God, Suffering the Punishment of Leprosy, and Being Shut Up outside the Camp for Seven Days

God came in to deal with Miriam's rebellion. She was condemned by God and suffered the punishment of leprosy (vv. 6-15a), a disease which indicates that one's sickness is inward. Suffering such a punishment, Miriam was shut up outside the camp for seven days.

4. The Journey of the People Being Delayed for Seven Days

As a result of Miriam's rebellion and punishment, the journey of the people was delayed for seven days (v. 15). Her rebellion surely was a frustration to God's people.

D. The Unbelief of God's Chosen and Redeemed People

Numbers 13:28—14:4 speaks of the unbelief of God's chosen and redeemed people. This took place at Kadesh-barnea, after the spies had come back from spying out the good land. With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, the spies brought back an evil report, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great size. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are from the Nephilim); and we were in our own sight like grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight (13:32-33). When the people heard this, they wept. Their weeping was not only a matter of unbelief but also of rebellion.

1. Provoking God's Anger toward Them

The unbelief of the people provoked God's anger toward them (14:11-12).

2. Causing Them to Forfeit the Right to Enter the God-promised Good Land

This unbelief also caused them to forfeit the right to enter the God-promised good land (vv. 22-23).

3. God Punishing Them by Causing Them to Wander in the Wilderness and to Be Consumed There

God punished the people by causing them to wander in the wilderness and to be consumed there (vv. 32-35). God said to them, "Your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have rejected. But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness" (vv. 31-32).

E. The Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with Two Hundred Fifty Leaders among the Assembly of God's People

In Numbers 16:1-12 we have the record of a corporate rebellion, the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and two hundred fifty leaders. Korah was a Levite, and Dathan and Abiram were leaders among the people. They convinced two hundred fifty of the leaders to join in a conspiracy to rebel.

1. Being Jealous of the High Position of Moses and Aaron

Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and two hundred fifty leaders of the assembly "gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, You have gone too far! For all the assembly is holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of Jehovah?" (16:3). This indicates that these rebellious ones were jealous of the high position of Moses and Aaron. This matter of jealousy concerning position and leadership has always been a problem among God's people. Often, those who are jealous in this way have ambition but do not have the capacity to match their ambition. Throughout the history of God's people, rebellion has been caused by the combination of ambition and the lack of capacity. This was the situation in Numbers 16. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were

ambitious, but they did not have the capacity which Moses and Aaron had.

2. Korah Not Being Satisfied to Be a Leader in the Levitical Service, and Dathan and Abiram Not Being Satisfied to Be Leaders in the Assembly of God's People

Korah was not satisfied to be a leader in the Levitical service, which was secondary to the priesthood, and Dathan and Abiram were not satisfied to be leaders in the assembly of God's people (vv. 8-11). They all wanted a higher position, but according to God's sovereignty, they did not have the capacity for such a position.

3. God's Punishment upon the Rebels

In Numbers 16 we also see God's punishment upon the rebels. Although Moses was meek, he called on God to come in, and God came in to punish the rebels.

a. The Earth Swallowing Up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with Their Households and All the Men That Belonged to Korah and All Their Goods

The earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with their households and all the men that belonged to Korah and all their goods, so they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol (vv. 31-33). They went to Sheol without dying. I believe that they were the first group of people to perish in this way.

b. Fire Coming Forth from Jehovah and Consuming the Two Hundred Fifty Leaders

According to verse 35, fire came forth from Jehovah and consumed the two hundred fifty leaders.

c. The Wrath of Jehovah Going Forth to Consume Fourteen Thousand Seven Hundred People with the Plague

Finally, the wrath of Jehovah went forth to consume

fourteen thousand seven hundred people with the plague (vv. 44-49). This was a very serious judgment.

God's judgment here was a threefold judgment, involving the earth, the fire, and the plague. To the rebels this was a judgment, but to the entire congregation of the children of Israel the whole matter was a frustration. But through this frustration, and especially through God's judgment, the people were sifted, purged, and purified.

F. Balaam's Plot and Teaching

Another frustration to God's chosen and redeemed people was Balaam's plot and teaching (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14b).

1. Teaching Balak to Stumble the God-chosen and God-redeemed People

Balaam taught Balak to stumble the God-chosen and God-redeemed people by seducing them to commit fornication with the daughters of Moab, which led them into idolatry (Num. 25:1-2). It is hard to believe that a large number of God's people could commit the sins of fornication, which damaged themselves, and idolatry, which insulted the person of God. Nevertheless, many of the people fell into these sins.

2. Through This, the God-chosen and God-redeemed People Provoking God to Consume Twenty-four Thousand of Them with the Plague

Through this fall into fornication and idolatry, the God-chosen and God-redeemed people provoked God to consume twenty-four thousand of them with the plague (Num. 25:3, 9). This was a great sifting, purging, and purification. Through this frustration the children of Israel were purified, and after this purification they were renumbered.

With respect to whatever is negative in our situation and condition, frustrations are needed. I have considered this very much as I have faced the recent rebellion among us. Whether we realize it or not and whether we understand it or not, we need the purification which comes through the frustrations.

G. All These Frustrations to Be Considered as Means to Humble the God-redeemed People by Afflictions and to Test Them on Their Journey in the Wilderness

All the frustrations suffered by God's chosen and redeemed people should be considered as means to humble God's people by afflictions and to test them on their journey in the wilderness (Deut. 8:2). This is our situation today. The different kinds of frustrations are used by God to humble us and to test us. As we make our journey through the great and terrible wilderness, we will suffer frustrations again and again. Just as some made themselves sacrifices for the benefit of the children of Israel, today some may become sacrifices for our benefit, in particular for our purging and purification. From this we see once again that the record of the journey of the children of Israel in the wilderness is a record of our journey today. The frustrations they experienced in their journey we will also experience in our journey. Therefore, it is helpful for us to consider the frustrations recorded in the book of Numbers.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FIFTY-TWO

A VITAL SKETCH OF THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BOOKS OF EXODUS, LEVITICUS, AND NUMBERS CONCERNING GOD'S ECONOMY WITH HIS CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE

(4)

Scripture Reading: Josh. 1:2-3

In this message we will consider the matter of God's chosen and redeemed people being ready to take possession of the God-promised good land.

IV. THE GOD-CHOSEN AND GOD-REDEEMED PEOPLE BEING READY TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE GOD-PROMISED GOOD LAND

The vital sketch of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers first involves God's need for a people to be saved and to go on with Him to enjoy His Christ, to receive His revelation, and to be built up with Him as the processed Triune God that they may be formed into a priestly army to journey with Him and to fight with Him. Second, this sketch shows us that, in addition to enjoying Christ, receiving the revelation, being built up with the Triune God, and being formed into a priestly army, this people also needs to be disciplined. In order to be disciplined, God's people in the Old Testament had to pass through certain difficulties. This is something which we need to realize today. The more difficulties we pass through, the more useful we will be to the Lord. Third, this vital sketch reveals that God's chosen and redeemed people needed to undergo different kinds of frustrations. As a result of all these things, God's people were ready to take possession of the God-promised land.

With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, those who were qualified and ready to take possession of the land were younger ones. They were of the second generation. The older ones, those of the first generation, had passed through many things and had learned many lessons. However, they were not qualified to enter into the land. The lessons learned by the first generation surely became part of the heritage passed on to the second generation. Their children certainly inherited from their parents all the lessons they learned during the forty years in the wilderness. By their birth the younger ones were put into a position to inherit the tradition of their family and all that their parents had experienced.

I believe that the fathers spoke to their children about their experiences in Egypt, in the exodus from Egypt, and in the wilderness. No doubt, the fathers spoke about how they were cruelly treated as slaves in Egypt, about how God in His mercy sent Moses to deliver them from bondage, about how they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month, and about how they marched out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. The fathers must have also explained to their children that they entered into the wilderness without food but that God fed them with manna and supplied them with water from the smitten rock. They might have also explained that although they eventually felt that manna was loathsome, they nevertheless appreciated it. The people did not grow any crops, but for forty years they daily received the heavenly supply of manna. Furthermore, the younger ones learned about Moses and about the great help he rendered to the people of Israel. Moses himself was not allowed to enter into the good land, but he contributed many constructive factors to God's people.

The second generation did not pass through as much as the first generation did, but they received the benefit of what the first generation experienced. I believe that the older generation told the younger generation about all they experienced, enjoyed, and suffered. This speaking was part of the raising up, or the building up, of the second generation. What the first generation experienced was not experienced in vain, for it was passed on to the second generation. What the older

ones experienced actually was not effective for them, but it was very effective in building up the younger ones. Therefore, God was able to prepare from the second generation more than six hundred thousand men with a rich inheritance and strong background who were qualified to be formed into an army to fight with Him and for Him.

The principle is the same with us in the Lord's recovery today. The recovery has been in the United States for twenty-seven years and has passed through many things. Do you think that all these things have been in vain? They certainly have not been in vain. These things are being passed on to the younger ones in the Lord's recovery and will be very effective in building them up and preparing them to fight with God and for God. The younger ones in the Lord's recovery have a rich inheritance. Because this inheritance is being passed on to the younger ones and even being constituted into them, I have the full assurance that when a further testing comes, there will be a very positive result.

In the Old Testament, what the second generation received from the first generation made the younger ones ready to take possession of the good land. Let us now consider the things which prepared them and made them ready to enter into the God-promised land.

A. Having Been Redeemed from God's Judgment by the Passover and Saved from the Slavery and Tyranny of Egypt by the Saving Power of the Triune God

God's people were made ready to take possession of the God-promised land by being redeemed from God's judgment by the Passover and by being saved from Egypt by the saving power of the Triune God (Exo. 12, 14). After they were redeemed by the Passover, they were saved personally by the Triune God. As Exodus 14 reveals, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit were all involved in the salvation of the children of Israel. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit were all engaged in rescuing God's people out of the tyranny of Pharaoh. In Exodus 14 the Triune God protected them and fought for

them. Without the personal involvement of the Triune God, it would have been impossible for the Israelites to be released from the hand of Pharaoh. God in His divine Trinity was directly and personally engaged in the rescue of His people.

B. Having Enjoyed the Heavenly Provision and the Divine Care in Their Initial Journey in the Wilderness

God's chosen and redeemed people enjoyed the heavenly provision and the divine care in their initial journey in the wilderness (Exo. 15—17). In Exodus 15:27 they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, all of which refer to Christ. In Exodus 16 the people enjoyed Christ as the manna, and in Exodus 17 they enjoyed Him as the rock smitten to flow out living water. Furthermore, the children of Israel enjoyed the divine care. In their initial journey in the wilderness, God was to them a nursing mother, feeding, nourishing, and cherishing them. This provision and care made them ready to enter into the good land.

C. Having Received the Divine Revelation and Training in Knowing God, in Being Built Up Together with God as His Dwelling on Earth for His Expression and Testimony, and in the Building Up of the Priesthood for the Divine Service

In Exodus 19—40 and Leviticus 1—27 the children of Israel received the divine revelation and training in knowing God, in being built up together with God as His dwelling on earth for His expression and testimony, and in the building up of the priesthood for the divine service. All this took place at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the people were given the law as a portrait of what God is in His attributes. They were built up together with God and they began to function in the divine service. This was a further means of God's making them ready to take possession of the good land.

D. Having Been Formed into a Priestly Army to Journey with God and to Fight with God for His Interest on Earth

The book of Numbers records how God's chosen and redeemed people were formed into a priestly army to journey with God and to fight with God for His interest on earth (Num. 1—4, 9:15—10:36; 12:16; 20:1—21:35; 31:1-54; 33:1-49).

E. Having Passed through All the Frustrations, Trials, and Disciplines for Their Purification

The children of Israel were also made ready to take possession of the God-promised land by passing through all the frustrations, trials, and disciplines for their purification. The situation is the same in the church life. Although we do not welcome frustrations, trials, and disciplines, we surely need the purification that comes from our passing through these things. In addition to nourishing and cherishing us, God sometimes disciplines us for our purification. He may purify us through fire, which is a matter of purging, and through water, which is a matter of purifying. This also is an aspect of our being made ready to take possession of the good land.

F. Having Been Prepared and Having Received All the Prearrangements for the Distribution of the Promised Good Land

In Numbers 32 and 33:50—36:13 God's people received the prearrangements for the distribution of the promised good land. This made them ready to take possession of the land.

G. Now Being Ready to Cross the Jordan, Enter Canaan, Consume the Inhabitants Thereof, and Possess the Good Land Promised by the Faithful God

After all the foregoing, God's chosen and redeemed people were ready to cross the Jordan, enter Canaan, consume the inhabitants thereof, and possess the good land promised by the faithful God (Josh. 1:2-3).

1. To Get Settled with God in the Good Land

In particular, the people were ready to get settled with God in the good land. For them to be homeless was for God to be homeless. But for them to be settled in the good land was for God to be settled in the land, for they were to settle there with God.

2. To Be Built Up with God in His Divine Trinity as the Mutual Dwelling for God and His Redeemed People for the Expression and Testimony of the Triune God on Earth among Men

God's people were also ready to be built up with Him in His divine Trinity as the mutual dwelling for God and His redeemed people for the expression and testimony of the Triune God on earth among men. This was the destination of the children of Israel, and it is our destiny today. This is the complete, perfect, and eternal revelation of the divine Person with His economy.

LIFE-STUDY OF NUMBERS

MESSAGE FIFTY-THREE

A VITAL SKETCH OF THE DIVINE REVELATION IN THE BOOKS OF EXODUS, LEVITICUS, AND NUMBERS CONCERNING GOD'S ECONOMY WITH HIS CHOSEN AND REDEEMED PEOPLE

(5)

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:12; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:19

In this message we come to the conclusion of the vital sketch of the divine revelation in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers concerning God's economy with His chosen and redeemed people.

V. A FULL TYPE OF THE CHURCH IN THE MYSTICAL UNION WITH THE ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST, THE VERY EMBODIMENT OF THE PROCESSED AND DISPENSING TRIUNE GOD

Apparently the Old Testament has nothing to do with the church. Actually the history of Israel recorded in the Old Testament is a picture of the church life. We need to have this understanding as we read Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. If we have this view, then we will see that in the divine revelation in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers we have a full type of the church in the mystical union with the all-inclusive Christ, who is the embodiment of the processed and dispensing Triune God.

A. A Full Type of the Church

Let us first consider the full type of the church and then the matter of the mystical union with the all-inclusive Christ.

1. Chosen by God

Deuteronomy 7:6 says, "You are a holy people to Jehovah your God; Jehovah your God has chosen you, from among all the peoples which are upon the face of the earth, to be a people for His personal treasure." In type, this indicates that the church has been chosen by God.

2. Redeemed from God's Judgment and Saved from the Bondage of the Fall

The typology in Exodus 1, 12, and 14 indicates that the church has been redeemed from God's judgment and saved from the bondage of the fall. As believers today, we know this and have experienced it.

3. Enjoying the Divine Care, and Christ as the Heavenly and Divine Provisions

Having been redeemed from God's judgment and saved from the bondage of the fall, we, like the children of Israel in the Old Testament, are now enjoying the divine care and Christ as the heavenly and divine provisions (Exo. 15—17). Under God's care, we enjoy His nourishing and cherishing us with Christ as our provisions—as the manna, as the living water which flows out of the smitten rock which follows us, and as the tree (the crucified Christ) cast into the bitter water. No matter what our circumstances may be, if we apply the crucified Christ to our situation, the bitter water will become sweet (Exo. 15:23-25). This is an aspect of Christ as the heavenly and divine provisions. Another aspect is typified by the twelve springs and seventy palm trees at Elim (Exo. 15:27).

4. Receiving the Divine Revelation and Being Trained in Knowing God, in Being Built Up Together with God in His Divine Trinity as His Dwelling on Earth for the Expression and Testimony of the Triune God, and in the Priesthood for the Divine Service

At Mount Sinai the children of Israel received the divine revelation recorded in Exodus 19—40 and Leviticus 1—27. This revelation is marvelous; human, philosophical writings

cannot compare with it. The type here signifies that the church today has received God's revelation.

At Mount Sinai the children of Israel not only received the divine revelation but were also trained in knowing God, in being built up together with God in His divine trinity as His dwelling on earth for the expression and testimony of the Triune God, and in the priesthood for the divine service. The children of Israel stayed at Mount Sinai for nine months, and during that time they were trained by the Lord. We may say that through this training they became a divinely cultured people, with God Himself as the main constituent of this culture. In the church life today, we also are being trained by the Lord in knowing Him, in being built up together with Him, and in serving Him.

5. Formed into an Army of God to Fight for God's Economy

According to the book of Numbers, the children of Israel were formed into an army of God to fight for God's economy (Num. 1—4; 21:1-4, 21-35; 31:1-12). We have a similar revelation in the book of Ephesians. The first five chapters of this book are sufficient for the revelation concerning the church. But in the sixth chapter Paul goes on to show us that the believers have been formed into an army to fight for God's economy.

6. Journeying with God and Suffering Frustrations and Trials for Its Purification

The church today is also journeying with God and suffering frustrations and trials for its purification. Before we were saved, we were traveling in this worldly wilderness by ourselves, but now that we have been saved we are journeying with God. God is our companion not merely beside us or in front of us but mainly within us. Sometimes we may not want to walk with Him, but He continues to walk with us, and His presence changes our journey. At other times we may cause Him to be unhappy with us or we may not agree with Him, but we cannot get away from Him. Even if we decide to give up journeying with Him, He will not stop journeying

with us, and eventually we have to come back to Him to be one with Him.

As we are journeying with the Lord, we suffer frustrations and trials for our purification. These trials and frustrations deal with our peculiar traits. The members of our family, the brothers and sisters in the church, and the many different persons and things in our environment may be contrary to us and thus become frustrations to us. However, these frustrations are needed for our purification.

7. Prepared by God to Take the All-inclusive Christ as Its Good Land

As a result of the foregoing, the church is prepared by God to take the all-inclusive Christ as its good land.

B. In the Mystical Union with the All-inclusive Christ, the Very Embodiment of the Processed and Dispensing Triune God

The full type of the church in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers is a type of the church in the mystical union with the all-inclusive Christ, who is the embodiment of the processed and dispensing Triune God. This mystical union is our destiny and our destination. In different kinds of circumstances and in dealing with different persons, we may say, "O Lord Jesus, I need You!" What does it mean to tell the Lord that we need Him? It actually means that we enjoy Him. Day by day, we may enjoy the all-inclusive Christ, the embodiment of the processed and dispensing Triune God, as our good land.

1. As the Passover and the Unleavened Bread

According to the type in Exodus, we first enjoy Christ as the Passover and the unleavened bread (1 Cor. 5:7-8). The Passover is for us to be saved, and the unleavened bread is for us to live a life without sin.

2. As the Heavenly Manna and the Rock That Flows Out the Living Water

After experiencing Christ as the Passover and after beginning to enjoy Him as the unleavened bread, we go on to enjoy Him as the heavenly manna and the rock that flows out the living water (1 Cor. 10:3-4).

3. As the Divine Law for God's Expression, Bearing God's Image That Man May Know God

Even the law is a type of Christ, for it typifies Christ as God's expression, bearing God's image that man may know God (John 1:18; Heb. 1:3a).

4. As the Tabernacle of God, with the Ark as the Center of God's Testimony

John 1:14 reveals that Christ tabernacled among us. He is the tabernacle of God, with the ark as the center of God's testimony.

5. As the Propitiation Place for God to Meet with Man in His Righteousness

According to Romans 3:25, Christ is the propitiation place—the cover, or lid, of the ark—for God to meet with man in His righteousness. Christ is thus the place where God meets with His people.

6. As the High Priest Bearing and Embracing God's Redeemed People

In the Old Testament the high priest wore the shoulder plates and the breastplate. This typifies Christ as the High Priest bearing and embracing in love God's redeemed people (Heb. 4:14-15; 7:25-26).

7. As All the Offerings for the Believers

The Old Testament typifies and the New Testament reveals that Christ is all the offerings for the believers (Heb. 10:5-7, 9-10).

8. As the Sabbath and All the Feasts to the Believers

The books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers have much to say concerning the Sabbath and the feasts. These typify Christ as the reality of the Sabbath and of all the feasts to the believers (Col. 2:16-17).

9. As the Real Nazarite Living Absolutely for God

Numbers 6 speaks of the Nazarite vow. Christ is the real Nazarite living absolutely for God (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 10:9; cf. Matt. 2:23 and note 2).

10. As the Red Heifer for the Washing of the Believers' Uncleanness

Christ is also the reality of the type of the red heifer for the washing of the believers' uncleanness (1 John 1:7).

11. As the Brass Serpent to Take Away the Sin of the Believers That They May Have Eternal Life

John 3:14 and 15 reveal that Christ is the brass serpent to take away the sin of the believers that they may have eternal life.

12. As the Cities of Refuge for the Believers

Today we may also enjoy Christ as the One who is the cities of refuge for the believers (Eph. 1:7).

13. As the All-inclusive Land with the Bountiful Supply for the Believers

Finally, Christ is the all-inclusive land with the bountiful supply for the believers (Col. 1:12; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:19). This is for the building up of the house of God on earth (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15), for the establishing of the kingdom of God on earth (Acts 1:3; Rom. 14:17), and, ultimately, for the consummation of the house of God and the kingdom of God as the New Jerusalem in eternity for the fulfillment of God's eternal economy (Rev. 21:1-2). Therefore, what is portrayed concerning the church in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers

will have its ultimate consummation in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity.