

Tuesday, February 18, 2020—Numbers 4-6

The United States Constitution requires regular census-taking so the people of the United States have adequate representation in the government. God called on His people to take a census as they began their journey with Him so they, too, would have adequate representation. God was putting servants in place for spiritual provision and military protection.

Aaron and his sons were to prepare the items in the Tabernacle for transportation, and the Kohathites were to carry those items. The Kohathites were not to look at those items (as they were to only be visible inside the Tabernacle), and the sons of Aaron were not to carry those items. Likewise, the Gershonites carried the curtains and coverings, and the Merarites carried the frames and hardware. Each group had specific roles in order to support one another and promote the glory of God (4:1-49).

The workers for the Tabernacle had their tasks, but the entire nation was to work for the purity of the people. Whether there were skin diseases, financial issues, or martial struggles, the people were to strive for holiness before God and unity with one another (5:1-30). When they made a personal vow to be separated for God's use for a time, they demonstrated that visibly through growing their hair and then offering that to the Lord at the end (6:1-21). Though strange to modern readers, these regulations elevated the value of each person's contribution to the health of the whole.

What role are you playing in your church? With whom are you partnering for the glory of God? Ask God to show you how to serve Him, bless others, and build unity in your church.

Monday, February 17, 2020—Numbers 1-3

Moses and the Levites set up the Tabernacle on the first day of the first month in the second year of the exodus (see Exodus 40:2). God outlined all of the offerings and regulations for holiness in Leviticus, so in the first day of the second month in the second year (1:1), God told Moses to take a census of the people to appoint men for their defense.

Before He moved them forward toward the Promised Land, God equipped His people for worship. Nothing is more important than a healthy relationship with Him. When that system was in place, God then assigned men from all 12 tribes to fight for and defend the people. They were going to encounter unfriendly nations and had to be ready for that as well.

God had begun this journey by calling one man—Abraham. Now, in the Sinai desert, there were 603,500 men who were 20 years old or older and able to protect the rest. The Levites maintained the Tabernacle and the spiritual health of the nation. The other tribes manned the army.

Because God is a god of order, He gave specific instructions for the tribes' encampment around the Tabernacle (2:1-34). Defending the people and the Tabernacle would not be left to chance. Maintaining the Tabernacle was also an organized effort, so each clan in the tribe of Levi had specific roles in order to help Aaron and his sons (3:1-38).

Thank God today for the order He brings to life and the abilities He gives each

person to serve His Kingdom.

Sunday, February 16, 2020—Leviticus 24-27

Many people, in trying to read through the Bible, find Leviticus to be a huge stumbling block. The details are too foreign or too bloody or too complicated. Instead of solely reading the words and descriptions, the reader can consider how these regulations describe the pathway to holiness and realize that only Jesus fulfills all these demands. Then, reading through Leviticus becomes a testimony to the work and worth of Jesus.

Jesus provides access to God. God the Son is the Bread of Life and the Light of the World, who continually prays for us. Just as the priests came every day to the Tabernacle (24:1-9), we must come every day to Jesus for worship, fellowship, and instruction. The Law required the punishment fit the crime (24:10-23), so our coming every day to Jesus reminds us of the punishment He took in our place and the faith we place in Him.

When the people moved into the Promised Land, they were to observe the seventh year as a Sabbath year. In the 50th year, they were to return land to original owners and free their slaves, making it a year of jubilee. All of this was an act of faith, fearing God more than man and nature. Everything belonged to Him, so they could trust Him to provide. “I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (26:11-12).

Thank God for requiring holiness to come to Him and walk with Him. Praise God for providing Jesus as the way to that blessed holiness.

Saturday, February 15, 2020—Leviticus 20-23

The coronavirus outbreak, which began in China in late 2019, has rapidly spread around the world. Large concentrations of people and international travel have made containing the outbreak difficult. The outbreak is a reminder of the devastation for Israel brought by disease. Disease brought separation from God and from man, so they could not take anything lightly. They had to address it, eradicate it, and be restored.

Disease was an outward symbol of sin itself. Not every condition was the result of sin, but every sin created a broken condition. God wanted His people to hate sin as much as He did, so He imposed strict guidelines and harsh punishments for such a devastating problem (20:1-21). Israel was to set themselves aside, to consecrate themselves for Him (20:7, 26).

Just as Israel was set aside from the nations, the priests were set aside from the rest of Israel. They dressed, ate, and they lived differently for the glory of God and the blessing of Israel. As God had high standards for Israel, He expected much of the priests and their families (21:1-22:16). Those who connect people to God must be holy.

Because the sacrifice was a substitute for the people, God was not pleased with low-quality, leftover items. They brought unblemished, costly gifts to God to represent His holiness and perfection (22:17-33).

Three times each year, Israel gathered to marvel at the greatness and graciousness of God (23:1-44). Give thanks to God today for His holiness and His making a way to be restored. Praise Him for His grace.

Friday, February 14, 2020—Leviticus 17-19

In giving the instructions in Leviticus, God was uniting His people in worship. They had been sacrificing outside the camp (17:5), so the people appeared to be worshiping any number of gods. Now, they all had a place to come and identify with Yahweh and one another. God was teaching them there was only one way to come to Him.

If they refused to live the truth in this way, they were to be cut off from Israel (17:9). If they did not want to identify with Yahweh and obey, they could not remain living among a group of people who did want to obey and honor Him. That would be confusing and hypocritical.

God revealed the foundational purpose for all the sacrificial system—life was in the blood (17:14). Shedding an animal's blood provided atonement—a substitution to satisfy God's anger toward sin. The people, therefore, were not to treat blood lightly, and they certainly weren't to eat blood, as many pagans did. Restoration to God required the blood.

One of God's greatest gifts is sexual intimacy, which bonds husband and wife and brings life. God was preparing His people to live in Canaan, a land full of pagan worshipers, so He spoke candidly about the abuses possible with sex and what to avoid (18:1-27). The land God was giving them would not tolerate sinful practice (18:28), so He reminded them of a variety of habits that would mark them as His people (19:3-37).

God is holy (19:2). Pray to live in holy, pleasing obedience.

Thursday, February 13, 2020—Leviticus 14-16

God had detailed protocol to deal with skin disease so that infection did not spread rapidly through the camp. The priest was responsible for declaring the person ceremonially clean, and the formerly-diseased person had to offer a sacrifice, wash his clothes, shave his hair, and remain outside his home for a week. The newly-clean person was visibly different and socially vulnerable. The community was responsible for welcoming him back and caring for him until all returned to normal.

When the priest performed the cleansing ceremony, he released a bird into the open fields outside of the camp, a visible representation of God's removing the disease or the mildew from the people. God was teaching them their utter dependence on Him to take their burdens away.

Leviticus 15 discusses some of the most intimate details of the lives of men and women. God's people had to be honest about their status before God because it affected those around them. They were continually reminding themselves of their need for communion with God and the way life weakened them and drew them away from Him.

Once a year, the high priest went into the Most Holy Place to make atonement for himself and the nation. Once a year, the entire nation paused, and their representative, the priest, entered God's presence to seek restoration from the uncleanness of sin. Forgiveness required the blood of an innocent animal, and another one symbolized the removal of their guilt and carried it away (16:22).

Praise God for forgiveness and restoration available in Jesus.

Wednesday, February 12, 2020—Leviticus 11-13

God calls His people to live differently in order to demonstrate His uniqueness. There is no one like Yahweh, so His people ought to live like no others do. The Tabernacle, the sacrificial system, and the Sabbath were obvious differences. No one else had those.

Israel's diet was to be different as well. Even when they addressed the most basic of human needs, God's people were to consider what holiness required and how worthy Yahweh was. He set forth strict dietary rules that seem too oppressive or confusing for modern ears and tastes, yet He was providing for their flourishing and enhancing their worship. God was holy. He called His people to be holy (11:45).

After giving birth, a woman was to make provisions so that she could once again come into fellowship with God and His people (12:1-8). She had not sinned in giving birth. That was a gift from God and a fulfillment of His command. She was unclean from the discharge after the birth. There was the flow of blood, but it was not giving life. It was lost, and there had to be atonement for it, recognizing the precious nature of life, a gift from God.

When someone had a skin condition, the priest had to assess its nature and severity (13:1-46). If there were mildew on material, the priest was called (13:47-59). The communal nature of Israel required diligence to prevent widespread sickness and uncleanness. They were to be holy.

Praise God that Jesus fulfills all requirements for holiness.