



THE PREPARATION IS COMPLETE

Numbers 7–9

We prepare for many things—career, family, retirement, even death. But chapters 7–9 of the book of Numbers reminds us that we are never really prepared for the future at all unless we are committed to praising, thanking, and worshiping the Lord.

There's an old proverb that says to be prepared is half the victory. Well, the Lord is certainly preparing His people Israel for the journey through the wilderness to the promised land.

Here now in chapters 7–9 of the book of Numbers, the preparation continues. In fact, the way Moses records the events is going to send the clear message that the Lord's preparation is coming to completion and the people of God are ready to follow Him.

The events recorded in chapters 7, 8, and 9 occur chronologically *before* Numbers chapters 1–6. ¹ I believe it's laid out this way to emphasize that the Lord has done His part in preparing the people of Israel. Now the question remains: Will they do their part in following Him?

Now let's go to Numbers 7:

On the day when Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle and had anointed and consecrated it with all its furnishings . . . the chiefs of the tribes . . . approached and brought their offer-



Artist's version of the lampstand from the tabernacle

ings before the LORD, six wagons and twelve oxen, a wagon for every two of the chiefs, and for each one an ox. They brought them before the tabernacle. (verses 1-3)

It's as if the Lord is saying in these verses, "Load 'em up! The wagons are here!" It looks like Moses and the people are beginning to do their part!

At the Lord's instruction, Moses gives the wagons to the Levites to help transport the tabernacle structure.



Keep in mind, they are still at Mount Sinai, but they will soon be heading out.

We read in verses 10-11 that the chiefs of the tribes bring offerings for the dedication of the altar of sacrifice. Numbers 7 is one of the longest chapters in the Bible, and verse 12 all the way through verse 88 presents a lengthy description of these offerings.

Each tribe offers exactly the same gifts, which are detailed beginning in verse 13:

One silver plate . . . one silver basin . . . both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one golden dish . . . full of incense; one bull from the herd, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering; one male goat for a sin offering; and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. (verses 13-17)

Now if you're reading the Bible through and you get to a chapter like this one, and the same offering is repeated twelve times, as it is here, about the third time through, you're going to skip to the end of the chapter. Why the redundancy?

Well, the repetition emphasizes several things here. First of all, this is a ceremony, as each tribe makes their way to offer these gifts. And repeating the gifts makes it clear that no tribe is superior to any other tribe; even the smallest tribe is not inferior in the sight of God. They have equal privileges and equal access to God and equal standing in the covenant as God's people, Israel.

There's something else here too. Moses recorded the presentation of each tribe's gift because each gift is of equal value before God. In fact, if you understand

the context here, this passage would have been read aloud. This is a time of great grandeur and ceremony. It is much like a graduation, where every graduate's full name is read, along with the honors received, and we watch each graduate march across the platform. As their tribe is called, the members of that tribe would parade in front of the assembly, filled with a sense of pleasure and honor in fulfilling their responsibility.

And don't miss that this is all by God's design, which means that God takes pleasure and enjoyment in His people offering their costly gifts to His service.²

Finally, here's one more observation by Warren Wiersbe:

He knows our names (John 10:3) and has recorded them individually in His heavenly register (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3). When we stand before the Lord, He will see us individually, "and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5) and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor" (3:8). Nobody will be overlooked and nobody will be lost in the crowd.³

The fact that God noted and recorded each name and each gift indicates His love for and interest in the individual believer.

Now here in Numbers chapter 8, the Levites are ordained and commissioned to serve as the assistants to Aaron and his sons in the work of the tabernacle. They take a bath and put on clean clothes. The people lay hands on them, which means they recognize that the Levites will be representing them in their service, and sacrifices are offered. Then we read in Numbers



8:22, “And after that the Levites went in to do their service in the tent of meeting [the tabernacle].”

Verses 24-25 inform us that the Levites will serve from the age of twenty-five to the age of fifty. It seems they were retired from service at the age of fifty. Does that mean you can't serve the Lord after age fifty? Well, for these assistants, keep in mind the heavy lifting and the management of animals. This was physically demanding work that required a lot of muscle. Retirement at age fifty was a way of protecting them from harm in their later years.

So, with the consecration of the Levites, another element of the preparation of the nation is now complete.

In chapter 9 the Lord reminds the people of Israel regarding the Passover celebration, which they observe there at Mount Sinai. The Lord doesn't want them to forget their deliverance from Egypt, especially as they set out from Sinai and head into the wilderness toward the promised land. They need to remember that the Lord was able to lead them, provide for them, and protect them in the past, and they can trust Him to do the same in the future.

Chapter 9 then concludes with a description of the glory cloud that descended on the tabernacle, revealing the presence of God. This is the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that will lead the people through the wilderness. Verse 17 says:

Whenever the cloud lifted from over the tent, after that the people of Israel set out, and in the

place where the cloud settled down, there the people of Israel camped.

The message for Israel could not be clearer. God has prepared His people; it's time to do their part and follow Him in faith.

Why are “equal privilege, equal access and equal standing” important biblical doctrines to teach, embrace and practice among believers in the Church today? What are typical consequences to believers and unbelievers to *not* living by them?

What events in your history serve as reminders of the Lord's faithfulness in supplying your needs? Why is such remembering important to your worship? To your motivation to obey in the future? To your effectiveness in sharing the gospel with others?

¹ The day Moses set up the tabernacle (Numbers 7:1) was the first day of the *first month* in the second year after Israel left Egypt, according to Exodus 40:17. This was one month before the Lord spoke in Numbers 1:1 on the first day of the *second month* after Israel departed from Egypt.

² Thomas Constable, *Notes on Numbers*, 2021 edition (Sonic Light, 2021), 43, planobiblechapel.org.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Counted* (David C. Cook, 1999), 30.

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