

Numbers 4

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[0 : 00] Let's read the text. Numbers chapter 4 says, Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, Take a census of the descendants of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their father's household, from thirty years and upward, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tent of meeting.

This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, concerning the most holy things. When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in, and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it.

And they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on it, and shall spread over it a cloth of pure blue, and shall insert its poles. I want to read that again, because I want you to pay attention to this, okay? When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in, and they shall take down the veil of the screen. That's the veil which separated the holy from the holy of holies. They shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony.

That's the ark of the covenant with it. And they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on it, and shall spread over it a cloth of pure blue, and shall insert its poles.

[1 : 11] Over the table of the bread of the presence, they shall also spread a cloth of blue, and put on it the dishes and the pans and the sacrificial bowls and the jars for the drink offering, and the continual bread shall be on it.

They shall spread over them a cloth of scarlet material, and cover the same with a covering of porpoise skin, and they shall insert its poles. Then they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand for the light, along with its lamps and its snuffers and its trays, and all its old vessels by which they serve it.

And they shall put on it and all its utensils a covering of porpoise skin, and shall put it on the carrying bars. Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of porpoise skin, and shall insert its poles.

And they shall take all the utensils of the service with which they serve in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of porpoise skin, and put them on the carrying bars. Then they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it, and they shall also put on it all its utensils, by which they serve it, serve it in connection with it, the firepans, the forks, the shovels, and the basin, and all the utensils of the altar.

And they shall spread a cover of porpoise skin over it, and insert its poles. When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects, and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, then the camp is to set out.

[2 : 32] After that, the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting, which the sons of Kohath already carry.

The responsibility of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, is the oil for the light, and the fragrant incense, and the continual grain offering, and the anointing oil. The responsibility of all the tabernacle, and of all that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, Do not let the tribe of the families of the Kohathites be cut off from among the Levites, but do this to them that they may live, and not die when they approach the most holy objects.

Aaron and his sons shall go in and assign each of them to his work and to his load, but they shall not go in to see the holy objects, even for a moment, or they will die.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Take a census of the sons of Gershon also, by their fathers' household, by their families from thirty years and upward to fifty years old. You shall number them, and all who enter to perform the service to do the work in the tent of meeting.

[3 : 37] This is the service of the families of the Gershonites. In serving and in caring, they shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tent of meeting, with its covering, and its coverings of

porpoise skin, that is, on the top of it, and the screen for the doorway of the tent of meeting, and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the doorway of the gate of the court, which is around the tabernacle, and the altar, and their cords, and all the equipment that is in their service, and all that is to be done, they shall perform.

All the service of the sons of the Gershonites, and all their loads, and all their work, shall be performed at the command of Aaron and his sons, and you shall assign to them, as a duty, all their loads. This is the service of the families of the sons of the Gershonites, in the tent of meeting, and their duties shall be under the direction of the Ithmar, the son of Aaron the priest.

As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families, by their fathers' households, from thirty years and upward, even to fifty years old. You shall number them, everyone who enters the service, to do the work of the tent of meeting.

Now this is the duty of their loads, for all their service, and the tent of meeting, the boards of the tabernacle, and its bars, and its pillars, and its sockets, and the pillars around the court, and their sockets, and their pegs, and their cords, and all their equipment, and with all their service, and you shall assign each man, by name, the items he is to carry.

This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, and the tent of meetings, under the direction of Ithmar, the son of Aaron the priest. So Moses and Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation, number the sons of the Kohathites, by their families, and by their fathers' households, from thirty years old and upward, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service, for work in the tent of meeting, their numbered men, by their families, were two thousand seven hundred and fifty.

[5 : 15] These are the number men, of the Kohathite family, everyone who was serving, in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron, numbered, according to the commandment, of the Lord, through Moses. The number men, of the sons of the Gershon, by their families, and by their father's households, from thirty years, and upward, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service, to work in the tent of meeting, their numbered men, by their families, by their father's households, were two thousand six hundred and thirty.

These are the number men, of the families, of the sons of Gershon, everyone, who was serving, in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron, numbered, according to the commandment, of the Lord. The numbered men of the families of the sons of Merari, by their families, by their fathers' households, from thirty years and upward, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting, their numbered men by their families were three thousand two hundred.

These are the numbered men of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, according to the commandment of the Lord through Moses. All the numbered men of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the leaders of Israel numbered, by their families and by their fathers' households, from thirty years old and upward, even to fifty years old, everyone who could enter to do the work of the service, the work of caring in the tent of meeting, their numbered men were eight thousand five hundred and eighty. According to the commandment of the Lord through Moses, they were numbered, everyone by his servant or caring, thus they were, thus these were his numbered men, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Numbers chapter four. The reason I had you listen to that passage two times about the coverings is because I wanted you to notice, I hope that someone picked it up. The only article that was covered with a covering of color when it left the camp that could be seen was the Ark of the Covenant.

Because they covered it with a veil, then the porpoise skin, then the blue cloth. Everything else had blue cloth covered with porpoise skin. Okay, the porpoise skins would have been the weatherproofing.

So it would have been just this. The only thing that did not have blue on it was the altar, which I found that just kind of, because it was more of a red color because the altars were shedding of blood. And then it had covering of porpoise skin. But all I wanted you to see is the only thing that was leaving the camp in the glory of its color was the Ark of the Covenant. It was the only thing. It just literally stood out. And why is that important? Because here's the holy standard of God. Here is the Shekinah, the propitiation seat of God where the Shekinah glory of God rest over. This was the representation of the presence of God. And it left in color.

[7 : 44] Okay, everything else, the color was covered with a porpoise skin. So anyway, that was just a side note. The side note, it really doesn't have a point in the message, but I wanted you to

pick up on that because God has it in a very specific way. So here we see the work of the Levites and we see their responsibilities and their duties. And God is giving them to us here as he is counting them and he is numbering them.

And again, we are numbering them at a very specific age group. So we see, number one, this is a sacred work. It is a sacred work. Leviticus chapter three, as we said, gives us the counting of the Levite males in whole, in totality. It doesn't matter. It's a month old and upward. However many are alive because God is using them as a substitute. Leviticus chapter four gives us the numbering and the counting of those who will be doing the work. And we see first and foremost, this is a sacred work because the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron. Or the Lord says, over and over again, we read this phrase, and the Lord spoke to Moses, and the Lord spoke to Moses. Let's just go ahead and say this.

Any work appointed and directed by the Lord's command is sacred. God commands me to vacuum the floors. All of a sudden, that is a sacred work because the Lord spoke and therefore they did. We see this work is sacred because it is following the very clear command of God. We see that it is also sacred because God set a limitation on the ages of those who could do it. He is counting those from 30 years old to 50 years old. God is giving a very specific time frame for the men who would be able to perform this duty and see that God sets it apart. He puts a very definite time here and he counsels these are the men. We see the sacred nature of it because they are carrying the very articles that represent the presence of God. The sons of Kohath, the Kohathites, carry the most sacred objects. We know that it is sacred because before the camp moves out, when the glory of God departs from the tent and begins to move, and the nation of Israel says, okay, it's time to leave. God is leading us. Then the sons of Aaron and

Aaron would go in and they would take down or cover up the articles or the furnishings inside the tabernacle. And after covering them up, we see here God commands Moses to respect the sons of Kohath, to actually be kind to them and not let them die. And he gives them very clear teaching that Aaron and his sons alone could see the objects, could cover up the objects, and only after this was done and the poles were inserted, then could the sons of Kohath come in and grab the poles. No one could ever look under the covering. No one could ever out of curiosity see what it looked like because this was a sacred work God was calling them to do. God was calling them to have this very prominent place within the nation. And this prominence was seen in what God was appointing for them to do. Now as we move through the book of Leviticus, we will get to Leviticus chapter 8. And in Leviticus chapter 8, we will come across this phrase which will cause us to kind of scratch our heads, so we need to address it here. And that phrase is that those males of the tribe of Levi that were appointed to the work were from age 25 to 50. But Leviticus 4 tells us they are from 30 to 50. Most Bible scholars agree, and

I am in agreement with them, that the reason God says that it is from age 25 is because it was a five-year apprenticeship to do the work God was calling them to do. It took them five years to learn how to do it right.

[11:35] Only those from 30 to 50 were doing the work, but God saw this work as so important. He gave the individuals five years to learn how to do it. I mean, they were doing the physical work of setting up the manifest presence of God among his people. Think about this. For five years, I have to learn how to take the tent down. For five years, if I am of the sons of Morari, I need to learn how to carry the boards and to put the sockets down. This wasn't a haphazard work.

This was something God was calling them to do to perfection. Now, later on in history, David would lower that age to age 20. It would be from 20 to 50. We don't really know why. We haven't really got to that yet, but he does. David does lower that. You just need to know that if you do a lot of cross-reference, Bible study, and really dig deep into it. But in the same work, there isn't just a few chapters God will say from 25 to 50 because he's going to give them five years to learn how to do the trade right. He's going to give them a little bit of hands-on exercise because what God was calling them to do was a sacred work. And careful attention was giving to each individual as to the work they were doing so that it would be done properly. As a matter of fact, such careful attention was giving so that no one would die while doing it. This is just a reinforcement of what we saw this morning.

That whatever it is God calls us to do, it is sacred. It is set apart. And God is calling us to do it for his glory and for his purpose. The second thing we see about this work is not only is it a sacred work, and I like this one, by the way, because this coincides with the rest of Scripture, it is a shared work.

It is a shared work.

The priest had to go in and cover it and insert the poles. The sons of Kohath had to come out and carry it. And then we would have the people of Gershon who would come and take the tent down, and then we would have the sons of Merari who would take the frame down. I wasn't, I wouldn't be responsible to do it all. As a matter of fact, it says in here that Abraham and his sons were to appoint to each man that which he was supposed to carry. The sons would come in and say, okay, you carry the lamp, you carry the table, you carry this. When he came to the tent cover and said, you carry this, you carry that. Each one had their responsibility. That's good news, by the way, because if I'm carrying the Ark of the Covenant, I don't have to take the poles down too. We see here that God had not called any individual to do all the work because God had a sufficient number of workers, over 8,000 workers. God had enough people to do all the work that needed to be accomplished, and God already had them in place. And it was a shared work because the only thing every individual was responsible for was the one thing God had called him to carry. You know why that's good news? It's because the Bible tells us that God puts the body together in Ephesians 4, and the body is held together by what every joint and bone and ligament and what every part supplies. God hasn't called any one of us to carry everything. He's only called us to carry that which he has appointed to us. That was something I had to learn in the ministry. The hardest thing for me to do, I'm naturally a people pleaser. I know it doesn't come across all the time in the full bits, but by nature, I am a people pleaser. I still struggle with that. I don't like for people to get mad at me. I don't like for people to get upset at me. It just kind of bothers me, and I don't really, you know, I just, this is something that's, by the way, it's a sin. I mean, I shouldn't struggle with that. Why? Something I've had to learn is that everything is not mine to carry. I have a responsibility God has appointed unto me, which means, and here's the wrestle, here's the wrestle I had to do. That means if something gets left undone, that's not my fault.

[15 : 53] If God called me to carry the lamp, and somebody forgot to get the table, I'm carrying my lamp. You know why that's freeing to you? Because God hasn't called you to do everything. You do the work God has appointed each one of us to do, then the body will move forward. The congregation of the nation of Israel could only move forward effectively if everyone did their part. If I was supposed to be covering the, or carrying the covering for the tabernacle, and someone forgot to get the pegs that held the bars together, not my responsibility, I'm going to take the covering and carry that covering.

Because it's a shared work. And that's good. Because the reality is, is God always has enough workers. One thing that I have figured out, it's only taken me like 15 years to figure this out. God has enough workers in every church to do whatever he's calling that church to do. Which means if we don't have the people to do it, then God hasn't called us to do it. And I'm a dreamer. That's hard for me. I'm a dreamer. I can see big things. But sometimes my dreams supersede or go beyond God's provisions. Maybe it's a not yet.

Right? Maybe he's a wait a minute, pump the brakes just a little bit. But that's okay. Because God always has enough workers to accomplish efficiently and effectively whatever it is he's calling his people to do.

This is why Jesus says we need to pray for the laborers. Because if we don't have enough, it's not that we need to put more on somebody else. We just need to ask God to bring somebody else.

[17 : 55] Or to stir somebody else. Or to raise up somebody else. God didn't need the Kohathites to do it at all. He only needed the Kohathites to do their parts. And then he needed the next group to do his part. And the next group to do his part.

And then he needed the sons of Aaron to do their part. And when everybody did their part, then we move forward. That's the way the church operates. And that is good news.

Is we don't need to all do it all. You want to see a living testimony of that? Go back on the YouTube channel and watch some of those videos I did by myself. You don't want me to do it all. They look awful.

Okay? The audio's not good. The video's not good. If you really want to go back when we first shut down, go back and watch the video when Ethan couldn't be here because he was at work. And I was relying on Kylie to get the camera to stop it.

And I hadn't told her how to stop it. And some of you are going to go back and figure this out and look at it. And if you watch my eyes, you can see that I'm trying to tell Kylie where to hit the stop button without talking because I realize I'm still live and there's probably people still watching.

[18 : 58] And I'm going, it's right there. She kind of hit it once, but she didn't really cut me off. And I knew because I could see the screen. God didn't call us all to do it all. I'm thankful for the men that God has called and appointed to do that that know a lot more than me.

That wasn't Kylie's fault. I'm not picking over her. I hadn't sure how to do it. I just said hit the end button. But you had to hit it twice. And if you didn't, I would still lie. I figured that out because somebody, well, my daughter-in-law said, do you know that every time you hit stop, you're still on? I did not know that. Thank you. I appreciate you telling me that. My daughter-in-law's a very honest person, by the way. So we'll tell you exactly what she's thinking at that time. That is why if you go back and you watch the ones, that little screenshot that they take before it screens, I got out of the way.

I did not realize the camera was taking my picture. And I was being, everybody got an email on my face. Hey, I'm here. You know, I didn't know that. So I'm so good. God hasn't called everybody to do everything. He calls us to do it together.

It's a shared responsibility. And it's a glorious thing that God calls us to a shared work. Because then, as we're walking along, we're looking at somebody else who's doing their part.

[20 : 01] And a little bit later, when we read this, you'll understand. Okay? Somebody's doing their part, and I'm doing my part. I don't have to get upset if their part looks easier than my part. Because they're doing their part.

That's what God called them to do. It was a shared work. It was something that was dispersed among every one of them. The third and final thing we see is not only is it a sacred work, not only is it a shared work, but it was a supported work.

It was a supported work. We know that the sons of Aaron, and Aaron supported the work because they did so much as even covering it and inserting the poles and having everything ready for them to come in.

And maybe you can go back mentally to the very first message we preached from the book of Numbers. And we opened up the book of Numbers with the counting of the nation of Israel, the nation in general, not the Levites, the other tribes other than the nation.

And with every tribe, there was a leader of that tribe. And when we looked at that message, I said really to take it in context, we need to go to Numbers chapter 7. And we need to understand that Numbers chapter 7 took place before Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

[21 : 17] As a matter of fact, Numbers 7 took place before anything else in the book of Numbers. Because Numbers 7 is the month. It actually happened before the book of Leviticus. The events of the book of Leviticus, if we're reading it in consecutive order.

Number 7 is what happened in the month after they completed the tabernacle. Moses came down from the mountain. He had this picture of what the tabernacles were like.

They completed it. The Shekinah glory of God fell into it. And they couldn't go into the tabernacle for a month because God's glory was filling it. Nobody knew how to approach God. Nobody knew how to go near God because God hadn't told them that yet.

All they know is that God is here. And we don't know how to get into His presence. The book of Leviticus tells us how man comes into God's presence. But if you remember, the book of Leviticus was in the second month.

Numbers chapter 7 is what happened in that first month. So in that month break. And in Numbers 7, something happens. And it happens before we have all this numbering and counting. Stay with me because it matters.

[22 : 16] I know we'll read it. But the leaders, we saw that God didn't just choose those leaders incidentally. Because it says in Numbers 7 that there were leaders of the nation of Israel who brought an offering. And they all brought the same offering.

Someone set a standard and everybody followed that standard. And it was an offering of rams and goats. And then also in that offering, there was all these dishes and these utensils. But there was something else. There were oxen and carts.

And I want you to see how the corporate body of the nation supported the work of the Leviticus. Because Numbers 7 tells us that we see these oxen and carts.

That two carts and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon according to their service. And four carts and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Mororah according to their service.

So two carts, four oxen, two per, right? Four carts, eight oxen to the sons of Gershon and the sons of Mororah. And the reason being, the sons of Gershon were charged with covering the, are carrying the tent coverings, right?

[23 : 25] So they would roll these up, put them on the carts and let the oxen pull them. The sons of Mororah, the reason there are more of them than any others is because they had the hardest work. They had all the boards, the pegs, the pillars. And a lot of these pillars are huge.

And they had all the framework. They were given more carts. They were given four carts and eight oxen. So the nation provided these to them to do their work. They supported them. Here are your carts and oxen.

Now, did you notice the one group that didn't get a cart or any oxen? Did you see that? The sons of Kohath. And the reason the sons of Kohath didn't get any is because theirs were the furnishings of the tabernacle.

They literally bore their work on their shoulders. That's why the poles were there. The holy things were to never be put on a cart.

Fast forward many years, and David is trying to move the Ark of the Covenant. And what does he do? He puts it on a cart. The cart starts crossing a little creek and starts to tilt.

[24 : 27] What happens? Someone sticks out a hand and tries to save the Ark. That man dies. And we say, Man, God is mean. All he was trying to do was to save the Ark from falling over and being destroyed.

No. God said, You carry that. Don't put it on a cart. God's not mean.

Man just thought they could do it their own way. When David went back, he found some Levites, put it on their shoulders, carried it into Jerusalem, and David went before them dancing and rejoicing in his loin covering.

Right? Why? Because now he's doing it the right way, which shows us that broad is the path that leads to destruction, but narrow is the way that leads to righteousness and everlasting life. God has but one way.

The sons of Kohath had no carts. They had no oxen because they bore it on their shoulders, which, let's go back to the shared work, if I am of the sons of Kohath and I have this heavy object on my shoulders, that's my work.

[25 : 28] So I cannot go, Boy, I wish I had a cart and an oxen. Look, all they're doing is walking behind that wagon. That looks a lot easier than what I've got. No. This is my work.

They bore it on their shoulders, each one with an assigned task. But each one was supported in their own way because while the sons of Kohath had the greater work to bear, they also had more involvement from the sons of Aaron in aiding them and helping them.

Everything was ready for them just to pick up a dirt. The other two, Gershon and Bararai, had to go in and physically take everything down, put everything together, put it on the cart, and then leave.

But all we see here, here's the work of the Levites. It was sacred. It was shared. And it was supported. It was shared. In an effective body of believers called the church.

It is full of individuals each performing its sacred work, sharing in the responsibility of God's kingdom and supported by one another.

[26 : 37] Some of us do our work with carts and oxen. Some of us are just bearing it on our shoulder. But we're all supported. We're all moving forward. And we're all going the same direction.

Because God is leading us to the wilderness of sanctification and calling us to live eternally in his presence in that promised land. Numbers chapter 4. Let's pray. God, I thank you so much.

God, what a great gift it is to be numbered among your people. I realize that you have counted and numbered each and every one of us. And Lord, we thank you for that privilege.

We thank you for that position that you've placed us in. Lord, we thank you for the work you've called us to. God, I thank you for the types and the pictures we see in the Old Testament as it serves as fires of revival in our hearts to draw closer and closer to you.

God, may we live our life for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[28 : 42] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[33 : 42] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[36 : 12] Thank you.

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[38 : 42] Thank you.

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[41 : 12] Thank you.

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[43 : 42] Thank you.

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[46 : 12] Thank you.

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Thank you.