

Numbers 3

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[0 : 00] We are in Numbers chapter 3 tonight. We'll be reading the entire chapter to get it in context, and we will see what the Word of God has to say to us from Numbers chapter 3.

You know, I love going through Scripture like this. It forces us to preach passages that we wouldn't normally be drawn to. This is really why I felt a number of years ago this is the way the Lord was leading me into the ministry.

It was more of just settling down in a book and preaching through the book or preaching, especially on Sunday nights, just started in Genesis and preaching through because it causes us to confront passages which we may often read and not necessarily look into the meaning of them much.

I mean, even my wife shared with me over lunch today, she said, that's not a passage many people would preach on, the one you preached on this morning. But I would have felt a lot less worthy if I'd stood up and said, Colossians 3, 18, it's a difficult passage.

Let's just jump over it and go to the second chapter, second verse of four. So it forces me to deal with issues as a pastor and as a Bible student that we wouldn't do if we didn't do this.

[1 : 08] I have a lot of respect. I know I've shared this with you before, but W.A. Criswell, who pastored in Dallas, Texas, preached Genesis to Revelation. He's the only pastor I know that made it all the way through the same manner we're doing on Sunday nights, but he did it Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, Wednesdays.

He just kept every message just tied on together. So whenever he started where he was pastoring there, he started in Genesis 1, and he preached all the way through the Bible, W.A. Criswell. So if you ever want to read any of his writings, that man studied the Word, preached the Word.

I have a book in the office. I haven't read it yet. It's titled, Why I Believe the Bible is True. And after preaching through it, I'm sure that he absolutely had that certainty because every passage just resonates.

Even the passage we have tonight, I would say just typically, and I know it's Sunday nights, I'll kind of slow down a little bit. In our average daily reading, for those of you that are following any kind of reading plan and you've read through Numbers, you haven't got there yet, but if you're following mine, but maybe the one I follow, but maybe you're following another one.

You read Numbers 3, you kind of say, oh, that's nice. But we don't ever pause to say, well, what application does that have for me? Because the Bible tells us in the New Testament that all of the Word of God is good for doctrine and reproof and correction and for calling us to godliness.

[2 : 24] So much the same in Numbers chapter 3 tonight. Let's open up with a word of prayer, and then we will read it together, and we'll see how the Lord opens it up for us. God, I thank you so much that you've given us this time tonight, Lord, just to gather around your Word as your people.

And God, I praise we have opened it up for now that you would speak to us. God, we thank you for the Old Testament. We thank you for the great truths that it contains, but we come to you with full confession that at times it can be difficult to read, difficult to understand.

But, Lord, we know that through the power and presence of your Spirit that you could open that up for each one of us. So, Lord, we pray. Tonight we would see a truth to be grasped, an application to be lived, Lord, and it would lead to a life of ours that is transformed for your glory and your purposes.

Lord, we continue to pray for those around us who may be affected by the weather. Lord, those who are affected throughout our nation and even throughout our community.

God, we just lift them up to you. God, we pray that you would speak to us tonight, and Lord, that we would hear you. We say, here we are, O God, speak. May we listen. And we ask in Christ's name.

[3 : 36] Amen. Numbers chapter 3. If you remember, the book of Numbers opens up. The reason it is, let's kind of put it in context because it's been several weeks since we've been together.

The reason it is referred to as the book of Numbers is because of the counting which takes place in the first few chapters, the counting of God's people. This is something which happened between the, there was a time, there was a week's time or a month's time between when God gave the command to build the tabernacle, and the tabernacle was completed, and the Shekinah glory fell at the end of the book of Exodus, and then God instituted the sacrificial system which we've read previously in the book of Leviticus.

There was a month's time between the erection of the tabernacle and the Shekinah glory of God, and then the institution of the sacrifices. There was this month span.

That month is what covers the opening up of the book of Numbers, the counting of God's people, the instructions for how they will camp around the tabernacle. And then we transition into their wilderness wanderings.

The Jewish Bible, or the Jewish people of the time of Christ, referred to this book as in the wilderness. It was one word, but it meant in the wilderness. Because it speaks of their wilderness wanderings.

[5 : 01] But before we can get to their walking around in the wilderness, and we can see what God is doing there, we need to see who it is that's there. Because let's just bring this application to point.

God doesn't just call unknown people. God calls those he knows to go into the wilderness to wander.

Because if you remember, the wilderness is the sanctification process. We don't rightly understand our salvation until we have a correct understanding of the book of Exodus, and that is that God saw us, took notice of us, cared for us, was concerned about us, and sent one to redeem us, and therefore called us out.

He set us free. We have been redeemed. In a moment, we are redeemed. And then it takes 40 years. It took a moment for God to get them out of Egypt, and it took 40 years for God to get Egypt out of them.

So we say that the wilderness wanderings are our sanctification. God saves you in a moment. He sanctifies you the rest of your life. Right? In a moment, instantaneous salvation, progressive sanctification is how I like to refer to it.

[6 : 09] Because the sanctification is this. Is that God is telling you something today that you did not know yesterday, and that God is changing you more today than he was yesterday, and God is calling you more into his presence today than it was yesterday.

And it's the whole theme that Paul said, I press on. Not that I have yet attained to that goal, but I press on towards that goal of being like Christ. And these are the people that God is sanctifying. That is, those he is bringing into the wilderness. And they are known to him, and he is revealing that to us. So we see here in Numbers chapter 3 the place of the Levites or the tribe of the Levites. Because Numbers 2 has given us the record of every other tribe, of the other tribes who surrounded the tabernacle, how they camped in the wilderness.

Remember, they were camping. There were three tribes here, three tribes here, three tribes here, three tribes there. So you had the 12 tribes. Because Ephraim and Manasseh took the place of Joseph, which led to 12.

[7 : 10] But that excluded the tribe of Levi. They did not count the tribe of Levi. And if you remember in Numbers chapter 2, I know this is a lot of backstory, but it's been several weeks since we've done this. In Numbers chapter 2, they counted the men who were of military age.

Those 20 and older. Those who could fight. Because the camp was setting out on a military campaign, right? It was an army that was progressing on.

Here we find in Numbers chapter 3, they are counted from a month old and upward. So this is not a military camp, right? This is not a military age. These are people serving the Lord. These are those who belong to him.

So in Numbers chapter 3, we read, Now these are the records of the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when the Lord spoke with Moses at or on Mount Sinai.

These then are the names of the sons of Aaron. Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithmar. These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to serve as priest.

[8 : 08] But Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord when they offered strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai. And they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithmar served as priests in the lifetime of their father Aaron.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. They shall perform the duties for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting to do the service of the tabernacle.

They shall also keep all the furnishings of the tent of meeting along with the duties of the sons of Israel to do the service of the tabernacle. You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons that are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel.

So you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, that they may keep their priesthood, but the layman who comes near shall be put to death. Again, the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Now behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel.

So the Levites shall be mine, for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to myself all the firstborn in Israel from man to beast.

[9 : 19] They shall be mine. I am the Lord. Then the Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, Number the sons of Levi by their father's households, by their families, every male from a month old and upward you shall number.

So Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, just as he had been commanded. These then are the sons of Levi by their names, Gershon and Kohath and Merara. These are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families, Libna and Shemaiah.

And the sons of Kohath by their families, Amram and Izhar, Hebron and Uzzel. And the sons of Merara by their families, Mahalil and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites among all their, according to their father's households.

Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shemnites. These were the family of the Gershonites. Their numbered men and the numbering of every male from a month old and upward, even their numbered men, were 7,500.

The family of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle westward. And the leader of the father's household of the Gershonites was Eliseth, the son of Lael. Now the duties of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting involved the tabernacle and the tent, its coverings and the screen for the doorway of the tent of meeting.

[10 : 30] And the hangings of the court and the screen for the doorway of the court, which is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its cords according to all the service concerning them.

Verse 27. Of Kohath was the family of the Amorites, or Amramites, and the family of the Isrites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzalites. These are the families of the Kohathites.

In the numbering of every male from a month old and upward, there were 8,600 performing the duties of the sanctuary. The family of the sons of Kohath were to camp on the southward side of the tabernacle.

And the leader of the father's households of the Kohathite families was Elisethan, the son of Uziel. Now the duties involved the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, and the utensils of the sanctuary, with which they minister, and the screen, and all the utensils concerning them.

And Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, was the chief of the leaders of Levi, and had the oversight of those who performed the duties of the sanctuary. Of Morari was the family of the Amalites and the family of the Mushites.

[11 : 33] These were the families of Morari. Their numbered men and the numbering of every male from a month old and upward were 6,200. The leader of the father's households of the families of Morari was Zeruel, the son of Abahel.

They were to camp on the northward side of the tabernacle. Now the appointed duties of the sons of Morari involved the frames of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its equipment and the service concerning them, and the pillars around the court with their sockets and their pegs and their cords.

Now those who were to camp before the tabernacle eastward, before the tent of meeting toward the sunrise, are Moses and Aaron and his sons, performing the duties of the sanctuary for the obligation of the sons of Israel.

But the layman coming near was to be put to death. All the numbered men of the Levites whom Moses and Aaron numbered, at the command of the Lord by their families, every male from a month old and upward were 22,000.

Then the Lord said to Moses, Number every firstborn male of the sons of Israel from a month old and upward, and make a list of their names. You shall take the Levites from me.

[12:41] I am the Lord. Instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel and the cattle of the Levites, you shall take the Levites from me. I am the Lord. Instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel and the cattle of the Levites, instead of all the firstborn among the cattle of the sons of Israel.

So Moses numbered all the firstborn among the sons of Israel, just as the Lord had commanded him. And all the firstborn males by the number of their names from a month old and upward, for their numbered men were 22,273.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the sons of Israel and the cattle of the Levites. And the Levites shall be mine. I am the Lord. For the ransom of the 273 of the firstborn of the sons of Israel, who are in excess beyond the Levites, you shall take five shekels apiece per head.

You shall take them in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary. The shekel is 20 gerars. And give the money, the ransom for those who are in excess among them to Aaron and to his sons. So Moses took the ransom money from those who are in excess beyond those ransomed by the Levites.

From the firstborn of the sons of Israel, he took the money in terms of the shekel of the sanctuary, 1,365. Then Moses gave the ransom money to Aaron and to his sons at the command of the Lord, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

[13:59] Numbers chapter 3. I apologize about my stumbling. Sometimes those names get to me, okay? We are looking tonight at the Levites.

Now that we have read it, maybe we can take some time to see if we can apply it. I want you to see the Levites, a tribe set apart. A tribe set apart. What we have in Numbers chapter 3 is the numbering and the counting of the tribe of Levi, of the males from a month old and upward.

And we see immediately that the Levites are set apart from their fellow countrymen and set apart from the rest of the nation of Israel. And they are set apart for a very specific purpose. They were to be set before Aaron the priest that they may serve him.

God set them apart and brought them to Aaron in order that they may serve him. Now we have a tendency, I think, to read this and say, well, that's Old Testament doctrine and it is. And to say, well, that has no application to us today, but I think that it's false.

Because all of Scripture points to one person and that person is Jesus Christ. All of Scripture is given to us there, some as a type or as an image, in order to open up for us more of Jesus Christ.

[15:08] We are told in the book of Hebrews a number of times, really, starting in chapter 5 and continuing on to the 10th chapter, that we too have a high priest. Because the tribe of Levi was set apart and brought and set before Aaron, who was the high priest at that time.

Because this calling and this setting apart was brought in the context of the priesthood of Aaron and his sons. And we'll see that in just a moment. They were brought and set before the high priest Aaron for his work and for his purposes.

The Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews that we have a high priest according not to the tribe of Levi, not of Arianic descent, but of the descent of Melchizedek.

We have a high priest according to the lineage of Melchizedek. Melchizedek, we don't have to get into that theology right now. Really, all you need to know about the author of the book of Hebrews, why he references Melchizedek there, is because Melchizedek is a very mysterious figure who appears for us in the book of Genesis.

And we don't know anything about him, and we don't know anything about him before, and we don't know anything about him after. And that is expressly the point in Scripture. Because in Jewish thought, if it was never recorded who your father and mother were, if it was never recorded who you descended from, then you were from eternity past.

[16:28] And if it was never recorded when you died, then you were eternity present. So you were an eternal being. So Melchizedek is seen as a priest of eternal rulership or eternal position.

Now we can really get into all of that, but I don't really want to flesh it out right now because it would take us all night, and we would all leave here confused. So that's not really for us to do quite yet. But what we need to see is that the Bible tells us in the book of Hebrews that believers have a high priest.

It's not the high priest of Aaron. It's not of the tribe of Levi. But we have a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Jesus Christ is our high priest.

Okay? He serves in the tabernacle made not with hands. If you remember, Moses led the people to construct the tabernacle based on the image he saw.

So he observed the tabernacle in heaven, brought it down, and gave them instructions on how to build that. Jesus, it says, for us serves in the tabernacle made not with hands, but in the heavenly tabernacle, and is entered into the veil, which is his flesh, or through the rending of the veil, which is his flesh, and he stands before God daily ministering for the saints.

[17 : 40] Now let's find the application here, okay? And then we'll flesh this out. The application is this. Just as the tribe of Levi was set apart and brought and set before Aaron for his use, so the church today has been set apart from its fellow countrymen and brought and set before Jesus Christ for his use.

The tribe of Levi was brought before the high priest Aaron and said, here you are, Aaron. They are for your use and for your service. The church today takes the place of the tribe of Levi in that we have been set before our high priest, and we have been set before him, who is Jesus Christ, for his use and his purposes.

And as we look at these points and as we go through the message, hopefully you see how that applies to us today. So let's not check out and say, well, this doesn't have any bearing upon us because it absolutely does.

We need to see a number of things. Number one, we see their selection. We see their selection. Their selection was within the context of the priesthood of Aaron and his sons because it says, now these are the records of the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai.

So this is when God is giving them the instructions when to complete or how to build the tabernacle. This is when God is beginning to speak to him about corporate worship. This is when God is telling him, this is what it's going to look like when the nation gathers around and worships me.

[19 : 03] Here is what the tabernacle looks like. Here is what the altar should be. Here is the offerings you should offer on the altars. Everything that's going on in the book of Leviticus, right? God is telling him how the nation will worship.

And then he is telling them who will lead them in worship. Now remember, let's step back. When God called the nation out of Israel, he was calling them to be a nation of priests, right? He was calling all of them to be priests.

He was calling them to be priests who would serve before him for the world to see. Because of their failures and their shortcomings, then they became a nation with priests. And it became a very small amount of priests.

And the priests would revolve around Aaron and his sons. And we are reminded here of the holiness of that position because we are also reminded of two of Aaron's sons who didn't cut it. They offered strange fire before God and the fire of the Lord came out and consumed them because of the unholiness or the impurity of their sacrifice. So we are reminded of the holiness of the priests, that there are some things that only at the time in the context of the Old Testament, only a select few could do.

[20 : 08] We are reminded here that what the priests could do, no layman could ever do because it tells us two times in this passage that if any layman was to approach, they would fall down dead. Right?

There were some things that only the priest could do. And those things were to be to offer the sacrifices before God, to perform the duties within the tabernacle in the presence of God, that they would be those who entered into the presence of God and interceded for the people of God. They alone could do that. So immediately we need to get this. Okay? We need to understand this. That while the Bible tells us in the book of 1 Peter that we are a group of priests, we're the priesthood of the believers, we have a position as priest.

We are not the high priest. Okay? Only he offers an acceptable sacrifice before God, that is Jesus Christ. Only he enters into the presence of God. We only come through the priest, right?

We are his servants. We are his people that would have been dedicated and given to him for his service. So we're separating this from the priesthood to those who serve the priesthood.

[21 : 10] And that is who we are, right? We see this. This is what the tribe of Levi has to be. They are not priests. They are laymen. But they are different. They are set apart. They are not even numbered among the rest of the sons of Israel.

They camp around the tabernacle and serve as a buffer zone for the rest of the nation of Israel. If you remember, they camped in kind of a cross or a plus sign.

And here you would have the tribe of Levi camping around the tabernacle, which would always be the center of focus because God should always be the focus of our lives. We understand that, right?

In the tabernacle, the very presence of God was always in the center of the camp. Everything revolved around him. And the tribe of Levi would be the buffer zone that would keep everybody else from coming in. But even they themselves could not go into the tabernacle.

They were on the south side, the west side, and the north side, not on the east side because that's where the priests were at. That's where Moses and Aaron and Aaron's sons were. So what we see here is that their selection came in the context of the position of the priests.

[22 : 15] And their selection came not only in that context, but it says, Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron. So here we understand this.

They were selected in the context of the priesthood. But they were selected based upon the sovereignty of God. God called them by name.

They didn't attain the position. They didn't earn the position. They didn't choose the position. God chose them and called them by name.

The tribe of Levi. We have no other reason in behind that. Nothing else in scripture now. I know that Moses and Aaron both are from the tribe of Levi. I know that they both ascend from Levitical places. But this is where really the tribe of Levi begins to separate itself. Nothing else in scripture justifies this choosing other than the fact that God called them by name. God selected them and said, These are the ones I'm taking.

[23 : 13] And it's really his sovereignty. That means that he was in absolute control. It wasn't that the tribe of Levi was better than the tribe of Judah. It wasn't that the tribe of Levi was better than the tribe of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Right? It wasn't that they were better people. It was the fact that God said, I am taking the tribe of Levi and they are going to be set apart for my service. So we see this selection in light of the context of the priesthood.

They're going to be for the priest to use for their work. But it was really God's doing, God's ordering, and God's choice. God called them. He called them by name.

And he called them personally. He knew their names. He knew who they were. He recorded them. He counted each and every one of them. And God brought them to Aaron and set them before him. Through Moses. I understand that.

But their selection came based upon his sovereignty. Now that's important because we need to understand this. If Jesus is our high priest, and if we are those who have been called and set before him to use for his service and his glory, we need to understand that's a very important position.

[24 : 12] Right? There's no better person to serve, as we even saw this morning, that when we work, we work as for the Lord, not unto man. There's no better person to serve than Jesus Christ. The Levites were really in this great position.

They were selected and chosen to have this honored position. I mean, think about this. They were carrying the altar on their shoulders. Right? They were carrying the tabernacle. They were transporting these things.

We find out later throughout the Old Testament that not just anybody could carry the altar. Not just anybody could touch that because if a common man touched it, he died. You had to have a Levite who could come and carry and move this stuff.

I mean, they were very elite. They were very select. And they were very privileged. But their position was solely based upon God's sovereignty in that he called them by name and told Moses to go get them and bring them before Aaron.

We, my friends, as believers, are in a very, very, very privileged position to serve Jesus Christ in the world that he has called us to. That may not always seem like a privilege, but it is. We are in a great place of honor.

[25 : 12] We get to touch things and do things that the common man cannot. You understand that? There's nothing in Scripture that says that God hears the courage of every man. God hears the courage. Yes, God hears that.

That God is going to respond. But for the believer, Jesus says that if you ask, he will respond, right? We have the great privilege to go boldly before the throne to the blood of the Lamb. We get to go stand in the courts of heaven.

We get to, as Charles Spurgeon said, pull the cord that rings the bell in heaven so that God responds to our prayers. We get to touch the holy things. We get to be there. And it's not because we've earned it.

It's not because we're good enough. It's not because we've done enough. It's because God called us and chose us, and he called us by name. And that's an amazing thing, the selection of God.

Now, we don't want to get into this and really just take it too far, but all we know is that before you knew God, God knew you, and he was calling you to serve him.

And that's an honor. Because before the foundations of the world were laid, he called us by name. He knew us. And that's how big God is.

[26 : 16] God knew everything I was going to go through before I would ever come to the place of service. God knew everything I was going to enter into. God knew all the little twists and turns, but God was calling me by name just as much as he's calling you by name.

And he calls us and appoints us to serve him. And what a privilege that is. We see their selection. Number two, we see their separation. When God selected them, he separated them.

When God selected them, he separated them, which means this. Selection always leads to separation. When God calls us to himself, he always separates us from what we used to be.

Always. The Levites were separated from their fellow countrymen. The Levites were separated from the rest of the tribe. The Levites were separated even in their inheritance. If you remember, I'm sure you've read it.

We will read it. The tribe of Levi has no inheritance within the land. Right? They get no distribution in the land. They have cities. They're Levitical cities. They have some pastoral land that goes around the cities, but they don't have an inheritance.

[27 : 18] They don't have anything that's theirs. Why? Because God says, I am their inheritance. Because what they inherited in God was more than anybody else was going to inherit. Right? Sure, the tribe of Benjamin might have got this land over here.

The tribe of Dan got a little bit of land. The tribe of Dan wasn't happy with their inheritance, so they ended up going a little further north and it led to idolatry. All you got to do is read the book of Judges. You can see that. Right? But the Levites, they had no inheritance in the land because the Lord, their God, was their inheritance.

What they inherited was more than anybody else did. But their inheritance came by way of separation. You're not going to be a part of this. You're going to get me. And this is exactly what the believers have. The believers are called to separation.

That is, we're going to be set apart from the world in which we live in and our ultimate inheritance is not in this world. What a great privilege it is to know as we traverse through this land, we may lay hands on things and we may technically own things, quote, unquote, and we may possess things, quote, unquote, but the things we are laboring for and the things we're putting our effort into is not the inheritance of this life.

Right? The Lord God is our inheritance. He is the thing that we earn. He is not the thing that we have received. And we see their separation because God called them apart and gave them to Aaron.

[28 : 29] They didn't even get to hang out in the camp of their fellow countrymen. The only other people they camped around were other Levites. Right? As we read the camp alignment in chapter 2, you may remember that like three tribes would camp here, three would camp here, three would camp here, three would camp here.

There was all this intermingling and then they would have these standards or the flags of each camp or each tribe so you'd have three over here, three over here. The Levites, they only camped around other Levites.

They were completely separated because God separated them for himself, for his use. Now, we get the privilege and as you read Scripture, you understand this, that while the Levites were separated, they always lived among the people.

So we get to live among those of this world while being separate from those in this world. And that is a great position that the believers possess. And may we not ever forget that, that while we may be among them, we are separate from them.

Because God has called us and that calling ultimately separates us from what we used to be, from the camp we used to hang out in and now we hang out in a totally different camp and that is the camp of those who have been identified solely based upon their service for God.

[29 : 51] Everywhere you read in Scripture, when you hear Levites, the only thing you should think about or the thing we immediately think about is, oh, they're the ones who serve the tabernacle. Their identity is wrapped up in what they do for God.

Their identity is wrapped up in the service they offer towards Aaron, the priest. Their identity is wrapped up in everything they do because of their calling. And that should be ours as well. Which leads us to the third thing. Not only do you have their selection, their separation, you have their service. God called them to a very specific service. He did not call them to offer offerings. He did not call them to make sacrifices. He did not call them to go into the tabernacle until it was time to leave, right? And then they could go in because the Shekinah Glory had departed. Remember when the Shekinah Glory stopped, they stayed. When the Shekinah Glory left, they left. So after the Shekinah Glory left the tabernacle, then they go in and they deconstruct it and take it all apart and carry it out. But God called them to a very specific thing.

[30 : 52] And each one of these, as we read through here and we see where they're camping out, we say, oh, like when we read of the tribe of Gershon, it says, now the duties of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting involve the tabernacle in the tent, its covering, 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 court, which is around the tabernacle, and an altar in its cords according to all the service concerning them.

So essentially, they carried the tent. That's a big tent, by the way. It's huge. The tabernacle and all its coverings and all the skins. If you remember the layers that was on that thing, there was a number of layers that were there.

They carried that. Now that may seem insignificant to most, but they are carrying the place where God dwells. Right? Very specific. They weren't to carry the altar.

They weren't to carry the utensils. That's the next group. They carried this. This is what God had called them to do. And then you go into the sons of Kohath. And the sons of Kohath, their duties involved the ark and the table and the lampstands and the altars and the utensils of the sanctuary in which they minister and the screen and all the service concerning them.

So somebody had to go in and get the little snuffers and the candelabra and they had to go in and get the showbread and the plates and the utensils and the forks and they were getting all, this was their duty, this was their job.

[32 : 07] And then the next group, they had a very specific, the appointed duties of the sons of Marar involved the frames and its bars and its pillars and its sockets and all the equipment and the service concerning them and the pillars around the court and all their sockets and their pegs and their cords.

When you read the book of Exodus and you get into all that ho-hum of how many sockets were on each curtain and how many pegs were on each board, well these were the ones who carried every one of those sockets. and it may seem insignificant but this was their calling.

Somebody had to go take every socket off of every panel so that the other tribe could come carry the panel so that they could gather the sockets and if anybody failed in their duties or their calling or their service, the tabernacle would not be complete because God gave very, very, very specific details.

And if the tabernacle was not complete, then the Shekinah glory of God would not come and rest. We bring that application to us that God calls us to himself and puts us before his son Jesus who is our high priest to render service.

And he calls each one of us to a very specific service. It may not have seemed glorious. Maybe ours is just taking off the sockets and the little rings that hold that. Maybe ours is taking the pegs out of the boards. Maybe ours is carrying the forks or utensils or maybe we're the guy who has the altar on our shoulder.

[33 : 30] But I know this. The Bible says it again in the book of Ephesians and it says it in other places that the church is only complete when everybody's doing their parts. Everybody.

Somebody had to get there first. The reason they camped in that order is because the ones carrying the frames had to get there first, right? And then the ones carrying the tent and then the

ones carrying the stuff inside the tent. And you have to do your part.

Everybody does their part because God calls us to service. And if my service is to be a peg-forer and a peg-footer in the tabernacle, I want to be the best peg-forer this world has ever seen, right? I want to put wood pegs in that tabernacle frame because you're serving the Lord. Not just serving. You're doing something nobody else can do. The smallest thing that we do in His service takes on a greater scale when we realize that everybody else in the world, nobody else can do what God's called us to do.

Because Scripture says that He has appointed something for each one of us to do. He has ordained a work for us and we're the only people that can do it.

[34 : 43] Right now, there are thousands, millions of preachers preaching around the world. But only Billy Joel Calvert can preach the way Billy Joel Calvert preaches and that's a good thing. That's a great thing.

Because you don't need any more Billy Joel Calverts around, right? I can only do what He's called me to do. You can only do what He's called you to do. Only you. And He's called us to be that, to be identified in that service.

The world can't do it. Over 7 billion people in this world. And the majority of them can never do the things we do. Because we're in His service.

We're in His service. For His glory and His alone. This is the Levites. I get to carry the pegs. The rest of the tribe, the other 12 tribes, they don't even get to touch them.

I'm carrying pegs. How awesome is that? Perspective. When we're His people for His glory called to His service, it is an amazing thing. We see in this passage, finally, in Numbers 3, we don't want to see their selection, their separation, their service.

[35 : 50] We also see they were there as a substitution. We see their substitution. Now this is specific Old Testament, right? It doesn't really have an application in today's time, but we see this.

The Levites were the substitution for the firstborn. Because that 10th plague ruled through Egypt, God made it pronounce, let's look at Passover, it is the firstborn belong to me.

Right? Remember the firstborn of every Egyptian died? The firstborn are mine, even the firstborn of the cattle. And God is serious. He says, I am Lord God. So when God says it, He means it.

He wasn't just playing around. He made an emphatic statement. They are mine. They belong to me. He's really showing this position of ownership in the firstborn of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the firstborn son of God. Now we know He is God and we can get into all that, but we are the children of God too. We are come by way of adoption. But it is this great privileged position of the firstborn. And the tribe of Levi was the substitution for the rest of the firstborn in the nation of Israel.

[36 : 53] When you counted the tribe of Levi from a month old and upward, it was 22,000. The counting of the rest of the nation of Israel was 22,273. Now many of us would be like, well what is 273 compared to 22,000?

Well in God's eyes that meant a lot. God wasn't just going to forget about the 273 in excess. So God issued a price of ransom for the 273 excess in firstborn and that price of ransom was given to Aaron through the tribe of Levi.

1,365 shekels was given as a price of ransom for the 273. But think about this. Everybody else in the nation of Israel, all the other firstborn, they had the opportunity to say, the Levites took my place.

I should be doing that. I should belong to God. I should be over there. That guy took my place. He is my substitution. As they're marching on, the Levites are not warriors so they're not fighting, they're not armed, they're carrying tents and pegs and boards.

As they're going along, everyone else could say, that person took my place. He is my substitution. As a firstborn, I should belong to God.

[38 : 10] Now, I'm not a firstborn in my family, but the firstborn, I should be doing that. That is my service. So we are introduced here, again, to this concept of substitutionary atonement.

Of someone picking the place that the other deserves to have. Now, that's a theme throughout Scripture because of the substitutionary atonement of the cross. That's our cross.

We deserve to be there. That's our place. But God put a substitute in our place. His son, who hung on the cross, in my place.

He is my substitute. He is your substitute. And God carries that theme throughout Scripture that what he says is absolutely emphatic and true. It's going to come about, but he always has a door of substitution.

Because when he says the wages of sin is death, he means it. But he also has a substitution for that wage who is Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary for you and I.

[39 : 14] Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this night. God, I thank you for the privilege of being in your word with my brothers and sisters in Christ. and we thank you for the encouragement we get from being together.

We pray, Lord, that you continue to lead us and, Lord, continue to move as we grow closer to you and that you would be glorified throughout our lives. We ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.