

Numbers Chapter 17

V: 1-2 Take a “rod” for each of the tribes of Israel.

- Rod vs: staff. A staff is a longer walking stick, hooked at the end used to guide and direct sheep.
- A staff is shorter & used to drive off predators and at times to correct the sheep. We know that it is shorter because eventually Aaron’s rod was placed into the Ark of the Covenant, meaning it was short enough to fit inside.

Psalm 23:4 “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

V: 3-5 God is taking a pre-emptive approach to dealing with the murmuring of the people, in particular their murmuring against Moses.

- A rod for each tribe.
- The rod that blossoms shall indicate the man / tribe / family that God has chosen to be High Priest.

V: 6-9 Moses took the rods and placed them in the Tabernacle overnight.

- The next morning he goes to get them, and Aaron’s rod has miraculously budded, brought forth blossoms, and yielded almonds.
- Aaron’s rod is chosen, singled out from amongst the others, it budded, blossomed, and yielded almonds.
- We see extremes, options, and the gentleness of God.
- In Israel almond trees are referred to as “watching” trees, based in part on **Jeremiah 1:11**.
- The almond trees are the first to blossom in January, in the middle of winter, during snow; symbolic of difficult times.
- Aaron’s staff budding, blossoming, and bearing fruit is symbolic of our Lord Jesus and new life after death, the resurrection.

Later, Isaiah spoke of a prophetic “Rod”.

Isaiah 11:1-2 “¹And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: ²And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;”

1 Corinthians 15:20 “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits (the almond blossom) of them that slept.”

- How did Jesus validate His authority? Through the resurrection.

John 10:17-18 “¹⁷Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. ¹⁸No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.”

- Moses brought out all the rods for everyone to see.

V: 10-11 The rod was to be kept as a token, a reminder. In fact every time the elders of each tribe picked up his own rod, it was a reminder that it was Aaron's rod that blossomed, not theirs.

- Our passage declares that the rod was to be placed “before” the ark of the testimony.
- At some point it was placed inside the ark:

Hebrews 9:4 “Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.”

Side note: The ark was one of those items which had to be born by the Levites upon their shoulders. Why?

- What did it contain?
 1. Tables of the law: God's word - broken & violated.
 2. Manna: The bread from Heaven, representing Jesus – despised.
 3. Rod that budded: symbolic of God's authority – rejected.
- Mankind must bear the burden of their sin, until they are delivered from sin and death.
- Later in **1 Samuel 6** the ark is returned to Israel after having been captured by the Philistines. The men of Beth-Shemesh subsequently look into the ark and 50,070 men are slain.
- Again why? The ark contained those items that were a representation of our sin, but in opening the Ark they had to remove the Mercy Seat upon which the blood was sprinkled. When they opened it they removed the mercy, they removed the atonement – and were simply left with the wages of sin, death.

V: 12-13 Moses had done what God commanded, placing Aaron's rod before the Ark.

- Now the children of Israel get a serious guilty conscious, rightly so, knowing that they were deserving of death. In their panicky state they misquote the word of God – “whosever” goes near the tabernacle – no just those who aren't supposed to.
- Moses, Aaron, the priests were all allowed – and as God has just demonstrated in this and the previous chapter – no one else.
- The distinguishing characteristic in this passage as it relates to those called into the service of our Lord is obedience and bearing fruit.

John 15:4-8 “⁴Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. ⁵I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. ⁶If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. ⁸Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.”

- Up to this point the Lord has given the children of Israel three things to remind them, to encourage them to obey His word:
 1. The tassels on their garments: **Numbers 15:37-40**
 2. The brass plates on the altar: **Numbers 16:38-40**
 3. Aaron's rod in the holy of Holies.
- The Lord encourages us to walk in His ways and to be obedient, and He has given us what we need to succeed:

1. The Lord has given us His word:

John 17:17 “Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy word is truth.”

2. He's given us the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “¹⁹What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

3. He's interceding for us at the right hand of the Father:

Romans 8:34 “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

Numbers Chapter 18

V: 1-7 Here the Lord speaks directly to Aaron (2nd time). In speaking directly to Aaron, God re-affirms that which He affirmed in the previous chapter – that Aaron is His chosen vessel for this particular ministry.

V: 5 No more wrath:

Ezekiel 18:32 “For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the sovereign Lord. Repent and live!”

- You and your sons are going to be held responsible if anything goes wrong, so make sure you do it right.
- Describing two groups; Aaron, his sons, and his father’s house – meaning the Levites; then Aaron and his sons only, meaning the priesthood.
- Everyone has a part to play, a function in the body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul relates this to the body of Christ:

1 Corinthians 12:4-5 “⁴Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.”

1 Corinthians 12:27-30 “²⁷Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. ²⁸And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers are all workers of miracles? ³⁰Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”

- The rest of the Levites will serve you and do their job, but you and your sons are responsible for the service of the Tabernacle.
- God empowered Aaron for his priestly ministry, God supplied Aaron with the practical help that he would need, and at the same time he would be held responsible to fulfill that responsibility. Aaron and his sons would fulfill the sacred duties, the rest of the Levites would do their part.
- These are life and death issues to those involved, particularly to the stranger or anyone who approaches the holy things.

- With great privilege, the priesthood, comes great responsibility.

Luke 12:48 “... For unto whosoever much is given, of him shall be much requires:...”

- God admonishes Aaron and his sons to keep things in order, they are about to be told of the things that they will receive of the offerings. They are not to lose sight of what their purpose is – the minister unto the Lord.
- We all have our calling, but we’re not all called to the same things.
- Those who help in ministry, and the ministry itself is a special gift from the Lord. It is a privilege and an honor to serve the Lord.

1 Timothy 1:12 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.”

V: 8-19 They will receive the offerings of the people, a specified portion goes to the Lord including the first born of the flocks and herds, and the remainder belongs to the priests. The firstborn of men were redeemed unto the Lord.

- Specific portions are to be eaten only by the priests actually in the Tabernacle, other portions are for all those of the household who were “clean” to partake of.
- God provides for His servants, both then and now.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 “¹³Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? ¹⁴Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

Matthew 10:10 “... for the workman is worthy of his meat.”

Matthew 6:33 “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

- Considered a “covenant of salt” – salt being imperishable, meaning an everlasting covenant.

V: 20-24 God again speaks to Aaron, declaring that He is their portion and their inheritance and as such they will have no inheritance in the land.

- Kind of like “you don’t need anything else, you have Me...”
- God provided for the priestly ministry through the tithes and offerings which were first dedicated to the Lord; a portion of which was sacrificed directly, then the remainder distributed to the priests.

V: 25-32 The priests receive of the tithe to the Lord; they are in turn to offer a tithe of what they receive to the Lord. There are no exceptions to this.

- They are to offer the best of it, the same as the first fruits.
- They were to be careful not to “profane” the holy things of God.
- Tithes and offerings were given to God, thus they became holy.
- They weren’t to be treated as “common” things, care was to be taken that these holy things not to be touched or come into contact with that which was unclean for any reason.

1 Peter 1:15-16 “¹⁵But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶Because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy.”

There are a couple of practical lessons in all of this:

1. The Lord meets our needs in very practical ways, but most importantly He meets our greatest need, which is to re-establish fellowship with Him through His Son Jesus Christ.
 - Without that established relationship we are separated from Him, if we die in that state then we are separated from Him eternally, eternally separated from the life that is the light of the world – we condemn ourselves to an eternity of darkness and torment.

Psalms 16:11 “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasure for evermore.”

- Those are the options, heaven or hell, life or death – choose life.
2. The other lesson to be learned is that if we do have that personal relationship established, if we are children of the light – then do those things that will make that relationship stronger – through obedience.
 - Understand that there is a “give back” – a tithe of the tithe in our lives; not just our finances which is simply a starting point – but of our time, our effort, our skills, giftings, and service unto the Lord.

Philippians 2:10 “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.”

- A sacrificial life given to God.