

Numbers 18 Bible Study Notes Part 1 of 2

Nu 18:1 And the LORD said unto Aaron, Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: As we continue the study of this chapter we will see that God has now established the office of the priesthood to the family of Aaron, as seen in the last of the previous chapter. With the office of priesthood firmly confirmed by God and made know to all Israel, God is now charging Aaron and the priesthood of their duties and responsibilities and the consequences of failures in the carrying out of the assigned duties.

God is also defining the duties of the Levites. Why would God spend so much time on this subject? Remember the rebellion of Korah in chapter 16? Did you notice that Korah was of the tribe of Levi? This is why. God is clearly defining the roles of the Levites and the Aaronites to cause the rebellious spirit of jealousy to be put down as He declared to Moses and Aaron in: ***Nu 17:5 And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.***

What does God mean by the phrase "***bear the iniquity***" of the sanctuary and priesthood? We first are brought to remembrance; in the previous chapter, 250 censors were lit by people who were not of the priesthood, which resulted in their death. Thus, we draw the conclusion that "***bear the iniquity***" means:

1st: If anyone, not authorized by God, comes near to do anything that pertains to the sanctuary, or priesthood duties, and you do not turn them away, but allow them to do their wishes, I, God, will hold you accountable, and you shall bear the consequence of your sin of omission.

2nd: If you fail to do any of the duties of the office assigned to you, I, God, will hold you accountable, and you shall bear the consequence of your sin of omission.

This gives us the picture, in today's age of salvation by grace, of the necessity of the Christian to live the Christian life to the fullest extent. Being born again, by God's marvelous grace, we have certain duties, of the office of being an ambassador for Christ, enjoined upon us. Should we fail in meeting the obligations, of the office of ambassador in our lives, then we shall be held accountable to God and bear the consequence of our sin of omission.

Some will say, but we are not priests, or of the lineage of the priesthood; I ask you; what are you going to do with the scriptures in: ***Re 1:6| 5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*** and in: ***Re 5:10| 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.***

Seeing both texts are speaking about God's people, on earth in time, in the age of salvation by grace, we see the simple conclusion that every child of grace is a priest. Thus, we draw the conclusion that we, just like the priesthood of Israel described here in scripture, are responsible, and will be held accountable, for any failure to do what God has commanded of the born again sinner, and the organized church.

May God help us to be faithful servants to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 And thy brethren also of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of thy father, bring thou with thee, that they may be joined unto thee, and minister unto thee: but thou and thy sons with thee shall minister before the tabernacle of witness.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: God is now assigning the rest of the tribe of Levi to be assistants to the office of the priesthood, which is assigned to Aaron and his descendants. Aaron was a descendant of Levi also, so we see that the whole tribe of Levi is involved in the action of the office of the priesthood, and sanctuary, as prescribed by God.

We add that only the priesthood of the family of Aaron was allowed to enter the holy place or the most holy place as prescribed by God. The rest of the Levites were not to do or perform any service of the sanctuary that God had specifically assigned to the office of priesthood.

We remember that the tabernacle of the congregation was separate from the holy place and the most holy place. The Aaronites only served in the two holy places. In the tabernacle of the congregation the Levites were assistants to the Aaronites in all things except in the offering of the sacrifices. The Aaronites only were charged with actually offering the sacrifices and performing the duties associated with those offerings. The Levites only performed those duties assigned to them by the Aaronites and only those not directly assigned to the Aaronites.

3 And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see here that God is making clear to both the Aaronites and the Levites who does what. We see the follow-up of the phrase "*bear the iniquity*" and the sentence of death associated therewith, for the sin of omission on the part of either party.

Thus, we have the picture of the church today in the following perspective: The Aaronites are the example of God's ministers who are called and chosen to be the public orators in the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Levites are a picture of the rest of the church body, who preach the gospel of Jesus Christ by walking in faithfulness to the call of the gospel.

4 And they shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, for all the service of the tabernacle: and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you. 5 And ye shall keep the charge of the sanctuary, and the charge of the altar: that there be no wrath any more upon the children of Israel. 6 And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a gift for the LORD, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7 Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for everything of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see clearly now from these verses that the office of priesthood given to the Aaronites is clearly established to be defined by the actual offering of sacrifices on the altar in the tabernacle of the congregation and all the duties assigned in the holy place and the most holy place. "*Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for everything of the altar, and within the vail; and ye shall serve:*" The Aaronites would have the assistance of the Levites in all other duties but these.

8 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance forever.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: In this verse we see more particularly describe that the actual offering of the sacrifice upon the altar is the duty of the office of the priesthood assigned particularly to the Aaronites.

9 This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. 10 In the most holy place shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see that the office of the priesthood had their particular duties assigned for the offering of the sacrifices and there is a reason behind it demonstrated here. The wave and heave offerings, that were not burned with the sacrifices, were given to the Aaronite priesthood for their sustenance in life. They were to take it into the holy place and eat of it there.

11 And this is thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute forever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it. 12 All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee. 13 And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it. 14 Everything devoted in Israel shall be thine.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see in these verses; God is making provision for the families, of those who are serving in the office of the priesthood, in the things herein provided to be used exclusively for their sustenance, as assigned by God.

We might from here draw a picture of the church providing for the ministers of the gospel, and that provision being sufficient to sustain them and their families. However, we remember also in scripture that Paul, the apostle, worked for his own sustenance that the church could not say; we made you what you are, or, you have what you have because of our provision. This also gave Paul that extra point of freedom; he was not chargeable to the church for his sustenance; this gave him free license to preach the whole of the gospel, without being afraid of offending his providers.

15 Everything that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. 16 And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17 But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD. 18 And the flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine. 19 All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute forever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see in these verses and in particular verse 19 that God has made provision for the office of the priesthood, the Aaronites, and their families. God calls this a covenant of salt. Why?

Salt, at this particular time, was used for two main purposes:

1st: to preserve food, especially meat. In preservation we see that by giving this food to the Aaronites they were preserved in life sustenance.

2nd: to season food and give it a better taste. This made the demands of the office of priesthood have a good taste in their hearts, and minds, and gave them thankful hearts to God, for the provision He has made for them.

20 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: I would point out here that God is speaking directly to Aaron, the high priest, and not to Moses. This gives us the picture, God speaking directly to the high priest, of God conferring with Jesus Christ, God the Son who is our High Priest, and working out the details of how Christ would bring relieve God's people of their sins.

Now we see why God has given all these particulars of duties and benefits of the office of priesthood. Thus, God has not given the Aaronites any earthly possessions in land and other things, because their service to the office of priesthood was an all demanding one and they would not have time to plant crops and raise animals and the other necessary things that accompany normal living conditions.

We see here a picture of the church today, how? God did not give the priesthood or their assistants, the Aaronites and the Levites, an earthly possession. Neither do we, God's priesthood on earth in the age of salvation by grace, have an earthly possession. Our possession is; as that of the priesthood, the Aaronites, and their assistants, the tribe of Levi, here on the earth, to serve the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ here, looking forward to serving our God in the eternal heaven, where our eternal sustenance and possession resides.

21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. 23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. 24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: We see in these verses that God has made provision for the Levites, since they did not receive a land inheritance either. We see that they are assigned particular duties and are charged to "**bear the iniquity**" of any omission on their part.

The tithes, iterated here, are the 10% tax levied upon all the tribes of Israel except the tribe of Levi, which includes the priesthood of the Aaronites.

We see in the tithes a picture of the present day church providing for the ministry. Remember that the priesthood herein described in this chapter had no income or sustenance except from the congregation of Israel.

The office of priesthood was a full time occupation of service to God and God's people and is a perfect picture of the present day church, its ministry, and congregations, inclusive of all of God's people. But you say this was Old Testament stuff and we are under the New Testament today. That is true, but the provision of God for his ministry is still the same.

When we get to the New Testament we see that Paul, in particular, labored with his own hands to have sustenance. Why? Paul did not want the church to be able to say; if we hadn't provided for you, you would be nothing, and he did not want to be chargeable to them in any way. Consider what Paul says in: **2Co 12:13-18 13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. 14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. 15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. 16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. 17 Did I make a gain of**

you by any of them whom I sent unto you? 18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps? 19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

Paul tells the Corinthians; when I was with you the first and second times, and established churches in the name of Christ, I worked with mine own hands and did not burden you in any way of you providing sustenance to me. Paul confesses that in this he did wrong.

Paul points out that he didn't get any gain from them when he sent others to minister to them in his stead. Paul says that when I come the third time I will not be a burden to you, though I should according to the testimony of God, because unlike those false professors among you that are there to get gain for themselves only, I have come to you and am coming to you, not for my gain, but for I seek to make gain for the glory of God and the advancement of God's church.

If Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, says it was wrong of him to not be sustained by the church congregation, then it would follow that even in these New Testament times the congregations of the churches should be making the natural provisions necessary for the ministry of their church body.

25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe. 27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fulness of the winepress. 28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: God tells the tribe of Levi, when you have received the tithes of Israel, you are to make a tithe of 10% also. Your tithe will go to the priesthood and their sustenance. So we see that it ends up that only the Aaronites, the priesthood, were exempted from tithing.

29 Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it. 30 Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor, and as the increase of the winepress. 31 And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation. 32 And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die.

Clarke Lee's Commentary: Again we see that if used properly there is no "***bear the iniquity***" but is improperly used then there is the consequence of "***bear the iniquity***".

Again this is a stark reminder to us to live the Christian life to the fullness of the commandment of God and Christ. Anything short of that is sin and we shall bear the iniquity thereof.

May God almighty help us to live and be true Christians in every sense of the word and the conveyance of the definition thereof. Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, was sinless and let us therefore live, the new born again Christian life, in sinless perfection through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, which dwells within us. Praise and glory to God for the reassurance of our help and divine aid of the Holy Spirit as seen in: ***1Jo 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.***

Praise God for the power of his Holy Spirit in us! Praise God for salvation by grace! Praise God for his is the name to be praised and glorified upon the earth, and in heaven!

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