

## Numbers Chapter 4 Commentary

**1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 2 Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, 3 From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.**

Notice, the ones set apart here are the sons of Kohath, of the sons of Levi, who were of them that went among the congregation to do God's work among the people. They are taken from out of the service of the congregation into the tabernacle service. God set the age of the Kohathite priests to serve in the tabernacle service from 30 to 50 years of age. Possibly, this was because of the physical demands of the service they are set apart to. We see in: ***Nu 4:15 "And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation."*** These Kohathites, from age 30 to 50 years old, were set apart to do a very physical task of carrying the holy things of the tabernacle as listed in verses 4 through 15.

Some people say there is errancy between ***Nu 4:3*** and ***Nu 8:24***. ***Nu 8:24 "This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation:"*** However, if you look at what is commanded in ***Nu 8:24***, we see that this is about a completely different work than that of the Kohathites, who were to carry the tabernacle when it was moved. The remainders of the tribe of Levi, from the age of 25 and upwards, were to serve in the ministry of the tabernacle service. Thus we see; there is no discrepancy between the scriptures because they are speaking of different duties.

Other scriptures that seem to conflict with these two verses are found in ***1Ch 23:3, 24, 27***. We must remember that the wilderness journey has long since ended and Israel has occupied the Promised Land for a long time. They are no longer carrying the tabernacle about because it is in a fixed spot that King David has prepared for it, seen in: ***1Ch 23:3 "Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. 4 Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand were officers and judges: 5 Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith."***

In this text we see that the age 30 years and upward is used for the Levites. However, if you look you will see the duties are again different. These, 30 years and upward are set to particular duties:

- To set forward the work of the house of the LORD.
- To be judges.
- To be porters.
- To praise the Lord.

Again, we see that there is no error, since these are assigned new and different duties, in a different time and age in the life of the children of Israel.

The second set of reference was in: ***1Ch 23:24,27; 1Ch 23:24 "These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by***

*their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward. 25 For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever: 26 And also unto the Levites; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof. 27 For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above:"*

Again we see that the service of these Levites was different from the scripture back in **Nu 4:3**. King David gave commandment for the numbering and employment to temple service (not tabernacle service) of 20 years old and upward. We understand that now they have a huge temple to keep repaired, cleaned, and there are many new and various duties to be performed when the temple is completed. There is also to be considered the increase of the number of the children of Israel, and the need for more priests to carry out the required ceremonial functions. Once again, we point out there is no scriptural error, because in each case there is a change in the duties to be performed.

**4 This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things: 5 And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it:**

Here, we see a picture of the items, in the most holy place, being covered with the vail; so that none, except the high priest and his sons, might see the most holy items. This accomplished several things:

- It showed that the vail upon the eyes of Israel, who bore God's name on the earth, by keeping sacred the place, where God met with the high priest, veiled from the sight of Israel. This signified that Israel would and could not see Jesus Christ but in the prophetic perspective.
- For us today, we are reminded of the scripture in: **Mr 15:37-38; 37 "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."** With the vail rent, we have the revelation of Jesus as Christ and Lord and Saviour. Thus, the Old Testament scriptures, which contained the testimony of Christ, were opened and Christ is revealed for us in them. The one, true, sacrifice for sin has now been revealed and the vail is no longer needed for God's people.
- It also demonstrated to Israel; the sacredness of God's presence, and the need for their separating themselves from looking upon what represented the face of God. Remember what God told Moses and Israel in: **Ex 33:20 "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And in: Ex 19:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish."**

To help us understand the seriousness of this charge we revert to scripture in: **Le 10:1-2; 1 "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. 2 And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."**

What has this to do with us today?

- We should be fully aware of the office of our calling in the Church of Salvation by Grace.
- We should be sure to fill that duty as best we can, without intruding into the office of others.
- We need to understand what a sacred duty is placed upon us to carry the name of God in life, and show forth his praise with reverence and fear.

- We cannot look upon the face of God, in nature, and live. Christ the Son is veiled from us until we are born again. When Christ was incarnate, people could look him in the face. However, He is no longer incarnate, and he is hidden from us, in physical appearance, until we are resurrected. Remember the scripture in: **1Co 13:12 "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."**

Remember when Stephen was being stoned to death? He looked heavenward and saw Jesus in heaven and then died. That is why in the resurrection; we will have bodies that are changed from mortality to immortality, and corruptible to incorruptible.

**6 And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof. 7 And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: 8 And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. 9 And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuffdishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: 10 And they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. 11 And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof: 12 And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put them on a bar: 13 And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon: 14 And they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the fleshhooks, and the shovels, and the basons, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it. 15 And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.**

We see again; the reminder from God that not only are they not to be looking upon, but they are not to touch anything except the staves, by which they are to tote the vessels of the holy and most holy place. We see God reminding them of this in: **2Sa 6:1-7; 1 "Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims. 3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. 6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."**

We see they remembered God's commandment, and followed his instruction to move the ark in: **1Ch 15:1-15; 1 "And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of**

***God, and pitched for it a tent. 2 Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever. 3 And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it. 4 And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites: 5 Of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twenty: 6 Of the sons of Merari; Asaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred and twenty: 7 Of the sons of Gershon; Joel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and thirty: 8 Of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred: 9 Of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore: 10 Of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twelve. 11 And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, 12 And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. 13 For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. 14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. 15 And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD."***

The lesson I see in all this for us today is; we should be very careful that we follow God's commandments and instructions, as we bear his Holy Name upon the earth. We, in comparison to Israel who bore the tabernacle in their time, are bearing about the name of God, and Christ, on earth in time. We should reverence that name, to the point of complete obedience to the commandment and instructions of Christ for his people in time. Remembering, we don't do any of the work that was accomplished by the finished work of Christ. We are, simply put, His representatives and/or ambassadors here in the world in time.

***16 And to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest pertaineth the oil for the light, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat offering, and the anointing oil, and the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that therein is, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof. 17 And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, 18 Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: 19 But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden: 20 But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die. 21 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 22 Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families; 23 From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. 24 This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: 25 And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, 26 And the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve. 27 At the appointment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burdens, and in all their service: and ye shall appoint unto them in charge all their burdens. 28 This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of the congregation: and their charge shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 29 As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of***

their fathers; 30 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. 31 And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof, 32 And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden. 33 This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest. 34 And Moses and Aaron and the chief of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites after their families, and after the house of their fathers, 35 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation: 36 And those that were numbered of them by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. 37 These were they that were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, which Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 38 And those that were numbered of the sons of Gershon, throughout their families, and by the house of their fathers, 39 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation, 40 Even those that were numbered of them, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers, were two thousand and six hundred and thirty. 41 These are they that were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all that might do service in the tabernacle of the congregation, whom Moses and Aaron did number according to the commandment of the LORD. 42 And those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, throughout their families, by the house of their fathers, 43 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that entereth into the service, for the work in the tabernacle of the congregation, 44 Even those that were numbered of them after their families, were three thousand and two hundred. 45 These be those that were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. 46 All those that were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chief of Israel numbered, after their families, and after the house of their fathers, 47 From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry, and the service of the burden in the tabernacle of the congregation, 48 Even those that were numbered of them, were eight thousand and five hundred and fourscore. 49 According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

We see in this chapter that God has made provision for every office and duty to have its proper personage. God has ordered and provided as was necessary to carry out his will and purpose in time.

***Application to us today:*** God has something for every child of grace to do to make his worship services complete. Some may not think they are important or needed, but they are in God's eyes. If there was no duty for them to fulfill, then God would not have called them. As we go on through our study of the bible; we shall see that there are many duties that had to be fulfilled to carry out the sacrificial/ceremonial law service, and God made provision for everything. There were many that had just everyday duties, and they were not necessarily assigned to temple service. These were just as necessary as the temple service, for without the congregation of Israel the temple service would have been, what we would deem, unnecessary.

Thus, we see a picture of the church in time, and its functions and obligations for every member of the congregation, of Church of Salvation by Grace; Those who bear God's name on earth. If there is no congregation, then there is no need of the office of minister, or deacon, or clerk, or treasurer and etc.

This reminds us of the scripture in: **Mt 5:16** "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" Do you now understand? It is necessary for each child of grace to live and walk in faith to Christ so that the light of Christ may shine forth and thereby affect others.

Let's look at an example: In the tabernacle service, if one who carried the boards of the tabernacle decides they are not needed, and they, and their board, doesn't show up when it is time to set up the tabernacle, the setting up process is upset and the tabernacle is not complete without that board. So it is with the Church of Salvation by Grace, established by Christ in time. Whenever a child of grace is not in their proper place, the organized church is not complete because a board is missing. Let us not forget; we are called to serve a living God, and God has standards that He has set for us to follow in life. May God help us all to be in our proper place, doing the proper things, and thereby bring glory to God's holy name.