

**NOTES  
ON  
THE BOOK OF NUMBERS**

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

-----

*"Things new and old."*

-----

Copyright © 1862

by

F. H. Revell

edited for 3BSB by Baptist Bible Believer in the spirit of the Colportage Ministry of a century ago

*~ out-of-print and in the public domain ~*

**Numbers 7 - Numbers 8**

This is the very longest section in the entire Book of Numbers. It contains a detailed statement of the names of the twelve princes of the congregation, and of their respective offerings on the occasion of the setting up of the tabernacle.

**"It came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them, that the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered. And they brought their offering before the Lord, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox; and they brought them before the tabernacle. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took: the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites. Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service, and four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest. But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none; because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders" (Verses 1-9).**

We noticed, when meditating on Numbers 3 and 4, that the sons of Kohath were privileged to carry all that was most precious of the instruments and furniture of the sanctuary. Hence they did not receive any of the princes' offering. It was their high and holy service to bear upon their

shoulders, and not to make use of wagons or oxen. The more closely we examine those things which were committed to the custody and charge of the Kohathites, the more we shall see that they set forth, in type, the deeper and fuller manifestations of GOD in CHRIST.

The Gershonites and Merarites, on the contrary, had to do with those things which were more external. Their work was rougher and more exposed, and therefore they were furnished with the needed help which the liberality of the princes placed at their disposal. The Kohathite did not want the aid of a wagon or an ox in his elevated service. His own shoulder was to bear the precious mystic burden.

**"And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes offered their offering before the altar. And the Lord said unto Moses, They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar."**

An unspiritual reader, in running his eye over this unusually long chapter, might feel disposed to ask why so much space is occupied, in an inspired document, with what might be given in the compass of a dozen lines. If a man were giving an account of the transaction of those twelve days, he would, in all probability, have very briefly summed up all in one statement, and told us that the twelve princes offered each such and such things.

But that would not have suited the divine mind at all. GOD's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. Nothing could satisfy Him but the fullest and most detailed account of each man's name, of the tribe which he represented, and of the offering which we made to the sanctuary of GOD. Hence this long chapter of eighty-nine verses. Each name shines out in its own distinctness. Each offering is minutely described and duly estimated. The names and the offerings are not huddled promiscuously together. This would not be like our GOD; and He can only act like Himself, in whatever He does, and speak like Himself, whatever He says. Man may pass hastily or carelessly over gifts and offerings; but GOD never can, never does, and never will. He delights to record every little act of service, every little loving gift. He never forgets the smallest thing; and not only does He not forget it Himself, but He takes special pains that untold millions shall read the record. How little did those twelve princes imagine that their names and their offerings were to be handed down, from age to age, to be read by countless generations! Yet so it was, for GOD would have it so. He will enter upon what might seem to us tedious detail, yea, if you please, what man might deem tautology, rather than omit a single name of any of His servants, or a single item of their work.

Thus, in the chapter before us, "**each prince**" gets his own appointed day for the presenting of his offering, and his own allotted space on the eternal page of inspiration, in the which the most complete record of his gifts is inscribed by GOD the Holy Ghost.

This is divine. And may we not say that this seventh chapter of Numbers is one of those specimen pages from the book of eternity, on which the finger of GOD has engraved the names of His servants, and the record of their work We believe it is; and if the reader will turn to the twenty-third of second Samuel, and the sixteenth of Romans, he will find two similar pages. In the former, we have the names and the deeds of David's worthies; in the latter, the names and the deeds of Paul's friends at Rome. In both we have an illustration of what, we feel persuaded, is true of all the saints of GOD, and the servants of CHRIST, from first to last. Each one has his

own special place on the roll, and each one his place in the Master's heart; and all will come out by and by. Amongst David's mighty men, we have "**the first three**" - "**the three**" and "**the thirty**." Not one of "**the thirty**" ever attained a place among "**the three**;" nor did one of "**the three**" ever reach to "**the first three**."

Nor this only. Every act is faithfully set down; and the substance and style most accurately put before us. We have the name of the man, what he did, and how he did it. All is recorded, with sedulous care and minuteness, by the unerring and impartial pen of the Holy Ghost.

So also, when we turn to that remarkable sample page furnished in Romans 16, we have all about Phebe, what she was and what she did, and what a solid basis she had on which to rest her claim upon the sympathy and succour of the assembly at Rome. Then we have Priscilla and Aquila - the wife put first - and how they had laid down their own necks for the life of the blessed apostle, and earned his thanks and that of all the churches of the Gentiles. Next we have "**the well beloved Epaenetus**;" and "**Mary who bestowed**," not merely labour, but "**much labour**" on the apostle. It would not have expressed the mind of the Spirit, or the heart of CHRIST, merely to say that Epaenetus was "**beloved**," or that Mary had bestowed "**labour**." No; the little adjuncts "**well**" and "**much**" were necessary in order to set forth the exact status of each.

But we must not enlarge, and we shall merely call the reader's attention to verse 12. Why does not the inspired penman place "**Tryphena, Tryphosa**," and "**the beloved Persis**" under one head? Why does he not assign them one and the same position? The reason is perfectly beautiful; because he could only say of the two former that they had "**laboured in the Lord**," whereas it was due to the latter to add that she had "**laboured much in the Lord**." Can anything be more discriminating? It is "**the three**" - "**the first three**" - and "**the thirty**" over again. There is no promiscuous jumbling of names and services together; no haste; no inaccuracy. We are told what each one was, and what he did. Each one gets his own place, and receives his own meed of praise.

And this, be it observed, is a specimen page from the book of eternity. How solemn And yet, how encouraging There is not a single act of service which we render to our Lord that will not be set down in His book; and not only the substance of the act, but the style of it also, for GOD appreciates style as well as we do. He loves a cheerful giver, and a cheerful worker, because that is precisely what He is Himself. It was grateful to His heart to see the tide of liberality flowing around His sanctuary from the representatives of the twelve tribes. It was grateful to his heart to mark the actings of David's worthies, in the day of his rejection. It was grateful to His heart to trace the devoted path of the Priscillas, the Aquilas, and the Phebes of a later date. And, we may add, it is grateful to His heart, in this day of so much lukewarmness and vapid profession, to behold, here and there, a true-hearted lover of CHRIST, and a devoted worker in His vineyard.

May GOD's Spirit stir up our hearts to more thorough devotedness! May the love of CHRIST constrain us, more and more, to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who loved us and washed us from our scarlet sins in His most precious Blood, and made us all we are, or ever hope to be.

## Numbers 8

**"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou**

**lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses. And this work of the candlestick was of beaten gold, unto the shaft thereof, unto the flowers thereof, was beaten work: according unto the pattern which the Lord had showed Moses, so he made the candlestick" (Verses 1-4).**

On reading the foregoing paragraph, two things claim the reader's attention, namely:

- first, the position which the type of the golden candlestick occupies; and,
- secondly, the instruction which the type conveys.

It is not a little remarkable, that the candlestick is the only part of the furniture of the tabernacle introduced in this place. We have nothing about the golden altar, nothing about the golden table. The candlestick alone is before us, and that not in its covering of blue and of badgers' skins, as in chapter 4, where it, like all the rest, is seen in its travelling dress. It is here seen lighted, not covered. It comes in between the offerings of the princes, and the consecration of the Levites, and sheds forth its mystic light according to the commandment of the Lord. Light cannot be dispensed with in the wilderness, and therefore the golden candlestick must be stripped of its covering, and allowed to shine in testimony for GOD, which, be it ever remembered, is the grand object of everything, whether it be the offering of our substance, as in the case of the princes; or the dedication of our persons, as in the case of the Levites. It is only in the light of the sanctuary that the true worth of anything or any one can be seen.

Hence the moral order of the whole of this part of our book is striking and beautiful; indeed it is divinely perfect. Having read, in chapter 7, the lengthened statement of the princes' liberality, we, in our wisdom, might suppose that the next thing in order would be the consecration of the Levites, thus presenting, in unbroken connection, "**our persons and offerings.**" But no. The Spirit of GOD causes the light of the sanctuary to intervene, in order that we may learn, in it, the true object of all liberality and service, in the wilderness.

Is there not lovely moral appropriateness in this? Can any spiritual reader fail to see it? Why have we not the golden altar, with its cloud of incense, here? Why not the pure table, with its twelve loaves? Because neither of these would have the least moral connection with what goes before, or what follows after; But the golden candlestick stands connected with both, inasmuch as it shows us that all liberality and all work must be viewed in the light of the sanctuary, in order to ascertain its real worth. This is a grand wilderness lesson, and it is taught us here as blessedly as type can teach us. In our progress through the Book of Numbers, We have just read the account of the large-hearted liberality of the great heads of the congregation, on the occasion of the dedication of the altar; and we are about to read the record of the consecration of the Levites; but between the one and the other, the inspired penman pauses, in order to let the light of the sanctuary shine on both.

This is divine order. It is, we are bold to say, one of the ten thousand illustrations which lie scattered over the surface of Scripture, tending to demonstrate the divine perfectness of the volume, as a whole, and of each book, section, and paragraph therein.

And we are glad - intensely glad to point out these precious illustrations to our reader, as we pass

along in his company. We consider we are doing him good service herein; and, at the same time, presenting our humble tribute of praise to that precious book which our Father has graciously penned for us. Well indeed we know it does not need our poor testimony, nor that of any mortal pen or mortal tongue. But still it is our joy to render the testimony, in the face of the enemy's manifold but futile attacks upon its inspiration. The true source and character of all such attacks will become more and more manifest, as we become more deeply, livingly, and experimentally acquainted with the infinite depths and divine perfections of the Volume. And hence it is that the internal evidences of Holy Scripture - its powerful effect upon ourselves, no less than its intrinsic moral glories - its ability to judge the very roots of character and conduct, no less than its admirable structure, in all its parts - are the most powerful arguments in defense of its divinity.

A book that exposes me to myself - that tells me all that is in my heart - that lays bare the very deepest moral springs of my nature - that judges me thoroughly, and at the same time reveals to me One who meets my every need - such a book carries its own credentials with it. It craves not, and needs not, letters of commendation from men. It stands in no need of his favour, in no dread of his wrath. It has often occurred to us that were we to reason about the Bible as the woman of Sychar reasoned about our Lord, we should reach as sound a conclusion about it as she reached about Him.

"**Come,**" said this simple and happy reasoner, "**see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?**" May we not, with equal force of reasoning, say, "Come, see a book which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Word of GOD?" Yes, truly; and not only so, but we may argue, *a fortiori*, inasmuch as the book of GOD not only tells us all that ever we did, but all we think, and all we say, and all we are see (Romans 3:10-18; Matthew 15:19).

But is it that we despise external evidences? Far from it. We delight in them, we value every argument and every evidence calculated to strengthen the foundations of the heart's confidence in the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture; and, most assuredly, we have abundance of such material.

The very history of the book itself, with all its striking facts, furnishes a broad tributary stream to swell the tide of evidence.

- the history of its composition;
- the history of its preservation;
- the history of its translation from tongue to tongue;
- the history of its circulation throughout earth's wide domain
- in a word, its entire history," surpassing fable, and yet true, forms a powerful argument in defense of its divine origin.

Take, for example, that one fact of most commanding interest, namely, its having been kept for over a thousand years, in the custody of those who would have gladly consigned it, if they could, to eternal oblivion. Is not this a telling fact? Yes; and there are many such facts in the marvellous history of this peerless, priceless Volume. But after allowing as wide a margin as may be desired, in the which to insert the value of external evidences, we return, with unshaken decision, to our statement, that the internal evidences - the proofs to be gleaned from the book itself - form as powerful a defense as can be erected with which to stem the tide of skeptical and infidel

opposition.

We shall not, however, pursue any further this line of thought into which we have been led, while contemplating the remarkable position assigned to the golden candlestick, in the Book of Numbers. We felt constrained to say thus much in testimony to our most precious Bible, and having said it, we shall return to our chapter, and seek to gather up the instruction contained in its opening paragraph.

**"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, when thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick."**

Those "**seven lamps**" express the light of the Spirit in testimony. They were connected with the beaten shaft of the candlestick which typifies CHRIST, who, in His Person and work, is the foundation of the Spirit's work in the Church. All depends upon CHRIST. Every ray of light in the Church, in the individual believer, or in Israel by and by, all flows from CHRIST.

Nor is this all we learn from our type. "**The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.**"

Were we to clothe this figure in New Testament language, we should quote our Lord's Words when He says to us, "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven**" (Matthew 5:16). Wherever the true light of the Spirit shines it will always yield a clear testimony to CHRIST. It will call attention not to itself, but to Him; and this is the way to glorify GOD. "**The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.**" This is a great practical truth for all Christians.

The very finest evidence which can be afforded of true spiritual work is that it tends directly to exalt CHRIST. If attention be sought for the work or the workman, the light has become dim, and the minister of the sanctuary must use the snuffers. It was Aaron's province to light the lamps; and he it was who trimmed them likewise. In other words, the light which, as Christians, we are responsible to yield, is not only founded upon CHRIST, but maintained by Him, from moment to moment, throughout the entire night. Apart from Him we can do nothing. The golden shaft sustained the lamps; the priestly hand supplied the oil and applied the snuffers.

It is all in CHRIST, from CHRIST, and by CHRIST. And more, it is all to CHRIST.

Wherever the light of the Spirit - the true light of the sanctuary - has shone, in this wilderness world, the object of that light has been to exalt the name of JESUS. Whatever has been done by the Holy Ghost, whatever has been said, whatever has been written, has had for its aim the glory of that blessed One. And we may say with confidence, that whatever has not that tendency - that aim, is not of the Holy Ghost, be it what it may. There may be an immense amount of work done, a great deal of apparent result reached, a quantity of that which is calculated to attract human attention, and elicit human applause, and yet not one ray of light from the golden candlestick. And why? Because attention is sought for the work, or for those engaged in it. Man and his doings and sayings are exalted, instead of CHRIST. The light has not been produced by the oil which the hand of the great High Priest supplies; and, as a consequence, it is false light. It is a light which shines not over against the candlestick, but over against the name or the acting's of

some poor mortal.

All this is most solemn, and demands our deepest attention.

There is always the utmost danger when a man or his work becomes remarkable. He may be sure Satan is gaining his object, when attention is drawn to anything or to any one but the Lord JESUS Himself. A work may be commenced in the greatest possible simplicity, but through lack of holy watchfulness and spirituality on the part of the workman, he himself, or the results of his work, may attract general attention, and he may fall into the snare of the devil.

Satan's grand and ceaseless object is to dishonour the Lord JESUS; and if he can do this by what seems to be Christian service, he has achieved all the greater victory for the time. He has no objection to work, as such, provided he can detach that work from the name of JESUS. He will even mingle himself, if he can, with the work; he will present himself amongst the servants of CHRIST, as he once presented himself amongst the sons of GOD; but his object is ever one and the same, namely, to dishonour the Lord.

He permitted the damsel, in Acts 16 to bear testimony to CHRIST's servants, and say, "**These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.**" But this was simply with a view to ensnare: those servants and mar their work. He was defeated, however, because the light that emanated from Paul and Silas was the genuine light, of the sanctuary, and it shone only for CHRIST. They sought not a name for themselves; and, inasmuch as it was to them and not to their Master that the damsel bore witness, they refused the witness, and chose rather to suffer for their Master's sake than to be exalted at His expense.

This is a fine example for all the Lord's workmen.

And if we turn, for an instant to Acts 3 we shall find another very striking illustration. There the light of the sanctuary shone out in the healing of the lame man, and when attention was drawn, unsought, to the workmen, we find Peter and John, at once, with holy jealousy, retiring behind their glorious Master and giving all the praise to Him.

**"And, as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them, in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus."**

Here we have, in very deed, "**the seven lamps giving their light over against the candlestick;**" or, in other words, the sevenfold or perfect display of the Spirit's light in distinct testimony to the name of JESUS.

"**Why,**" said these faithful vessels of the Spirit's light, "**look ye so earnestly on us?**" No need of the snuffers here. The light was undimmed. It was, no doubt, an occasion which the apostles might have turned to their own account, had they been so disposed. It was a moment in the which they might have surrounded their own names with a halo of glory. They might have raised

themselves to a pinnacle of fame, and drawn around them the respect and veneration of wondering, if not worshipping, thousands. But had they done so, they would have robbed their Master; falsified the testimony; grieved the Holy Ghost, and brought down upon themselves the just judgment of Him who will not give His glory to another.

But, no; the seven lamps were shining brightly in Jerusalem, at this interesting moment. The true candlestick was in Solomon's porch just then, and not in the temple. At least the seven lamps were there, and doing their appointed work most blessedly. Those honoured servants sought no glory for themselves; yea, they instantly put forth all their energies in order to avert the wondering gaze of the multitude from themselves, and fix it upon the only worthy One, who, though He had passed into the heavens, was still working by His Spirit on earth. Many other illustrations might be drawn from the pages of the Acts of the Apostles; but the above will suffice to impress upon our hearts the great practical lesson taught in the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps.

We are deeply sensible of our need of the lesson at this very moment. There is always a danger of the work and the workman being more the object than the Master. Let us be on our guard against this. It is a sad evil. It grieves the blessed Spirit, who ever labours to exalt the name of JESUS. It is offensive to the Father, who would ever be sounding in our ears, and deep down in our hearts, those words heard, from an open Heaven, on the mount of transfiguration: "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.**"

It is in the most direct and positive hostility to the mind of Heaven, where every eye is fixed on JESUS, every heart occupied with JESUS, and where the one eternal, universal, unanimous cry shall be, "**Thou art worthy.**"

Let us think of all this - think deeply - think habitually; that so we may shrink from everything bordering upon, or savouring of, the exaltation of man - of self - our doings and sayings and thinkings. May we all more earnestly seek the quiet, shady, unobtrusive path where the spirit of the meek and lowly JESUS will ever lead us to walk and serve.

In a word, may we so abide in CHRIST, so receive from Him, day by day, and moment by moment, the pure oil, that our light may shine, without our thinking of it, to His praise, in whom alone we have ALL, and apart from whom we can do absolutely NOTHING.

The remainder of the eighth chapter of Numbers contains the record of the ceremonial connected with the consecration of the Levites, to which we have already referred in our notes on chapter 3 and 4.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>

\*\*\*