

## Sermon #05 — *Christ in Numbers*

Title:        **LEVITE LABOR**

Text:        Numbers 4:1-49

Subject:    *The Levitical Priesthood — God's Chosen*

Date:        Tuesday Evening — January 14, 2020

Readings: *Lindsay Campbell and Mark Henson*

Introduction:

As God the Holy Ghost will enable me I want to preach to you tonight from the 4<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Book of Numbers — Numbers 4. — My subject is **LEVITE LABOR** — **LEVITE LABOR** (Numbers 4:1-49). Let's read just a portion of this chapter together.

(Numbers 4:1-49) 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. (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

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come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: (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,

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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.

**In the next verses we read about the responsibilities of Gershon and Merari and their sons.**

- Some bore the heavy burden of the tabernacle furnishings.
- Some were appointed to carry the boards and sockets of silver.
- Others carried the load of the curtains and coverings.
- And some carried the cords and pins (nails).

Then, in verses 46-49, we read...

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(Numbers 4:46-49) 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.

**GOD'S FIRSTBORN**

Perhaps, as you read this chapter, you thought as I did. — “What does this have to do with me?” If you will give me your attention for just a few minutes, I will show you what these things have to do with you

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and me. — **Remember that the tribe of Levi was taken from the tribes of Israel as the firstborn. The Lord God claimed the firstborn of man and beast as his own.** — “Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine” (Exodus 13:2). **And the Lord God says, concerning the tribe of Levi,** — “I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine” (Numbers 3:12). — “I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel” (Numbers 8:18).

**So the Levites, being the priestly tribe in Israel, were typical of and representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah’s Firstborn, our Great High Priest.** The law of the firstborn, given back in Exodus 13:12, was prophetic of the incarnation and virgin birth of our Savior. — He who is born of a virgin is the only one who opened the womb by birth. Our blessed Savior, “*the firstborn,*” was conceived in

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Mary's virgin womb by the overshadowing power of God the Holy Spirit. **He opened Mary's virgin womb when he came forth from it to accomplish our redemption.** — **Christ, the Firstborn, is our High Priest, a Priest after the order of Melchisedec** (Hebrews 5:5-10; 7:1-28).

(Hebrews 5:5-10) So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee. (6) As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. (7) Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; (8) Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; (9) And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; (10) Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

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(Hebrews 7:1-28) For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; (2) To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; (3) Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. (4) Now consider how great this man *was*, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. (5) And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: (6) But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. (7) And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. (8) And here men that die receive tithes; but there he

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*receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. (9) And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. (10) For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. (11) If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? (12) For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. (13) For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. (14) For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. (15) And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, (16) Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. (17) For he testifieth, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (18) For

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there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. (19) For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God. (20) And inasmuch as not without an oath *he was made priest*: (21) (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) (22) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. (23) And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: (24) But this *man*, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. (25) Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (26) For such an high priest became us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; (27) Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up

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sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. (28) For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, *maketh* the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

**Without question, the Levites were also symbolic of faithful gospel preachers, those men who labor in the Word and doctrine of God and labor in service to God's Israel.**

- Gospel preachers are not priests.
- But like the Levites they live to serve the house of God and the people of God.
- Their work, like the work of the Levites here in Numbers 4, is a work, a burden, a load, a weight, a labor (Ephesians 4:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

(Ephesians 4:1-17) I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering,

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forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. (7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of

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the fulness of Christ: (14) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: (16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (17) This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

(1 Thessalonians 5:12-13) And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; (13) And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

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**And these Levites were typical of all believers. We who are God's elect are God's "royal priesthood"** (1 Peter 2:5-10). We are the "*the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.*" As such, we are God's Levites, God's "*royal priesthood.*" Here, in Numbers 4, the Lord God tells us how we are to serve him, as his "*royal priesthood.*"

**Proposition:** Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, calls all his redeemed to his service and lays upon each one a burden which no one else can carry. — It should be the joy of each believer to know what it is that his shoulders were made to bear and gladly take up the ennobling load.

In the moving the tabernacle and all its belongings from place to place there was great division of labor. As we would think, the work of the Gershonites, looking after the curtains, could have easily been done by a few of men. But for this task alone 2630 were set apart. **This teaches us that no work done for God is small or trifling.** The packing up of the

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holy vessels was done by Aaron and his sons (vs. 5-15). Consecrated hands must set in order holy things. The bearers of the tabernacle and its furniture were three families of the Levites, the sons of Kohath, of Gershon, and of Merari. — **Let me show you four things about these Levites.**

### **VARIED**

1<sup>st</sup> — **Their work was varied. The sons of Merari had charge of the foundation things** — “Sockets, pillars, boards, bars, and pins” (vs. 31, 32). In setting up the tabernacle the sockets and pillars would be needed first. **Foundation truths should always go first. This is the work of the evangelist.** — “*Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, Jesus Christ.*” — “The Three Rs”

- Ruin by the Fall
- Redemption by the Blood
- Regeneration by the Holy Spirit

**The silver sockets speak of redemption,** because they were made of the ransom price given for the

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souls of the people (Exodus 30:15). — Yes, the redeeming Blood first.

- Sovereignty
- Substitution
- Satisfaction
- Success

**The sons of Gershon had charge of the uniting things.** “Coverings, curtains, and hangings” (vs. 24-27). The sockets and pillars may be strong, but they are naked and bare without the coverings and curtains. In fact, it was not a tabernacle without the coverings.

**These beautifully represent the work of the pastor, binding all together and beautifying with the coverings and hangings of order and doctrine.** The coverings brought every pillar and board into union with one another. This is the work of the pastor making manifest the truth. — “*All one in Christ Jesus.*”

**The sons of Kohath had charge of the approach**

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**things**. — “*All the vessels of the sanctuary*” (v. 15). The vessels placed in position indicate the way to God. No service could be done in the tabernacle without them. All was powerless till the work of the Kohathites was finished. **This is the work of the teacher**. These gifts belong to the Church just as really as they belonged to the tabernacle. — “*He gave some evangelists, some pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (Ephesians 4. 11, 12). — Evangelists, pastors, and teachers are all words that describe one group of men — Pastors — The Ascension Gift of Christ to His Church.

**APPOINTED**

2<sup>nd</sup> — **The work of the Levites was the work appointed to them by the Lord** (vs. 1-4). No man takes this work upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. Could you imagine others making other sockets, coverings, and vessels, and setting up another tabernacle. The whole thing could only be a sham and a mockery. **Each one was...**

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- Chosen by the Lord God.
- Appointed of God to his specific work.
- Gifted for that work to which he was appointed.
- Ordained for a specific time (20 years old to 50 years old).

**You my brother and you my sister, have a charge laid upon you by your God**, God who gave his Son for you, gave you to his Son, and gave his Son to you. He has made you his servant and the servant of his people. As God gave the Levites to Aaron, he has given us to Christ to serve him and his people.

- Always be Ready!
- Serve him Cheerfully!

## **UNITED**

3<sup>rd</sup> — **These Levites were united in all things.** The Gershonites had no jealousy at all, although the sons of Merari commenced work before them, and took possession of the spot before they came. They all wrought under one guiding will, and for the honor and glory of one Lord.

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- Their burdens were different, but their aim was one. — *“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, it is the same God which worketh in all”* (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).
- They sought the good of the Lord’s house always.
- By each one using the gift entrusted to him as God’s steward, we show the manifold grace of God, serving Christ together (1 Peter. 4:10).

**Illustration: *Two Angels Sent to Serve***

(1 Corinthians 12:1-20) Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (2) Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. (3) Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. (4) **Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.** (5) And there are differences of

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administrations, but the same Lord. (6) And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. (7) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (8) For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; (9) To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; (10) To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: (11) **But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.** (12) For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. (13) For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (14) For the body is not one member, but many. (15) If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I

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am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (16) And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (17) If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? (18) **But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.** (19) And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? (20) But now *are they* many members, yet but one body.

**REWARDED**

4<sup>th</sup> — **The Levites were rewarded for their work.** The Lord became to them their portion and inheritance (Deuteronomy 18:1, 2). “*I am their possession*” saith the Lord (Ezekiel 44:28). **Those who consecrate themselves to the work of the Lord find their all in him.** — “*They that wait at the altar are partakers with the altar*” (1 Corinthians 9:13). They that wait on the Lord are partakers with the Lord of his grace, mercy, and strength. — “*Well*

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*done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” — Partakers of his life, of his work, then of his joy.*

**Illustration:** *The Preacher and the Businessman*

**APPLICATION**

I wonder what God might do with one congregation of Levites in our day. — Levites, people devoted to Christ. — Levites, people devoted to the worship and honor of God. — Levites, people devoted to God’s Israel.

Spirit of God, give me more and more, every day, every hour, with every breath, to give myself to Christ as these Levites were given by God to Aaron.

Amen.