

Message #19**Numbers 18:1-32**

There are not too many churches anymore that really concern themselves with being a sacred and reverent place. The predominant theme today is friendship and fellowship. Create a pleasant environment so the seekers will find their way into church. Give them coffee and pop; give them music to which they can relate; give them entertainment so they like the experience. That is the way it is, but that is not the way it is supposed to be.

There should be seriousness and sacredness to church worship. People should be confronted with truth. There should be a fear of the Lord and a reverence for Him. There ought to be a sense that at church I am in the very presence of a Holy God and one day I will face this Holy God.

One thing that we clearly see in going through this book of Numbers, which we know does have N.T. application (I Cor. 10), is that worship is not light or frivolous. Kent Hughes said something that is so accurate, “There is certainly a place for laughter and fun in church, but there must also be a place for being deadly serious” (*Numbers*, p. 221).

Now the job for making certain that worship was deadly serious was a job given to Aaron and his sons. In fact, **verse 1** says, “you bear the guilt in connection to the sanctuary” and “you bear the guilt in connection to the priesthood.”

Those who will be held accountable by God for what transpired in His place of worship will be the leadership. It is serious business, and it is scary business. God chooses leaders, and those leaders better realize we are accountable for what transpires here. That point is very clear from Numbers 18:

GOD IS THE ONE WHO SELECTS HIS LEADERS AND HIS LEADERS NEED TO FAITHFULLY CARRY OUT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES, AND HE WILL BLESS HIS PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE OBEYING HIS WORD AND SUBMITTING TO REMUNERATION MATTERS OF LEADERSHIP.

We may recall that we have just come through a time when God nearly wiped out the nation for grumbling against the leadership. So God made certain they knew who His choice was, Aaron. God had selected Aaron, and Aaron’s job was to see to it that worship was carried out God’s way. Even though God had specifically chosen him, he needed to carefully oversee things to make sure they were carried out properly.

AUTHORITY FACT #1 – Aaron has God-given authority and responsibility over the Sanctuary. 18:1-7

The responsibility for overseeing the sanctuary and the priesthood fell to Aaron and his sons. Like it or not, it was the job given to them by God. It would be Aaron’s responsibility to see to it that sacrifices were offered that could bring the forgiveness and cleansing of God.

According to **verse 2**, they could use the Levites to help them with Tabernacle matters.

Now the Levites had responsibilities of helping Aaron and his sons. We may recall that some tabernacle responsibilities had been divided among the three sons of Levi:

1) Gershon – The Gershonites were to take care of the curtains and screens of the tabernacle, the tent coverings, the skins, the curtains for the entrances and the curtains and cords that surrounded the tabernacle and the altar (Num. 3:25-26).

2) Kohath – The Kohathites were to cover and transport the ark of the testimony, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils, and the inside curtain (Num. 3:31).

3) Merari – The Merarites were to take care of the frames of the tabernacle, the pillars of the tabernacle with its bars, sockets, and pegs, and physical equipment; also the frame of the courtyard, including the pillars, sockets, pegs, and cords (Num. 3:36-37).

Now in the aftermath of what had occurred, they were probably wondering, do we even dare do this anymore? So God says to Aaron yes those Levites may help you with those assignments. They were to help Aaron and his sons, **but they were not to go near those furnishings in the Holy Place or they would die and so would Aaron and his sons (verse 3).**

In **verse 4**, God makes sure that Aaron and his sons know they can use the Levites for helpers, but no outsider may ever be used.

According to **verse 5** this was such a critical matter that God stresses the fact that, if they obey, they will not incur God's wrath.

In **verses 6-7** God says to Aaron:

- 1) I Myself have given the Levites to you to help you. God rises up people to help his ministers.
- 2) You and your sons shall attend to everything pertaining to the priesthood.
- 3) You and your sons are to take care of everything inside the Tabernacle.
- 4) I have given you the priesthood as a gift.
- 5) Any outsider who tries to come near will be put to death.

Now this was God's doing. This was not Aaron's concept. God chose him for this job.

I want to make an observation here. Any ministry is a gift of God. It is not something that is deserved, earned, or merited. It is a gift of God to a person, and that person had better take that gift ministry seriously, because they are accountable to God for it.

AUTHORITY FACT #2 – Aaron was to be responsible to oversee the offerings and those offerings would provide for them. **18:8-19**

The job of Aaron was to see to it that the sacred offerings were handled properly. God viewed these as “holy offerings,” and He also viewed this as a compensation package for Aaron. His living and provisions would come from these offerings. Now the Apostle Paul literally referred to this very point in regard to the N.T. minister and compensation (I Cor. 9:13-14).

- 1) Aaron was in charge of all of the offerings. **18:8a**
 - 2) The offerings were to support him and his sons. **18:8b**
 - 3) The grain offering, sin offering, and guilt offering are holy offerings for Aaron and his sons. **18:9**
 - 4) Aaron and his sons shall eat these offerings. **18:10**
 - 5) Aaron and his sons and daughters and all clean household members could eat the wave offering. **18:11**
 - 6) Aaron was to receive the best oil, wine, grain, and fruit. **18:12**
 - 7) Aaron was to receive the first fruit offering. **18:13**
 - 8) Aaron was to receive every devoted offering from the people. **18:14**
 - 9) Aaron was to receive every first born man or animal, but they must be redeemed. **18:15-18**
- The redemption price would go to Aaron and his sons as financial remuneration.
- 10) Aaron and his family were given all of the offerings as payment. **18:19**

AUTHORITY FACT #3 – Aaron and the priests would not receive a land inheritance, but they would receive money and a city inheritance. **18:20-24**

Verse 20 makes it clear that in land distribution, Aaron and his sons would not be given a tribal portion.

Verse 21 makes it clear that the Levites received tithes in return for their service. **Verse 22** says if any son of Israel other than those authorized tries to do the service, they will die.

Now the Levitical priests were to be compensated by all of the offerings, but they were not to get a land inheritance when Israel was in the Promised Land (**verses 23-24**). What we learn from Numbers 35 is that they inherited cities.

The Lord himself was their inheritance and they were to serve him with their lives. They were to make absolutely certain they exclusively take care of the Tabernacle matters, and anyone else who tried that would die.

AUTHORITY FACT #4 – Aaron and the priests were responsible to give their own offerings to the Lord out of the offerings given to them. **18:25-32**

Now the priests were given much and they were required to give offerings too. They were responsible to present their offerings like everyone else.

They were responsible to give to the Lord out of their overflowing blessings, and they were responsible to give God their best, not the leftovers.

Now I want to make some observations here about ministry. We know we have this right to do this because of what Paul says in I Corinthians 9:

- 1) A minister has a responsibility to protect the reverence and sacredness of God in the place of worship.
- 2) A minister has the responsibility to see that the Word of God is taught accurately and systematically.
- 3) A minister should be consulted concerning the use of all the offerings.

There are some ministers I know who have been in board meetings and the board never even consulted the minister as to what he thought they should do when preparing a budget. They just all came up with their own ideas and not once did they consult the man God had sent to lead them. It is no wonder that God does not bless them.

- 4) A minister has a right to be well-compensated from the offerings to the point that he and his family are well-supported.

I do not believe a minister should ask or beg for this compensation. This is the way it should be.

- 5) A minister should be considered first in the expansion of the budget or ministry.
- 6) A minister has the responsibility to generously give his own offerings to God.
- 7) If ministry functions this way, God will bless it.