

## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### Further Details of the Responsibilities of the Levites

#### Numbers 4

*"Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: <sup>2</sup> "Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the children of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' house, <sup>3</sup> from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting.*

*<sup>4</sup> "This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of meeting, relating to the most holy things: <sup>5</sup> When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. <sup>6</sup> Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over that a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles.*

*<sup>7</sup> "On the table of showbread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the dishes, the pans, the bowls, and the pitchers for pouring; and the showbread<sup>[a]</sup> shall be on it. <sup>8</sup> They shall spread over them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. <sup>9</sup> And they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand of the light, with its lamps, its wick-trimmers, its trays, and all its oil vessels, with which they service it. <sup>10</sup> Then they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of badger skins, and put it on a carrying beam.*

*<sup>11</sup> "Over the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of badger skins; and they shall insert its poles. <sup>12</sup> Then they shall take all the utensils of service with which they minister in the sanctuary, put them in a blue cloth, cover them with a covering of badger skins, and put them on a carrying beam. <sup>13</sup> Also they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth over it. <sup>14</sup> They shall put on it all its implements with which they minister there—the firepans, the forks, the shovels, the basins, and all the utensils of the altar—and they shall spread on it a covering of badger skins, and insert its poles. <sup>15</sup> And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is set to go, then the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them; but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die.*

*"These are the things in the tabernacle of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.*

*<sup>16</sup> "The appointed duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest is the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, the anointing oil, the oversight of all the tabernacle, of all that is in it, with the sanctuary and its furnishings."*

<sup>17</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: <sup>18</sup> "Do not cut off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites; <sup>19</sup> but do this in regard to them, that they may live and not die when they approach the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint each of them to his service and his task. <sup>20</sup> But they shall not go in to watch while the holy things are being covered, lest they die."

<sup>21</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>22</sup> "Also take a census of the sons of Gershon, by their fathers' house, by their families. <sup>23</sup> From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, all who enter to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting. <sup>24</sup> This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and carrying: <sup>25</sup> They shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tabernacle of meeting with its covering, the covering of badger skins that is on it, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting, <sup>26</sup> the screen for the door of the gate of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and altar, and their cords, all the furnishings for their service and all that is made for these things: so shall they serve.

<sup>27</sup> "Aaron and his sons shall assign all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, all their tasks and all their service. And you shall appoint to them all their tasks as their duty. <sup>28</sup> This is the service of the families of the sons of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting. And their duties shall be under the authority<sup>[b]</sup> of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

<sup>29</sup> "As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families and by their fathers' house. <sup>30</sup> From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, you shall number them, everyone who enters the service to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. <sup>31</sup> And this is what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, <sup>32</sup> and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign to each man by name the items he must carry. <sup>33</sup> This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority<sup>[c]</sup> of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest."

<sup>34</sup> And Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families and by their fathers' house, <sup>35</sup> from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting; <sup>36</sup> and those who were numbered by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty. <sup>37</sup> These were the ones who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

<sup>38</sup> And those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families and by their fathers' house, <sup>39</sup> from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting— <sup>40</sup> those

*who were numbered by their families, by their fathers' house, were two thousand six hundred and thirty.<sup>41</sup> These are the ones who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, of all who might serve in the tabernacle of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of the LORD.*

*<sup>42</sup> Those of the families of the sons of Merari who were numbered, by their families, by their fathers' house,<sup>43</sup> from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting—<sup>44</sup> those who were numbered by their families were three thousand two hundred.<sup>45</sup> These are the ones who 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.*

*<sup>46</sup> All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of Israel numbered, by their families and by their fathers' houses,<sup>47</sup> from thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, everyone who came to do the work of service and the work of bearing burdens in the tabernacle of meeting—<sup>48</sup> those who were numbered were eight thousand five hundred and eighty.*

*<sup>49</sup> According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, each according to his service and according to his task; thus were they numbered by him, as the LORD commanded Moses.”*

## **Background Notes**

The three branches of the Levites were given different Tabernacle duties when Israel camped and travelled in the wilderness (Numbers 3). The Kohathites had the responsibility for the Tabernacle furnishings, the Gershonites were responsible for the coverings for the Tabernacle and the courtyard hangings, and the Merarites were responsible for the boards and pillars of the Tabernacle, as well as the posts and sockets of the Tabernacle courtyard.

In Numbers 4 we have further details of these responsibilities, and we also have further spiritual teaching and truth.

## **Doctrinal Points**

### **1. The holiness of God requires responsible protection.**

When the children of Israel broke camp in the wilderness, Aaron and his sons, the priests, would cover up the holy objects of the Tabernacle with coverings. Then the rest of the Kohathites would come and transport these Tabernacle furnishings by carrying them on poles. Did you realize that only the priests saw the holy objects of the Tabernacle? No one but the priests saw the holy objects of the Tabernacle!

The priests were responsible to guard and protect the holy objects, and the rest of the Levites didn't even see them!

There is a spiritual lesson for us today. The Tabernacle in the wilderness is a "type" (a spiritual picture) of the Church of God, the body and bride of Christ, in this world. The Church, which is composed of all believers, is God's dwelling place on this earth. The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 3:16 says, *"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* Therefore as the Church moves through this world, the holiness of God must be guarded and protected. We, as priests in the Church, have a responsibility to guard and protect the holiness of God.

How do we guard and protect God's holiness? We cover the holy objects! In Matthew 7:6 the Lord Jesus said, *"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces."* We don't share the precious pearls of the faith and truths that we've learned about the holiness of God with unbelievers, because many of them would mock and cheapen and trample upon the holiness of God. We are to share the **gospel** with unbelievers, but not every precious truth about our holy God.

"Covering the holy objects" to guard and protect the holiness of God also involves how we use humor in reference to the things of God. God has given us a sense of humor, but He expects us to use it properly. There are lines that should not be crossed, because certain jokes can detract from the holiness of God.

Numbers 4 has many details about the covering of the holy objects. Some of these details were just for efficiency in transporting everything (such as carrying all the utensils of the altar), but other details are essential to the spiritual picture. The different colors of the cloth add to the spiritual picture – blue, the heavenly color; scarlet, redemption; purple, the color of royalty. The overall lesson, of course, comes from the responsibilities of the priests and the rest of the Kohathites. The holiness of God requires responsible protection.

## **2. The worship of God requires responsible work.**

Verses 21- 49 tell us of the responsibilities of the Gershonites and the Merarites regarding the transporting of the Tabernacle. All this work was done under the direction of the priests. There was a lot of work involved in taking down and transporting and setting up the tabernacle in the wilderness, and carrying all the curtains and boards and posts and other items. It was no easy job; it was a lot of work! But the worship of God required it.

The same is true in the Church today. As Christians we are not only priests, but we are also servants like the Levites. Think of the work involved at your home church, for example – all the work that goes into maintaining the church building and

providing the proper setting, so the people of God can worship together. Are you doing your job as a Levite to make this possible?

Notice verses 31-32: *"And this is what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, and the pillars around the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall assign to each man by name the items he must carry."*

Suppose someone had said that they forgot a couple of tent pegs or cords? Or worse yet, suppose they said that they were tired of carrying their share of the load? The lesson is obvious. **Every believer** is to be involved! Each one of us is to carry our share of the load so proper worship can take place. The worship of God requires responsible work.

## **Practical Application**

### **You don't have to be "on the front lines" to serve the Lord.**

In verses 3, 23, 30 and 35 we read that the Levites served from the age of 30 to the age of 50. Now the Bible is not teaching here that we shouldn't work until we're 30, and that we should retire at age 50! No! In fact, the Levites were probably involved as apprentices before the age of 30, and in an advisory capacity after 50. But the Hebrew phrase *"enter the service"* in these verses is the same phrase that is used in Numbers 1:3 for military service. God saw both areas of service as very important.

This is true today, too. Don't think that if you become a foreign missionary, you are more of a servant for the Lord than if you serve Him in some capacity here at home! It's **where the Lord wants you** that is important. So you don't have to be "on the front lines" to serve the Lord!