

Offerings for the Dedication of the Tabernacle

Numbers 7

Numbers 7 - *"When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed and consecrated it and all its furnishings. He also anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils. ² Then the leaders of Israel, the heads of families who were the tribal leaders in charge of those who were counted, made offerings. ³ They brought as their gifts before the LORD six covered carts and twelve oxen—an ox from each leader and a cart from every two. These they presented before the tabernacle. ⁴ The LORD said to Moses, ⁵ "Accept these from them, that they may be used in the work at the tent of meeting. Give them to the Levites as each man's work requires." ⁶ So Moses took the carts and oxen and gave them to the Levites. ⁷ He gave two carts and four oxen to the Gershonites, as their work required, ⁸ and he gave four carts and eight oxen to the Merarites, as their work required. They were all under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest. ⁹ But Moses did not give any to the Kohathites, because they were to carry on their shoulders the holy things, for which they were responsible. ¹⁰ When the altar was anointed, the leaders brought their offerings for its dedication and presented them before the altar. ¹¹ For the LORD had said to Moses, "Each day one leader is to bring his offering for the dedication of the altar."*

¹² The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nahshon son of Amminadab of the tribe of Judah. ¹³ His offering was one silver plate weighing a hundred and thirty shekels and one silver sprinkling bowl weighing seventy shekels, both according to the sanctuary shekel, each filled with the finest flour mixed with olive oil as a grain offering; ¹⁴ one gold dish weighing ten shekels, filled with incense; ¹⁵ one young bull, one ram and one male lamb a year old for a burnt offering; ¹⁶ one male goat for a sin offering. ¹⁷ and two oxen, five rams, five male goats and five male lambs a year old to be sacrificed as a fellowship offering. This was the offering of Nahshon son of Amminadab.

[On twelve successive days, the leaders gave exactly the same offering for the dedication of the Tabernacle. For sake of space, only the list on the first day is included here.]

¹⁸ On the second day Nethanel son of Zuar, the leader of Issachar, brought his offering

²⁴ On the third day, Eliab son of Helon, the leader of the people of Zebulun, brought his offering...

³⁰ On the fourth day Elizur son of Shedeur, the leader of the people of Reuben, brought his offering...

³⁶ On the fifth day Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai, the leader of the people of Simeon, brought his offering...

⁴² On the sixth day Eliasaph son of Deuel, the leader of the people of Gad, brought his offering

⁴⁸ On the seventh day Elishama son of Ammihud, the leader of the people of Ephraim, brought his offering...

⁵⁴ *On the eighth day Gamaliel son of Pedahzur, the leader of the people of Manasseh, brought his offering...*

⁶⁰ *On the ninth day Abidan son of Gideon, the leader of the people of Benjamin, brought his offering...*

⁶⁶ *On the tenth day Ahiezer son of Ammishaddai, the leader of the people of Dan, brought his offering...*

⁷² *On the eleventh day Pagiel son of Okran, the leader of the people of Asher, brought his offering...*

⁷⁸ *On the twelfth day Ahira son of Enan, the leader of the people of Naphtali, brought his offering...*

⁸⁴ *These were the offerings of the Israelite leaders for the dedication of the altar when it was anointed: twelve silver plates, twelve silver sprinkling bowls and twelve gold dishes. ⁸⁵ Each silver plate weighed a hundred and thirty shekels, and each sprinkling bowl seventy shekels. Altogether, the silver dishes weighed two thousand four hundred shekels, according to the sanctuary shekel. ⁸⁶ The twelve gold dishes filled with incense weighed ten shekels each, according to the sanctuary shekel. Altogether, the gold dishes weighed a hundred and twenty shekels. ⁸⁷ The total number of animals for the burnt offering came to twelve young bulls, twelve rams and twelve male lambs a year old, together with their grain offering. Twelve male goats were used for the sin offering. ⁸⁸ The total number of animals for the sacrifice of the fellowship offering came to twenty-four oxen, sixty rams, sixty male goats and sixty male lambs a year old. These were the offerings for the dedication of the altar after it was anointed.*

⁸⁹ *When Moses entered the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the Ark of the Covenant law. In this way the LORD spoke to him."*

Background Notes

Numbers 7 is the longest chapter in the Pentateuch, and the second to longest chapter in the Bible! (As you probably know, Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible.)

In Numbers 7:1 we go back in time, even before the military census of Numbers 1, to the time immediately following the setting up of the Tabernacle. At this time the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel, who were listed in Numbers 2, brought gifts and offerings for the dedication of the Tabernacle and the altar. One reason for the twelve successive days of giving, rather than all twelve tribes giving their same gifts on the same day, is that a considerable time would be needed to sacrifice all the animals in just one tribe's offering. So the offerings were spread out over twelve successive days.

Before the offerings for the dedication of the altar were given, the leaders gave a gift of six covered carts, and twelve oxen to pull the carts (v3). This was a very thoughtful and appropriate gift. The Lord directed Moses to accept this gift for the Levites, to help transport the Tabernacle as they traveled through the wilderness.

When the Lord calls His people to do something for Him, he always provides for the needs! Moses gave the Gershonites two carts and four oxen, and He gave the Merarites four carts and eight oxen. The Merarites received more carts and

oxen because they had to transport the heavy boards, pillars, posts, and sockets of the Tabernacle. The Kohathites received no carts or oxen because they carried everything on their shoulders.

Doctrinal Points

1. Every gift to God is an offering before the Lord.

The carts and the oxen to pull the carts were considered an offering to the Lord, just as much as the animals that were given for sacrifices were considered an offering to the Lord. This was also true of the dishes, bowls, and pans that are mentioned in the rest of the chapter. Those items, by the way, were not for decorative purposes! They were used in the worship and service of the Lord in the Tabernacle, so all those items, from the dishes to the covered carts, were considered **offerings to the Lord**.

The same is true today. **Whatever** we give to help further the Lord's work is a gift to God, and is therefore an offering before the Lord. About 20 years ago, a friend asked if we needed a printer for address labels in our ministry, and we replied that we sure could use one! He gave us an Oki printer, we hooked it up to our computer, and it's been printing address labels for Growing Christian Ministries ever since! That label printer was given as a gift to God, and therefore it was an offering before the Lord.

Last summer one of my students was part of a mission team to Uganda. One Sunday morning at the local church they attended, a man put a can of motor oil into the collection plate! It was for the pastor, because he used a motorbike to visit his congregation. This was a gift to help with the work of the Lord, and it was therefore a gift to God and an offering before the Lord. **Every gift to God is an offering before the Lord!**

2. **Every gift of God is "recorded in His book."**

If we were the authors of this chapter, we would probably have abbreviated most of the chapter by writing something like, "On twelve successive days, the rest of the leaders gave exactly the same offering for the dedication of the altar." [Note - for sake of space here, we abbreviated!] Why did God have Moses repeat this same list of offerings twelve times? God could have summarized here - but He didn't! Why not? One reason is because of the lessons that we can learn.

One lesson is that **God is never bored with our worship**. We may find this chapter monotonous and repetitious - tedious reading - and some Christians skip through a chapter like this as they read through the Bible. But God doesn't skip over any gift! Every gift to God is important to Him.

These gifts were offerings to the Lord, and therefore the giving was an act of worship. Even though the same gifts were presented every day, God didn't get bored or tired because the gifts were given from hearts that were right with God. They were given from a true heart of worship.

This is true today as well. God never gets tired of our worship if it's offered from a pure heart. Did you ever wonder if God gets bored with our Sunday worship? We sing the same hymns or praise songs almost every Sunday, and we pray the same kinds of prayers. Isn't this boring to God? No, He doesn't get bored – as long as it's true worship, and not just a ritualistic mechanical “going through the motions” kind of “worship.” God is never bored by our worship if it comes from a responsive heart.

Another lesson from this chapter is that **God keeps a record of our offerings and service to Him**. Every gift to God is “recorded in His book.” In Hebrews 6:10 we read, *“For God is not unjust, to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”* God kept a record of every single gift that was given here in Numbers 7 – even to the point of repeating the same verses twelve times! Remember, too, that God kept a record of the two tiny coins given to Him by the poor widow in Mark 12 and Luke 21. And God keeps a record of every little gift that you give to Him as an offering to be used in His service and for His glory.

Practical Application

Speak to God, so He can speak to you!

As a leader of God's people, Moses had a special relationship with God. Other than Moses, only the priests could go into the Tabernacle, and only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies. But Moses was special. In Exodus 25:21-22, God said, *“You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.”* Notice how God spoke to Moses in verse 89: *“When Moses entered the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant law. In this way the LORD spoke to him.”* When the Lord spoke to Moses on this occasion, maybe expressed His pleasure in His people's obedience and generosity.

Would you like God to speak to you? For comfort? For encouragement? For guidance in decisions you need to make? If so, follow the pattern that we see here. When we draw near to God, God can and will speak to us during those times of closeness. Many Christians say that they want God to speak with them, but they rarely draw near and speak to God.

How do we draw near to God? We talk to Him in prayer, we read His Word, and we thank Him for His wonderful grace and goodness to us. Speak to God - so He can speak to you!