

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Numbers 1:1-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week we will be reading Numbers chapter 1, and today we will read verses 1-4.

Before delving into today's scripture, I want to add a few supplementary words to yesterday's introduction to Numbers. That introduction was made in 2020, the year the Covid pandemic began to spread, when, by God's special grace, He led us to spend a year reading Genesis. By understanding God's eternal will for mankind, we were able to maintain a peace that comes from God, even amidst the chaotic environment of an out-of-control pandemic.

During our reading of Genesis that year, I first provided a general overview of the Pentateuch; I gave a brief introduction to each book as a preface. In the introduction to Numbers, I specifically mentioned the number 42. Numbers chapter 33 mentions the 42 stations in the wilderness; the Bible does not explicitly use the number 42, but rather, readers of the Bible counted the stations the Israelites passed through in the wilderness one by one, and it turned out to be exactly 42 stations.

In 2022, still during the pandemic, God again led us to read the Recovery Books of Old Testament. While reading Nehemiah chapter 3, we saw Nehemiah leading the returning Israelites to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Starting from the Sheep Gate, the construction work was divided into 42 sections, with different people responsible for each section, and all 42 sections began construction simultaneously; this is a picture of everyone building the wall of Jerusalem together. The city wall serves three purposes: it defines the city, it separates the inside from the outside, and it protects the city's testimony.

The Bible does not specifically point out that there are 42 sections either; rather, when I was sharing the daily Bible reading message, I read it section by section,

explained it section by section, and after finishing, I carefully counted them and was astonished to discover that there were exactly 42 sections; I immediately offered thanks and worship to God. I do not believe this is a coincidence, but rather God's sovereign authority. Just as when Moses wrote Numbers chapter 33, he probably didn't intentionally try to make it 42 stations, but recorded them station by station according to the trajectory God led the Israelites through the wilderness; it was later Bible readers who, after counting, realized they had passed through 42 stations.

Similarly, Nehemiah did not predetermine to divide it into 42 sections, but followed God's leading so that the returning Israelite families could all contribute and build together. Most Bible readers simply read past it without giving it much thought. I had also read the Book of Nehemiah several times before without any particular insight, until this time when I read it carefully and discovered there were 42 sections of the project, hence the Old Testament has two "42s."

In the time of Moses, the Israelites received the law and the blueprint for the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness, which defined the Israelites; and the Israelites had to pass through 42 stations to enter the good land. After the Israelites entered the good land, they passed through the period of the Judges and arrived at the period of the Kings; when David was king, he established the city of Jerusalem; when Solomon became king, he built the temple in the city of Jerusalem. Upon the completion of the temple, the nation of Israel reached her peak.

It is a pity that after this, the condition of the nation of Israel went from bad to worse: first it split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, and later both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were successively destroyed by the Assyrian and Babylonian empires; the Israelites were taken captive to foreign lands, the temple was destroyed, and the city of Jerusalem became a desolate place. This fulfilled the prophecy of the prophet Jeremiah, that God predestined the city of Jerusalem to be desolate for 70 years.

When the 70 years were completed, God raised up Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, bringing about three returns of the Israelite people: the first rebuilt the

temple, the second restored the system of the law and priestly service, and the third was led by Nehemiah, bringing the returning congregation to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and restore the testimony of Israel. And this testimony was built by the returning Israelite families working together to build the wall, divided into a total of 42 sections, with 42 families taking responsibility.

The two 42s in the Old Testament are both connected to space! From the 42 stations in the vast expanse of the wilderness, ultimately focusing on the construction of the 42 sections of the wall of Jerusalem, this restored the testimony of the Israelites. The restoration of this testimony is crucial, and it also served as a preparation for the birth of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

This brings out the two 42s in the New Testament. First, in Matthew chapter 1, counting from Abraham to the birth of Jesus, a total of 42 generations passed; toward the end of the New Testament, in Revelation 11:2, it is mentioned that the holy city will be trampled by the Gentiles for 42 months. The two 42s in the New Testament are both connected to time! First, passing through 42 generations brought about Christ's first coming; and at the end of the age, the focus will also be on the 42 months of the great tribulation, in order to bring about Christ's second coming. Furthermore, the two 42s in the New Testament are both explicitly pointed out.

In the second half of this year, we will read Numbers together. This is the 4th book of the Pentateuch, and although it was written 3,500 years ago, it is closely related to the saints of the New Testament. Just as the Old Testament congregation of Israel went from being a disorganized mob to being organized into an army by God in the wilderness, passing through 42 stations of growth before they could enter the good land. In the same way, the saints of the New Testament, after being saved by grace one by one, must also be equipped in the church and organized into the elite soldiers of Christ; walking together through 42 spiritual stations before they can enter the promised land and enjoy the riches of Christ.

After the Israelites entered the good land, they had prosperity, and they also had decline; but in God's sovereign authority, the returning remnant built the walls of

Jerusalem together and upheld God's testimony, which brought about Christ's first coming. Jesus was born, accomplished redemption, resurrected and ascended, producing the New Testament church. Similarly, the New Testament church will also have prosperity, and it will also have decline, but ultimately must overcome the 42 months of the great tribulation, which will bring about Christ's second coming to establish the millennial kingdom on earth.

I hope that as we read Numbers together, the saints will surely remember this grand picture that spans the entire Bible; and realize that although we are small, we are an indispensable part of fulfilling God's eternal will.

Verse 1: "Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:"

The Israelites slaughtered the lamb on the 14th day of the first month; they smeared the blood of the lamb on the lintel and doorposts, and ate the Passover dinner together. It was that very night when the destroying angel struck every household in the land of Egypt that was not covered by the blood of the lamb: all the firstborn among them were to be struck down, including the firstborn of Pharaoh of Egypt. On the night of that very day, Moses led a congregation of 2 million Israelites out of Egypt. Fast forward to the first day of the second month of the second year, which was two weeks after they had finished observing their first Passover in the wilderness, the congregation of Israel was still in the Wilderness of Sinai, and the Lord spoke to Moses in the tabernacle.

Here we see that God took the initiative to speak to Moses, the leader of the Israelites, and the place of speaking was in the tabernacle; this was the place where the Israelites were sanctified, worshipped God, and served God. It is the same today: when God has a new leading for the church, He will certainly take the initiative to speak to the leaders of the church in the place where the congregation worships God. God is a God of order, and creation is full of order. Even after the fall of man, when God calls people to follow Him, every group called by God should

also be filled with order. And Moses, as the leader, had to sanctify himself to be holy in order to hear God's speaking in the tabernacle.

Dear brothers and sisters, do you feel that God is partial, that He does not often appear to you or speak to you? Actually, the reason is very likely that you are too busy, you have not set yourself apart to wait upon God, and you have not placed yourself in a proper position to listen to God's speaking.

Moses led the Israelites in building the tabernacle, and after the tabernacle was built, God's glory filled the tent; God called Moses from within the tabernacle and began to speak to him. Moses recorded it, and it became the Book of Leviticus in our hands, which is God's longest continuous speech in the entire Bible. Now we come to the first day of the second month in the second year, and God once again spoke to Moses.

Verse 2: "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually,"

Entering the wilderness, there will be environmental trials and disturbances from the enemy, so God wanted Moses to number the people. In today's terms, this is a census; the purpose is to organize them into an army to protect God's testimony. They were to be numbered according to the families, fathers' houses, and names of the entire Israelite congregation, without missing a single one. Just as in John 10:3, Jesus also says that He calls His own sheep by name.

Every child belonging to God is precious, and every single one must be numbered, and doing so according to their families and fathers' houses points to the source of their life. For the Israelites, this was the source of their physical life; for New Testament saints, it is the source of their spiritual life. Of course, from a grand perspective, we are all children of the Heavenly Father and share the same source. But looking more closely, every person's salvation by grace is inseparable from the one who preached the gospel to them and led them to salvation; that person is

their spiritual parent. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:15, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers"; this precisely articulates the preciousness of spiritual parents.

Here, God wanted Moses to take a census of the Israelites for the purpose of counting all the males. The males in the Bible are a type of the strong ones, capable of joining the ranks of battle to protect God's testimony. At that time, God asking Moses to count the number of males among the Israelites signifies that leaders should definitely know how many people are in their group, especially the number of strong ones. Of course, in the church today, the strong are not distinguished by gender, but by their degree of faith. The degree of faith is manifested in the knowledge of the truth and also in the tolerance found within love.

Verse 3: "from twenty years old and above—all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies."

Among all the males, two conditions still had to be met: they had to be twenty years old and above, and they had to be able to go to war. This means that, besides being strong, they also had to be at least twenty years old, possessing a certain measure of life; furthermore, they had to be free of disabilities and diseases to go out to battle. Only such people could be numbered to become God's army. For the church today, this means that in addition to being strong in faith, one must also have the experience and measure of life, and be free from worldly entanglements and burdens, in order to become an elite soldier of Christ.

What is very special is that the age had to be at least 20, but there was no prescribed upper limit. Earthly warfare relies on physical strength, so the elderly cannot join the army. However, God's army fights spiritual battles, relying not on physical strength but on the firmness of faith; therefore, there is no upper age limit. In Joshua 14:10-11, it says, "...here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in." This mentions

that Caleb was already 85 years old, yet he was still as able to fight for God as when he was young.

God added another phrase here, asking Moses and Aaron to number the armies. Both Moses and Aaron are types of Christ: Moses typifies Christ's authority, and Aaron typifies Christ as Priest. For New Testament saints to become Christ's elite soldiers, they must be under Christ's sovereignty and be served and supplied by Christ as Priest. That is to say, every elite soldier of Christ must submit to the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ and accept the support and supply of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 4: "And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house."

Not only that, but in every tribe, a person had to be appointed as the head of his father's house to assist Moses and Aaron. If Moses and Aaron are types of Christ, the head of each tribe typifies the elders in the church. Christ recruits His army from within the church, and in this process, the assistance of the elders in the church is needed.

Dear brothers and sisters, every saint who has been saved by grace must first commit to the church, learn to serve, and submit to the leading of the elders in the church. If we cannot submit to the authority God has established in the church, how can we submit to God?

When the Israelites were about to set out in the wilderness, God wanted Moses to number the armies first; it is the same today. When the church is to move forward, there must be a group of saints who are strong in faith, mature in life, and submissive to the representative authority in the church, being organized into the army of Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, are you a member of Jesus' army?

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You, bless our time reading Numbers. Just as 3,500 years ago Moses organized the Israelite people in the wilderness, turning a disorganized mob into the army of the Lord; in the same way, in the New Testament church, You also hope that every church can be organized into an army, able to fight for Christ. Our warfare is not a battle against flesh and blood, but a spiritual warfare; what we rely on is not our own physical strength, our own wisdom, or our own power. Therefore, we must all learn to be firm in faith, mature in life, and submissive in our will, so that we can join the Calvary's hosts, fighting together following our Commander Jesus Christ, and rescuing human souls together. Bless the church where I am to have a strong and bright testimony; praying in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.