

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

Numbers 2:1-9

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're going to read Numbers chapter 2. Today we'll read from verses 1 to 9.

The first day of the second month, in the second year after Moses led the congregation of Israel out of Egypt, the LORD spoke to Moses in the Tabernacle. He instructed Moses to take a census of the males from the twelve tribes. All those who were twenty years old and above and able to go out to war were to be organized into an army.

Last week we read that Moses, Aaron, and the leaders of the twelve tribes counted the people in each tribe according to their families, their clans, and their names. The total number of males was 603,550.

Chapter 2 continues to reveal God's purpose: how should these organized armies camp, and how should they move forward? I want to emphasize once again that God is a God of order. In God's creation, everything was according to order: from nothing to something, from the environment needed for living creatures to survive, from lower forms of life to higher forms of life, and finally God created mankind according to His own image and likeness, giving mankind the responsibility and mission to rule over all things.

Satan was also created by God. He was the archangel of the previous age, but he refused the order of authority. He desired to be equal with God, and therefore he fell. Satan opposed God and came to tempt the people God created—our ancestors Adam and Eve. The method of temptation was to make them desire to be like God, knowing good and evil.

As a result, our first ancestors could not withstand the temptation. They sinned and fell, and sin entered the world through one man. When sin entered, the order God

had created was broken. The result brought by sin was the collapse of order. Even until today, nations rise against nations, and peoples rise against peoples; the whole world is moving toward destruction.

Yet in His love and mercy, God began to carry out His plan of redemption. First, He called Abraham out from among the cursed humanity. Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob had twelve sons, who became the twelve tribes of Israel. The entire Old Testament reveals how God restored the order of His authority among the people of Israel. Overall, the Israelites failed, but the remnant among Israel faithfully completed God's commission. From the descendants of David came forth the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ completed God's plan of redemption. After His resurrection and ascension, the chosen people of the New Testament were produced—the church. When the number of overcoming ones in the church is complete, it will bring about the return of Christ, and God's authority and order will be restored throughout the whole earth.

This is what Ephesians 1:10 says, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him." Christ will become the Head over all things, and all things will exist together according to God's order, in peace and harmony.

Therefore, from this perspective, God's purpose is to restore the authority and order that existed in His original creation among all the things He created. God's purpose of restoring order is especially clearly revealed in the Book of Numbers, particularly in the numbering of the army and the arrangement of the camps.

Verses 1–2: "And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 'Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.'"

After the census of the army, God spoke to Moses and Aaron concerning how the twelve tribes should camp. The Israelites were to camp according to their own standards. The “standard” refers to the military banner. The twelve tribes were divided into four camps. Each camp had three tribes, and each camp had its own banner. Therefore, the Israelites had to know which camp they belonged to, and they were to camp under their own banner around the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle was built by Moses according to the pattern God revealed on Mount Sinai. Its purpose was for God to dwell among the people of Israel. The Tabernacle was also the place where God spoke to man, and it was the place where people worshiped and served God. Therefore, the Tabernacle was the center of Israel’s life. Their daily life and movements all revolved around the Tabernacle.

The twelve tribes of Israel were arranged in groups of three tribes to form one camp, making a total of four camps. The four camps surrounded the Tabernacle on all four sides, but they were required to remain at a certain distance from it. Between the camps and the Tabernacle was the place where the Levites camped. The Levites served as a buffer, preventing the Israelites from accidentally entering the Tabernacle and provoking God’s anger.

Next, God revealed how the twelve tribes were divided into four camps and how the four camps surrounded the Tabernacle: beginning from the east, moving clockwise to the south, then west, and finally north. Today we will read about the three tribes that camped on the east side.

Verses 3–4: “On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with the camp of Judah shall camp according to their armies; and the leader of the children of Judah: Nahshon the son of Amminadab. And his army was numbered at seventy-four thousand six hundred.”

The east was the direction of sunrise and also the location of the entrance to the Tabernacle. Therefore, it was the direction most needing protection from enemy attacks. Logically, this should have been the place where Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn

son, camped. However, according to Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:3–5, Reuben lost the position of leadership because he defiled his father's bed through uncontrolled desire.

Simeon and Levi were second and third in birth order. When Jacob gave his prophecies concerning his sons, he could not forget the cruelty of Simeon and Levi when they slaughtered the people of Shechem. Therefore, in Genesis 49:5–7, Jacob prophesied that these two brothers would be divided and scattered among Israel. Later, in the Book of Exodus, the tribe of Levi stood with God. Their cruel nature was used by God and transformed into a character of absolute devotion, able to belong solely to God. Levi became the tribe that served God, and the responsibility of camping on the east side fell to Judah, the fourth son.

When Leah gave birth to her fourth son, because God had given her four sons in succession, her desire to compete for Jacob's affection began to fade, and it turned into praise toward God. Therefore, she named her fourth son Judah, which means "praise." Many years later, when Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph and wanted to kill him, Genesis 37:26–27 records that Judah proposed that they should not kill their own brother, but instead sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, who eventually brought him to Egypt.

Judah was unrighteous in the matter concerning his daughter-in-law Tamar. But when his wrongdoing was exposed by Tamar, Judah was able to humble himself, admit his mistake, and take responsibility. When the Promised Land experienced famine and Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy grain, Judah especially showed his responsible character. Not only did he stand before Jacob and guarantee that he would bring Benjamin back safely, otherwise he would bear the guilt forever; when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, Judah stood before Joseph and accepted responsibility, willing to become Joseph's servant in Benjamin's place. Thus he fulfilled the promise he had made to Jacob.

Therefore, Jacob's prophecy concerning Judah in Genesis 49:8–12 was: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet..." This promised that the tribe of Judah would bear the responsibility of kingship. When

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt into the wilderness, the tribe of Judah also received special favor from God and became the strongest tribe, with the greatest number of males. Therefore, it was most fitting for Judah to camp on the east side.

The tribe of Judah was the leader of those who camped on the east side. Together they were called the camp of Judah, and they were to display the banner of the camp of Judah. Although the Scriptures do not describe the appearance of the banner, Jacob called Judah a lion. Therefore, in the tradition of Israel, the lion became the symbol of the camp of Judah. The leader of the camp of Judah was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, and the number of males counted from the tribe of Judah was 74,600.

Verses 2:5–6: “Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar; and the leader of the children of Issachar: Nethanel the son of Zuar. And his army was numbered at fifty-four thousand four hundred.”

The second tribe in the camp of Judah was the descendants of Issachar, Leah’s fifth son. According to Genesis 30:14–18, Leah exchanged mandrakes with Rachel and was able to spend one night with Jacob. As a result, she gave birth to Issachar. The name Issachar means “there is a reward” or “valuable.” Leah understood that true value was not found in outward things, such as mandrakes, but in the blessing and gift of the LORD.

In Genesis 49:14–15, Jacob’s prophecy concerning Issachar was: “Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between two burdens; He saw that rest was good, And that the land was pleasant; He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden, And became a band of slaves.” The tribe of Issachar was arranged beside Judah, guarding the entrance of the Tabernacle. Indeed, they were full of value. The leader of the tribe of Issachar was Nethanel the son of Zuar, and the number of males counted was 54,400.

Verses 2:7–8: “Then comes the tribe of Zebulun; and the leader of the children of Zebulun: Eliab the son of Helon. And his army was numbered at fifty-seven thousand four hundred.”

The third tribe in the camp of Judah was the descendants of Zebulun, Leah’s sixth son. Zebulun was Leah’s last son. After Leah gave birth to six sons for Jacob, she was satisfied. She offered thanksgiving to God and believed that Jacob would dwell with her. Therefore, she named her sixth son Zebulun, which means “dwelling.” In Genesis 49:13, Jacob’s prophecy concerning Zebulun was: “Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea; He shall become a haven for ships, And his border shall adjoin Sidon.”

Jacob’s prophecy was fulfilled after the birth of Christ. Matthew 4:15–16 says: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.” The gospel originated from Galilee, the land of Zebulun, and was to reach the world of the Gentiles.

The tribe of Zebulun joined the camp of Judah to guard the entrance of the Tabernacle. In the New Testament, this entrance is a type of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, this entrance, we enter the Tabernacle—which is a picture of today’s church—and we are able to dwell together with Christ. Here we see that God’s word truly never fails. The leader of the tribe of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon, and the number of males counted was 57,400.

Verse 9: “All who were numbered according to their armies of the camp of Judah, one hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred—these shall break camp first.”

The camp of Judah guarded the east side of the Tabernacle, the place of sunrise. The camp of Judah consisted of three tribes: the tribe of Judah, the tribe of Issachar, and the tribe of Zebulun. The total number of males counted from these three

tribes was 186,400, making it the largest camp of the army. The camp of Judah was to camp on the east side of the Tabernacle and guard its entrance.

When the Israelites set out, the camp of Judah was also the first to move forward. They became the vanguard of the entire congregation of Israel, carrying the banner of the lion as they traveled through the wilderness. From the perspective of the New Testament typology, Christ is our Commander. Christ leads the church through the wilderness of this world, and ultimately brings us into the good land promised by God.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Through the twelve tribes of Israel camping around the Tabernacle, and through the camp of Judah guarding the east with the banner of the lion, these historical facts of the Old Testament today become a picture and type of the church. Thank You that You are the Commander of the church. You are the Lion of Judah. You lead the church through the wilderness of this world.

Help us become like the strong donkey of Issachar, able to labor and serve faithfully in the church. May we also become like Zebulun, the haven by the sea, able to bring the gospel to those around us who are in need. May the church lift up the banner of Christ and testify for God in this crooked and perverse generation. Bless the church where I am. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.