

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

Numbers 3: 21-32

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 are going to read Numbers Chapter 3 and today we will read verses 21 to 32.

In the wilderness, the Tabernacle was the center of Israel's life and movement. God specifically arranged for the Israelites to be organized into an army, divided into four camps surrounding and guarding the Tabernacle on all sides. Between the Tabernacle and the army camps was the camping area of the Levites. This arrangement was intended to prevent the Israelites from accidentally entering the Tabernacle and thereby provoking God's wrath. The Levites themselves were divided into four groups, each camping immediately adjacent to the Tabernacle. Whenever the Tabernacle was to be moved, these four groups were responsible for dismantling it, transporting it, and setting it up again.

According to God's sovereign plan, Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. The descendants of these three sons formed the three major Levitical clans, which camped on the west, south, and north sides of the Tabernacle respectively. The priests, however, came from the Kohathite clan—specifically from the family of Aaron, the son of Amram. The priests, together with Moses, who was the leader at that time, camped on the east side of the Tabernacle. Numbers 3:21–39 gives a detailed description of the camping locations of the Levites as well as the specific responsibilities assigned to each Levitical division.

Verse 21-22: “From Gershon came the family of the Libnites and the family of the Shimites; these were the families of the Gershonites. Those who were numbered, according to the number of all the males from a month old and above—of those who were numbered there were seven thousand five hundred.”

Gershon was the firstborn son of Levi. Gershon's two sons, Libni and Shimei, became the heads of the two principal Gershonite families. Among the Gershonites, the number of males one month old and upward who were counted was 7,500. As mentioned earlier, the tribe of Levi was the tribe set apart for the service of God. Therefore, every male infant who had reached one month of age and was expected to survive was included in the census. This also illustrates that everyone who serves God belongs to Him throughout his entire life. Such a person's life is under God's authority, protection, and care. God Himself takes responsibility for the whole course of that person's life.

Verse 23-24: “The families of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle westward. And the leader of the father’s house of the Gershonites was Eliasaph the son of Lael.”

The two Gershonite families were to camp on the west side of the Tabernacle. The entrance to the Tabernacle faced east, while the west side contained the Most Holy Place. Within the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant, where God met with the high priest once each year. The Gershonites were entrusted with a particularly important responsibility: to guard this sacred area so that nothing would disturb the meeting between God and man, especially against any attack from the enemy, Satan, coming from behind.

Camping immediately beside the Gershonites was the Camp of Ephraim, which consisted of the three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. Together, these three tribes and the Gershonite camp guarded the western side of the Tabernacle. Eliasaph, the son of Lael, served as the leader of the Gershonite clan.

Verse 25: “The duties of the children of Gershon in the tabernacle of meeting included the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”

The descendants of Gershon were assigned the responsibility of caring for the Tabernacle itself, including the tent, its coverings, the outer covering, and the entrance curtain of the Tabernacle. To understand this assignment, we should refer to Exodus 26:1–14, where God revealed that the Tabernacle was covered with four layers. The innermost layer consisted of finely woven linen with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn, embroidered with cherubim in an exquisite and beautiful design. These four materials symbolize Christ's perfect humanity, His heavenly nature, His royal dignity, and His redeeming love. They correspond beautifully with the portraits of Christ presented in the four Gospels: Luke, John, Matthew, and Mark. To understand these typological details more fully, believers are encouraged to review the daily Bible reading on Exodus 26:1–14.

The second covering was made of goats' hair, signifying that Christ became sin on our behalf and bore God's judgment. Although our sins were as numerous as the hairs of a goat, Christ bore every one of them and, through His precious blood, washed us clean. The third covering was made of ram skins dyed red, signifying that Christ shed His blood on the cross to accomplish redemption. His sacrifice became our covering so that God could declare us righteous. The outermost covering was made of badger skins, signifying Christ as our protection against every storm of life—the wind, the scorching sun, and the driving rain. Under these fourfold coverings of Christ's grace, we are made holy and able to meet with God.

The Tabernacle is a type of the church. Outwardly, the church should resemble the outer covering of badger skins. It does not need to appear magnificent or outwardly attractive, nor should it seek to impress people by its appearance. Rather, it should be strong and durable, providing shelter from the winds and storms of the world—referring, of course, to the winds of worldly ideas and the rains of changing cultural trends. Yet when people enter the church, what they should behold is the inner beauty symbolized by the finely woven linen with blue, purple, and scarlet threads, embroidered with glorious cherubim. In other words, everyone who comes into the church should be led to see Christ—His perfect humanity, His heavenly and kingly nature, His diligent service, His willingness to pay the price of redemption for others,

and His resurrection, ascension, and present glory at the right hand of God the Father.

How greatly blessed the descendants of Gershon were to be entrusted with the care of these four coverings of the Tabernacle. They were also responsible for the entrance curtain of the Tabernacle. According to Exodus 26:36–37, this entrance curtain was likewise woven of fine linen with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. It typifies Christ as revealed in the four Gospels, becoming the entrance through which people may enter the Holy Place.

Verse 26: “the screen for the door of the court, the hangings of the court which are around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords, according to all the work relating to them.”

The entire Tabernacle measured 100 cubits in length and 50 cubits in width. Exodus 27:18 tells us that the Tabernacle courtyard was surrounded by fine linen curtains five cubits high on all sides, with an entrance on the east. Exodus 27:16 further tells us that the entrance was covered by a curtain 20 cubits wide and 5 cubits high, woven of fine linen with blue, purple, and scarlet yarn. This entrance typifies the door of salvation—Christ as revealed in the four Gospels.

In the wilderness of this world, God has prepared a Tabernacle of salvation for all who seek Him. It measured 100 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and was enclosed by fine linen curtains five cubits high. Christ Himself is the entrance, through whom the weary and heavy-laden may find a place of rest.

The descendants of Gershon were entrusted with a unique ministry. They were responsible for caring for the coverings and entrance curtains of the Tabernacle, as well as the linen curtains surrounding the courtyard, the entrance curtain of the courtyard, and the ropes used to secure all these curtains and coverings in place. These coverings, curtains, and entrance hangings all typify Christ. Since the descendants of Gershon were entrusted with guarding them, they also needed to develop the corresponding skills and abilities to maintain, protect, repair, and care

for these sacred furnishings. Likewise, in today's church, God desires to raise up believers who, like the descendants of Gershon, will faithfully guard the church's covering and its entrance. They are called to preserve the church's testimony, to ensure that Christ remains the true covering over His people, and to keep the way into God's presence centered on Christ alone.

Verse 27-28: “From Kohath came the family of the Amramites, the family of the Izharites, the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites; these were the families of the Kohathites. According to the number of all the males, from a month old and above, there were eight thousand six hundred keeping charge of the sanctuary.”

Kohath, the second son of Levi, became the head of the second Levitical clan. Kohath had four sons: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. These four sons became the heads of four family divisions. Among these four families, the total number of males one month old and upward who were counted was 8,600.

Verse 29-30: “The families of the children of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle. And the leader of the fathers’ house of the families of the Kohathites was Elizaphan the son of Uzziel.”

The descendants of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the Tabernacle. Their camping area was located between the Tabernacle and the Camp of Reuben. The Camp of Reuben consisted of the three tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad. Together, the descendants of Kohath and the Camp of Reuben guarded the southern side of the Tabernacle. The Kohathites also served as a protective barrier for the Camp of Reuben, preventing the Israelites from accidentally entering the Tabernacle and thereby sinning against God. Elizaphan, the son of Uzziel, was appointed as the leader of the entire Kohathite clan.

Verse 31: “Their duty included the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the utensils of the sanctuary with which they ministered, the screen, and all the work relating to them.”

The Kohathites were entrusted with the care of the most sacred furnishings of the Tabernacle. These included the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place, as well as the golden altar of incense, the golden lampstand, and the table of the showbread in the Holy Place. They were also responsible for the various utensils and vessels used by the priests in their ministry, together with the bronze altar, the bronze laver in the outer court, and all the implements required for the sacrificial offerings. The curtain mentioned here most likely refers to the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Unlike the other curtains of the Tabernacle, which were entrusted to the Gershonites, this veil was placed under the care of the Kohathites.

Although the Gershonites cared for the soft furnishings of the Tabernacle and developed special skills for maintaining and repairing them, God's division of responsibilities was based not primarily on practical abilities but on the spiritual significance of the objects themselves. This demonstrates that God's purpose is greater than the particular gifts people may develop. The furnishings entrusted to the Kohathites were not only types of Christ but were also the very instruments the priests used in serving God. The priest's ministry was to bring God to the people and to present the people to God as mature and holy. Therefore, these sacred furnishings portray the spiritual journey that every believer should experience after receiving salvation.

The various objects under the Kohathites' care carry profound spiritual significance. It is impossible to explain each one in detail here. Believers are encouraged to review Exodus 25:10–40, 26:31–35, 27:1–8, 30:1–6, and Exodus 30:17–21. These passages have been discussed previously, and reviewing them in your daily Bible reading will help you understand the spiritual meaning represented by these furnishings.

Here I would simply like to explain one aspect of these rich types by following the order of the furnishings within the Tabernacle, illustrating the stages of spiritual growth that every believer should experience. The entrance on the east side of the Tabernacle signifies that believers enter God's presence through Christ by receiving salvation. Upon entering the Tabernacle courtyard, the first object encountered is the bronze altar. This represents the first milestone in the believer's spiritual journey: presenting one's body as a living sacrifice to God. Consecration is the starting point of spiritual growth.

The next stage is the experience of the bronze laver. Through the cleansing water of God's Word, a believer is washed and purified, becoming fit to enter the Tabernacle and serve God. After entering the Holy Place, the believer first comes to the table of the showbread to receive nourishment from God's Word. Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." Christ's Word is our spiritual food and the essential nourishment for our growth.

As spiritual life matures, believers must then experience the work of the Holy Spirit. The golden lampstand was fashioned from one talent of pure gold, hammered by the skillful work of a craftsman into a beautiful lampstand. This signifies that our faith must also be refined through testing until it is formed into a lampstand with cups, ornamental buds, and blossoms. The lampstand was the only source of light in the Holy Place, illuminating the priests' service before God.

When a believer has matured and his faith shines brightly, he may come to the golden altar of incense, where he cooperates with God through prayer. Although a veil separated the altar of incense from the Ark of the Covenant, the fragrance of the incense passed beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place, bringing delight to God and enabling His people to labor together with Him.

Under the Old Testament, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place once a year to meet with God. However, when Jesus died on the cross, the veil of the Temple—the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place—was torn in two from top to bottom. From that moment on, through the torn body of Christ,

believers have free access into the Most Holy Place to come before the Ark of the Covenant and meet God at the Mercy Seat.

The Ark of the Covenant was the central object of the entire Tabernacle and was also called the Ark of the Testimony. Above it stood two cherubim guarding the glory of God. Beneath the cherubim was the Mercy Seat, upon which the blood of the sacrificial lamb was sprinkled. Inside the Ark were the two stone tablets of the Law given to Moses, bearing the Ten Commandments, signifying that the blood of the Lamb has fully satisfied the righteous requirements of God's law. Also within the Ark were the golden pot containing manna and Aaron's rod that budded. These signify that God's Word becomes our hidden and eternal supply, and that the resurrection power which raised Christ from the dead also becomes our testimony. Because of the redemptive work accomplished by Jesus Christ, we too may now come boldly before the throne of grace to meet with God.

All of these sacred furnishings, which reveal the believer's path of spiritual growth, were entrusted to the care of the descendants of Kohath. Likewise, in the church today, there is a great need for those who will faithfully fulfill this ministry by helping believers grow to spiritual maturity.

Verse 32: “And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was to be chief over the leaders of the Levites, with oversight of those who kept charge of the sanctuary.”

Aaron was the son of Amram and belonged to the clan of Kohath. Aaron's first and second sons had already died, so his third son, Eleazar, became the leader of the Levites. The leaders of the three major Levitical clans—Gershon, Kohath, and Merari—were all under Eleazar's authority. Since the Levites' responsibility was to assist the priests in their ministry, Eleazar, as the leader of the Levites, was to oversee those who were entrusted with the care of the sanctuary.

Through the division of responsibilities between the clans of Gershon and Kohath, we see how, under God's sovereign authority, every task was assigned with great care and precision. The same principle applies in the church today. God desires to

raise up believers who will faithfully fulfill the ministries represented by the descendants of Gershon and Kohath.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, we thank You that the church is Your Body and the focus of Your purpose in these last days. Within the church, believers are needed to fulfill many different ministries. Some are called to guard the entrance of the church, some to care for its spiritual covering, and others to help believers grow in their spiritual lives as they pass through each stage of maturity—from consecrating themselves to You, to being cleansed by Your Word, to experiencing Christ's Word as the nourishment of life, to being shaped by the Holy Spirit so that their faith may shine forth, to cooperating with You through prayer, and finally to meeting with You at the Mercy Seat.

This journey of spiritual growth requires dedicated servants who can guide believers forward step by step. We pray that You would richly bless our church by raising up such faithful servants, so that every believer in the church may grow into spiritual maturity. Bless our church and our life together as Your people. We pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!