

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

Numbers 7: 84-89

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank God, it's time to read the Bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 7. Today we read from verse 84 to verse 89.

We have already read about the offerings that the twelve tribes of Israel presented for the altar from the first day to the twelfth day of the first month in the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. The leaders of the twelve tribes presented exactly the same offerings, and the Bible painstakingly records every item of the offering and repeats it twelve times, showing that God truly remembers what each person offers. It is the same today: every willing offering of each saint will surely be remembered by the Lord.

Today we will look at the order in which these twelve tribes presented their offerings from another angle. First, we need to recognize that this was something the leaders of the twelve tribes did voluntarily and spontaneously. They were willing to present offerings for the altar on the day Moses anointed the altar with the holy anointing oil. God was very pleased with their willing offering, but God had another plan: at the same time, He wanted the priests to be consecrated to the holy office. Therefore, God wanted them to be divided into twelve days, with one tribe coming forward each day to present its offering.

In these records, I believe the first thing the saints will notice is that the tribe of Levi is not included. In the incident of the golden calf, the tribe of Levi stood forth for God's interest and cleansed the uncleanness among the Israelites. The Levites were then set apart to serve God. Eleazar, the third son of Aaron, as the leader of the Levites, should have known that God had a special arrangement for the Levites. Therefore, the tribe of Levi was not among the procession of these twelve tribes presenting offerings. When we come to Numbers chapter 8, we will read about God's arrangement for the Levites.

We said earlier that God did not give instructions concerning the order in which these twelve tribes came forward to present offerings. It should have been the order finally decided after discussion among these twelve leaders. This order may have been connected to the characteristics of each tribe and the background of their growth. Perhaps we can regard it as the order they decided for themselves.

I want to remind the saints once again that the presentation of offerings by the twelve leaders took place between the first day and the twelfth day of the first month. Now we look back at Numbers chapter 1. On the first day of the second month, God spoke to Moses and told him to organize the twelve tribes into an army. In Numbers 1:5-15, God first told Moses to appoint the heads of the twelve tribes as leaders to help Moses number the army. We find that the names of these twelve leaders are exactly the names of the twelve leaders who came forward to present offerings from the first to the twelfth day of the first month. In other words, these twelve men had already become leaders in each tribe and had represented their own tribes in coming forward to present offerings. Then, on the first day of the second month, God spoke to Moses and told him to appoint them as the leaders of the tribes.

It is the same in the church today. Leaders are not chosen by men. Rather, because some people love the Lord and love the church, they are willing to offer themselves and willing to be exercised. Therefore, their life gradually matures, and their gifts also begin to be manifested among the saints. They are then recognized by the saints as leaders. After God examines them, He formally establishes them as leaders.

In addition, we see that the order in which God mentions the twelve tribes also gradually changed. In Numbers 1:5-15, it is generally according to the natural order of birth: first, the sons of Leah—Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; then Rachel's eldest son Joseph, represented by Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh; then Rachel's younger son Benjamin; and finally, the four sons of the maidservants—Dan, Asher, Gad, and Naphtali. Next, in Numbers 1:20-43, Moses began to number the males twenty years old and above in each tribe. The order in which the tribes were numbered was still generally according to the natural order

of birth, beginning with Reuben and continuing in order until Naphtali. There is only one exception in this list: the tribe of Gad was moved to after the tribe of Simeon, taking the place of the tribe of Levi.

Then in Numbers chapter 2, God spoke to Moses concerning how to arrange the camping positions and marching order of the twelve tribes. This had to do with guarding the tabernacle and leading the congregation forward. Therefore, in chapter 2, God began from the east side of the tabernacle, toward the place of sunrise, then went from the east side to the south side, then to the west side, and then to the north side, speaking to Moses in a clockwise order. This order of encampment was also the order of marching.

If we list these names, they are exactly: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Reuben, Simeon, Gad, Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. And this order is exactly the same as the order in which the tribes came forward in groups to present offerings from the first day to the twelfth day of the first month.

When the leaders of the twelve tribes presented their offerings, God did not arrange the order. It should have been the order the leaders discussed and decided among themselves. Yet in the end, when it came to the camping and marching order, God used exactly the same order. I have spent so much space reviewing these details in order that the saints may have a deeper experience of God's sovereign authority.

God predestines according to His foreknowledge, and in God's foreknowledge, man's free will plays a certain role. This includes man's mind understanding, through prayer, God's will upon himself; through understanding God's will, becoming clear about the commission God has given him; loving the commission God has given in his emotion; and finally, in his will, being willing to follow. In the process of man following God, there will certainly be growth in life, and there will also be the perfecting of the gifts. In the end, God's foreknowledge becomes man's predestination.

From the order in which the twelve tribes offered voluntarily to God's speaking to Moses concerning how to arrange the twelve tribes, we see that this order was

gradually adjusted until it was finally exactly the same as the order of offering. This truly presents a beautiful picture in which man's free will and God's sovereign authority are completely joined together.

The following verses summarize the offerings presented by these twelve leaders from the first day to the twelfth day of the first month.

Verses 84-85: "This was the dedication offering for the altar from the leaders of Israel, when it was anointed: twelve silver platters, twelve silver bowls, and twelve gold pans. Each silver platter weighed one hundred and thirty shekels and each bowl seventy shekels. All the silver of the vessels weighed two thousand four hundred shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary."

In the summary, this once again emphasizes that it was on the day the altar was anointed, that is, in Exodus 40:1, on the first day of the first month in the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, the day Moses set up the tabernacle and anointed the altar with the holy anointing oil. From that day onward, the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel were divided into twelve days, with one tribe coming forward each day to present offerings as the dedication offering for the altar.

Beginning from verse 84, the objects offered are once again counted item by item: there were twelve silver platters, each platter weighing 130 shekels; there were twelve silver bowls, each bowl weighing 70 shekels. All this silver was weighed according to the shekel of the sanctuary, so the total amount of silver was 2,400 shekels.

Verse 86: "The twelve gold pans full of incense weighed ten shekels apiece, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; all the gold of the pans weighed one hundred and twenty shekels."

Altogether, twelve gold pans were offered, each gold pan weighing 10 shekels, still according to the shekel of the sanctuary. Therefore, there were altogether 120 shekels of gold. The silver platters and silver bowls held fine flour mixed with oil, while the gold pans held frankincense. These were all offerings to be presented when offering the grain offering. Next, all the sacrificial animals are counted.

Verse 87: “All the oxen for the burnt offering were twelve young bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs in their first year twelve, with their grain offering, and the kids of the goats as a sin offering twelve.”

First, the sacrificial animals for the burnt offering are counted. Altogether there were twelve young bulls, twelve rams, and twelve male lambs in their first year. When offering the burnt offering, there also had to be the accompanying grain offering, that is, fine flour mixed with oil plus frankincense. Both the burnt offering and the grain offering were to be burned on the altar, and the soothing aroma ascended to heaven to satisfy God. After looking at the burnt offering and the grain offering, we next come to the sin offering. The sacrificial animals for the sin offering totaled twelve male goats.

Verse 88: “And all the oxen for the sacrifice of peace offerings were twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, and the lambs in their first year sixty. This was the dedication offering for the altar after it was anointed.”

Here the number of offerings for the peace offering is recorded as very large. Altogether there were twenty-four bulls, sixty rams, sixty male goats, and sixty male lambs in their first year. The peace offering was an offering shared by God and man. The Israelites of each tribe should have come together to celebrate and partake of the peace offering on the day their leader offered the sacrifice. All the offerings listed above were offerings presented for the dedication of the altar.

Verse 89: “Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.”

The leaders of the twelve tribes, for the dedication of the altar, presented the offerings of each tribe. The altar was the place through which man had to pass in order to come before God. The altar typifies Christ bearing the price of sin for us on the cross and also becoming the burnt offering and the grain offering for us, satisfying God’s heart’s desire, so that there could be peace between God and man. The leaders of the twelve tribes all presented offerings, signifying that all the Israelites had the standing to come before God.

And the peak of the presentation of offerings was that after the offerings had been presented, Moses could enter the tabernacle of meeting to speak with God. Moses represented the Israelites and came before God to hear God’s speaking. God is willing to dwell with man, and God is even more willing to have intimate fellowship with man. Therefore, after the dedication of the altar was completed, Moses entered the tabernacle of meeting and heard a voice coming from above the mercy seat on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim.

We know that the mercy seat is the place where God’s righteousness and God’s mercy meet. Through the offering of sacrifices, the requirement of God’s righteousness was satisfied. In the Old Testament, man’s sins were temporarily covered by the blood of the sacrificial animals. In the New Testament, man’s case of sin is completely removed through the precious blood of Christ. Christ paid the price of sin and satisfied the requirement of God’s righteousness. Therefore, in His mercy, God fellowships with man at the mercy seat. On the mercy seat were two cherubim, bearing witness to the manifestation of God’s glory.

After the Israelites in the Old Testament had presented their offerings, Moses entered the tabernacle of meeting to hear God’s speaking and then conveyed what God had spoken to all the Israelites. But in the New Testament, because Jesus Christ

has already completed redemption, the New Testament saints can directly enter the Most Holy Place and come before the throne of grace to fellowship with God.

Hebrews 10:19-20: "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus," "by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh," Through the body of Jesus Christ, we can enter the Most Holy Place. Then Hebrews 4:16 says: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Dear brothers and sisters, the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel had to present abundant offerings before they could hear God's speaking through Moses. But how blessed are the New Testament saints! We can boldly enter the Most Holy Place at any time to fellowship with God and understand God's heart's desire. Having experienced such a great blessing, should we not all the more offer our whole being and live a life according to God's heart's desire?

Let us pray together: Lord, how we thank You! Through the salvation You completed for us, we can come boldly before the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace as our help in time of need. Having experienced such great salvation, Lord, we ask You to help us set our hearts, willing to consecrate ourselves into Your gracious hands, allowing You to operate freely upon us. Remove from us the things that do not please You. Help us know You more fully, understand Your will upon us more clearly, and be more willing to follow You. Bless my living today. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.