

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

Numbers 10: 21-28

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time to read the bible again. We continue to read Numbers chapter 10. Today, we are reading verses 21 through 28.

The Israelites set out on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year after the Exodus, leaving the wilderness of Sinai and entering the wilderness of Paran. When the two silver trumpets sounded the alarm for the first time, the camp of Judah, which was encamped on the east side of the tabernacle, began to set out, with the tribe of Judah leading, followed closely by the two tribes of Issachar and Zebulun. When the trumpet sounded for setting out, the tribe of Levi also began the work of taking down the tabernacle, with the priests first covering the most holy objects in the tabernacle. After this, the descendants of Gershon began to take down the curtains and coverings over the tabernacle, as well as the hangings around the tabernacle, and loaded these items onto two covered carts, pulled by four oxen. After the descendants of Gershon finished taking things down, the descendants of Merari then began taking down the structural items in the tabernacle, such as the boards, pillars, silver sockets, bronze pillars, and bronze sockets, and they loaded these items onto four covered carts, pulled by eight oxen. The descendants of Gershon and the descendants of Merari then began to set out immediately after the camp of Judah.

When the two silver trumpets sounded the alarm for the second time, the camp of Reuben also began to set out. The tribe of Reuben led, followed closely by the two tribes of Simeon and Gad. The Gershonite clan and the Merarite clan of the tribe of Levi were positioned exactly between the camp of Judah and the camp of Reuben, and were protected by these two camps.

Verse 21: “Then the Kohathites set out, carrying the holy things. (The tabernacle would be prepared for their arrival.)”

Immediately after the camp of Reuben came the Kohathite clan of the tribe of Levi. The descendants of Kohath carried the most holy objects in the tabernacle, including the ark in the Most Holy Place, the golden altar of incense, the golden lampstand, and the table of the showbread in the Holy Place, as well as the bronze altar in the outer court. When the first trumpet sounded for the Israelites to set out, the priests first covered these holy objects. Then the descendants of Kohath carried them aside, so that the Gershonite clan and the Merarite clan could continue taking down the tabernacle and the various objects in the tabernacle.

The Gershonite clan and the Merarite clan used ox carts to transport the objects under their care, following closely after the camp of Judah. When the silver trumpets sounded the alarm for the second time, the camp of Reuben set out, following closely after the Gershonite clan and the Merarite clan. After the camp of Reuben came the descendants of Kohath, carrying those most holy objects. The descendants of Kohath could not use ox carts; they had to carry the holy objects on their shoulders and proceed according to the proper order. The Bible does not explicitly say what that order was. It should have been from the Most Holy Place, then to the Holy Place, and finally to the various most holy objects in the outer court.

Here we see that the holy objects carried by the Kohathites were exactly in the center of the twelve tribes of Israel. In particular, the ark represented the testimony of God’s presence and was to be the center of the Israelites. God delights to dwell with His people, and God’s people must place the testimony of God’s presence in the most central position. Therefore, when they camped, the twelve tribes surrounded the tabernacle on all sides, with the tabernacle as the center; and the most central object in the tabernacle was the ark in the Most Holy Place. When the Israelites set out, these most holy objects were after the camp of Reuben and before the camp of Ephraim.

It is the same with the church today. We must place God's testimony in the most central position, and the church life must be centered on God's testimony. Then what is God's testimony? Actually, the objects carried by the descendants of Kohath were all the core of the church's testimony. The bronze altar represents the saints' consecration, worship, and praise to God; the table of the showbread is the supply of spiritual food to the saints; the golden lampstand is the testimony of the saints being enlightened and constituted; and the golden altar of incense is the means by which the saints cooperate with God through prayer. All these are the core of God's testimony. When the saints place God's testimony at the center of the church life, unbelievers who come into the church can see that God is truly among the saints.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 14, Paul exhorted the Corinthian saints that they should all prophesy, so that when an unbeliever came among them, he would be convinced and judged. The result is described in 1 Corinthians 14:25, "And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you." When the saints can rise up one by one to testify for God, this is the best proof that the church is centered on God.

The Kohathites carried the holy objects and walked at the very center of Israel's marching procession. When it was time to camp, the Merarite clan and the Gershonite clan, having arrived first immediately after the camp of Judah, began rebuilding the tabernacle. After the camp of Reuben arrived, they camped on the south side of the tabernacle. At this time, the Kohathites carrying the holy objects also arrived. By then the tabernacle had already been set up, so the Kohathites could directly place the holy objects in their proper positions. This arrangement was truly perfect.

Verses 22-24: "And the standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set out according to their armies; over their army was Elishama the son of Ammihud. Over the army of the tribe of the children of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of

Pedahzur. And over the army of the tribe of the children of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideoni.”

The Kohathite clan, carrying the holy objects, was exactly in the central position of the march. Immediately after the Kohathites came the camp of Ephraim. When they were encamped, Ephraim was on the west side of the tabernacle. When the two silver trumpets sounded the alarm for the third time, the standard of the camp of Ephraim went first, followed by the three tribes in the camp of Ephraim: Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin. These three tribes set out in order. The leader of the tribe of Ephraim was Elishama the son of Ammihud; the leader of the tribe of Manasseh was Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur; and the leader of the tribe of Benjamin was Abidan the son of Gideoni.

Verses 25-27: “Then the standard of the camp of the children of Dan, the rear guard of all the camps, set out according to their armies; over their army was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai. Over the army of the tribe of the children of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ocran. And over the army of the tribe of the children of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan.”

The camp of Dan guarded the north side of the tabernacle. When they set out, the camp of Dan set out last, positioned at the rear of the marching procession to guard against attacks from behind. When the two silver trumpets sounded the alarm for the fourth time, the standard of the camp of Dan went first. The camp of Dan had three tribes: Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. The three tribes moved forward in order. The leader of the tribe of Dan was Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai; the leader of the tribe of Asher was Pagiel the son of Ocran; and the leader of Naphtali was Ahira the son of Enan.

Verse 28: “Thus was the order of march of the children of Israel, according to their armies, when they began their journey.”

We have read earlier and have seen that the twelve tribes of Israel set out according to the marching order. Everything was according to what God had commanded through Moses. If the saints are careful, they will discover that the leaders of these twelve tribes were exactly the twelve men who presented offerings for the altar in order from the first day to the twelfth day of the first month in the second year; and the marching order was exactly the same as the order in which the offerings were presented. When the offerings were presented, God did not tell Moses the order in which the twelve tribes should present their offerings, nor did He appoint who should present the offerings. A reasonable conjecture is that leaders had already emerged among the twelve tribes at that time, and these leaders, according to their relationships with one another, discussed and decided the order in which the offerings would be presented, and then presented the offerings over twelve consecutive days.

However, by the first day of the second month, when God wanted Moses to number the armies of the twelve tribes, in Numbers 1:5-15, God told Moses to appoint the heads of the twelve tribes, who were exactly the twelve men who had presented the offerings from the first day to the twelfth day of the first month. In Numbers 2:1-31, God told Moses to establish the camping positions and marching order of the twelve tribes, and this was exactly the order in which they had come to present their offerings from the first day to the twelfth day of the first month. The twelve heads and the order of the twelve tribes appointed by God were, of course, out of God's sovereignty. Yet in His sovereignty, God appointed those who willingly came to present offerings, and He respected the order that had been discussed among men. This is truly a beautiful picture.

Today, when people talk about God's sovereignty and man's free will, they often take them as being in opposition to each other. Those who emphasize God's sovereignty completely disregard man's free will; those who emphasize man's free will disregard God's sovereignty. Yet in the real situation, we see that when man obeys God's will, and when God dwells among men, God's sovereignty and man's free will are blended together in such harmony. Man obeys the commandments, statutes, and judgments established by God, and God also respects man's willing

offering and the order arranged according to human relationships. This is the normal relationship that should exist between God and man.

It is just as Paul repeatedly emphasized that Christ is the Head of the church, and the church is the Body of Christ. Every member of the Body must submit to the Head and obey the direction of the Head. The Head also truly nourishes and cherishes every member of the Body, especially those who are inconspicuous and often overlooked; Christ pays particular attention to them.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope that in our church life, every saint will be willing to place God's testimony in the most central position, and that all our service will be for the manifestation of God's testimony. In this way, the gospel friends who come among us will no longer see merely a gathering of people, but will see that God is among us. When the whole world has become confused and disorderly because it has forsaken God, the church, by contrast, uplifts God's sovereignty and manifests the order that should exist under God's government, as well as harmonious relationships among people. This becomes an opposing testimony to the world.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! Through Numbers, we see how the Israelites camped and set out in the wilderness. This is also the testimony that the church today should have in this crooked and perverse generation. Bless the church where I am, so that it may be centered on God and uplift the testimony of Jesus Christ, allowing the gospel friends who come among us to see that God is among us. Bless the church where I am. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.