

Numbers 1-4 • Intro and First Census

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

Just so you know, the Book of Numbers basically covers the events during the time of the wilderness wanderings for the nation of Israel. So it basically encompasses about 38, 39 years. Their wanderings were essentially 40 years total. But it took them 2 years even to basically get to the Promised Land, getting the law and all the instructions.

And then when they got there, they, through their unbelief and disobedience, were turned back for an additional 38 years, making the total of 40 years wandering in the wilderness. But there were a lot of very important things that happened during that time, and this book covers those things. This book basically picks up where Exodus left off in terms of the storyline that we're going to be following.

And in case you're interested in this sort of thing, the Book of Numbers gets its name by the fact that it has two numberings of the people of Israel—one at the beginning of the book and one at the end. And so obviously the first numbering of the people was to number how many there were who came out of Egypt.

And then finally, the second numbering of the people of Israel was how many people were about to enter into the Promised Land. They're like bookends in terms of this sort of thing. As the Book of Numbers begins, it is one year and one month after they left Egypt, and it is one month after the tabernacle was finally erected, okay.

So, that maybe gives you a little bit of the timeframe of this book and where these events kind of happen. But before we get into the text—and I promise you we will get into the text tonight—I want to talk a little bit about a very interesting subject called typology. And typology is essential... well, let me put up a definition of typology instead of stumbling over it.

Typology:

Elements of the Christian faith which are prefigured or symbolized ahead of time by events or individuals in the Old Testament

Typology is basically, these are elements of the Christian faith which we find prefigured or symbolized ahead of time by events and individuals in the Old Testament. All right?

In other words, we see things in the Old Testament that are pictures of relevant truths in the New Testament, and so we see these things or we call these things in the Old Testament types. They're often referred to as types and shadows, symbols of what is happening, of course, later on.

And based on the definition of typology that you see up there on the screen, as we look at the Book of Numbers—not just for what it says but for its typology—it presents us some incredible opportunities to connect the dots about many things related to our Christian faith.

And it is just rich in typology. Of course, Israel itself is a type of all God's people. They are the original expression of God's people and then the type for all who would come after them. Their bondage in Egypt, of course, is a type of our bondage to sin that we are all born into—all people throughout time and history.

Pharaoh is a type of Satan, who wants very much to keep us in bondage and will do just about anything to keep us in that place. The exodus of Israel out of Egypt is a type of being released from sin, released from the bondage of the old life. And of course, the Red Sea is a type of water baptism when we come to know Christ as Savior.

And we all know, as we look at the story of Israel, that it was God's intent to bring the nation of Israel out of bondage in Egypt and right into the Promised Land. Now, we know that's not exactly what happened right away, but we know that's what God's plan was. He referred to the Promised Land as a land flowing with milk and honey. And of course, that description is symbolic of the abundance or the abundant life that God wants everyone to have.

Now, what's interesting about the Promised Land is that some people in past years have mistakenly believed that the Promised Land was a type of heaven. In fact, there are actually some old hymns that talk about crossing the Jordan into Canaan land, and they talk about it as if it were, and they speak of it as if it were a symbol or a type of entering into heaven.

But what we find when we get to the Book of Joshua, when the nation finally enters into the land—what do we find? We find battles, we find enemies, we find challenges, we find deceptions—none of which will be in heaven. So obviously the Promised Land is not a type of heaven.

The Promised Land is a type of the promise of abundant, victorious living that Jesus wants us to walk in. You'll remember that Jesus said, I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly. I want you to have a life flowing with milk and honey, is what Jesus has basically said. He's saying, I want you to walk in that abundance. I want you to walk in that victory. (John 10:10)

But what do we find when we enter into the Christian life? It's full of battles, isn't it? It's full of challenges. It's full of enemies. Peter talks about your enemy, the devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

It's like we come into this land of promise. And what do we find? Challenges all the way. Everywhere we look, there are new challenges — in our families, in our marriages, in our child-raising, in our businesses, in our finances, in our bodies, in all of our relationships, in church life. I mean, it's everywhere. There are challenges, battles, challenges that go on all the time.

But in the midst of this, you and I are called to live this abundant life that Jesus desires to give to us — this life of milk and honey. And most of us are kind of sitting around going, yeah, serve it up, I'm ready. But we know that this abundant life isn't just a given. It requires obedience, right?

Now, you're not saved by your obedience, but that abundant life, that life of milk and honey — what did it take for the Israelites to go into the land and enjoy the abundance of God? It took obedience and faith, didn't it? They had to obey the word of God, and they had to walk in faith, believing, God's given me this land, right?

God has given us the land of promise to go in and take. And as Christians, there are so many wonderful promises that He's given to us in His word. And the enemy's constantly coming along, challenging you, and saying, that's not yours to have. And you and I have to come back and go, yes, it is mine to have. And he challenges, no, it's not. And then there's the battle that ensues over this thing, just like the Israelites had to go in and clear the land, right? They didn't just waltz into the land and start setting up housekeeping. There were enemies. There were nations. There were strongholds.

Now, God did say, don't fear. Don't fear. Go in the power of the Spirit. Do this thing, because I've called you to do it. I've given you the land, but you've got to go in and clear it. (Deuteronomy 1:21)

And that land, for you and I, represents that victorious Christian living — walking in the victory of Jesus Christ, the victory of the cross. Walking in the abundance that He has for you and I, however that abundance may play out in our lives, whatever it may be.

So what does it take on our parts? Battles. Fighting them every day. Challenges all along the way. Faith. Keeping our faith strong.

I trust that's why you're here tonight. I trust that's why the people who tuned in tonight online — because we all know that we need to be strengthened for the battle. We're going to walk out of this room, and we're going to deal with

battles, right? We know that we need to really encourage our own hearts. We need to nourish our hearts in the word, and so forth. We have to fight in the power of the Spirit, and that takes strength of God in our lives, and so forth.

But here's a really interesting thing about what we learn about abundant life from the Book of Numbers. You ready for this? Not everybody enters into it. Not everybody — not every Christian — enters into abundant life.

We see from the stories that we see here in the Old Testament that it is possible to be set free from sin — again, that picture of being released from Egypt. Have you been set free from Egypt? Egypt is a type of sin. Has Pharaoh relinquished his power over you, which of course is that type of Satan?

Have you gone through that time of learning in the wilderness, and the water baptism of making that public declaration of being part of God's people, and all the other things that go along with it? I trust that you have. And yet we know that from these stories, there were people that went through all those things, and they still never entered into the abundant life and the victorious life that God intended.

It is believed that the nation of Israel at the time of the writing of the book of Numbers is somewhere between 2.5 to 3 million people. That's a lot of people. How many of those people who were of adult age entered into the Promised Land? Two, Caleb and Joshua.

And what happened to the rest of them? Well, the story is, they fell in the desert. But they'd been set free from bondage in Egypt. They'd been released. They'd been baptized in the waters of the Red Sea. They'd heard the law, heard God's own voice. And yet they didn't enter in.

And so we see from this that it's possible to even be a true and genuine believer and still wander in the wilderness. And believe me, there are many Christians who spend a lot of their Christian life — some, the majority, some, all of it — wandering in the wilderness. They never walk in the fullness of the victory.

And we know why. It's for the same reason Israel didn't get to go in the first time — it's because of disobedience and unbelief. Disobedience and a lack of faith.

So, with that good news, let's get into Numbers chapter 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us here tonight. It begins by saying,

“The LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent 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,” (ESV)

And just quickly, have you ever noticed how precise God's word is related to the dating of things? To give us this in such a way to say it was the first day of the second month in the second year after they'd come out of Egypt. The specificity and the exactness of the dating that's laid out for you and I reminds us once again that these are historical accounts. These are not fictitious. This is not something that someone made up. This is true history.

The Lord speaks to Moses, and in verse 2, He says, *“Take a census (or accounting of you will) of all the congregation of the people of Israel, by clans, by fathers’ houses, according to the number of names, every male, head by head. (And He says) ³ From twenty years old and upward, all in Israel (look at this) who are able to go to war, (So we know we're talking about the men here. Alright?) you and Aaron shall list them, company by company.”* Your Bible may say *“by their armies.”*

Now, the nation of Israel — you might be wondering here at the beginning of this — why in the world would He need to count the men who were basically 20 and older, and we know that they would be fighting men or considered fighting men? Why is that necessary? We're just on our way to the Promised Land.

Well, the nation of Israel is going to make their way through the wilderness, and they're going to pass through some areas, some lands that are inhabited by people who are very violent and very evil. They're not going to take a liking to having 2.5 to 3 million people passing through their territory. And since the probability of one of those nations responding in violence was high, they needed to have a fighting force. And that's what is being done here — to count those who would be that fighting force.

Verse 4 goes on and says, *“And there shall be with you a man from each tribe, each man being the head of the house of his fathers. ⁵ And these are the names of the men who shall assist you.”*

Obviously, counting all these people was a huge task. So God says to Moses, I'm going to present to you the names of these individuals who are going to help you do the counting. Alright.

And if you look at the rest of verse 5 and 6 on down through verse 16, these are the names — and all they are is just the Hebrew names of the men who had been called by God to come alongside Moses and help him with the counting.

And so it says, if you'll skip down to verse 17: *“Moses and Aaron took these men who had been named, ¹⁸ and on the first day of the second month, they assembled the whole congregation together...”*

And did you notice it's the first day of the second month still? In other words, they started this process the day they got the word. They didn't wait and say, okay, we'll do it in a week, or, we'll wait till next month. They started right away.

And it says, “... *they assembled the whole congregation together, who registered themselves by clans, by fathers' houses, according to the number of names from twenty years old and upward, head by head,* ¹⁹ *as the LORD commanded Moses. So he listed them in the wilderness of Sinai...*”

Now we're going to go through and we're going to deal — see how many people there were from each of the tribes.

“²⁰ *The people of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their generations, by their clans, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go to war:* ²¹ *those listed of the tribe of Reuben were 46,500.*” And again, this is 20 years old and up.

“²² *Of the people of Simeon, their generations, by their clans, by their fathers' houses, those of them who were listed, according to the number of names, head by head, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go to war:* ²³ *those listed of the tribe of Simeon were 59,300.*”

Now you're going to notice that for every single tribe of Israel, it's going to begin describing them the exact same way: “*Of the people of*” and then it'll mention. So I'm just going to give you the numbers, alright?

Verse 25, “*those listed of the tribe of Gad were 45,650.*” It's going to be every other verse. Verse 27, “*those listed of the tribe of Judah were 74,600.*” Verse 29, “*those listed of the tribe of Issachar were 54,400.*” Verse 31, “*those listed of the tribe of Zebulun were 57,400.*” Verse 33, “*those listed of the tribe of Ephraim were 40,500.*” Verse 35, “*those listed of the tribe of Manasseh were 32,200.*” Verse 37, “*those listed of the tribe of Benjamin were 35,400.*” Verse 39, “*those listed of the tribe of Dan were 62,700.*” Verse 41, “*the tribe of Asher, 41,500.*” Verse 43, “*the tribe of Naphtali was 53,400.*”

It goes on to say, “⁴⁴ *These are those who were listed, whom Moses and Aaron listed with the help of the chiefs of Israel, twelve men, each representing his fathers' house.* ⁴⁵ *So all those listed of the people of Israel, by their fathers' houses, from twenty years old and upward, every man able to go to war in Israel—* ⁴⁶ *all those listed were 603,550.*”

And it's based on that number, then taking into consideration the women and children, that the estimates are made of somewhere between 2.5 and 3 million people.

Now, you'll notice that the tribe of Levi was not counted, of course, and the explanation for that is given beginning in verse 47: *"But the Levites were not listed along with them by their ancestral tribe. ⁴⁸ For the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁹ "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not list, and you shall not take a census of them among the people of Israel."*

Doesn't mean they're not going to take a census of — or count them — but they're not going to be included in the regular count.

He says, *"⁵⁰ But appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, and over all its furnishings, and over all that belongs to it. They are to carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings, and they shall take care of it and shall camp around the tabernacle. ⁵¹ When the tabernacle is (to set up or) to set out, (meaning to head out on the journey) the Levites shall take it down, and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death."*

So the tribe of Levi was given by God to the people of Israel — and specifically to Aaron and his sons — to be their helpers. How would you like to have a whole tribe literally at your disposal to kind of help do all the grunt work? And essentially it was kind of grunt work, for the most part.

But I have to believe that the Levites were honored to do this, because even though we're going to see when things did get taken down, Aaron and his sons had to cover everything — like multiple times — with various coverings before the Levites came in to pick it up and move it. And they weren't to actually look upon it. They could move it, but they couldn't look upon it. But they could at least touch it. They could at least pick the things up and move it.

The rest of the tribes of Israel were told, you can't even touch this stuff or you'll be put to death. Right? I have to believe that the Levites felt some level of specialness. I'm not sure that's a word, but you know what I mean.

Now, as we get into the Book of Numbers, we're going to find that there was a group of Levites who did get — become disgruntled — and they're going to actually challenge Moses and Aaron. Because Moses and Aaron are from the same tribe — they're from the tribe of Levi as well.

And these Levites are going to come to Moses and Aaron, and they're going to basically tell him, you guys think you're all that and more, and we're just the

same as you. And we'll see how Moses handles that at the time. (Numbers 16:1–3)

But anyway, it goes on. Verse 52: *"The people of Israel shall pitch their tents by their companies, each man in his own camp and each man by his own standard.*

⁵³ But the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the testimony, so that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the people of Israel. And the Levites shall keep guard over the tabernacle of the testimony." ⁵⁴ *Thus did the people of Israel; they did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses."*

Kind of a neat picture isn't it? So you have in there, and we'll get into the camp set up in just a little bit here. But you have the tabernacle, which would be set up in the heart of the camp, and the Levites were camped all the way around it so that the other people couldn't get close.

Now, remember, this is the old covenant. We talked about this many times in our study of the book of Leviticus. We talked about the fact that under the old covenant, you can't just approach God, right? You can't just waltz into God anytime you want to, like you and I can, but often take for granted. You can't just waltz in and say, hey, God, want to have a little chat? I want to behold your presence. I want to come boldly before the throne of grace.

And you can't do that under the old covenant. You do that and you'll die. Why? Because our God is a consuming fire. Right? But there's more than that. The why has to do with because we're sinners. We are sinners, and sinners cannot approach a holy God. Right.

So, there's this issue of sin, and what God is communicating to Israel in no uncertain terms is: your sin has separated you from me. God wants them to know that. Sin separates us from God.

So why can you and I approach the throne of grace boldly anytime we want? Sin's been dealt with. We've appropriated the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Our sin has been handled. The vessel has been cleansed. Now we can enter into His presence anytime we want.

But of course, we know we're coming through the blood of Jesus Christ, right? It's not on our own merit. It's because Christ has enabled us, by His merit, to enter in. And now we can just anytime we want.

And, oh, we got to be very careful not to allow our hearts to take that for granted. It's good for us to go back and study through these Old Testament books to remind ourselves again: the Israelites could not enter whenever they wanted—or ever, for the most part—as far as really the presence of God. That was only the high priest.

All right, Numbers chapter 2. As we get into this chapter, we're going to see that before the nation of Israel begins to set out in earnest for the Promised Land, God needs to establish order for every tribe. And this order you're going to see in this chapter involves where each tribe will camp.

It wasn't just a hodgepodge of, hey, there's a good piece of ground, let's pitch our tent there. Everybody camped in a very specific area along with their tribe—tribal division. We'll see how that works in just a little bit. And then he's also going to talk about what order to set out.

Think about 2.5 million people, and suddenly you get the word, it's time to leave. Now, you can imagine what would happen if everybody just kind of went, okay, let's go! and they all just left. Well, it'd be chaos. It'd be total chaos. You got people running over each other and people getting out of whack, and then the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant isn't being properly protected, and so on, and so you got people going where they shouldn't go.

So God is going to lay all this out. And if you find this a little bit challenging to read, let me just remind you of something: this is all about order. This is all about order. God is going to say, here's the order of how you're going to camp, and here's the order about how you're going to set out when you leave.

And I want you to live lives that are in order. Why? God is a God of order, right? We know that from the Scripture. Paul writes, our God is not a God of disorder, which, of course, only leaves one option—He's a God of order. (1 Corinthians 14:33)

What's important for you and I to take away from that little tidbit is that God is doing a work of bringing order into our lives as well. And because He is a God of order, the more we yield to His Spirit, the more order He's going to bring to our lives.

Now, understand this: you and I live in a world that is out of order. I mean, people are out of order. The institutions of man are out of order. Our bodies get out of order. Our thinking gets out of order. Our habits get out of order. Our relationships get out of order—you name it.

And yet in the midst of this world of total disorder, God has called us to yield our lives to Him, that He might take what we give to Him and bring order to whatever that is. And it could be anything—literally anything.

And I don't know about you, but when I allow things in my life to get out of order, which is pretty regularly, God convicts me. I can feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Can't you? Whether it's my eating practices or my sleep practices, or you name it—if things start getting out of order, I can just feel His

hand on my shoulder just saying, son, this is an area that you're letting get off course here again, and you need to get back on track.

And I know what on track means. It means walking in the order of the Spirit, which is so hard because everything in my being that's made up of Paul wants to go off course. And it's a continual daily battle against the world—just kind of going with the way of the world.

Just living in that disorder: disorderly thinking, disorderly treatment of myself, disorderly treatment of others—you name it. And what's interesting about order is that none of us—God puts none of us—all in order all at once. Our lives are a continual process of yielding over new ground, new territory of our hearts, of our lives, of our minds, and of our lives to His order.

And just about the time you feel like you've got everything pretty much dialed in, just wait. He is so faithful to knock on your door and reveal to you yet another area of your life that you need to surrender to the work of His order.

But it's like Mom coming into your room and saying, okay, we're going to pick this thing up. And that's never fun. I never enjoyed that with my mother. She might be even watching tonight. I love you, mom. But that was not fun, because I had other things I wanted to do, places I needed to go, and often she would leave me alone in my room to clean it—which was always a mistake on her part. Because I lived on a ground level sort of a thing, and I would just open my window, take off the screen, and leave, and just figure I was going to deal with the consequences later.

Wasn't I a good kid? You can thank God you didn't have to raise me. But I hated the idea of just—order goes against us. And yet we like it.

That's the weird part. The older I get, the more order I like. I don't like being in a disorderly environment. When you come home and—don't you hate it when you come home from vacation and you left dishes in the sink?

I mean, that's an awful feeling. Or the house is—you're just coming in with your bags, and the house needs to be cleaned. And it's like, oh man, I should have stayed away. Because we want things to be in order. How nice it is to come back to your home, and it's all picked up, put in order, everything's in its place. And I believe that order brings peace. I really do.

I believe an orderly house, an orderly checkbook, an orderly mind, and practices that are ordered, and so forth—habits that are ordered. Which again, this is my inner self wants to fight against all this, but there's something in me that appreciates order. It's just that I don't have what it takes without God's help to

walk in that order. But God is a God of order, and you'll see it here as we get into this chapter.

Look at verse 1: *"The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ² 'The people of Israel shall camp each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' houses. They shall camp facing the tent of meeting on every side.'"*

So they're even the doorway of their tent has to be pointed toward the tabernacle. All right. And understand this again—speaking of types, typology—remember this: when God set up His people in the wilderness, His presence, the tabernacle, was always in the center of the camp. And that creates this beautiful organizational picture for you and I of the presence of God in the center of His people, and you and I yielding to the centrality of the Lord's presence in our lives—making Him the center of our lives.

We talk about it when people get married, but we don't often talk about it in other respects. We always hear people say when somebody is getting married, well, you guys, just keep Jesus the center of your marriage. And that's wonderful advice. What about keeping Him in the center of other things too? We don't often say that to people.

Well, keep Him in the center of your parenting. Or keep Him in the center of your checkbook. I keep referring to checkbooks. People don't even have them anymore, but you know what I mean. Keep God at the center of your habits and everything. He should be at the center of our lives, not just the center of our worship. And hopefully, He is the center of our worship, but He should be the center of our lives at all times. But I want you just to notice here the organization.

Look at verse 3, God just lays all this out for Moses. First of all: *"Those to camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah by their companies, the chief of the people of Judah being Nahshon the son of Amminadab, ⁴ his company as listed being 74,600. ⁵ Those to camp next to him (those camped next to him, and these are still on the east side. In other words, various tribes—they're going to be grouped on all the sides, right? But they're going to be grouped in packs of three. Okay, so then next to him) shall be the tribe of Issachar, the chief of the people of Issachar being (Nathel, it's not really Nathaniel but it looks like it) Nethanel (Nathaniel is n-a, but anyway) the son of Zuar, ⁶ his company as listed being 54,400. ⁷ Then the tribe of Zebulun (still on the east side of the Tabernacle), the chief of the people of Zebulun being Eliab the son of Helon, ⁸ his company as listed being 57,400. ⁹ All those (is going to be basically) listed (under)...the camp of Judah, (but includes these other tribes as well) by their companies, (this is going to be a total of)... 186,400..."* And they're going to set out first every time the presence of the Lord

picks up to move, okay. This is the group of Israelites that will move out first. All right.

Now we have the south side: ¹⁰ *On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben by their companies, the chief of the people of Reuben being Elizur the son of Shedeur,* ¹¹ *his company as listed being 46,500.* ¹² *And those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon, the chief of the people of Simeon being Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai (that guy),* ¹³ *his company as listed being 59,300.* (These are the real exercise in pronunciation of some of these.) ¹⁴ *Then the tribe of Gad, the chief of the people of Gad being Eliasaph the son of Reuel,* ¹⁵ *his company as listed being 45,650.* ¹⁶ *All those listed (under)... the camp of Reuben, (Right? Under the banner if you will) by their companies, were (totaling) 151,450. They shall set out second.*

¹⁷ *“Then the tent of meeting (goes next, when they)... set out, with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps; as they camp, so shall they set out, each in position, standard by standard.”* So you know that the tent of meeting and the Levites go next. Finally, but not finally but next.

¹⁸ *On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim by their companies, the chief of the people of Ephraim being Elishama the son of Ammihud,* ¹⁹ *his company as listed being 40,500.* ²⁰ *And next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh, the chief of the people of Manasseh being Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur,* ²¹ *his company as listed being 32,200.* ²² *Then the tribe of Benjamin, the chief of the people of Benjamin being Abidan the son of Gideoni,* ²³ *his company as listed being 35,400.* ²⁴ *All those listed of the camp of Ephraim, by their companies, were 108,100. They shall set out third on the march.”* And then, you got the north side.

²⁵ *On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan by their companies, the chief of the people of Dan being Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai,* ²⁶ *his company as listed being 62,700.* ²⁷ *And those to camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, the chief of the people of Asher being Pagiel the son of Ochran,* ²⁸ *his company as listed being 41,500.* ²⁹ *Then the tribe of Naphtali, the chief of the people of (that people) Naphtali being Ahira the son of Enan,* ³⁰ *his company as listed being 53,400.* ³¹ *All those listed of the camp of Dan were 157,600. They shall set out last, standard by standard.”*

³² *These are the people of Israel as listed by their fathers’ houses. All those listed in the camps by their companies were 603,550.”*

Now, interesting thing about the numbers: you've got Judah and the tribes with them camped—so they're camped kind of on one side of the tabernacle. And then you have the tribes on the sides and then basically on the top.

Here's what's interesting. According to these numbers, if you look at these numbers of the totals of these different groups, if you would have been able back in those days to have a bird's eye view of the camp of Israel, guess what shape this is all in? It's in the shape of a cross.

Now, the significance is obvious for you and I. But the smallest group of people is on the top. The two groups that are on the side are almost identical in size. And then the bottom, which is the tribe and the group of Judah and those with them, would be the longest—stretching out farther than any other, because remember, they're all supposed to face the tabernacle.

Again, if you could put your drone up in the air by remote control and look down on this thing, you would see the picture of a cross, which is pretty amazing.

Again, in verse 33 we're told: *“But the Levites were not listed among the people of Israel, as the LORD commanded Moses. ³⁴ Thus did the people of Israel. According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they camped by their standards, and so they set out, each one in his clan, according to his fathers’ house.”*

Once again, just reminding you: there are twelve tribes of Israel minus Levi. And you guys know how that works, right? Because the tribe of Joseph got broken up into two—Manasseh and Ephraim. We don't ever hear about the tribe of Joseph, although he was one of the sons of Jacob. The tribe of Joseph is never listed because his boys are listed in his place.

He got a double portion, remember, from his father? And he has 2 tribes under his name. So you take Levi out and give Joseph 2 tribes—you still end up with 12 tribes of Israel, even minus Levi. So you have the 12 tribes of Israel, right? In these groups, by their standards, with these banners.

Now, here's another really interesting thing. We know what the animal symbol was for the tribe of Judah. We know that. It's a lion—because in Scripture, Judah is referred to that way. And we know that Jesus is referred to as the lion of the tribe of Judah. So that lion is that picture of the tribe of Judah.

Jewish history, or Jewish tradition, actually tells us what the other animal designations were for these other three tribes. So you've got Judah as a lion. You've got Reuben—his symbol was man. You have Ephraim—his symbol was the animal of the ox. And then you have Dan—whose symbol was the eagle.

Now, I don't know if those sound familiar to you, but interestingly, those four symbols also represent the four faces of the cherubim that are represented in the Old Testament Books of Isaiah (chapter 6), Ezekiel (chapters 1 and 10), and then also in the Book of Revelation (chapter 4).

So these four banners, if you will, that surround the tabernacle are the exact animal representations or symbols given to those tribes that are seen on the faces of the cherubim symbolically in the Scripture.

And I have a feeling that we're barely even scratching the surface of all of the connections that we're making in the Word of God—about how they apply to other things.

All right. Chapters 3 and 4—we're going to try to move through these fairly quickly, because in these two chapters we're going to basically deal with the service of the Levites. Who, as we saw, were not included in the counting of chapters 1 and 2. And so we're going to see how they are numbered here.

It says, *"¹ These are the generations of Aaron and Moses at the time when the LORD spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. ² These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar ³ These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the anointed priests, whom he ordained to serve as priests. ⁴ But (as we read before) Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD when they offered (what is referred to here as) unauthorized fire before the LORD in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. So Eleazar and Ithamar served as priests in the lifetime of Aaron their father."*

And that was referenced, by the way, back in our study of Leviticus in chapter 10. And so, as it says, Aaron now has two remaining sons to come after him.

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, (verse 5) saying, ⁶ "Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister to him."

Again, this is saying there's a lot of work that I've given Aaron and his sons to do. So the tribe of Levi is to minister, to do the physical work for the sons of Aaron, for Aaron and his sons.

Verse 7: *"They shall keep guard over him and over the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister at the tabernacle. ⁸ They shall guard all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and keep guard over the people of Israel as they minister at the tabernacle. (And here's the important thing, verse 9) And you shall give the Levites to Aaron and his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the people of Israel. ¹⁰ And you shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall guard their priesthood. But if any outsider comes near, he shall be put to death."*

¹¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² “Behold, (if I, excuse me) I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn (I’ll explain what that means in a moment) who opens the womb among the people of Israel. The Levites shall be mine, ¹³ for all the firstborn are mine. (Here He explains why) On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt (He’s referring to Passover), I consecrated for my own all the firstborn in Israel, both of man and of beast. They shall be mine: I am the LORD.”

So when God spared all the boys, all the firstborn boys in Israel, of the Israelites, on that evening of the Passover—the first Passover in Egypt—when all the firstborn male children were put to death in Egypt, God said, because I spared them, they're mine. You give them to me; they belong to me. All the firstborn males, they belong to me. All right? Now, let's keep going here.

¹⁴ And the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, ¹⁵ “List the sons of Levi, by fathers’ houses and by clans; every male from a month old and upward you shall list.” ¹⁶ So Moses listed them according to the word of the LORD, as he was commanded: ¹⁷ And these were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon and Kohath and Merari. ¹⁸ And these are the names of the sons of Gershon by their clans: Libni and Shimei. ¹⁹ And the sons of Kohath by their clans: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. ²⁰ And the sons of Merari by their clans: Mahli and Mushi (that’s just cool). These are the clans of the Levites, by their fathers’ houses.

²¹ To Gershon belonged the clan of the Libnites and the clan of the Shimeites; these were the clans of the Gershonites. ²² Their listing according to the number of all the males from a month old and upward was 7,500. ²³ The clans of the Gershonites were to camp behind the tabernacle on the west, ²⁴ with Eliasaph, the son of Lael as chief of the fathers’ house of the Gershonites. ²⁵ And the guard duty of the sons of Gershon in the tent of meeting involved the tabernacle, the tent with its covering, the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting, ²⁶ the hangings of the court, the screen for the door of the court that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and its cords—all the service connected with these.”

Notice here, God is, in addition to saying, hey, I want you Levites to take care of the job of the tabernacle, He gives them very specific tasks. Again—order. I don't know if this order, this kind of order, gives you the shakes or not.

Verse 27: “To Kohath belonged the clan of the Amramites and the clan of the Izharites and the clan of the Hebronites and the clan of the Uzzielites; these are the clans of the Kohathites. ²⁸ According to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, there were 8,600, keeping guard over the sanctuary. ²⁹ The clans of the sons of Kohath were to camp on the south side of the tabernacle, ³⁰ with Elizaphan the son of Uzziel as chief of the fathers’ house of the clans of the Kohathites. ³¹ And their guard duty involved the ark, the table,

the lampstand, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary with which the priests minister, and the screen; all the service connected with these. ³² *And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest was to be chief over the chiefs of the Levites, and to have oversight of those who kept guard over the sanctuary.”* He’s an overseer over the overseers of the Levites, so one of the sons of Aaron.

“³³ To Merari belonged the clan of the Mahlites and the clan of the Mushites: these are the clans of Merari. ³⁴ Their listing according to the number of all the males from a month old and upward was 6,200. ³⁵ And the chief of the fathers’ house of the clans of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. They were to camp on the north side of the tabernacle. ³⁶ And the appointed guard duty of the sons of Merari involved the frames of the tabernacle, the bars, the pillars, the bases, and all their accessories; all the service connected with these; ³⁷ also the pillars around the court, with their bases and pegs and cords.

³⁸ *Those who were to camp before the tabernacle on the east, before the tent of meeting toward the sunrise, were Moses and Aaron and his sons, guarding the sanctuary itself, to protect the people of Israel. And any outsider who came near was to be put to death. ³⁹ All those listed among the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron listed at the commandment of the LORD, by clans, all the males from a month old and upward, were 22,000.*

⁴⁰ *And the LORD said to Moses, “List all the firstborn males of the people of Israel, from a month old and upward, taking the number of their names. (Remember they all belong to God.) ⁴¹ And you shall take the Levites for me—I am the LORD—instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the cattle of the people of Israel.” ⁴² So Moses listed all the firstborn among the people of Israel, as the LORD commanded him. ⁴³ And all the firstborn males, according to the number of names, from a month old and upward as listed were 22,273.*

⁴⁴ *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ⁴⁵ “Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the people of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle. The Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD. ⁴⁶ And as the redemption price for the 273 of the firstborn of the people of Israel, over and above the number of the male Levites, ⁴⁷ you shall take five shekels per head; you shall take them according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel of twenty gerahs), ⁴⁸ and give the money to Aaron and his sons as the redemption price for those who are over.””*

Do you get what's going on here? Because God redeemed his people at Passover and spared all the firstborn sons of Israel, again He said, the firstborn sons of Israel are mine. They're all mine. However, I'm taking all of the Levites. So, I

want you to count all of the firstborn males in Israel, and then we're going to take the number of Levites, and that will cancel out as many as Levites there are. But it turned out there were some left over—273 firstborn of Israel that were left over. So they had to be redeemed back with this sanctuary shekel, and then the money was given to the sons of Aaron.

“⁴⁹ So Moses took the redemption money from those who were over and above those redeemed by the Levites. ⁵⁰ From the firstborn of the people of Israel he took the money, 1,365 shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁵¹ And Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.”

Chapter 4. We're dealing still with the priesthood. Very quickly here: *“The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ² ‘Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their clans and their fathers’ houses, ³ from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can come on duty, to do the work in the tent of meeting.’”*

So now you know what the age was for doing the work of the tent of meeting. It was thirty to fifty. So it was an early retirement for the guys. They had to wait till they were thirty to serve, and they had to retire when they were fifty-one—I presume. And that was just the way it was. Otherwise, there probably would have been too many had they allowed that number to go sooner or go later.

Verse 4: *“This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the tent of meeting: the most holy things. (So the sons of Kohath are responsible for the most holy things) ⁵ When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons (first) shall go in and take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it. ⁶ Then they shall put on it a covering of goatskin and spread on top of that a cloth all of blue, and shall put in its poles.”*

So you can see, the sons of Aaron had to go and conceal all these things first. And then, the Kohathites could go in there and carry it but they couldn't see it. It had to be concealed from them because the glory of the Lord was there.

“⁷ And over the table of the bread of the Presence (It's going to through these basically there pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle.) they shall spread a cloth of blue and put on it the plates, the dishes for incense, the bowls, and the flagons for the drink offering; the regular showbread also shall be on it. (So they leave the bread right on the table.) ⁸ Then they shall spread over them a cloth of scarlet and cover the same with a covering of goatskin, and shall put in its poles. ⁹ And they shall take a cloth of blue and cover the lampstand for the light, with its lamps, its tongs, its trays, and all the vessels for oil with which it is supplied. ¹⁰ And they shall put it with all its utensils in a covering of goatskin

and put it on the carrying frame. ¹¹ And over the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue and cover it with a covering of goatskin, and shall put in its poles ¹² And they shall take all the vessels of the service that are used in the sanctuary and put them in a cloth of blue and cover them with a covering of goatskin and put them on the carrying frame. ¹³ And they shall take away the ashes from the altar and spread a purple cloth over it. ¹⁴ And they shall put on it all the utensils of the altar, which are used for the service there, the fire pans, the forks, the shovels, and the basins, all the utensils of the altar; and they shall spread on it a covering of goatskin, and shall put in its poles. ¹⁵ And when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, as the camp sets out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry these, but they must not touch the holy things, lest they die. These are the things of the tent of meeting that the sons of Kohath are to carry.

¹⁶ “And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall have charge of the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the regular grain offering, and the anointing oil, with the oversight of the whole tabernacle and all that is in it, of the sanctuary and its vessels.”

¹⁷ The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ¹⁸ “Let not the tribe of the clans of the Kohathites be destroyed from among the Levites, (In other words, be very careful about how you cover these things so they aren’t killed. He says,) ¹⁹ but deal thus with them, that they may live and not die when they come near to the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in and appoint them each to his task and to his burden (in other words, give him very clear instructions, and part of those instructions are in verse 20) but they shall not go in to look on the holy things even for a moment, lest they die.”

So this was a challenge—or a charge, if you will—given to the sons of Aaron: to give a very clear instruction so the Kohathites would not die by doing something by accident or by ignorance.

“²¹ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²² “Take a census of the sons of Gershon also, by their fathers’ houses and by their clans. ²³ From thirty years old up to fifty years old, you shall list them, all who can come to do duty, to do service in the tent of meeting. (Now, we’re dealing with these guys) ²⁴ This is the service of the clans of the Gershonites, in serving and bearing burdens: ²⁵ they shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle and the tent of meeting with its covering and the covering of goatskin that is on top of it and the screen for the entrance of the tent of meeting ²⁶ and the hangings of the court and the screen for the entrance of the gate of the court that is around the tabernacle and the altar, and their cords and all the equipment for their service. And they shall do all that needs to be done with regard to them.”

These guys are kind of the roadies. They got all the cords. They're taking care of all the cords and all the stuff.

“²⁷ All the service of the sons of the Gershonites shall be at the command of Aaron and his sons, in all that they are to carry and in all that they have to do. And you shall assign to their charge all that they are to carry. ²⁸ This is the service of the clans of the sons of the Gershonites in the tent of meeting, and their guard duty is to be under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

²⁹ “As for the sons of Merari, you shall list them by their clans and their fathers’ houses. ³⁰ From thirty years old up to fifty years old, you shall list them, everyone who can come on duty, to do the service of the tent of meeting. ³¹ And this is what they are charged to carry, as the whole of their service in the tent of meeting: the frames of the tabernacle, with its bars, pillars, and bases, ³² and the pillars around the court with their bases, pegs, and cords, with all their equipment and all their accessories. And you shall list by name the objects that they are required to carry. (They have to have a checklist) ³³ This is the service of the clans of the sons of Merari, the whole of their service in the tent of meeting, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.”

³⁴ And Moses and Aaron and the chiefs of the congregation listed the sons of the Kohathites, by their clans and their fathers’ houses, ³⁵ from thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone who could come on duty, for service in the tent of meeting; ³⁶ and those listed by clans were 2,750. (A lot of guys to work) ³⁷ This was the list of the clans of the Kohathites, all who served in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron listed according to the commandment of the LORD by Moses.”

Now we are basically reading about how they’re carrying out these things.

“³⁸ Those listed of the sons of Gershon, by their clans and their fathers’ houses, ³⁹ from thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone who could come on duty for service in the tent of meeting— ⁴⁰ those listed by their clans and their fathers’ houses were 2,630. ⁴¹ This was the list of the clans of the sons of Gershon, all who served in the tent of meeting, whom Moses and Aaron listed according to the commandment of the LORD.” It’s the same thing over and over again.

“⁴² Those listed of the clans of the sons of Merari, by their clans and their fathers’ houses, ⁴³ from thirty years old up to fifty years old, everyone who could come on duty, for service in the tent of meeting— ⁴⁴ those listed by clans were

3,200. ⁴⁵ *This was the list of the clans of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron listed according to the commandment of the LORD by Moses.*

⁴⁶ *All those who were listed of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the chiefs of Israel listed, by their clans and their fathers' houses, ⁴⁷from thirty years old up to fifty years old (These are the rest of Levites apart from these other clans.), everyone who could come to do the service of ministry and the service of bearing burdens in the tent of meeting, ⁴⁸those listed were 8,580. ⁴⁹According to the commandment of the LORD through Moses they were listed, each one with his task of serving or carrying. Thus they were listed by him, as the LORD commanded Moses."*

And that's where we stop for tonight.

Isn't it interesting that there was a task for everyone and for everyone a task? We're reminded of the order of the Lord too in our own service for Him. We don't take upon ourselves the giftings that we receive. They're given to us by the Lord, and they're given to us that we might perform a function so that there might be order in the body of Christ. We're given jobs to do. We're given abilities. We're given tasks.

I was talking to someone recently, and he asked me, So how do I know what my calling is? Sometimes you just got to get busy, and you just got to do it. I mean, obviously be praying about it. The Lord revealed this to me. But I'll tell you one great way to know what God's called you to do in the body of Christ: it's what you're delighted doing and what is not a burden.

Because the Bible tells us very clearly that the yoke of the Lord is easy, and His burden is light. (Matthew 11:28–30) Whatever yoke the Lord has placed on you, whatever burden He's given you to function in the body of Christ, it's going to be easy and light. It's not going to be something you're going to have to drag your feet to do.

Often in the body of Christ, when you talk to people about giftings and their place in the body, what they'll often be very adept at telling you is what they're not called to do. They'll say, well, I'll tell you one thing—I'm not very good with kids, or I just don't do that thing of what that guy does. I just can't do it.

We're all very eager to tell everybody what we aren't supposed to do. I get it. That's kind of a process of elimination. And they're probably explaining—hopefully they're explaining—what they just haven't been given the grace of God to do. Hopefully, they're not just expressing their own stubborn unwillingness to do the service to the Lord, but rather they're saying, in essence, I don't think God has given me the grace to function in that role.

We probably know what those things are. But if you don't know what you do have the grace to do, then you owe it to yourself, and you owe it to the Lord—I believe, who gifts everyone to function—to try out new things, different things, in the body of Christ. And when you find that thing, it's just going to be, yes.

And it's not to say it's going to be one thing and one thing only, and one thing forever and all time. The Lord can even switch gears on you from time to time, and He will do that. But when you are walking in the grace of God—when His grace is there to equip you, to enable you—His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

So it is a delight to serve the Lord.