

Numbers 17-18

November 13, 2011

Introduction:

In **chapter 13** the spies were sent into the land. In **chapter 14** the people rejected God's plan and wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua for telling the truth about God enabling them to defeat the giants and conquer the land. They want to choose a new leader and go back to Egypt. God wants to destroy them for their sin and lack of faith but Moses intercedes for them (a picture of Jesus interceding for us). In **chapter 16** Korah leads a rebellion against the leadership of Moses (God's chosen leader) and Aaron (the High Priest). The ground swallows the families of Korah and two others alive. Another **250 men die** from a fire from the Lord as God judges their rebellion against His chosen leadership.

17:1-11 What takes place in **chapter 17** in **verses 1 to 11**

In **chapter 16 verse 3**, Korah made the argument that all of the Lord's people were "holy" and therefore had a right to do what Moses, Aaron, and the Levites were doing. [God had chosen Moses to lead the people (**Exodus 3:7-10**). God had selected Aaron to be the High Priest (**Exodus 28:1-43**). God selected the **Levites** to do all of the work related to offerings, sacrifices, and the Tabernacle (**Exodus 38:21**).]

- God tells Aaron to collect rods from the leaders of each of the tribes. Those rods would be placed before the Lord in the Holy of Holies and God would cause the rod of the tribe He had chosen for the "spiritual" work to sprout. Aaron's rod, representing the tribe of Levi, not only sprouted, it budded, blossomed, and produced *ripe* almonds. God told Moses to leave that rod with the ark (the Testimony) to be kept as a reminder of the fact that *He* chooses who will lead His people and what different people (in this case "tribes") will do for Him. See **1 Corinthians 12:12,18**.

Does anyone know whatever became of Aaron's rod that budded?

- In **Hebrews 9:2-4** we learn that Aaron's rod that budded was kept in the Ark of the Covenant/Testimony along with a jar of manna, and the Ten Commandment Tablets. It likely was taken out of the Ark when the Philistines captured the Ark in a battle with Israel. See **1 Samuel 4:2-11**. Aaron's rod was originally the rod of Moses. See **Exodus 4:1-5 & 14-17**. See **Exodus 7:8-13**. See **Exodus 7:19-20; 8:5-7 & 16-19**. Moses used this rod when he spoke to and stuck the rocks. See **Exodus 17:1-7** and **Numbers 20:7-11**.

17:5,10 What do we learn about our complaining in **verses 5 and 10?**

- When we complain about our lives and those whom God has placed over us, our complaining is really against God. We think that we deserve "better" or that God "owes" us more or better or different.

17:8 Can we learn anything from the detail given in **verse 8?**

- When God acts, He does so in an unmistakable way. The rod only had to sprout; instead it also budded, blossomed, and produced ripe fruit overnight. When God sent darkness into Egypt, it was a darkness that could be "felt" (**Exodus 10:21**). When God sent fire from heaven on Mount Carmel, it not only consumed the offering...see **1 Kings 18:31-39** (notice **verse 38**).

17:12-13 We are not told for certain, but why do you think the people said what they did in **verses 12 to 13?**

- People from the other tribes had apparently been trying to take responsibility for the holy things with, in, and around the Tabernacle that only the Levites were supposed to do. Those who did so were apparently dying; we are not told how. In **chapter 18** God again instructs the people that the Levites...Aaron's tribe...were to perform the holy work.

18:1-7 In **chapter 18 verses 1 to 7** God reminds the people that the Levites will attend to the holy things. What is to become of anyone besides a Levite attempting to do the work related to the offerings and the Tabernacle?

- **Verse 7** tells us that they were to be put to death. God is apparently serious about the distinction between those He chooses to lead and those who are supposed to follow.

18:8-32 Verses **8 to 32** tell us how the priests were to be provided for. What do we learn about their “portion” and provision?

- The tithes and offerings would be given to and handled by the Levites. In **verses 8 and 19**, these were to be a *perpetual allotment* out of which they would take care of Tabernacle business and essentially provide “salaries” for the priests and Levite families. Unlike the other tribes, the Levites would not inherit land: God Himself would be their inheritance (**verse 20**).

Some of you may have heard that pastors should not get paid for what they do. What does this passage teach about that?

- See **verse 21** and the first part of **verse 26**; the tithe is given to them *in return for the service they perform*. [**21** *As for the tribe of Levi, your relatives, I will compensate them for their service in the Tabernacle.*] [, **26** *“Give these instructions to the Levites: When you receive from the people of Israel the tithes I have assigned as your allotment, give a tenth of the tithes you receive—a tithe of the tithe—to the Lord as a sacred offering.”*]

There were times when the Apostle Paul made tents to provide for himself (**Acts 18:1-4**), does this mean that he opposed paying pastors?

- No. See **Acts 18:1-5**; Paul only made tents until there were enough resources to provide for him so that he could devote himself full-time to the ministry. See **1 Corinthians 9:7-14** and **1 Timothy 5:17-18**. The work *honor* in **verse 17** is literally “*honorarium*”.

What does today's Numbers passage say about the priests or pastors giving?

- They, too, are to tithe. In **verse 26** it is called *a tithe of a tithe*.

Are pastors expected to give offerings above their tithe?

- Yes. See **verses 28 and 29**. [**28** *You must present one-tenth of the tithe received from the Israelites as a sacred offering to the Lord. This is the Lord's sacred portion, and you must present it to Aaron the priest.* **29** *Be sure to give to the Lord the best portions of the gifts given to you.*]

What do **verses 30 and 32** teach us about our giving to the Lord?

- The Lord is to get the *best* of us, not “what's left” of us. When they brought an animal for sacrifice, they were to bring their best animal, not the one they wanted to get rid of. God should get the “first” tenth (tithe) of our money (**Proverbs 3:9**), not what we might have left over after we spend on our families or ourselves.