

The Service of the Levites in God's Tabernacle & the Christian

Who says you cannot discover spiritual riches in the "hard to read" books of Leviticus and Numbers? Not I! In **Numbers 4** I was reading recently God's instructions to Moses for how the Levites were to serve in the Tabernacle and carefully handle the holy items in the Tabernacle and the Tabernacle itself. After going through a list of families and censuses of those in the tribe of Levi that might make most people yawn and want to read something else, or brew a cup of coffee to endure, we read the real subject and purpose of the text here when it refers to them as "

everyone who entered the service for work in the tabernacle of meeting

" **(4:42, ASV)**. This phrase "*entered the service*" today would evoke the imagery of military service, but here we see people not being recruited for national defense or war but rather for an office for one of the most humble but rewarding positions available: of serving God in the maintenance and concerns of the Tabernacle. This literally requires a

servant

, with a servant's heart, to carry out what may be considered by some to be very menial tasks, which were also described as carrying out "the work of service and the work of bearing burdens"

(4:47)

in the Tabernacle.

Yet this brings out a marvelous truth in that these simple men, the Levites, were God's chosen ones to serve Him in the **highest** and most **holy** of positions in orchestrating the proper worship of God for the entire nation. The needs of

so many

fell on

so few

, just as ultimately the needs and debt for the sins of the whole world fell on Jesus the one and only Son of God on our behalf, who was a servant to all! And yet one might be utterly

mistaken

what such a "high called" servant did and what holiness actually meant in practice: properly handling dishes, and bowls, and pans, and pitchers for pouring water

(4:7)

; handling firepans, and forks, and shovels, and wash basins, and utensils of the altar

(4:14)

; managing oil for the light, the sweet incense, the daily grain offering, and the anointing oil

(4:16)

; and handling cloth, animal skins, and carrying poles for the vessels in the tabernacle, so that they were properly handled and adorned by "

covering the sanctuary and all the furnishings of the sanctuary

"

(4:15)

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If you served in this holiest of callings you might respond to a question directed to you from an Israelite in the congregation like, "How do you serve in holiness to our God?" by saying something like this: "I handle the bowls and utensils in the Tabernacle of God". **Bowls? Utensils?**

Yes! This service is just like the diversity in service in the body of Christ and while one part may **seem**

more honorable than another being among the most humble of servants in the Body of Christ may in fact mean being among the most necessary, even if one is simply considered one who "serves tables" as a community service to others

(Acts 6:2)

. Paul particularly says, "

On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor

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(1 Corinthians 12:22)

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□

I personally was struck by the simplicity and power of what the tasks of the Levites were in serving in the most holy place that could be found on earth, the Tabernacle of Yahweh. How simple and yet how necessary is the proper care of those things in God's house? So also we should be servants, serving happily and humbly without grumbling and complaining, and see our service to God in spirit and truth as an inward worship to God. Notice one final thing also that is fascinating in how this text from Numbers (that "hard to read book") so beautifully illustrates the spiritual principle of being children of God and how we are "*a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession*"

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(1 Peter 2:9)

. These all were Levites who were called, and the only ones allowed, to serve. Among all the tribes of Israel only the Levites were allowed to serve God in the Tabernacle. This means one could not simply

enter

God's presence in service to Him, though the common people could draw near to offer sacrifices, but one had to be

born

into the right family to gain that opportunity for position as an inheritance.

Similarly now that we have been saved out of the world and adopted into God's spiritual family as his sons and daughters we now have been given a new nature and with it a new inheritance, by which we may truly serve God as "a royal priesthood" and "a holy nation". And that is a

privilege not to be taken for granted! God broke down the walls of separation between not only Jew and Gentile but also the wall of sin that separated us from Him. For that purpose He sent Jesus to act as redeemer (one who pays a redemption price) to allow us to come near to God.

Now that we are in God's presence how often do we 'sense' or acknowledge our holy calling? Was your first impression of what it meant to be **holy** that it meant serving tables or handling bowls and utensils in service to God?? And yet we are told "

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men

"

(Colossians 3:23)

and "

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might

"

(Ecclesiastes 9:10)

. Always remember that you have a place in the family of God and that you are holy and called to His service (not military, but saintly service) at all times!

And to think I got all this from reading one of those "hard to read books" in the Bible. Dig into the Word and don't make excuses! God will make your understanding fruitful if your heart is right before Him and you are earnestly seeking the truth.