

## 2. Order in the camp

October 13, 2011

I am sure that you all have come across funny drawings that are called "Where's Waldo?" You are supposed to find Waldo who looks like a regular computer geek with a pair of round lens glasses in a red and white stripe shirt.

Waldo was created by a British cartoonist and became so popular that now you can find his drawings in 20 countries around the World.

But we are not interested in finding Waldo, rather we are looking for Jesus from the OT. Like the Book of Leviticus, the Book of Numbers contains the images of Jesus in many places. Casual readers may overlook and not find what the Lord intended for us to see and learn.

### A. TAKE A CENSUS

*Numbers 1:1-3 Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle 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: 2 "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, every male individually, 3 from twenty years old and above--all who are able to go to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their armies.*

The second month of the second year, thirteen months after the Exodus, Israel had to start preparing for battle. If Genesis is the book of beginnings and Exodus the book of redemption, then Numbers is the book of warfare. The Jews were in enemy territory, marching toward the land God would help them conquer, and they had to organize for confrontation and conflict. The phrase "able to go to war" is used fourteen times in this chapter.

If God were to number the believers in the church today according to their ability to wage spiritual warfare, we wonder how big the army would be. We might have a bunch of immature Christians who think that they are ready for a fight, but they are not ready in spiritual reality. They would get whipped by Satan or hurt their own fellow believers for Christ.

Frankly, we would fail in spiritual battle because we do not take an honest inventory of spiritual battle readiness. We may overestimate or underestimate our spiritual conditions and resources.

Some people are disturbed by the emphasis on warfare in certain parts of the Bible such as this portion. A few Christian denominations even have removed militant songs like "Onward, Christian soldiers" from their hymnals. Their denials for battles and fights are unfounded and unbiblical and ungodly. Do they expect God to not judge ungodly? Do they expect God to wink at their sins and just love them?

They are the same denominations which embrace homosexuality as just another lifestyle. Most recently, the Presbyterian denomination leadership ordained a gay man who revealed his perverted lifestyle twenty years ago and was booted out from the pulpit back to a pulpit and welcomed him. They even gave him a standing ovation.

Obviously the Presbyterian denomination leadership doesn't care anything about the truth and commandment from the Lord. Though they would acknowledge the love of God, they reject the holiness and wrath of God. Since they rejected these two very important attributes of God, they will be judged by these two attributes of God.

The nations that Israel destroyed in Canaan were living in utter abominable moral filth and sinning against the Lord much like what America is doing now and the Lord had been patient with them for over 400 years while Israel was in Egypt. It was the time for the Lord to bring down His judgment on them through Israel.

Would anybody today criticize a surgeon for removing a cancerous life-threatening tumor from a patient's body? That is what God did for society when He used Israel to judge the degenerate nations in Canaan.

The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground. There is an enemy to fight and territory to gain which is the heart of unbelievers for the Lord. God declared war on satan in Genesis 3:

*Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."*

There can be no neutrality in this spiritual conflict because Jesus clearly teaches us that either we are for Him or against Him.

## **B. THE TRIBE OF LEVITES**

*Numbers 1:47-53 But the Levites were not numbered among them by their fathers' tribe; 48 for the Lord had spoken to Moses, saying: 49 "Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, nor take a census of them among the children of Israel; 50 but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle. 51 And when the tabernacle is to go forward, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The outsider who comes near shall be put to death. 52 The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies; 53 but the Levites shall camp around the tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall keep charge of the tabernacle of the Testimony." 54 Thus the children of Israel did; according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so they did.*

The three sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari according to Genesis. Moses and Aaron were descendants of Kohath and Aaron was the first high priest. Only the sons of Aaron were allowed to minister at the altar and the Levites assisted the priests in their ministry.

Supervised by the high priest, the Levites dismantled the tabernacle when the camp relocated, carried the various tabernacle parts, furnishings, and vessels during the march, and then erected the tabernacle at the new location.

The Levites camped around the tabernacle, which stood in the center of the camp, with Kohath on the south, Merari on the north, and Gershon on the west. Moses and Aaron camped on the east, at the gate of the tabernacle. In this way, the Levites protected the tabernacle from intruders and, being next to the tabernacle, would see when the cloud signaled that the camp was going to move.

Because of their important ministry as assistants to the priests, the Levites were exempted from military duty.

Worship and warfare may seem unrelated, but in God's organization, they go together. One of the major themes of the Book of Revelation is God's warfare against evil on earth and His receiving worship in heaven. Another great example is found in the Book of Joshua as the Israelites marched around the wall of Jericho in Joshua chapter 6. The ark of God was at the head of the army, followed by the praise band and the soldiers. They marched around the wall.

Unless the people of God are right with the Lord in their worship, they can't face their enemies and defeat them in warfare.

*Psalm 149:6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand*

### **C. THE TRIBAL ARRANGEMENT**

Can you imagine moving over 2 million people as the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle started to move forward? Unless there is some sort of arrangement and organization, it would be absolute chaos.

Our God is a God of order not the author of confusion.

*1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, all descendants of Leah, camped to the east, with a total of 186,400 men. Since the entrance to the tabernacle was there, it was important to have the largest number of soldiers protecting it. According to the rabbinical tradition, these tribes would order themselves after the standard (the banner or flag) of Judah, which was said to be a lion.

Reuben, Simeon, and Gad camped south of the tabernacle with 151,450 men. The tribes ordered themselves after the banner of Reuben, which was said to be a man.

Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph, encamped west of the tabernacle, along with Benjamin, a total of 108,100 men. Thus, all the descendants of Rachel camped together. The tribes ordered themselves after the banner of Ephraim, which was said to be an ox.

On the north side of the tabernacle were Dan, Asher, and Naphtali, with 157,600 men. The tribes ordered themselves after the banner of Dan, which was said to be an eagle.

In chapter 2, we find God's tribal arrangement in the camp and the order of moving. These tribes would order themselves after the standard – the banner or flag – of Judah, which was said to be a lion.

Whenever the camp moved, the ark of the covenant went before, carried by the priests. Then the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun marched next, followed by the Gershonites and Merarites carrying the tabernacle items – frames, curtains, coverings, etc. Next came Reuben, Simeon, and Gad, followed by the Kohathites carrying the tabernacle furnishings. Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were next, while Dan, Asher, and Naphtali brought up the rear. The largest number of soldiers – 186,400 led the way and the next largest – 157,600 picked up the rear guard.

I am sure that by now you've noticed that God's tribal arrangement is in the shape of a cross with the ark of God which was a symbol of God's presence in the middle. Do you think that it just happened to be that way? I think not.

While we are at this, please notice the arrangement of the four main tribes' emblems – Lion for Judah, Human for Reuben, Ox for Ephraim, and Eagle for Dan just happened to be in that formation? Again, I disagree. In our God, there are no such things as coincidence or "Oops".

*Ezekiel 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle.*

The angelic beings described here have four faces: the face of a man, a lion on the right, an ox on the left, an eagle's face on the other side. Many notable biblical scholars tell us that these are the four characteristics of Jesus that were represented by the four Gospels of Jesus.

The Book of Matthew describes Jesus as the Messiah – the Lion of the tribe of Judah; Mark as the Suffering Servant as it depicted by the ox; Luke as the Kinsman Redeemer in the form of a human; and the Book of John points to Jesus as God depicted by the eagle.

This should remind us of what we learned in the Book of Revelation chapter 4:

*Revelation 4:7-8 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. 8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*

Some might wonder, "How are you going to connect all these images to God?" Our infinitely wise God arranged all these to show us what we see in the camp of Israel is a copy of the heavenly things. All the instructions in the OT point to one person: Jesus.

*Hebrews 8:1-5 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*

## **D. THE SONS OF AARON AND THE LEVITES' DUTIES**

Now I have to finish two chapters in five minutes.

In chapter 3 and 4 we find the list of the sons of the first high priest Aaron, the duties of the Levites in the tabernacle and the census of the Levites.

There were three groups of the Levites which served and maintained the tabernacle – the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and Merarites.

It is worthy of note that these Levites, although they were all equally consecrated to God, had not all exactly the same work to perform. God is not the God of all uniformity. Apostle Paul says the church is to work like a body – many parts, looking different, doing different jobs, meeting different needs, some more visible, some less, but all essential – and all with the same DNA code.

Much trouble is caused in the service of the Lord by those who desire a different calling than they have, or who are jealous of those who have a different calling, or by those who exalt one calling and look down another. Everyone has a place and a job, and all can set themselves to do it.

### ***E. APPLICATIONS***

1) In His infinite wisdom our God teaches us His characteristics and attributes through the OT Books that we may learn how to bring honor to the Lord Jesus through our lives.

2) Spiritual battle readiness doesn't come from our human ages, rather simple obedience, faith in the Lord, and humility.