

## Numbers 2-4: Camping & Serving.

### I. Camping: 2.

- i. (1-9) The command to arrange around the Tabernacle.

Judah was first, and closest to the tabernacle itself. The tribes of Issachar and Zebulun followed in order after Judah. In that order they were to move as an orderly army, not as a mob. The total number of available soldiers among the eastward tribes was 186,400.

- ii. (10-16) The tribes camped to the south of the Tabernacle.

On the **south side** of the tabernacle Reuben was the first tribe, and set closest to the tabernacle itself. Then the tribes of Simeon and Gad followed in order. The tribes ordered themselves after **the standard** of Reuben, which was said to be a *man*. The total number of available soldiers among the southward tribes was 151,450.

- iii. (17) The tribe in the middle, with the Tabernacle: Levi.

The priestly tribe was **in the middle of the camps**, closest to the tabernacle and surrounded by the other tribes.

- iv. (18-24) The tribes camped to the west of the Tabernacle.

Ephraim was first, and closest to the tabernacle itself on the **west side**. Following the tribe of Ephraim were the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin. The tribes ordered themselves after **the standard** of Ephraim, which was said to be a *calf*. The total number of available soldiers among the westward tribes was 108,100.

- v. (25-31) The tribes camped to the north of the Tabernacle.

Dan was first, and closest to the tabernacle itself on the north side. Following the tribe of Dan were the tribes of Asher and Naphtali. The tribes ordered themselves after **the standard** of Dan, which was said to be an *eagle*. The total number of available soldiers among the northward tribes was 157,600.

- vi. (32-34) Summary: Israel's order around the Tabernacle.

The total of 603,550 available soldiers is ordered around the tabernacle; the number excluding the tribe of Levi.

God is orderly; here, before Israel can take the Promised Land, He requires they order themselves also. Not only is it more efficient and useful, but it also simply more like God – **excellently organized at the center.**

**Luke 9:23** - Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

**Luke 24:6-7** - "He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, "saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'"

The **Battle** of the Milvian Bridge took place between the Roman Emperors **Constantine I** and Maxentius on 28 October 312. Emperor Constantine dreamt of a sign with which to conquer the battle, it was the Cross.

**John 12:32** - "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."

**1 Corinthians 1:18** - For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

**Galatians 6:14** - But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

There are no crown-wearers in heaven who were not cross-bearers here below.  
Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

We need men of the cross, with the message of the cross, bearing the marks of the cross. Vance Havner.

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross  
The emblem of suffering and shame  
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best  
For a world of lost sinners was slain

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross  
Till my trophies at last I lay down  
And I will cling to the old rugged cross  
And exchange it some day for a crown

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true  
It's shame and reproach gladly bear  
Then he'll call me someday to my home far away  
Where his glory forever I'll share

## II. Serving: 3-4.

- i. (1-5) The priests: The family of Aaron.

Nadab and Abihu were the two oldest children of Aaron, and the two ranking priests behind him - yet they were struck down by the LORD for offering *profane fire* before the LORD (Leviticus 10:1-7). Therefore, Eleazar and Ithamar inherited the priesthood, and passed it down to their sons after them

Only those who were descendants of Aaron could be priests.

- ii. (6-10) The Levites: Their role in relation to Aaron.

The entire tribe of Levi was given to serve the needs of Aaron and the priests (**they shall attend to his needs**), the needs of the congregation at large (**and the needs of the whole congregation**), and the needs of the tabernacle itself (**attend to all the furnishings of the tabernacle ... to do the work of the tabernacle**).

- iii. (11-13) The Levites are a special possession to God.

The firstborn belonged to God; a firstborn lamb from a ewe would be given to the LORD. God didn't want human sacrifice, so He took the tribe of Levi as Israel's **firstborn**.

- iv. (14-20) The census of the tribe of Levi.

They were to be categorized by the families, with the main grouping according to Levi's three sons: **Gershon, Kohath, and Merari**.

- v. (21-26) The census and duties of the family of Gershon.

The Gershonites (7,500 males) were to camp westward to the tabernacle.

The Gershonites were to take care of the skins that covered the tabernacle itself.

- vi. (27-32) The census and duties of the family of Kohath.

The Kohathites (8,600 males) were to camp southward to the tabernacle.

The Kohathites were to take care of the furniture of the tabernacle: The ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, and so forth, under the direction of Eleazar the priest, son of Aaron.

- vii. (33-37) The census and duties of the family of Merari.

The family of Merari (6,200 males) were to camp northward to the tabernacle.

They took care of the pillars, the boards, and so forth.

viii. (38-39) The camp of the priests.

The family of Aaron, and Moses, were to camp on the east side of the tabernacle - closest to the entrance, which was on the east.

ix. (40-51) The exchange of the firstborn.

The firstborn - which was always thought to be the best and the favored - always belongs to God; so instead of giving the firstborn of Israel to God in sacrifice, the tribe of Levi was "given" to God as in place of each of the firstborn sons of Israel.

However, there were 22,273 firstborn sons in Israel; and there were only 22,000 Levite males (Leviticus 3:39). The extra 273 were given a monetary value (**five shekels for each one individually**), and the money was given to the tabernacle as redemption money.

x. (1-20) The Kohathites; 2750.

Among the males of the family of Kohath, only those between thirty and fifty were allowed to actually do the work of the sanctuary.

The Kohathites were forbidden to touch any of the tabernacle furniture; it was made with poles that one could use to carry the furniture without touching the item itself.

Eleazar, the eldest surviving son of Aaron the high priest, supervised the work of the Kohathites.

xi. (21-28) The Gershonites; 2630

They had oversight of the coverings of the tabernacle; the skins and artistically woven designs that made up the walls and the roof of the tent; they did this under the supervision of Aaron's son Ithamar.

xii. (29-33) Those from Merari; 3200.

They had the job of packing and transporting the boards and pillars of the tabernacle; this was important work, because of all the precious metals used, the weight of the tabernacle was some 19,000 pounds/8636 Kgs.

xiii. (34-49) The final count according to the families: 8580.

Each of these had a role to play in doing the work of tabernacle, and God made them all dependent on each other to do that work.

"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. There is a wondrous unity of plan and design in all that he does, but there is also an equally marvelous variety." (Spurgeon)

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 abase another. Everyone has a place and a job, and all can set themselves to do it.

***Romans 12:4-8*** - For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

***1 Peter 2:4-5*** - Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.