

Numbers 17-18 - Priests and Tithes.

I. Priests (17-18:20)

A Rod here is a symbol of God's choice and authority as a scepter is to a King.

In gathering rods, and inscribing each with the name of a tribe, and on Levi's rod inscribing Aaron's name, God would declare which tribe possessed priestly authority by choosing one of the rods. This was the issue at hand in light of Korah's rebellion and God doesn't want such rebellion to happen again.

"Not only would this obviously be a miraculous sign, the blossoming of dead wood spoke of fruitfulness. Fruitfulness - miraculous fruitfulness - is present when godly authority and leadership is being practiced."

The people of Israel realized their sinfulness in going against Moses and Aaron.

- i. The Priests are responsible for the sanctuary and the priesthood (1).

The priests - that is, Aaron, his sons, and their descendants - **shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary**, and the priesthood. They were accountable to God.

- ii. The Levites are helpers for the priests (2-7).

Aaron himself was of the tribe of Levi. While only he and his descendants were given the priesthood, the whole tribe of Levi had a special calling to help Aaron and the priests.

- iii. The firstborn and some sacrifice portions belong to the priest (8-20).

In the heave offering, a choice portion of the animal was *heaved* or *waved* before the LORD. Afterwards, that choice portion of the meat was for the priest and his family, and was considered holy - so it had to be eaten in the *holy place*.

The priests received portions of the **grain** offerings, **sin** offerings, **trespass** offering; gifts of **oil**, **wine** and **fruits** from the first fruit offerings.

When the firstborn was brought to the tabernacle, either to be given or redeemed with money, it also belonged to the priest.

While the priests had the right to receive much, he also was deprived of **inheritance in their land**; they had no permanent portion of land given to them, because God said **I am your portion and your inheritance**.

2 Chronicles 26:16 - *But when he (Uzziah) was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.*

Hebrews 7:24-27 - *But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*

II. **Tithes (18:21-32)**

God commanded the tithes (a giving of ten percent of one's harvest) be given to the Levites for their livelihood. The tithes *belong* to God (He says **I have given**, so they are His to give), but He gives them to the Levites.

The Levites themselves were not exempt from tithing. They were also to give a tenth (and the **best of them** given as the tenth) **due to the LORD**, and the LORD gave it to the priests.

Proverbs 3:9-10 - *Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.*

Malachi 3:8-10 - *“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.*

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 - *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he **purposes in his heart**, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a **cheerful giver**. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*