

God Teaches His People to Be Holy in Their Worship of Him

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[0 : 00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Take your Bibles. Go with me to Numbers, and we're going to start out actually in Numbers chapter 3, and we're going to cover all the way to chapter 5 tonight.

You know what the book of Numbers is about? Can I tell anybody what it's about? It's about numbers, and lots of numbers. And so they asked me in Alabama, they said, what are you preaching?

I said, Numbers. They said, are you going to explain every name that's found in Numbers? I said, are you kidding? I'm not even explaining the numbers. So I'm definitely not going to do that.

But let's have a word of prayer, and we will start into this. Father, I pray you'd use this time, and you'd work and make yourself powerful and known and loved and respected as you deserve.

I thank you for the goodness of your Word. I thank you for the goodness of your people as they serve you and love you. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, you should have seen Sunday night in chapter 1. They counted the people to see who would be able to go to war.

[1 : 04] If I could, if I'd have been preaching that, I would have really wanted to stress that. I would have asked you, are you ready to go to war? You know, they counted the males that were 20'd up. They were the ones that were able to go to war.

The Levites weren't counted. They put the people all in order so that they would be able to go out to war. And every church, I think, has to consider this. When they counted their people, they were counting them for two reasons.

We'll see one of the other reasons tonight. But one of the main reasons, in fact, is later on, God will be angry with David for counting them. Because when you count your people, you're counting your power. And they counted the men of war.

Those that were 20 years old and above. But I want you to go with me to Numbers chapter 3 and verse 4. By the way, God's a God of order. I'm sure you've seen that. If there's anything else in Numbers, it's that.

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 14.40, Let all things be done decently and in order. 14.33, For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

[2 : 05] But I want to take you over to Numbers chapter 3 and verse 4 now. I want to read that with you if I could. The Bible says, It was these two guys offering strange fire or unauthorized fire.

Fire that was wrong. A worship that was wrong. And God killed them. I think that is probably one of the most shocking things. And I'm just going to briefly, so I can get through with everything tonight, I'll just say this to you.

We have got to be, we need to be really serious about worship. This is not a game. We're in the New Testament. We're in a time of grace. And it seems like when God starts something new, He's really very serious about it.

And He wants to establish that point really clearly. Here He takes these two guys out in the New Testament. He takes out two other people, if you recall. They lied to God. It was the beginning of the church that lied about their offering.

And He takes them out. If I could say what I would say to the missionaries to you right here, and just I'll say it in two sentences or three, and that's this. We get so used to church that it becomes flippant.

[3 : 26] In the old days, the people were really funny where I grew up. By the way, they weren't what you might call legalists. They certainly weren't what you might call independent Baptists. They were Southern Baptists. They were country people.

And my pastor was a smoker. And he did not smoke pork. He smoked cigarettes. Amen. And the fact is, my first cigarettes I ever smoked, I smoked as he flicked them with the deacons.

And they said, all of us little young boys would stand behind the church at a different angle. And when they'd get through, they'd flick the butts over there. We'd all run over and pick them up and smoke them. Anybody else ever done that in this room?

Come on, Brother Frick. Tell the truth. But anyway, so that would have been a strange fire. Amen. But you know, they were funny about don't run around in the church.

Don't play in a church building. Like we even had a guy here in the church, don't eat in a church building. And a lot of those rules, you know, I don't know where they all come from. But can I just say the minute we get too used to God and too used to church and you play on the altar and everything's common and nothing spiritual and nothing special, you might just offer some strange fire.

[4 : 36] And sometimes in churches today, especially charismatic chaos and a lot of that junk that goes on happens to, they're trying to work up worship.

And so we don't want to do that. We don't want to take flippantly the things of God. Now go with me, if you would, to chapter 3 and verse 12. Here's a wild thought for you. And I'm only going to give you three thoughts out of these chapters.

And the first one was, let's don't play around with worshiping God. Let's don't offer strange fire. Chapter 3 and verse 12, if I could. The Bible says, and I behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that opened up the matrix among the people of Israel.

Therefore, the Levites shall be mine. And here's what God did. God said, I want the Levites and they're going to belong to me. Now, you know that there are 12 tribes of Israel. If you study your Bible, there are 12 tribes of Israel.

And the Levites don't count as a tribe because Joseph got the double portion. So his two sons become two tribes. The Levites are separated. And so there's 13 tribes in that sense.

[5 : 43] So you got the, you got the, you got the God saying, I want the Levites. Look at the reason he said he wanted the Levites to be his. Look at verse 13. Because all the firstborn are mine.

All the firstborn are mine. From the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel. I separated them to me.

I made them holy to me. They're mine because I had the lamb killed in their place. I hallowed them. Both man and beast, mine shall they be.

I am the Lord. Good. So the second thing I want you to look at is God said, you know, he didn't count the Levites in that first. They're not going to war. He's going to count the Levites here in just a second.

But the Levites are his. They belong to him. And what he did is he took the Levites as a substitute for everybody else's firstborn child. Everyone was supposed to be serving God as a priest.

[6 : 43] In Exodus chapter 19 and verse 5, the Bible said, Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all the people.

For all the earth is mine, and you shall be unto me a kingdom, a priest, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. So God said, all of Israel, they're my people.

All of Israel are my priests. All of Israel are going to serve me. But then he gave the Levites as a gift from him to them because they became substitutes for the rest of the nation.

And by the way, they're going to be a burden, but they're not supposed to be a burden. They're supposed to be a blessing. Because from now on, Israel's got to pay everything for the Levites. They've got to take care of them financially.

They've got to take care of them protecting them. They've got to take care of them in every way. But they're not a burden. They're a gift. God didn't count the Levites when he told them to number them in the previous service, in the previous census.

[7 : 41] But now he says, chapter 3, go to chapter 3, verse 15. Now he says, number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers by their families.

Every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. Now he numbered everybody else from 20 years old and upward. Only males, 20 years old and upward, and only able-bodied males.

But now he's saying let's count all the baby boys from one month old and up of the Israelites in verse 15. Because they're going to be substitutes.

They're going to be substitutes for the firstborn of everybody else. Look in verse 44 if you would. Numbers 3, 44. And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, take the Levites.

You got your Bible open? Underline this. Instead of all. So underline it. Instead of all, the firstborn among the children of Israel and the cattle of the Levites. Instead of, there it is again, of their cattle.

[8 : 42] And the Levites shall be mine. I am the Lord. So he said, every one of y'all owe me your firstborn kid. Supposed to be mine. Every one of your cattle, every time they have the firstborn of every one of your cattle, that belongs to me.

But I'm going to make a deal with you. You give me the Levites. You take care of the Levites. You can keep your kid. You take care of the Levites. You can keep your kid. You take care of the Levites. You can keep your firstborn animals.

If you let them have their animals, you take care of them. Verse 46. For those that are to be redeemed of the 273 of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites.

So he's going to end up taking an offering. I'll show you that in just a second. So God allows them to have the Levites and their possessions to themselves as a substitute for their children.

They can keep their children. They can keep their firstborn as long as they take care of the Levites. For all the Levites, for all the firstborn that they have above the number of Levites, they're going to have to give an offering.

[9 : 45] So watch what happened. They said, count everybody, all the men. Now go count me all the Levite boys from a month on and upward. And I'm going to go figure it out. And I've got to have a, there's going to be one Levite for every firstborn.

I'm going to count them. And if you're short, you've got to give an offering. You've got to give an offering because the Levites are a substitute. Look if you would at verse 47. For thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the pole, by the count, after the shekel of the sanctuary, shalt thou take them.

The shekel is 20 gerards. And thou shalt give the money there with the odd number of them that is to be redeemed unto Aaron and his son. And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites.

So here's a wild thing going on. God said, I need some people that are going to be my servants. There's got a big job that's going to be happening. And as you read in the census, and if you read these chapters here, you've got guys that are moving the tabernacle.

You've got guys that are killing the cattle. You've got guys that are carrying the boards. You've got guys that are setting everything up. And all these men are going to be doing the work. And he says, so I need some people that are going to work for me. I mean, their ministry is going to be taking care of my stuff.

[10 : 52] So he lets them substitute Levites for their sons. That's a big deal. He lets them substitute Levites for their sons. Now he takes a second census of Levites.

Look at chapter 4 and verse 2. The first one was to find out if there are enough Levite boys to take the place of all the other boys, and then they've got to give an offering. Now he says, I need to find out how many of them can do the work.

How many Levites can actually do the work? Chapter 4 and verse 2. Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi after their families by the house of their fathers from 30 years old and upward, even until 50, all that entered into the host to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.

So he said, now I want you to do another count. First count you counted, substitutes. Second count you count, how many guys I got to do the work? Because I've got to divide the work up among them.

These guys are going to do hard work. They're going to move the tabernacle. They're going to be given detailed instructions. If you read all these chapters, they're given detailed instructions about moving it.

[11 : 55] Every family had a different job at a different part. They all took care of the holy things, and they're going to take care of the sacrifices. So he's got these people, the Levites. There he is. Now you get ready to move.

Soldiers are going before. Twelve tribes are going to be doing that, and there's one group of guys. Their job will be to move that tabernacle. Now if you go to Numbers chapter 8 and verse 24, you'll find out that they even had a five-year apprenticeship learning how to do everything.

You've got to take care of God's stuff right. You don't just run in there and start doing it. This isn't a flippant job. Look at chapter 8 and verse 24. This is it that belongeth unto the Levites. From 25 years old and upward, they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

So 30 to 50, that's the ages you're strong and you're young enough to still do it. Us old guys, we're out of the work. Thank the Lord. The younger guys, you're not stable enough. We're only going to use the ones 30 to 50.

We're going to get you in there at 25 so we can be teaching you. Under Solomon, by the way, it's going to get so bad they're going to lower the age limit. They're going to lower the age limit. So we've got to bring in more because we don't have enough Levites to get the job done.

[13 : 01] They were to serve and worship God like he wanted. They were to serve and worship God like he wanted. So it's a wild thing. They're going to worship God, but you don't just do it like you want. We don't set up a church service like we want.

We're supposed to realize this is God's house, God's church, God's ministry, God's book, God's work. It ought to be done God's way. And that's what they were supposed to do. Today's church is more like what you find in the book of Judges.

In Judges 17, 6, the Bible said, In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. That's not how it's working. In the book of Numbers, that's not how it's working.

In those days, God has it under control. People are obeying him. We should be doing like God wants. God's work done God's way. And obedience to God's truth will never lack for God's blessings.

Now go over to chapter 5, verse 3. First thing, the first thing I want you to see was they're worshipping him and they better do it right. No strange fire. Don't be doing stuff that you come up with.

[14 : 00] Don't be doing stuff God didn't authorize. Realize we're going to do it God's way. This is God's house. And I could stop and say, Baptize the babies, that's strange fire. It's just not God's way of doing it.

That's not what God wanted. Speaking in tongues, running around a room with a box on your head, that's just not God's way of doing it. You know, there's a lot of stupidity that goes on in churches. Strange fire, don't do it.

Second thing, Levites are a substitute for the rest of you. So God had this group of people. He called out and chose for himself. And they would be substitutes. The third thing is God's people were to be a clean people.

They were to be a clean people. That's strange as all get out, by the way. Can I just say to you, this is, I love this part of the Bible. Because God knew, let's just back that up.

The Israelites knew stuff that nobody could know if there wasn't a God involved. Nobody knew what they're about to do. Quarantine didn't come about until recently, a couple hundred years ago.

[15 : 00] We still don't even know what we're doing. But God told the Israelites hundreds of years ago what he wanted done. In Numbers chapter 5 and verse 3, he says, I live among you.

So you're going to keep the place clean. Chapter 5, verse 3, both male and female shall you put out without the camp. Shall you put them that they defile not them? So they don't mess up the camp in the midst whereof I dwell.

You keep this place clean. I live here. You keep this place clean. I live here. In Exodus chapter 29 and verse 45, he said, I will dwell among the children of Israel.

I will dwell among them and be their God. His tabernacle, his dwelling place is in the center of the camp. In Leviticus chapter 26 and verse 12, he said, I will walk among you and will be your God and you shall be my people.

So he's going to give them these cleanliness rules. He's going to give them cleanliness rules. But they're more about holiness and recognizing sin than just pure cleanliness. Cleanliness is going to be mentioned.

[16 : 02] Cleanliness that nobody knew about in a time when no one was concerned about it. But God's people is he's going to explain those truths. But it's really not about just being clean. It isn't like take a bath.

That's not really what it's about. It's about recognize clean and recognize unclean. Recognize right. Recognize wrong. Realize that I'm telling you some good stuff here. So they were in chapter 5 to quarantine the lepers.

That was an infectious disease of the skin of some type. They were to quarantine those who had touched the dead or who had some kind of bodily discharge. Look if you would at chapter 5 and verse 2.

Numbers chapter 5 and verse 2. Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone that has an issue or a discharge. That don't mean when you come to the pastor and say, hey, I got an issue.

That's a different kind of issue here. Amen. Amen. This issue is a discharge. And who whatsoever is defiled by the dead. Just stop a second. Think about that a second. You got lepers.

[17 : 01] And if a leper touches another guy, he can get the disease. So God said, no, let's get him out of the camp. Somebody's got a discharge. Could be coming from a sexually transmitted disease. Could be coming from some kind of other disease.

We don't know what's going on. Put him outside the camp. Do we figure it out? You got something else. Somebody's touched a dead guy. What killed the dead guy? Why'd you touch a dead guy? You touch a dead guy. You might get sick. We got to get you out of the camp.

Nobody knew that stuff. Nobody knew that stuff. Until Pastor and some other guys like him came along just over 100 years ago. Doctors prided themselves out of working on autopsies of dead bodies and then going in to deliver babies with the junk on their hands.

They couldn't figure out why so many women got sick and died. But Moses knew. Just a dumb Jew walking around in the desert knew because he knew God. And God knew what science did not know yet.

We're to learn about spiritual things and to get away from spiritually unclean things. 2 Corinthians 7.1. The Bible says, Having therefore these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

[18 : 10] Second thing I want you to look at in that chapter. They were to get all this out. But the second thing they had to realize, sin cost. You couldn't just say, sorry. You had to say, sorry.

Pay back what you owed and pay 20% interest on top of that. Got your Bible open? Numbers chapter 5 and verse 6. Speak unto the children of Israel when a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit.

Things that men do. Yeah, men mess up. No doubt. To do a trespass against the Lord and that person be guilty. They confess their sin in verse 7. They recompense his trespass with the principle.

And they add a fifth part to it when they give it back. Confess your sin. Say you're sorry. Pay back everything you took. And add 20% to it. So you still have a thousand bucks.

You're going to have to confess. You've got to give a thousand back and plus 200 bucks. So it costs. You do wrong. It's going to cost you. You can't steal the money. Come back and say, sorry. I didn't mean to do that. Too late. Bring me 1,200 bucks.

[19 : 04] I'll let y'all steal all day long. Come get all you want. I mean, that's a pretty good deal. You've got to give 20%. That's pretty good interest. It wasn't enough to say they were sorry. Sin costs.

The last thing in the chapter. Numbers chapter 5. Was they had to be clean in marriage. This is the craziest, wildest story if you've read the story. Sexual sin and immorality is a big deal.

You can't ever think adultery is okay. We can never ever as a church act like sin. Having sex in the wrong way is ever okay.

It's not okay. Deuteronomy chapter 22 and verse 22. The Bible says, if a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, they both die. And we'll put away evil from Israel.

Verse 23. If a young virgin, she's engaged and they find her outside this city and the guy's had sex with her. Then bring him in here. We're going to stone him. Unless she cried out.

[20 : 03] And we'll put away evil from there. Skip down if you would to chapter 5 and verse 11. And I've not got time to read all of it to you. But let me just kind of tell you the story.

There's a man in the camp and he's beginning to wonder, has my wife done something with another guy and I just don't know what's going on here. And so he doesn't know what's happened.

So if he thinks she's done it and he thinks it's hidden from his eyes and there's no witness and he's got a spirit of jealousy that maybe she's done dirty stuff. But maybe she hasn't done it.

We don't have any proof here. Then they would go to the priest and they would take an offering in verse 15. It was called the offering of jealousy. You came with an offering of jealousy and you put her before the Lord in verse 16.

And you took holy water in an earthen vessel, got some dust off the fork and you put it in the water. And you set the woman before the Lord and you uncovered her head, took off her covering. And you put the offering of a memorial in her hands.

[20 : 59] That's a jealousy offering. And you made her drink bitter water. The water's not bitter to the taste. Bitter is what it's going to do to you. If you drink it and you've been caught in sin, then she had to take an oath and give her word.

I haven't done anything. So he charged her with an oath and she had to say, amen, amen. And if you are, if you're not guilty, you're free from the bitter water. Verse 19. But if you've gone aside, you're in a heap of trouble.

In verse 21, there's an oath of curse. And the Lord make thee a curse and an oath among the people. When the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot and thy belly to swell. So she came in there.

Husband brought her in. Got dirt off the floor. They took it in the vessel. Took the holy water. The water sanctified. Not holy water like a Catholic. Thank you. Holy water like water set aside for the things of God.

That's what's happening there. And they take that water. She says, amen, amen. In verse 22. They cause her to drink the bitter water. They take the offering out of the woman's hand. Verse 25. They wave it before the Lord.

[21 : 57] And they offer it upon the altar. And then she drinks the water. And she drinks the water. And if she's defiled, it will become bitter. Verse 27. And her belly will swell. Her thigh will rot.

And the woman shall be a curse among her people. But if she's innocent, she'll get pregnant. Verse 28. She shall be free and shall conceive seed.

This is the law of jealousies. Verse 31. Then shall the man be guiltless from iniquity. This woman shall bear her iniquity if she was guilty. So real quickly, let me just talk to you about that.

You know, there's no story of anybody ever going through that in the Bible that I can find. But it's a big warning. It's like a big billboard saying, don't mess around.

Respect your marriage vows. Can you say amen right there? By the way, men, don't be so quick to jump and criticize. Because can you imagine what's going to happen when you go down there and you make her drink the water.

[22 : 55] You got her up in front of everybody and you're saying, here she is, I'm pretty sure she's bad. And she drinks it and nothing happens. She gets pregnant and you're going to look like a real idiot. So have a little respect to your wife. Because God said, you know, if you've got a bad attitude and you're just being a jerk, God knows.

So don't be messing around like that. Don't do that. Show some respect towards your wife. She's got the offering in her hand. I read all that to you. It's an obvious roadblock from somebody committing adultery, but it's also a roadblock from a man accusing his wife falsely in public.

It will reveal his heart towards his wife. He was wanting to hurt her and humiliate her. And if she isn't guilty, he is going to look like a fool. But here's the major lesson.

God wants purity in our marriages. That's a note of porn. That's a note of sex with anybody else beside your spouse.

It's a no to wrong stuff. It's a yes to right stuff. Right stuff. And nobody escapes the consequences of a lack of faithfulness.

[24 : 03] She wasn't going to get away with it. And he wouldn't get away with it if he was just accusing her. Could I just say this to all of you? Take care of your marriage.

Take care of your marriage. Work on building a strong marriage. I cannot imagine what it must have been like to that poor lady to be dragged down there in front of everybody, taken in there.

Everybody's watching. This is the center of the camp. Everybody can see it. She's going to go through this. If she's guilty, it's going to be horrendous. If it's not guilty, it's still going to be horrendous.

The humiliation for her, but also the humiliation for her husband. I want to take care of my marriage. So when you worship God, it's not a flippant thing.

Don't come with strange fire. Realize God has called out some people that you're responsible to take care of. And number three, cleanliness. Let's stay away from sin. Let's do what's right. If I could leave you with something I wish you'd take home tonight is this.

[25 : 01] How did Moses walking around, they didn't have a car. They did not have a car. They did not have Twitter. They didn't have the Internet. How did Moses know all the stuff he knew? God told him.

Somebody's ever told you, I'm not sure the Bible is the Word of God. I question whether or not the Bible is the Word of God. This book was written long before science knew what this book says. Even those of you who would say, well, it wasn't written when Moses didn't write it.

If one of you want to say Moses didn't write it, none of that's true. It was written 500 years ago still before they knew. God gave us a book. His book.

And you can trust it. Father, I love you. And I thank you so much for the opportunity to be in your house. And I pray that your name would be glorified and magnified. And I pray you'd help us to worship you right in holiness and in purity.

And I give you praise for it. In Jesus' name, amen. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfredo, Georgia. For more information, log on to www.visionbaptist.com where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.