

# Readings on Numbers

by John Nelson Darby

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*God's dwelling with man is based on redemption, and believers must separate themselves from the world to follow God's word.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 29:45, Hebrews 10:19

**Topics:** "Separation from the World", "Holiness"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby discusses the significance of holiness and separation in the context of God's presence among His people, emphasizing that God's dwelling is contingent upon redemption. He highlights the importance of maintaining a holy camp, drawing parallels between the Old Testament practices and the New Testament understanding of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Darby also addresses the necessity of separating the precious from the vile within the church, urging believers to uphold the truth of God's word amidst a culture of unbelief and compromise.

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## Transcript

### READING 1

Passing by the numbering of the people and the redemption of the firstborn, we might begin with the laws and appointments of chapter 5; they were to keep the camp holy - put out the leper, and so on - "that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell." God's dwelling with them was on the ground of redemption, and He never dwelt with man until redemption was accomplished; but now the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. God had never dwelt with Abraham, but as soon as redemption was accomplished, He said, "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God," Ex. 29:45.

Ques. Was not God in the pillar of cloud before the tabernacle was set up?

Yes, but this was after redemption. And it is the same now, only that it is the Holy Ghost indwelling us, the habitation of God through the Spirit which God still insists shall be kept holy. He met Moses between the cherubim; but here it is, "I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory." And the different ordinances and sacrifices offered were founded upon the truth that God was there. An immense thing this was, but now it is a fact by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Ques. In chapter 7:89, Moses "heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of testimony"?

Ques. But Moses went within the veil?

Yes, but he took off his own veil from his face when he went in. Aaron was only forbidden to enter after his sons had offered strange fire, otherwise he would I suppose, have gone in too. "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest"; but now we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." And we have a high Priest, and we draw near. Great principles there are connected with this that we have to weigh. We are now told to go outside the camp; literally, this was then Jerusalem, but we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. That was all suited to man on earth and as such was ordered by God, but it was the figure of the heavenly thing. God knew the moment when He was going to execute judgment upon the whole system, and so He tells these Hebrews to go outside the camp. They proposed to have the altar, but rejected the Christians, the sect of the Nazarenes. So it is written for us; we have the true altar now, for Christ rejected suffered outside; the altar is therefore there, and we must go forth to Him.

374 Ques. Has Moses' action in Exodus 33 any bearing on this?

I have no doubt it has. Only his action took place before the tabernacle was set up. He took his tent and pitched it afar off, outside the camp. That was something special to Moses, as it says, "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold," Num. 12. That was when the cloudy pillar descended, and God talked with Moses outside the camp. There, too, we find Joshua again. Joshua departed not out of the tabernacle of the congregation; Moses also kept there, saving when he went into the camp to carry God's messages. As yet, the tabernacle had not been made, but when Moses gets outside the camp, he gives to the tent this name.

Ques. Was it Moses' own tent?

Yes, I suppose so, or a tent. Coming down from the mountain with directions for the tabernacle, he found the golden calf there and he smashed the tables of the law; then he went up and obtained mercy for the people. But he also took the tent and pitched it outside the camp.

Ques. Why were sacrifices burnt outside the camp?

In two cases this was so, they were treated as an unclean thing; but the fat of these was burnt upon the brazen altar. It was an additional element in the sacrifice.

When they had made the camp unclean with their idolatry, Moses could not take the law of God down to that state of things; he could not put such a law alongside the calf, and, as he did not know what to do, he smashed the tables beneath the mount, so that as a written law it never reached man at all. Then Moses goes up and obtains the mercy of God. Christ went outside Jerusalem, though it was the holy city.

Ques. Till Christ was rejected, was the camp still recognised?

Certainly, but it was passing away, judgment was coming upon it, and so he tells them to go out of it. In John 1, Christ, the real temple, is seen as rejected, yet until He was actually rejected in full, He calls the temple His Father's house.

375 Ques. Then the sin-offering burnt outside was in separation?

Not exactly; when it was for the whole congregation or for the priest, then the blood was brought into the holiest, and the animal was burnt outside as unclean.

Ques. What, in Christendom, answers now to the camp?

Wherever I find the world united to the Church or to religion, that is the camp. Persons who have brought in false doctrine are the vessels to dishonour, and we have books called "The Christian World," and so on, but one cannot take it all in in a lump. In Jeremiah 15, we have the separating the precious from the vile. There we see Jeremiah in constant exercise of heart before God and man; in verse 15, he calls for vengeance, saying, "Revenge me of my persecutors, . . . for thy sake I have suffered rebuke." But then he adds, "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," whilst in verse 17 he does not rejoice, but is filled with indignation. He is representing Jerusalem before God, and God says to him, "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them." The first returning is in the way of testimony, then, if Jerusalem comes back, you will have the blessing. You must not, however, fight the evil - "return not thou unto them" - but let them return unto thee. "And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD." There is the principle for us. God's word, with all the blessed things that are in it, becomes the joy and rejoicing of the heart. We must take God's word, and separate the precious from the vile, and then we become as God's mouth.

Ques. What is the reproach in Hebrews 13:13?

Christ's reproach, that He is an outcast, a rejected Lord. Hanged as a malefactor, He was in the fullest reproach, and in more than reproach; and we go there to Him. It is easy to condemn those who do so and then say, God will never leave His people, despite the evil - I believe all that, too - but if we are to be as His mouth, we must in practice separate the precious from the vile.

Ques. And gather the good into vessels?

376 That is the same thing. And if we are to be as His mouth, we shall have to be "a fenced brasen wall."

Ques. What is being God's mouth?

All Jeremiah's words, as a prophet, were absolutely God's words; that is being as God's mouth.

Ques. What is the "fenced brasen wall?"

A strong thing that cannot be broken.

Ques. The "taking forth the precious from the vile" is practically separating between them?

Yes. It is easier to speak about evil. The Edomites could say, 'Down with it' because it was God's city; and on the other hand, priests were saying, "The temple of the LORD, are these." The professing church takes the one side, even Papists own the Holy Ghost and that Christ died for sinners; but Edomites, i.e., infidels, seek to pull down everything. In view of all that, I could not sit with the mockers, and rejoice; that would not do. Papists hold more truth than most Protestants, yet I cannot go with them; I cannot walk with either.

Other things there are, too; take, say, the Establishment, with the world and the Church mixed up all together, a great system with a profession to be one body, which the world recognises, and which takes in

unconverted people avowedly; there I do not find separation of the precious from the vile; but dross, if it is dross, I reject as such. I have to make the difference and lay hold of whatever is precious, and this I accept and own. I have no doubt we are in the last days, and our business is with the precious.

But then we have that which is of great moment: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name." The word of God becomes that which is eaten and digested into the soul, and which gives me the consciousness so far of what is precious and of what is vile. If we turn to 2 Timothy 3, we shall find the same thing. There it is not crying out against the evil. We are now in these last days, and verses 2-5 are true all around us; so the instruction given to us is, "From such turn away."

Paul then speaks of the mischief they do, and he tells us that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." He further appeals to Timothy to continue in the things he has learned and has been assured of, knowing from whom he had learned them (we now have them from Paul, or Peter, or from God); and adds, that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures which were given by inspiration of God, and were profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

That is to say, that when the state of the church in a general sense has become thus, having the form of godliness but denying the power of it, I am to turn away from it. And what am I to turn to? Why, says the apostle, you have the Scriptures, God's word! Thus it was with Jeremiah; he was testifying against Jerusalem, and he found the words of God. And again, in Philadelphia, I find that which Christ approves, "Thou . . . hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Holiness and truth are what God will always own, but all over the country people are now turning infidel.

Only to-day I have received a letter from America, where things are ten times worse than they were a very short time back. It is from Boston where things are growing to such a pitch that a prominent minister there, speaking from the pulpit, gave up as uninspired all the word of God, save the four gospels. He said, too, that when a man dies, he does not know what becomes of him; it is like a man going down the street and turning round the corner out of sight. Ward Beecher gave out that he does not believe in eternal punishment, and all over that country they are discussing whether there is a hell or not.

377 Ques. It is the rapid progress of all this that is so extraordinary?

It is indeed. Take the case of men of science discussing creation, calling it evolution, of protoplasms or anything else; it is all alike unbelief. The younger ministers of this country are pretty much the same. And it is no good not looking at the evil in the face. The Free Church of Scotland has gone from its ground, and is, practically, an infidel body, though there are individual exceptions still to be found in it. A short time since, a deacon of an Independent Church asked, in view of all this, 'What are we to do?' and he was told that he had better hold his tongue; others felt the same, only they were not bold enough to say so. Another has said, 'When it says, "Thus saith the LORD," I say nothing about that, but the rest in Scripture is only a credible history.' But I ask, have you a credible history of the creation, written by the morning stars, or someone to tell us about it, or have you a credible history of the flood? Oh, say they, the gospels differ; but if any man has a spiritual understanding, he sees that in the different gospels God is giving in each one of them the moral bearing of a certain view of Christ. Men only see in them Matthew, Mark, or Luke, but they never see a trace of God. Of course, Matthew is a credible historian, but they leave God out. Look at 1

Corinthians 2 and you will see the absurdity of it all; suppose you take up heavenly things, well, what are they? Nobody has been there to tell me; "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" But God has revealed these things unto us by His Spirit. And we have received, not the spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God. The things themselves have been received by the Spirit's own revelation of them. They are communicated to us by words taught of the Spirit, and then they are received in our minds by the power of the Holy Ghost. Yet people say Paul's statements are revelations from God, but that Paul only gave them to us the best way he could! 'It is no such thing,' says Paul, 'I give you what I have received, a revelation, and that in words which I have been taught for the purpose.' And the next thing is, those who hear these words from the Spirit, by Paul, do not understand one atom about them except by the Spirit.

378 Ques. Does, the "words . . . which the Holy Ghost teacheth," apply to all Scripture?

Of course it does.

Ques. How far do you admit the human element?

Fully, in every possible way. I admit the human in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the beauty and blessedness of Him.

Ques. But was there anything not divine in Him as Man?

Nothing.

Ques. What are the "things" to which Paul refers?

The things which God had ordained before the world unto our glory. The Holy Ghost has come down, putting Himself in human circumstances, and saying, these things were ordained for our glory, and it is, "us," "us," "us," all through. In the Old Testament it was not so, when they searched it; there is that difference in character between the Old Testament and the New. And very wonderful it is, that the Holy Ghost has taken His place in the midst of the saints, to unfold to them what He has caused to be written, and I bless God for it.

Ques. Can you explain how Paul got these words?

379 No, I cannot, and what is more, if I could, I do not think I could make you understand it. But the word is the "lively oracles."

Ques. Is the "unto us," confined to the apostles?

Yes. People say that they believe in inspiration, and that Shakespeare was inspired. But did he get a revelation? You cannot receive things from heaven unless they are revealed. Every Scripture is given by inspiration of God. But others say that we must go back to the beginning and see what the Fathers say; but are the Fathers the beginning? I own I must have what is from the beginning; this is what I want, but I cannot be content with anything lower down.

Ques. Does the passage in 2 Timothy 3:16 refer to a known body of writers?

No, it is "every scripture," that is to say, everything that comes under that title. We find the devil speaking, and that, of course, is not inspired, but the writer who gave it was inspired to give it.

Ques. The only question that remains is, how are we to know what is inspired?

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I was brought up to know the Scriptures, and I am very thankful that it was so.

Ques. And is there now nothing further to be revealed?

No; we have to try whatever comes by this word. If people do not believe, it is because they are not of My sheep.

Ques. What of the apocryphal gospels?

Only read them, and then pretend that a man is brought into any difficulty by them! I put it on you to read them, and ask any company of intelligent people about them.

Ques. Is it not remarkable that they should have passed current at the time?

Well, no, for the professing church never had the truth of God; one cannot even find justification by faith in any of the old Fathers, so Milner says. There was no teaching among them of Christ's work, as in Romans, Hebrews, and so on. And their morality was just as bad. I hardly think I have ever found in the Fathers the right sense of a single passage of Scripture. Remember, too, that human education is not faith and will never give faith. What is needed to have real faith is the Spirit of God opening the eyes and turning people from the power of Satan unto God. One may present the truth, but if God does not change the will, it produces anger. Man's mind is always atheist when it is sifted out. So where the mind is working for itself, it is necessarily atheistical, for my mind cannot go beyond my mind, or else it is not my mind; but if God cannot go beyond my mind, then it is not God. The Lord brought this out in John 4. The woman did not understand a single word about the water, and she says, "Give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." But when Jesus says, "Go, call thy husband," etc., she replies, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She did not say that He had told her rightly, but the word of God carried with it the authority of God in her soul. So when the word of God reaches the conscience, it puts me in my place, and it also puts God in His right place towards me.

380 Ques. Why is the conscience never infidel?

It cannot be, because it knows right and wrong and refers to God. When man lost God as he did in the garden, then he got a conscience. The mass of infidelity is hypocrisy; if you go and tell a man all that he ever did, he will not stand it.

Ques. How do you account for the traces of another hand in the Pentateuch?

Another hand! I do not care if there are fifty hands.

Ques. How were all the books put together into one book?

It is said Ezra did it, and that the grand synagogue did it, but that on the face of it is merely an addition. Recollect that we have the Lord, and the apostles, too, sanctioning all that they had, as it was, and all that we now have. I remember a man - a nice man, too - who had declared against inspiration; speaking of the New Testament, he said that while he refused to take that up, yet he owned that an honest man cannot deny that the apostles quoted the Old Testament, but then they were all wrong together. Well then, I said,

it is a question whether the apostles knew better what Christianity is, or you. Christ says, Moses wrote of Me, and you say no. And again, the more they attempt, as they are doing in some quarters, to decry the apostles as mere fishermen of Galilee, the more they elevate the word. I think God allowed the earliest Fathers to drop down morally (and perhaps at once), and also not to know the difference between the apostles themselves and those who were next to them.

Ques. What of the Apocrypha?

381 This does not profess to be by the Holy Ghost, but only to be according to the writer's capacity.

Ques. Do you confine 1 Corinthians 2:12 to the apostles?

That is the revelation. But now I receive the Spirit, and so now I realise these things by the Spirit; this is the way of their communication. The other point, in verse 14, is also true, viz., that it is by the Spirit we apprehend them. If a person were to come and tell me that something heavenly had been revealed to him by the Spirit, I should not believe him, but I should ask where is it in Scripture?

In Numbers 5, we have the Spirit's jealousy to test whether or no there was any evil there. Then follows in chapter 6 the question of Nazariteship, i.e., entire separation to God. God must have the camp holy, and if any question affecting this was raised, there was the way of detecting it.

Ques. Does not chapter 6 show what Israel ought to have been as a Nazarite to God?

Yes, and it gives also the blessing at the end. Christ alone was the true Nazarite, but that ought to be true of all of us in one sense.

Ques. In chapter 8, verses 2 and 3, there is a remarkable expression, "over against"?

Ques. You once said you thought it meant, to light up the face of the candlestick, to illuminate it?

Very likely it does.

Ques. Were the lamps burning night and day?

By night, as may be seen from Exodus 30:7, 8.

Then, next, the Levites were given to the priests. And those who kept the Passover had to be circumcised. And the cloud was upon the tabernacle by day, and there was to be no starting to journey unless the cloud removed; i.e., divine guidance.

In chapter 10, we have the order of march for the whole camp; but at the close of the chapter the ark removes from that order and goes first; that is, the LORD steps out of His place to lead them. In Psalm 132, there is a similar change; in verse 5, David seeks a habitation for God; in verse 13, God answers by choosing Zion. In verse 8, David says, "Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength"; in verse 14, God answers, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."

382 DAVID GOD

Let thy priests be clothed I will also clothe her

with righteousness; priests with salvation:

And let thy saints shout And her saints shall shout

for joy. aloud for joy.

For thy servant David's There will I make the horn

sake turn not away the face of of David to bud; I have

thine anointed. ordained a lamp for mine

anointed.

And in the Psalm, there are no more enemies left, they are all clothed with shame.

The answers surpass the prayers.

Ques. Is it only in a general way that this guidance of the cloud can be applied now?

But saints are guided as they wait on God. Remember, it was a pillar of a cloud, not a cloud and a pillar. Then the people complained and murmured, though God led them so.

Ques. But in chapter 10 we have the blowing of trumpets?

Yes, that was the testimony of God in the camp.

Ques. "If ye go to war . . . ye shall be remembered." It does not say they were to fight?

No, but blowing the trumpets is the testimony before God beforehand; it was a question of God being with them all through. We find the same thing in the Revelation where "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (chap. 12:11); the testimony was in their hands.

Then we have the sad history of the various forms of unbelief in their going through the wilderness. And in chapter 19, the red heifer, which is the only institution of a sacrifice in the book of Numbers, though others are offered. Infidels say this 19th chapter has got into its wrong place, but it would be of no use at all in Leviticus.

Ques. To what does 1 Corinthians 10:10 refer?

To Numbers 11:1, but not to verse 33. Wonderful man that Moses was, still he shews he was a man.

Ques. Why did they complain about the manna?

Christ there had lost His value, it was only dry food; they wanted something of the world, something Egyptian.

Ques. All the food of Egypt was on the ground or under its surface, but the food of Canaan is up in the air, grapes, figs, pomegranates, etc., in the first heavens?

383 I see; the great thing is that they had the food, but whether the figure in that difference was meant, is another thing. Christ is the bread come down from heaven which we can have and enjoy. It is not the corn of the land here, but the supply for the wilderness.

Ques. What is the change of its colour and taste from Exodus?

Different descriptions of it, that is all.

Ques. Which was best, the "honey" or the "fresh oil"?

Are you tired of Christ, i.e., of nothing but Christ?

Ques. But they could not get anything else in the wilderness?

Not unless, as Moses says, they killed all the cattle; they could get nothing from the ground. And Moses got tested, too. The burden of this wilful, wayward people through the wilderness was an immense one for Moses, and he loses, though God does not in form rebuke him.

In answer to his complaint (chap. 11:11 15), God tells him to bring seventy of the elders, and He adds, "I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone." Moses loses something of the importance of his place; God does not say, I will give them of My Spirit, but, "I will take of the spirit that is upon thee, and will put it upon them," which really was a strong rebuke.

Ques. But in the intercourse of Moses with God, do we not see the same nearness of communion as in Abraham?

Yes; he was a most blessed man, but even so he could not go into the land.

Ques. What was the dew upon which the manna fell a figure of?

I do not know. Up to Sinai, as we have seen, God had proved His divine glory by giving them all they wanted without a reproach, but here He visits them with His displeasure. And even Moses' faith is feeble, and he asks whether they were to kill all the flocks and the herds? And yet beautiful grace is shewn in Moses when two of them did not come up, but abode in the camp. "Enviest thou for my sake?" he says; "Would God that all the LORD's people were prophets!"

Ques. Why were the people so visited, when God gave them their wish?

384 They ought to have said, 'The LORD could have given us quails in a minute, what fools we have been,' but instead of that, they set upon the quails to devour them. There was no sign, that I see, of self-judgment, for they flew upon the quails instead of humbling themselves about their murmurings when they saw them.

Ques. What about the names here?

All the names have a meaning.

Ques. What of this Ethiopian woman whom Moses had married?

They were glad of an excuse to blame Moses; it took place, I suppose, at the time he was driven out of Egypt. It would most likely be a different woman from Zipporah, because she would be a Cushite, and not an Ethiopian.

Ques. Was it right on Moses' part?

It might not have been very spiritual, but there was no law then.

Ques. What is the lesson to be learned from chapter 12?

There is this, I believe, to be learned in it: the professing church has set up to believe that it is that which God owns, and so it does not like Christ to be King when He comes again. They revolt against the Royalty of Christ, and want to set up the prophet and the priest which as a present thing we have.

## READING 2

We will just notice the general division of the book. First, there is the numbering and arranging of the people; then, beginning with chapter 5, the holiness of God, the Nazarite, and the Levite; next, the preparing of the camp to go on with God; whilst in chapter 19 there is provision for failure by the way.

Ques. Should every Israelite have been a Nazarite?

I do not say that; taken as a whole, they were to be a people for God. But we ought to be all Nazarites.

Ques. What is the difference between one who is a Nazarite from birth, and one who is such by vow?

A Nazarite from birth had a special calling, like Samson, in which, however, he failed, like others, whereas some have vows at will.

Ques. What is the vow?

385 The giving up of self to God. We have been bought at a price, and we are not our own; some may have a deeper sense of this, or they may have a special calling, as Paul, but still it is the case with every Christian. In the full unfailing sense of it, Christ was the only true Nazarite, and we have to walk as He walked; that is the great thing one has to look for among Christians.

Ques. What was the meaning for the Israelite of the vow being over?

He might drink wine then - the joy of this world. All the days of his separation he was not to drink any wine, i.e., mere human joy; nor might he touch a dead body, which was a sign of sin. If a man happened to die by him, all the past time was lost.

Ques. What was Paul's vow?

I do not know.

Ques. Can you always apply the actual circumstances of Israel to us?

The principle in them you can, but that is all. Paul did not let his hair grow and that is the opposite of a Nazarite. It was when the vow was over that the head was shorn.

Ques. Would a vow be at all in connection with their condition, but as under law, so that there was nothing permanent in it?

Not that I know of.

Ques. Is there not an amount of human power in making a vow?

Yes; so accordingly there is now no vow, but it is, "Swear not at all."

Ques. We often hear of persons making a vow?

Yes, but it is all wrong for a Christian.

Ques. But if he purposes in his heart?

Just so; but then it is, if the Lord will.

Ques. He might deny himself certain things for a purpose?

Yes, but I should not like to make a vow to do it. It is, if the Lord will, we will go into such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain.

Ques. Paul kept under his body?

Yes, but that was a constant thing, not a particular thing.

Ques. Did an Israelite ever accomplish it?

I do not know; some may have done so as a mere outward thing. Only do not confound the type with the thing typified.

386 Ques. But a man under law fails altogether?

Yes, when he finds the law is spiritual, though externally he may say, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." But when the Lord talks to the young ruler about his money, he goes away sorrowful. It is separation in heart to God that answers to it now.

Ques. How do you explain Paul's words, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless"?

That he was not a thief or murderer; but the moment the law came and said, "Thou shalt not lust," it was all over with him. The duties were there, whether towards God or towards man, only the law did not deal with sin in the flesh.

Ques. Would he have brought the sacrifice proper for every transgression?

No; I suppose he never broke the law in an outward sense. So with the young man, the Lord did not tell him that he had not kept the law. But when Paul took the principle of it, "Thou shalt not covet," i.e., not lust, it was all up with him because he was a man and did lust. To bring an offering would not be "blameless," it would be meeting the blame.

Ques. But that did not meet the whole thing in the ten commandments?

I beg your pardon, it did meet the whole thing until he came to the inward thing.

Ques. Zacharias was spoken of in the same way?

Yes, and his wife Elizabeth, too. Remember, sacrifices only met the outward relationship of man with God for the time being.

Ques. Does Nazariteship specially refer to saints now, like the Lord says, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom"?

Yes, that is its full character in its application to us, only we are a living sacrifice.

Ques. Do you see anything special in the priestly action introduced at the end of chapter 6?

If the sacrifice was offered to God, you must have a priest.

Ques. But I mean the last verses?

Well, that is the converse of it.

The Nazarite offered himself to God, and God put His name upon Israel, only it was as separated to God that He did so. God said, "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."

387 Ques. What did the apostle mean by "the Israel of God"?

It is in Galatians where they were bringing the saints under the law every way, but he so speaks of those whom he owned as consecrated to God.

J.B.S. I think I find the apostle refusing a great many thing besides on the ground of self-denial.

Explain then; what were they? He would not be a stumbling block to others.

J.B.S. I think a Nazarite is more self-denial.

But a Nazarite was consecrated to God.

J.B.S. But the greatest moral victory in a man walking here is self-denial. I do not mean any monkish spirit, but like as Paul says, "I keep under my body."

But the Nazarite in Numbers had not an object as a Christian has?

J.B.S. But the object brings in self-denial.

Self is the principle of sin, for it is self that shuts out God. But I am not my own; if I am my own, I am going to hell. So self denial is the principle of godliness, only it is founded on the grace that has brought us out of ruin. Selfishness began with Eve. All the scene was just enjoying God's mercies in her place, and then self came in. But now man is separated from God, he is his own god; Eve did not trust God to make her happy, but she set to work to try to make herself happy. There is only one power for us, and that is Christ, and now Christ is all to me.

Ques. What is the meaning of "Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"?

Take it simply as it stands. I enjoyed my breakfast this morning, and I thanked God for it. A person may say he enjoys his food because he is hungry, that is eating like a pig eats; but if you thank God for it, it is another thing for then you enjoy it as given of God.

Ques. What is the connection of the next verse, "That they do good, that they be rich in good works"?

Well, he goes on to speak of other things, but it means that instead of trusting man, and self, and riches, I trust in the living God, from whom I receive everything; and it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, instead of being eaten in a merely natural way from want; it is enjoyed with God.

388 Ques. And it is enjoyed in poverty as well as in riches?

Yes, only there is less temptation in poverty than in riches.

Ques. Does, "He shall be called a Nazarene," in Matthew 2:23, refer to where our Lord was brought up, or to His Nazariteship?

There are two words, "Nazarene" and "Nazarite." Nazarene refers to where He was brought up; there is no connection between the two, only they are a little mixed up in the English.

Ques. Was His Nazariteship broken through being made sin for us?

So far as He was concerned, there never was a time when He was so separated to God as when He was made sin: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." He was a Nazarite from life as well as from wine.

Ques. Did Jehovah put His name upon them there, on the ground of their separation to Himself?

Yes, in a way; that is to say, taking the Nazarite as Israel in a certain sense.

Ques. Is there any parallel between this and Deuteronomy 26, "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning"?

Yes, in principle there is. The LORD had separated the people like ourselves; God separates us to Himself, but having the new man and the Holy Ghost, I separate myself to Him. We see that in Romans 6. They had been slaves and are now set free. That is God's work. And to whom, then, are you going to give yourselves? Is it to sin, or is it to God? It was the priest's rod, not Moses' rod, that was henceforth to carry them through. There is all the difference between "the" rod and "thy" rod.

Ques. Why the sacrifices at the end of the Nazarite's vow?

Without sacrifices Nazariteship would be nothing at all; there can be no blessing without the sacrifice of Christ, so they had to be added to this consecration. The consecration was acceptable in virtue of the value of that which the sacrifices represented; they both went together.

Ques. Is there anything to learn from the "basket" that held the bread?

In Deuteronomy 26, we find the basket of the first-fruits of the land; it takes them all, I suppose.

In chapter 13, "The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men," etc., and in Deuteronomy 1:22, Moses says,

"Ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us," etc. And Moses adds, "The saying pleased me well." The LORD sanctioned it, but still it was the working of unbelief. Instead of going on simply in faith, how often do we raise a cloud of questions in order to get a human estimate of a thing only to find out at last that the walls are up to heaven. Instead of doing the thing to be done, we are looking at all the questions and difficulties that can be raised. And thus it ended in their not going into the land at all.

389 Ques. Is not the tribe of Levi outside all this?

Yes.

Ques. And were they not involved in despising the land?

I do not know that. But it was by the commandment of the LORD that Moses sent the spies. Despising the pleasant land was when they wanted to go back into Egypt. However, they had the grapes of Eshcol, and the witness of the spies, but this gave the very things for unbelief to work upon. "They are stronger than we," say the spies, but really their strength was departed from them. The cities were walled, and they saw the giants too, but when finally they reached Canaan, the walls were just as high, and the children of Anak were still there; not one of the difficulties of unbelief had been removed. Only, when they go forward with God, difficulty is no difficulty. But the moment this account came before them, the people got uneasy, the report cowed them. "The land . . . eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." Now in all this I find two things: it is an evil report of the land - there is nothing good in it - and then, God is quite left out, for had they thought of God, the question would have been this: Is God a grasshopper or not? Only Caleb says, "We are well able to overcome it," and then, in chapter 14, Joshua and Caleb say, "If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us." The spies had said at first that it was a land that surely "floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." But in spite of this good report the moment they bring in a "nevertheless," their faith fails and then they lose sight of everything.

Ques. God did not rebuke them for sending the spies?

No; but it was unbelief in the shape of human wisdom. And the point of the spies' answer was, "We be not able to go up against the people" - the grapes were sour (verse 31). They looked at the difficulties and then all was bad, though they had the grapes on their shoulders. Further, the whole congregation lifted up their voice, and cried, until they fairly turned for Egypt. It was now a positive giving up of the whole thing. Moses and Aaron rent their clothes, and it took Joshua and Caleb to bring in the Lord: "The people of the land . . . are bread for us," and "the LORD is with us: fear them not." That was real faith; but all the congregation bade stone them with stones - they would not listen to the testimony

390 Ques. Was not this the despising of the pleasant land according to Psalm 106?

Well it was, though there is another case of it, too.

Ques. Is this the "gospel" in the beginning of Hebrews 4?

In principle it is.

Ques. People may go so far with you in truth until they come to the heavenly truth, and then they go back?

Yes; the truth that tests faith is always the truth that unbelief deals with. If a truth has become accredited, well. Or as at the Reformation, they glorified in justification by faith because it was against Rome. But if one speaks of ministry by the Spirit, and of the coming of the Lord, souls hesitate and refuse. I see this in Scripture, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me." The Jews boasted of having the true God, but the truth that the Father had sent the Son had come in and was testing them, and

they would not have that, but stoned them that held it. People accept the Lord's coming as a doctrine that He will appear, but not as coming at any moment to take up the church. The rapture and the church are identified in Scripture, but the coming of the Lord is in the Old Testament, as well as in the New. Even in the Apostles' Creed we find the mere fact that the Lord will come to judge the quick and the dead. I remember when brethren were very much exercised about the truth of the rapture, some thinking it upset, "They that are Christ's at his coming." But what always comforts me is that the Lord takes care to wake up in time all the virgins, whether they have refused the rapture much or long. It is a truth that will sift Christians amazingly.

Ques. How large a company is, "They that are Christ's at his coming"?

391 They that are Christ's, but I do not know how many that will be.

Ques. There is no doubt as to the Old Testament saints being among them?

No, I have no doubt; and the elders in heaven would take them all in. Until the modern evangelical doctrine of an invisible church, nobody ever thought of the Old Testament saints being the church, or of the church as the same thing as Judaism.

Ques. Will all professors be aroused?

We are no judge of people. I believe many who call themselves Christians will turn out to be infidels. Mixture enough there is on every side; you will never do the Lord's work without finding the devil working against it.

Ephesians 2 makes it impossible to mingle Jewish saints of the Old Testament with the church. The middle wall of partition separated them off, but now in Christ it is broken down. The Jew as such was bound not to accept the foundation of the church, i.e., he had to keep up the middle wall of partition and not let the Gentile in; but the principle of Christianity is that there is neither Jew nor Gentile, "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." If the doctrine that Paul preached had been preached, say, in Hezekiah's time, it would have broken down Judaism altogether. The mixture that exists to-day is really the refusal of the truth of the church; it practically denies that there is any.

Ques. But do not such put the O.T. saints into the church after they have gone to heaven?

But that is monstrous, for it is telling me that what the Lord does here is not what He does there. And to say that God is going to give them a new place in heaven, without a single syllable of it in Scripture, is of man, not of God.

Ques. What is the city Abraham looked for?

We are the city, the New Jerusalem. If the church, the body of Christ, is in the Old Testament, then, on that shewing, it is a body without a head; but it is clear enough from Ephesians 1 that Christ, as raised from the dead, is given to be Head over all things to the church which is His body. And by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body; but the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. So whether we take Christ as Head or the Holy Ghost as the power, we have neither the one nor the other with the Old Testament saints.

392 Ques. If when Israel reached Kadesh-barnea, they had gone on in faith into the land, they would not have had any Jordan to cross. Is there not another point for us in connection with that?

It brings out much deeper truth; never would they go up that mountain again, and they all perished in the wilderness. The nation has to go round, and this brings out a fresh truth for us, namely, that we must cross the Jordan. And when the Jews themselves get their true blessing ultimately, it will also be founded on death and resurrection.

Ques. Did the Egyptians cross Jordan in Genesis 50?

It does not say so. They went to Atad, and Joseph went on to Canaan. "Beyond Jordan," can only be understood according as we take the standpoint of the writer. Verse 13 would shew, I think, that Jacob's sons carried him and buried him in Machpelah. That was not Atad, nor did all the people of verse 9 go over. In verse 10, "beyond Jordan" would mean to the east of it, so that the sons of Jacob went over, but not the Egyptians. In Numbers 14, the place Moses takes before the Lord is truly beautiful. "The Egyptians shall hear it," and the nations will say, "Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness."

Ques. Would you connect Psalm 90 with this?

That Psalm applies to the last days; it opens Book 4, which is looking especially for the Lord's return. The next Psalm takes up the names of Jehovah, God of Israel, recognising the most High, and so they get the blessing of Abraham from the Almighty.

Ques. What do we learn from verse 22 of Numbers 13: "Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt"?

Well, I do not know that I have ever got anything from it; it is, I suppose, just an incidental notice. I suppose Zoan was one of the places near which Israel was.

Ques. Hebron and the richest grapes figure the perfection of grace in the heavenlies. Zoan, where God's wonders were wrought, but not bowed to by the wisdom of this world's princes (Psa. 78:12 and 43), is the place of Pharaoh's counsellors, and they become fools (Isa. 19:11, 13). But Hebron was set up the perfection of time before the world's counsellors had a place at all?

393 I dare say. The Lord says, in Numbers 14:20, "I have pardoned according to thy word"; and He further tells Moses that those men shall not see the land, though all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. That will be the completion of everything. Three times is this "filling" mentioned: here in this passage, in Isaiah 11:9, and in Habakkuk 2:14; and each time it is connected with judgment.

Ques. In Psalm 72:19, it is, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory"?

Yes, "let," that is the desire, not the fact.

Ques. But is it judgment in Habakkuk?

Yes. "The people shall labour in the very fire," and so on, and the earth shall be "filled," not with grace but, "with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD," etc.

Ques. In Isaiah 40:5, we read, "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together"?

Yes, and that will be in judgment in the future day. Isaiah 6 refers to the same thing.

Ques. Is it not millennial glory?

Yes, but the glory of the LORD does not appear until He executes judgment. Very beautiful is it to see Moses hide himself thus behind the glory of the Lord. And notice that administered forgiveness is not redemption forgiveness. It is so even now in the church of God: "If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:15); and Paul says to the Corinthians, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also." Absolute redemption forgiveness was never known historically in the church of God. The standing of the soul with God never had historical existence in the professing church, and now we find it dreaded more than anything.

Ques. If one who has been "put away" is received again, is that the forgiveness you mean?

That is one form of it.

Ques. Is it that in Acts 2:38?

I think that there it is more what they were baptised to. An important thing it is in its place, but redemption forgiveness is the thing wanted. One finds constantly, in people's souls, the thought that all their sins are put away up to the time of their conversion; but since? Ah! you will find they have really lost all. There is the difficulty as to what is to be done with the gap that has slipped down since. Ask any evangelical Christian if he understands that "the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins."

394 Ques. "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," is that administered forgiveness?

I suppose so.

Ques. But such forgiveness did not meet the case in Numbers 14?

Yes, it did.

Ques. But their carcases fell in the wilderness?

Just so, ultimately, but they were forgiven for the time being and they were allowed to go on. Present government also is very distinct from everlasting salvation. In Popery, they forgive the sins if they have not committed any, and when they have, they cannot. The trouble arises from looking at the Spirit's work in me, which has given me the consciousness of the sins I have committed. But when I look at the work of Christ, at the cross all my sins were future. People say it is a dangerous doctrine; but all I know is, that if it is not true, I shall be damned. It is confusing the Spirit's work in me with the work of Christ for me. But when full Popery came in, then they got absolution by the priest all cut and dried for a man. They bring in absolution because they have no knowledge of redemption. But now, knowing redemption, I learn to hate the sins more and more - all right. Evangelicals resprinkle with the blood of Christ; and I ask them, where do you get your doctrine in Scripture? It is not found there. In Hebrews 10:14, the real force of "for ever" is, "in immutable continuity." We never find in Scripture that "we must offend," but, "we do offend."

Ques. In Galatians, the flesh lusteth against the Spirit?

Yes, but it is "that ye may not do the things that ye would," i.e., the flesh labours to hinder.

Ques. Would you say more about "no more conscience of sins?"

Once purged, I go to God, and I cannot have the idea of His imputing my sins to me, for He has imputed them all to Christ. And that is the only right Christian state.

Ques. But might I not have that, and yet have an idea that something is not forgiven?

No. The constant Christian condition is this, while I hate myself for what I do that is wrong, and God in government may judge it too, yet, in going to God, I can never have sins on my mind as something to be imputed to me.

395 Ques. But you could not say your sins were all forgiven at the cross?

Certainly not, not one of them; no sins are ever forgiven before they are committed. But if, when away from God, I go to God, the Christ who bore my sins is there, and I cannot have the thought of God's imputing them to me while that Christ is sitting at His right hand, i.e., the One who, after having purged my sins, has sat down there.

Ques. But suppose I am out of communion?

That has nothing to do with imputation. You are first cleared as to imputation, and communion follows. Born of God, you have a holy nature, but you can have no proper state and feelings until you know you have everlasting forgiveness. If I still have an idea that sin can be imputed to me, I must connect it with my acceptance. There is all the difference between righteousness before God, and holiness in my ways. Righteousness takes up the question of the judicial character of God, and all was met at the cross; but if it is a question of holiness, I now hate sin for sin's own sake. I cannot get on that ground, if the question of righteousness is not settled. But that once settled, then I say, 'Look, I have gone and found my pleasure in the very thing that made Christ's agony on the cross.' And then communion is stopped. The iniquity of my sin is rather the crookedness and departure from God on my part. But I have the sense of no imputation; and now that I am saved I hate sin, as regards unholiness. If we are manifested to God now, there will be nothing to come out at the judgment seat.

There is a beautiful point in Numbers 15:1, 2. After the conduct of the people in chapter 14, the Lord says to Moses, as a matter of course, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land of your habitations." God is not stopped, but looks forward still to the completion of the whole thing, because His purpose in grace is certain to be fulfilled.

Ques. What is "the gainsaying of Core"?

They resisted the authority of Moses, and pretended to the priesthood when they were only Levites. Then the rod, Aaron's rod, leads through the wilderness and nothing else does.

396 Ques. Numbers 19 is more a sense of defilement than of fear of judgment?

Quite so, it is cleansing, not forgiveness. They were to kill the heifer, and sprinkle its blood seven times directly before the door of the tabernacle, of the congregation; because, I suppose, all the people were

concerned in it. When Moses went in, it was to God inside, but the people would be gathered at the door.

Ques. Is not the red heifer, atonement?

It is a sacrifice for sin, but there is no re-application of blood by it at all.

Ques. Was there only one heifer killed?

If the ashes were all spent, they might kill another, but I do not know.

Then all was burnt together, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. But sin is an unclean thing, and he that gathered the ashes, and the priest, and he that burnt all, each one of them was unclean; it was a question of cleanness and uncleanness. And then comes a case the avoiding of which was almost impossible, namely, the touching of the dead body of a man.

Ques. Why was it a heifer and not a bullock?

It was not of the complete character of the great day of atonement. And there is no altar here, and that clears the thought of standing being in question. It was Eleazar too, not Aaron.

Ques. Why a "grave"?

A grave implies anything dead.

Then comes the double cleansing on the third day, and on the seventh day.

Ques. What is the open vessel?

One that could be reached.

Ques. What does it mean now?

It shews that everything that came within the breath of sin was unclean.

Ques. What is the difference between this, and touching an unclean animal in Leviticus 6?

It is much the same in principle, but this is on the journey, and so it is found in Numbers.

Ques. There is re-sprinkling here?

Yes, but of what?

Ques. Ashes?

And what did the ashes show but that the thing was all consumed when Christ died, and that there is no repetition of His death, or re-sprinkling with blood.

397 Ques. But you could not say that God had any complacency in the agony of Christ?

No, I should not. God had no pleasure in His being agonised, but He took pleasure in the effect of it; "It pleased the LORD to bruise him," and I should understand a person using such language, if he used it with a good intention. That dreadful agony of Christ met all that God was. There is no objection, therefore, to the thought of God finding complacency in Christ all that time; the Lord smelled a sweet savour in the

sacrifice itself.

Ques. Why was it Eleazar, and not Aaron who acted here?

Had it been Aaron, it would have shewed that some link between the whole people and God had been lost, and that was not true; the nation stood as it was, but individual communion alone was touched.

Ques. It brings out the deepest view of [individual] sin in the Old Testament?

Yes, I think so.

When one is defiled, then one that is clean takes the water and sprinkles upon him; it is the power of the Spirit of God and the word, bringing home to him what it had been to Christ to be consumed as Victim because of sin, but the sin had been consumed in Christ's work, so that no question of imputation arises.

Ques. Is the water, then, the written word?

There must be the full effect of the power of the Spirit of God by the word, which is certainly the use of running, i.e., living water. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." The Lord is speaking here, not of guilt, but of the contrast between unclean and clean.

Then there are two things: First, I must have that view of sin which God has of it and which I could not get but by the death of Christ, and the power of the Spirit of God it is that makes good to me, by that death, what sin is in the presence of such grace; and secondly, I get absolute clearness as to its having been put away out of God's sight so that I am in communion with Him. First, I have the sense in my conscience of what sin is in God's sight as manifested in the cross: it "became him . . . in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" - that is what became God according to His nature. The cross has taken away my guilt, though that is not the thing here; but through the ashes of the death of Christ being brought home to my conscience and heart, I lay hold of that which makes me feel what a horrible thing sin is; but then I see, too, the other side of the question, and that is that all was burnt up in Christ's cross, and I am brought back into communion. This is a thoroughly deep work. A person is thus brought under the efficacy of the great day of atonement, that he may have communion with God. Sin is hateful to God, and he who touches it is unclean.

398 Ques. Would there, then, be a consciousness of this in dealing with cases of discipline?

Yes, where the word came home in the power of the Spirit of God.

Ques. Is it the same as John 13?

As to Christ's connection with it, I think it is.

Ques. You do not, then, allow pleading for that which is unavoidable?

When you come practically to deal with it, I do not know such a thing as unavoidable sin, though at any given moment, through my carelessness, sin may have become unavoidable.

Ques. But what about people in contact with business and all that?

I know nothing weaker than myself, and I know nothing stronger than the grace of God.

Ques. Is it possible for us to be in this world at all without being defiled?

Certainly, but if you ask me whether we are or no, that is another thing. "In many things we offend all."

Ques. But the whole world is defiled?

He will keep you in the secret of His presence from the strife of tongues.

Ques. In Romans 7 sin is a necessity, but in Romans 8 it is no necessity, because of the law of the Spirit of life?

Quite so.

Ques. Has the third day anything to do with a long delay?

No, I do not think so. I should not stop immediate confession, though there might be an acknowledgment of the outward fact, without a proper sense of its character.

Ques. Then such an one must know that he is defiled three days before he is sprinkled?

Yes. The Lord did not charge Peter with having denied

Him, but He probed his self-confidence by asking him whether he loved Him more than did the other disciples.

399 Ques. Would "faithful . . . to forgive" be the third day, and "to cleanse" be the seventh day?

No, it is cleansing here, and no question of forgiving at all.

Ques. How would anyone know that he has touched the dead thing?

That is the work of the Spirit of God, and there is danger that there may be no adequate sense of what makes impure.

Ques. The man would have a sense of the redemption and sufferings of Christ on the third day?

Yes.

Ques. Has not all this a dispensational bearing on Israel in the future?

I do not doubt it has, because it is in the death of Christ that they have brought their great sin upon them. When they look on Him whom they have pierced, that will be the seventh day.

Ques. Does verse 13 have any application to an assembly of saints?

If one goes there unclean, he does defile the communion. It is most important for us all that we should measure what sin is in view of the cross.

Ques. But when we come together, do we not sometimes get washed by one another, without our knowing the circumstances?

That may happen, for God can apply the word, but that is not washing one another's feet, for that is active individual service. But, in John 13, the Lord is sitting with the disciples as their companion in the world,

and there, knowing that the glory was His and that He was going to it, in the perfect holiness of His nature He says to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." I am going away, but I am not going to give you up, I must have you with me where I go, and dirty feet will not do for heaven.

Ques. Is that a present thing?

Of course it is. There will be no washing up there; we shall not have dirty feet in heaven, nor shall we want a conscience in heaven. On the other hand, if I do not get my feet washed down here, I shall soon be a nuisance and fall into some mischief or other.

Ques. There is no laver in heaven?

In Revelation 15, it is a sea of glass, but mingled with fire, for those who stand on it have gone through the tribulation to get there.

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