

Service

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon emphasizes the importance of communion with God as the foundation for effective service in the Church.

Scripture: Leviticus 23:11, Numbers 8:2, Numbers 8:19, Acts 7:55, Romans 12:1, Romans 15:16, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Ephesians 3:10, 1 Peter 2:9, Revelation 1:20

Topics: "Communion with God", "Service"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of service within the Church, drawing parallels from the Levites' role in the Old Testament. He explains that true service stems from a deep communion with God, highlighting that the Levites were first offered to God before they could serve. The candlestick symbolizes the Church, which is called to shine forth the light of God's truth and wisdom to the world. Darby stresses that all service should be rooted in spiritual communion, as it empowers and directs our actions in accordance with God's will. Ultimately, he encourages believers to recognize their identity as God's servants, dedicated to His glory rather than their own ambitions.

Transcript

{Christian Friend 1893, pages 113-6.}

We have dwelt on separation from evil in Num. 6, and on willing-heartedness in Num. 7. In this chapter we have the light, and the manner in which it should shine forth. There are little bits of direction in the book of Numbers. Here it is about the candlestick, showing the energy of the Spirit of God in us in passing through the wilderness.

"Speak unto Aaron." (v. 2.) The Lord is in the midst of the seven candlesticks in Rev. 1. The candlestick represents the Church by the power of the Spirit holding up the light - "holding forth the word of life." Gold is divine righteousness connected with or bearing upon what man is. It holds up the beauty and order of God's truth - holding forth truth to the world. "The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick." The light manifested the candlestick, as well as everything else. So should it be now with the Church; not only should the light shine from it, but on it, showing what it is in the mind of God. "According to the pattern which the Lord had shewed Moses, so he made the candlestick," according, to the perfect mind of God.

By the Church principalities and powers in heavenly places are to learn the manifold wisdom of God. The perfect mind of God is shown in that which gives light to the world. The seven lamps were not only to light up the tabernacle, but to give light over against the candlestick. Angels are to learn in the Church the comeliness of God's order, the energy too of the Holy Ghost now in the Church, not having the Holy Ghost themselves; so the woman is to have power on her head because of the angels; and Paul wrote to Timothy, that he might know "how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

The Levites (v. 6) represent the saints in service. Priests, the Church in communion; the Levites are servants to the priests. The Levites are first offered to God. (v. 13.) "After that shall the Levites go in to do service." (v. 15) Here is the true character of service - "first gave themselves to God," then God employs them. The Levites are offered for an offering unto the Lord (v. 13), so in Rom. 15:16, "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable." The Church is not only a witness in the world, but an offering to God. Figuratively, Christ was waved before the Lord in Lev. 23:11; so also the Church in verses 17, 20. The service of the Levites was entirely the consequence of their being the Lord's. "The Levites shall be mine." (v. 14.) For as it is written, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price." (1 Cor. 6:20.) It is blessed to say, "My beloved is mine;" but it is greater progress and a deeper joy to say, "I am His."

The Levites (v. 19) represented the whole of the children of Israel; they were consecrated by the very act of the cutting off of the firstborn in Egypt. The cross of Christ is condemnation to the world, but deliverance to those who believe on Him. He suffered the judgment that we might escape it. He has bought us with a price, just as, in verse 17, "the firstborn are mine."

In verse 10 we have another principle of offering, of great importance and blessing to the soul to observe - the children of Israel putting their hands on the Levites, thereby identifying the offerer with the offering. In verse 12 the Levites laid their hands on the head of the sin-offering, the whole thus standing guilty before God; and on the burnt-offering, completely identifying them as accepted in all the perfectness of Christ's sacrifice - a savour of sweet smell to God. Like as He bore our sins, which were laid upon Him, so all our services are accepted through the burnt-offering. Laying my hand on the burnt-offering identifies me with the savour of Christ in the presence of God. In verses 10, 11 they are brought before the Lord, and are offered to Him, that they may serve Him, and all this under the direction of priestly communion. The Church is first brought to God altogether, and then set in service under spiritual priestly direction. Observe, there is no anointing here. The Levites are not only given to God, but to Aaron and his sons (v. 19), identifying them with Christ in priestly communion. We are to be servants of God under the direction of spiritual priestly communion in the sanctuary. There can be no intelligent, no reasonable, service but that which springs from priestly communion with the Lord, not merely intention of obedience. It is communion which gives power and intelligence in service. (See Acts 7:55.) Besides the positive written Word, we get the mind of God by habitual intercourse with Him - walking with Him, and "proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Thus shalt thou separate the Levites. (v. 14.) The blood which guarded the door-posts of Israel within was the token of judgment upon the Egyptians without. A Levite was not a priest, but a servant; they were not anointed, but were servants to the priests. Communion is higher than service, and it enables our service to be with power and intelligence. We are sons of God doing the work of servants here, just as Jesus when on earth was the Son of God in the place of a servant. Prophets were servants; so preaching the gospel is service; but oil inside the bowl is more blessed than the bowl. All service is inferior to communion; so our Lord said of John the Baptist, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Only

communion can bring true service; all else is only a flare, and will end in failure.

The age (v. 24) of twenty-five years shows maturity for service; that is, the full energy of the Spirit. Exemption from service was given as a blessing, but keeping the charge remains. The priestly service never departs, but we get greater in it. We, the saints now, are the offering up of the Gentiles to God. True honour in service is that we are wholly the Lord's. It is a saying, that if an angel came down from heaven to earth, he would be as glad to sweep the streets as to be a king, the only honour just to do what God set him to do. We should not be seeking ourselves, but the Lord's glory. God's order in His house, in the sanctuary, is the object of admiration and wonder in the heavenly places - the light of the Holy Ghost shining down over against the candlestick, showing out all its beauty and perfectness after the pattern of heavenly things.

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