

May 23

Scriptures: Read Numbers 6

Key Verse: “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)

Overview

The very important Nazarite vow of consecration is detailed in this chapter. The word “Nazarite” comes from the Hebrew verb “nazar”, meaning “to dedicate” or “to separate”. It was a voluntary expression of love and devotion to God by living a holy life, which is separated to Him (6:8). Once this most serious vow was made, it became obligatory and binding. Both men and women could choose to become Nazarites for a certain period of time or for life (e.g. Samson and John the Baptist). Jesus was not a Nazarite; His life was already perfect, holy and sanctified. He was a “Nazarene”, meaning someone who came from the city of Nazareth.

The Nazarites were not to drink or eat from any fruit of the vine, which symbolized joy; rather their joy was to come from God alone. Also, they were not to cut their hair; this would distinguish them as being separated to God for a life of holiness. They were not to touch any dead body, causing them to become defiled, for death is the result of sin (Gen.2:17). At the end of the period of separation, there were to be several offerings to the Lord which were very costly, but it seems they could be paid for by others (Acts 21:14); therefore, even the poor could find the means to fulfill that which was required. It also included the burning of his or her hair (6:18), which had grown during the specified time period. This was a further expression of a life totally committed to God and symbolized that the Nazarite had, in a sense, offered himself as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (Rom.12:1). The Apostle Paul must have understood the deep spiritual significance of this vow, for he himself took a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18; 21:24).

Numbers 6 has one of Scripture’s most beautiful and famous blessings. The Lord taught it to Moses who, in turn, was to teach Aaron and his sons, so that with it they might bless all the children of Israel. In all three sections of this lovely Hebrew poem, the Lord’s name (Yahweh) is emphasized. The Israelites were to openly declare the Name of God, for it was to be put on them as a witness to the one and only Holy God; then God promised to bless them (6:27). Each of the three lines of this benediction promises two blessings: “The Lord bless you and keep you” (6:24)—they would receive all good things from God and be protected from any harm (kept safe in His loving arms); “The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you” (6:25)—they would be happy and granted real life (Prov.16:15), be acceptable, favored, and shown mercy; “The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace: (6:26)—God would give special attention and care for their good. The final blessing is that of “shalom”, translated “peace”; this is a comprehensive term meaning: wholeness, health, contentment, security, friendship, total well-being and, most importantly, inner peace with God and spiritual blessings which can come only from Him (Eph.1:3).

To receive blessings from God, we first need to openly and unashamedly put His Name upon ourselves (6:27), and to separate ourselves from sin, like the Nazarite who became totally consecrated to Him. This may mean giving up certain fleeting pleasures of life (like the fruit of the vine for the Nazarite), but the joy of the Lord that results, and the joy everlasting, far outweighs any earthly pleasures.

Prayer

Lord, Jehovah, grant us Your grace to separate ourselves from any unclean thing, and not just from some things, but grant us to be separated to Your will and purpose. Thank You for Your blessings as we serve You.