

Numbers 6:1–21 Separated Unto God

Friday, March 22, 2024 • Read Numbers 6:1–21

Questions from the Scripture text: Who spoke to whom in v1? To whom was he to speak (v2)? Who might offer an offering-vow? What sort? To do what to himself? Unto Whom? From what shall he separate himself (v3)? What must he not drink or eat, for how long (v3–4)? What else must not be done to him for that long (v5)? What will he be, until that day? Then what shall he do after that day? What else mustn't he do all those days (v6)? Not even for whom (v7)? How does v8 summarize all of this? What might happen to him (v9)? What must he do when he is cleansed? What does he do on the next day (v10)? Why two turtledoves (v11)? From where does he now begin counting the days of his vow (v12)? What happens to him after the days are completed (v13)? What does he present for what offerings (v14–15)? Who brings him/this before YHWH (v16)? What does he offer as what (v16–17)? Then what does the Nazirite do to his head and with the hair (v18)? What does the priest now do and keep (v19–20)? And what does the Nazirite drink? How does v21 summarize this section?

What is the point of a Nazirite vow? Numbers 6:1–21 prepares us for the evening sermon on the Lord's Day. In these twenty-one verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that, **all of God's people must be consecrated to Him as holy, finding in Him their happiness and their fellowship.**

Holy to the Lord. Because of the foreignness to us of the ceremonial system, we tend to focus on what we are separated from. And, indeed, much of the text is spent spelling this out. But the emphasis of the separation is not from what the person is separated, but *unto Whom* the Nazirite is separated. This is a sort of fast or consecration that goes beyond the length of time of a food fast (as evidenced by the growth of the hair). But the purpose is the same: drawing near to YHWH in heart and mind and dwelling upon Him and His Word. Throughout the passage, the word (NZR, separate) from which we get Nazirite is used to say that he is separated unto God and holy unto God.

Anyone and everyone can be holy. One of the reasons that we no longer perform Nazirite vows is that if we continued to keep the laws connected to Aaron's priesthood, we would be diminishing/denying Christ's priesthood (cf. Heb 7:12). Another reason is that this shadow has been fulfilled in the priesthood of all believers. But in the context of Leviticus and Numbers, this is a marvelously "equal opportunity holiness." NKJ's "consecrates" in v2 translates a verb that means to "work a wonder," and wonderful this is.

Not just men but women can do it, v2. And the pigeons in v10 being the lowest cost sin/ascension offerings, there is an emphasis that not just rich but poor can do it. And the level of the separation from dead bodies in v6–7 is above even that of the ordinary priests, equal to that of the high priesthood. But not just a son of Aaron, or even a Levite, can enter into such a vow of holiness. One from any tribe can do it. How great is our privilege now, in Christ, to be seated with Him in heaven (cf. Eph 1:3, 1:20, 2:6), and to come beyond the veil through union with Him (cf. Heb 10:19–21)! But what a great blessing, even in the Mosaic administration, God gave all His saints, that any of them could take a Nazirite vow.

Holiness of life and happiness of heart unto YHWH. The three specific things from which a Nazirite must refrain teach various things about this time of holiness unto the Lord.

First, the refraining from wine is especially a refraining from happiness and fellowship in/from creatures. While there were other produce of the land that were rich and beneficial (olives, figs, grain, etc.), wine was especially used by God to gladden the heart and cement relationships. In fact, He continues to use it for this purpose no only after its common use, but in the sacramental use of the Lord's Supper. By setting wine aside for the time of the separation, the separate one would be directed especially to the Lord for his happiness and belonging.

Second, he is to focus on the inward appearance of the heart unto the Lord. With respect to the hair, the instruction is not only negative (no razor shall cross his head) but positive (he shall let the hair of his head become great). Well-groomed and arranged hair was an important part of a man's or woman's public dignity, but here they are required to "let themselves go" (as we might say today in English) as far as their hair is concerned. As we have been hearing in Mt 6:1–18 the purpose here is not that they would make a display of their vow, but rather that they would care about how they appear to God more than how they appear to men.

Third, he is to be devoted especially to the worship of God. We've mentioned that v6–8 is a high-priestly level requirement. But there is likely more to this requirement than simply maintaining the same level of ceremonial cleanliness. At the very least, the Nazirite is supposed to live in a way that he could engage in public worship at any time. Possibly, he is even to spend as much of his time as possible at the tabernacle itself (so near as he is permitted to go), for the duration of his vow.

The Lord's Day, of course, functions in the same way for believers. So also our secret and family worship, morning and evening. And though we must not engage in a Nazirite vow now (it would be wrong, even, to refrain from wine, when it is a necessary part of the happiness and fellowship in Christ in the Supper), yet it is right and good for the Christian to vow unto the Lord such things as His Word commands (as we recently heard opened from Mt 5:33–37), and to fast in a Sabbath-shaped way (cf. Mt 6:16–18, cf. Is 58). Even married couples may (though only for a limited time, and only for the specific purpose of fasting and prayer) take a time of refraining from coming together as husband and wife (cf. 1Cor 7:5).

So, as the Lord has commanded certain seasons for us, and has permitted others, let us use the means that He has given us to rejoice in our holiness to the Lord in Jesus, and to find the Lord Himself as our great happiness and fellowship!

What times/ways has God required of you for attending upon means of grace that communicate Him as your happiness and fellowship? What other opportunities do you take besides these? How are you enjoying, or making use of, Christ's Priesthood (and your priesthood in Him), which has obsoleted the Nazirite vow?

Sample prayer: Thank You, Lord, for giving us union with Christ, that in Him, You would be our great blessedness, and that our nearest and greatest intimacy is that which we have with You. Grant that we would take the opportunities that You give us to meditate upon You and Your Word. And bless those opportunities to us by Your Spirit, which we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP15 "Within Your Tent Who Will Reside?" or TPH24B "The Earth and Its Riches"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Numbers chapter 6, verses 1 through 21. These are God's words. Then you always spoke to Moses saying, speak to the children of Israel. And say to them, when either a man or woman consecrates an offering, To take the vow of an azarite to separate himself to Yahweh. He shall separate himself from wine and similar, drink

He shall drink. Neither vinegar made from wine. Nor vinegar made from similar. Drink neither, shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh grapes or raisins? All the days of his separation, he shall eat nothing. That is produced by the Grapevine from seed to skin. All the days of the vow of this separation.

No razor. Shall come upon his head until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to Yahweh. He shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separates himself to Yahweh, he shall not go near a dead body.

He shall not make himself unclean even for his father, or his mother for his brother, or his sister, when they die. Because his separation to God is on his head. All the days of his separation, he shall be holy. To your way. And if anyone dies very, suddenly beside him.

And he defiles as consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing. On the seventh day, he shall shave it. Then on the eighth day, he shall bring two turtle doves or two young pigeons to the priest. To the door, the Dapper knuckle of meeting.

And the priest shall offer? One is a sin offering, the other is a burnt offering. And make a tournament for him because he sinned in regard to the corpse. And you shall sanctify his head that same day. Okay, so consecrate to y'all, play the days of his separation and bring a male lamb in its first year.

As a trespass offering, but the former days shall be lost. Because the separation was defiled. Now, this is the law of the Nazarite. When the days of his separation are fulfilled, These shall be brought to the door of the Tabernacle of meeting and he shall present his offering to Yahweh.

One male lamb in its first year without blemish. As a burnt offering one new lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering. On Ram without blemish as a peace offering. A basket of unleavened bread cakes, a fine flour mixed with oil. Unleavened wafers, Anointed with oil and their grain offering with their drink offerings.

Then the priest shall bring them before. Yahweh and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering. And he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to Yahweh. With the baskets of unleavened bread, the priests shall also offer its green offering and its drink offering. Then the Nazarite shall shave.

His consecrated head at the door of the Tabernacle of meeting and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire. Which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering. And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram. One unleaven cake from the basket and one unleavened wafer.

Put them upon the hands of the Nazarite after he has shaved, his consecrated hair in the priest, shall wave them. As a way of offering before you offer, they are holy for the priest. Together with the breast of, the way of offering in the thigh of the eve offering, After that, the nazrite may drink wine.

This is the law of the Nazarite who vows to Yahweh the offering for his separation. And besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide According to the vow, which he takes. So he must do. According to the law. Of his separation. So far the reading of God's holy Inspired and inert worked.

Well, we have Head and the first six chapters of numbers. Instruction, especially on. what it meant for Israel to be set apart to God. And yet. There was in their ordinary life those things. That didn't allow them to be. As set apart to God. As. One might wish he could be.

His whole life long. In particular, you had in the previous chapter. those things that exist because of sin and death. Being in the world. Whether it was. The sin between people and the need of restitution, or the sin and the heart, and the jealousy, or even just things like uncleannesses and discharges, and Etc.

And, The instruction in chapter five would remind them that we are continuously being defiled and continuously needing to repent of sin and be cleansed. From our uncleanness. Well. What is provided in chapter six? Then is a part of the ceremonial law in which they're hoping for something that would come especially through Union with Christ.

Notice that, although we're going to get to the three things that they separated, from the point of the Nazarite vow, Was a special season, a special, a specific number of days that they would vow. That would be separated unto Yahweh. The point was not. The abstinence from even the Skins or seed of the grapes or or any sort of vinegar.

that might be produced in the process of making alcoholic, drink even of something. Other than why the point was not being defiled by a dead body. Although that would, of course, interrupt the vow. The point. Was to spend time. Spend a season of life, just in concentrated.

Fellowship with Yahweh meditation. Upon him. in which it was necessary. Of course that they be clean. In which, They, they were. Concentrate on the inward presentation of the heart to God, and not the outward, presentation of the appearance to man. and in which they were to find.

God for their soul, both their health and their happiness. And they did this not by, not eating for that length of time. And perhaps this is because The length of a Nazarite vow. Would be longer than you could. Physically do a food fast as evidenced by the length of the growing hair.

but the grape being essential both to the product of the land for health and especially the product of the land. In this case, for happiness, they'll be separated from those things, but the point is not what they are separated. From the point is what they are separated to we read over and over separate himself to Yahweh.

Separate himself to Yahweh, he shall be holy on the days of his separation, he shall be holy to Yahweh. So, especially because of the The command not even to enter the house where a dead body was. not even. for near family which was greater. Or more stringent a command than even.

For the regular priesthood is the one who took the nazrite vow, whether it was a man or a woman as very specifically said, beginning of the chapter they were to maintain a ceremonial cleanness, like that of the high priest. And so there's a sense in which even by that requirement, there's a communication that what the high priest does beyond the Veil.

And the office of the high priest is something that we look forward to being spiritually available in the heart and life of the common believer and it would be a common believer, note, that the Ascension offering And the sin offering when he comes to offer, those are a turtle dove each and so the poorest of the poor now, So not only men but women, not only the wealthy, but the poor, not only the levite, and the House of Aaron and the high priest himself, but the common Israelite is given a mechanism by which a means by which you may spend a season of his life, devoting his heart to the Lord.

And so, you wouldn't really be a great Nazarite if you're like Samson. Right. Your hair is growing, you're not supposed to drink. If you was, he's a classic Old Testament example of a Nazarite vow on the outside, but he certainly was not separated unto Yahweh, by in the heart and finding his his health and especially his happiness in the Lord himself.

but that's what the Nazarite vow was for. That's what Jesus has freed us to do by having our very life in Union with our crucified risen, ascended and throned savior, we may enter into vows of the Lord and we ought not enter into vows of the Lord by saying, I will attend no funerals for this extended period of time, or I refuse to have anything to do with anything that comes for a grape for this extended period of time.

Can you imagine a Believer vowing, not to partake of the Lord's supper as a way of being holy unto God and finding his happiness and God that of course is exactly opposite what we do now. Because the shadow is gone. Christ has come. The reality is here, he has fulfilled it all.

And so we must not entangle ourselves with vows to anything that That oppose? The word of God. Now it is very important that we see with the change of his priesthood. There has of course, been A change of law there. Although, the scripture does teach us that even though our bodies are always to be offered unto God as

Living, Sacrifice, that there are times in, which we would refrain from other things.

that the Lord ordinarily uses us or uses to sustain us. And so you have so you have for instance, our current preaching, in Matthew, we have the fasting, that is unto the Lord. You have in First Corinthians, 7 instruction about a husband and his wife and how They should.

Neither should withhold themselves from the other but they should frequently come together as husband and wife, but a little exception is made and is and the limits on that exception include time and purpose that it must be for a brief while and it must be especially for praying together.

that Abstain from their ordinary marital Fellowship to have increased concentrated marital Fellowship in prayer spiritual Fellowship, but then even only briefly and so there are Some things like this there continues to be the making of a vow. Unto the Lord. And we've had instruction on the making and keeping Of vows unto the Lord even in Matthew chapter 5.

But these are these are to be. done in Christ and unto Christ. As part of, Our or ordinary life in him. The entire Christian Life now is like unto the Nazarite vow, there are not there is not a way of becoming Holier or nearer. to God or nearer to the glory of God than you already are by faith in Jesus Christ.

And as a member of his church and as one who comes into the holy of holies week by week and the public assembly through faith in Jesus Christ, Rather. there are still the deficiencies in ourselves our, our limitations, That we recognize by for a time. Setting aside to that, which is helpful.

In order in order to find the Lord, all of our all of our health and Of our Happiness. And so that which number six looked forward to we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. you know, the believer is never now to abstain from wine, the Nazarite, when he was done with his vow, The end of verse 20, isn't.

strong enough here. he was supposed to drink wine. At the completion of his vow, just like, he was supposed to burn his hair. After the completion of his vow, to enjoy that the benefits of his concentrated time with the Lord do not stay. The time that he spent, the days that he spent, but those benefits.

Of Holiness to the Lord and fellowship with him and the season of meditation and consecration. Now, come back into the ordinary life that the Lord is still, of course, his health and his happiness. And that God would graciously use. this vow and the time of the vow, that he or she took.

in their ongoing. And so let us Rejoice that Christ has fulfilled. This that there is a sense in which we are all Holier now and nearer now to God than someone under a Nazarite vow could ever have been. under the old Covenant under the previous ceremonial law.

Let us realize that our sinfulness and our weakness. However continue. And so looking to God, continuously by his grace to overcome our weakness and give us strength from Christ to overcome our sin. And give us continued repentance and cleansing and growth from Christ. and let us make use of those things, which the Lord Sustains to us the things which remain unto us that our methods for that.

Let us make vows of the heart unto him, not for things that Are of our own devising. Notice that, if you made this extraordinary vow, God himself set the rules of how to do it. But let us make vows to God and those things that he requires. and further obligating ourselves to those things which are right and good.

and let Fast. in The manner that we're hearing about last week and this week and the preaching in Matthew 6. And let us make use of the means of Grace the Sabbath, as a fast day in which it is a feast day for the soul. Upon God, the market day of the Soul, Our forebears used to say, Let us see our ongoing need even as we rejoice in Christ's ultimate fulfillment.

what is given in this chapter? A man won't surprise. Our gracious. God and our heavenly father, we thank you for this portion of your word. We thank you for what you did. For your old Covenant people even before Christ came, even before they could be conscientiously aware of being united to him and seated with him.

let me see how mercifully you gave them specific regulations by which they could have a an extended season of Holiness unto you That would be indicated to. by the way that you gave them to do so. We pray. Lord that you would give us a whole life.

Devotion unto you even in the ordinary things of life. But also help us Lord to make good use of those means. That you have. that you have given us. Especially your day, especially your word and prayer and the Lord's supper. Grant unto us to find in you, all of our help.

And all of our happiness. And we pray that Christ would be glorified as the great high priest, who has obsoleted, the former ceremonies. Because you have now given us the reality of which they spoke. More directly and fully in. And so help us Lord. to live such lives with you, through Christ, which we ask in his name.

Amen.