

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The generations of Aaron and Moses, Numbers 3:1-4. The tribe of Levi to minister to the Lord under Aaron and his sons, Numbers 3:5-10. They are taken in the place of the first-born, Numbers 3:11-13. Moses is commanded to number them, Numbers 3:14-16. Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the names of the three heads of families of the Levites, Numbers 3:17. Of Gershon and his family, Numbers 3:18-21. Their number, 7,500, Numbers 3:22. Their place behind the tabernacle, westward, Numbers 3:23. Their chief, Eliasaph, Numbers 3:24. Their charge, Numbers 3:25, Numbers 3:26. Of Kohath and his family, Numbers 3:27. Their number, 8,600, Numbers 3:28. Their place, beside the tabernacle, southward, Numbers 3:29. Their chief, Elizaphan, Numbers 3:30. Their charge, Numbers 3:31. The chief of the Levites, Eleazar, son of Aaron, Numbers 3:32. Of Merari and his family, Numbers 3:33. Their number, 6,200, Numbers 3:34. Their chief, Zuriel, they shall pitch beside the tabernacle, northward, Numbers 3:35. Their charge, Numbers 3:35-37. Moses and Aaron to encamp before the tabernacle, eastward, Numbers 3:38. The amount of all the males among the Levites from a month old and upwards, 22,000, Numbers 3:39. Moses is commanded to number the first-born, Numbers 3:40; and to take the Levites and their cattle, instead of the first-born of man and beast among the Israelites, Numbers 3:41. Moses numbers the first-born, who amount to 22,273, Numbers 3:43. As the first-born were 273 more than the Levites, Moses is commanded to take from the people five shekels apiece for them, Numbers 3:44-47, which is to be given to Aaron and his sons, Numbers 3:48. Moses does accordingly, and finds the amount of the money to be 1,365 shekels, Numbers 3:49, Numbers 3:50, which is given to Aaron and his sons, Numbers 3:51.

Verse 1

The generations of Aaron and Moses - Though Aaron and Moses are both mentioned here, yet the family of Aaron alone appears in the list: hence some have thought that the word Moses was not originally in the text. Others think that the words "veelleh toledoth", these are the generations, should be rendered these are the acts, or transactions, or the history of the lives, as the same phrase may be understood in Genesis 2:4; Genesis 6:9. However this may be, it is evident that in this genealogy the family of Aaron are alone mentioned, probably because these belonged to the priesthood. Moses passes by his own family, or immediate descendants; he gave no rank or privilege to them during his life, and left nothing to them at his death. They became incorporated with the Levites, from or amongst whom they are never distinguished. What a strong proof is this of the celestial origin of his religion! Had it been of man, it must have had the gratification of some impure passion for its object; lust, ambition, or avarice: but none of these ever appear during the whole of his administration amongst the Israelites, though he had it constantly in his power to have gratified each. What an essential difference between the religion of the Pentateuch and that of the Koran! The former is God's workmanship; the latter is a motley mixture of all bad crafts, with here and there a portion of heavenly fire, stolen from the Divine altar in the Old and New Testaments, to give some vitality to the otherwise inert mass.

Verse 4

Nadab and Abihu died - See the notes on Leviticus 10 (note).

Verse 6

Bring the tribe of Levi near - The original word "hakreb" is properly a sacrificial word, and signifies the presenting of a sacrifice or offering to the Lord. As an offering, the tribe of Levi was given up entirely to the service of the sanctuary, to be no longer their own, but the Lord's property.

Verse 7

The charge of the whole congregation - They shall work for the whole congregation; and instead of the first-born.

Verse 8

All the instruments - The tabernacle itself and all its contents: see all described, Numbers 3:25, Numbers 3:26, Numbers 3:31, Numbers 3:36, Numbers 3:37. The Levites were to perform the most common and laborious offices. It was their business to take down, put up, and carry the tabernacle and its utensils; for it was the object of their peculiar care. In a word, they were the servants of the priests.

Verse 10

Aaron and his sons - shall wait on their priest's office - It was the business of the priests to offer the different sacrifices to God; to consecrate the shew-bread, pour out the libations, burn the incense, sprinkle the blood of the victims, and bless the people. In a word, they were the servants of God alone.

settlement never could have been resorted to by an intelligent people. It would have been much more simple to have paid it out of a general fund; and it is very likely that in this way the expense was defrayed. This species of redeeming of men is referred to by St. Peter, 1 Peter 1:18, 1 Peter 1:19: "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious (valuable) blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, etc. And it is not the first-born only which are thus redeemed, for he, by the grace of God, tasted death for Every man; Hebrews 2:9. Reader, give glory to God that such a ransom has been paid for thy soul, and see that, redeemed from thy vain conversation, thy empty, fruitless, and graceless observances, on which thou hast built thy hopes of salvation, thou walk in newness of life, giving thy whole soul with thankfulness unto the Father who hath translated thee from darkness, and placed thee in the kingdom of his beloved Son. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen.