

# Offerings, Feasts and Oaths (Numbers 28-30)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Numbers

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## I. Introduction

- a. We are near the very end of the 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness, before the Israelites will enter the Promised Land.
- b. Moses has been told that he will not enter the Promised Land, but will only see it from a distance. He will die on Mount Nebo. Following the Lord's instructions, he laid hands on his successor, *Joshua* (in Greek of the LXX: *Jesus*).
- c. Now in the final chapters of **Numbers**, the Lord gives instructions to Moses regarding:
  - i. Offerings at the tabernacle,
  - ii. Special annual feast days,
  - iii. Other laws (in this case, concerning oaths sworn and vows), and
  - iv. Division of the spoils of war after defeating the Midianites in battle.
- d. Although this material might not seem interesting or relevant at first glance, when we take a deeper look, I believe there are some gems contained even here, in **Numbers 28-30**, including:
  - i. One passage that Jesus alludes to, to teach us important lessons. (Also, a heads-up that there is a passage in the next lesson, in **Numbers 31**, that Jesus will refer to.)
  - ii. More foreshadowings that are developed further in the New Testament, again with practical applications.
- e. I believe that we will see in this lesson, once again, that we can get a much deeper understanding of the New Testament as we know the Old Testament better.
  - i. That is true, even including *seemingly obscure* chapters near the end of the book of **Numbers**!

## II. Regular Sacrifices at the Tabernacle

- a. The daily sacrifices.

- i. Read **Numbers 28:1-8**.
- ii. Read **Exodus 29:38-42**.
- iii. Description of the daily sacrifice.
  1. One male lamb without blemish sacrificed each morning and one each evening. Every single day.
    - a. The lamb, a whole burnt offering, was accompanied by flour as a grain offering, plus oil.
    - b. It also was accompanied by an offering of wine, which was “poured out...as a drink offering to the Lord”.  
**(Numbers 28:7)**
  2. This is described as “a continual sacrifice”. **(Exodus 29:38)**
    - a. It sounds to me as if there was always a lamb on the altar of the burnt offering, since the prior lamb was replaced with a new one each morning and evening.
- iv. This picture of a continual, twice-daily sacrifice is significant for several reasons.
  1. It provides an image of devotion to the Lord in prayer.
    - a. “O Lord, I have cried to You; hear me; give heed to the voice of my supplication when I cry to You. Let my prayer be set forth before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”
      - i. **(Psalm 140:1-2, LXX, OSB; corresponds to Psalm 141:1-2 in Bibles based on the Masoretic Text)**
  2. The tabernacle ministry of continual, daily sacrifices foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus, once for all time.
    - a. “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, *which they offer continually* year by year, make those who approach perfect.”  
**(Hebrews 10:1, NKJV)**
    - b. “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of

God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” (**Hebrews 10:11–14**, NKJV)

- c. “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” (**Hebrews 13:14–16**, NKJV)
3. The apostles, Peter and Paul, use this language of the priests offering sacrifices to describe our own ministry.
    - a. “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (**1 Peter 2:4–5**, NKJV)
    - b. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (**Romans 12:1**, NKJV)
      - i. This is the great transition verse in Romans. In the rest of **Romans 12-15**, he elaborates on what this means, practically, to offer our bodies as “living sacrifices”.
  4. Paul uses the imagery of the daily sacrifice to describe how he poured out his own life, nearly to the point of death, as he wrote his letters.
    - a. “...For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (**2 Timothy 4:3–7**, NKJV)



- b. Paul is saying here that all these offerings were foreshadowing Christ. That is further explained in the book of **Hebrews**.
- c. Annual Offerings and Feasts
  - i. Now the focus turns to annual offerings and annual feasts.
    1. **Question:** Why should Christians pay any attention to Jewish feasts under the Law of Moses?
      - a. **Objection:** In the passage we just read from **Colossians 2:16-17**, Paul wrote that we are not to be judged on the basis of the requirements of the Law of Moses, and he specifically mentioned festivals (or feasts).
        - i. Immediately prior to that, Paul had described circumcision and the requirements of the Law of Moses as “the handwriting of requirements that was against us”, and said that Jesus had “taken it out of the way” and “nailed it to the cross”.  
(**Colossians 2:14-15**)
        - b. However, Paul did say that these things were “*a shadow of things to come*”. (**Colossians 2:16**) Therefore, as we consider the feasts, let us also consider what they might be foreshadowing that has been fully realized through Jesus Christ.
    2. These offerings and feasts were:
      - a. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread
      - b. The Feast of Weeks (also known as Pentecost)
      - c. Various festivals in the seventh month (including the Festival of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of the Tabernacles).
    3. Read **Numbers 28:16-19** and **28:25**.
  - ii. The fourteenth day of the first month was the *Passover*.
    1. Of course, the Passover Lamb foreshadowed Jesus, as we discussed in detail in a past lesson in our **Exodus** expository series: ‘*The Final Plague: Passover (Exodus 11:1-13:16)*’.
    2. There are several references to this connection in the New Testament.

- a. In **John 1**, when John the Baptist sees Jesus he says,
    - i. "... Behold! The *Lamb of God* who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**, NKJV)
  - b. Peter refers to Christ as being like:
    - i. "...a lamb without blemish and without spot." (**1 Peter 1:19**, NKJV)
  - c. Paul refers to Christ as "our Passover", who "was sacrificed for us". (**1 Corinthians 5:7**)
- iii. The *Feast of the Unleavened Bread* started on the next day (the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month) and continued for seven days.
1. Read **Exodus 12:15-20** and **Exodus 13:3-10**.
  2. During the time of this festival, all yeast had to be removed from the community.
    - a. Anyone who kept yeast in their home would be expelled from the community.
  3. Paul referred to this festival, and speaking figuratively, called the Christians to "keep the feast", when addressing the problem of sexual immorality within the church.
    - a. Read **1 Corinthians 5:1-8**.
      - i. The sacrifice of the Passover lamb foreshadowed the sacrificial death of Jesus.
      - ii. Likewise, the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread foreshadowed the Christian life, with yeast representing sin.
        1. Sin, like yeast, multiplies and spreads. Sin will spread throughout the church if we do not deal with it!
    - b. Read **1 Corinthians 5:9-12**.
      - i. We are called to get the sin out of the community and to expel those involved in serious sin, when we become aware of it.
      - ii. Church discipline is to be done out of love and concern, both for the salvation of the person

involved in the sin; and also, to protect the other members of the church.

iii. This teaches us about the importance of maintaining holiness as well as church discipline.

4. These are illustrations of the importance of understanding the significance of the feasts. While we are no longer bound to the Law of Moses and to celebrating those feasts in that way, they were a shadow of things that are extremely important to us.

a. This is a great example of what Paul was saying in **Colossians 2**, that the elements of the Law (circumcision, feasts, etc.) were shadows to prepare us for what we now have.

iv. The Feast of Weeks

1. Read **Numbers 28:26-31**.

2. This is a harvest festival associated with the new grain. It was  $7 \times 7 (+1) = 50$  days after the Passover. This feast is perhaps better known to most Christians as *Pentecost*.

3. The Lord would use this day to open up the kingdom of God in **Acts 2**, where Peter preached the gospel, 3,000 were baptized, and the church began. This was a harvest of souls!

v. Festivals of the Seventh Month (**Numbers 29**)

1. The Festival of Trumpets was on the first day of the seventh month.

2. The Day of Atonement was on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month.

3. The Feast of Tabernacles started on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month and continued for 8 days. During this time, the Israelites would dwell in booths or tents.

4. There were additional offerings made to the Lord associated with the festivals of this month.

5. We discussed these festivals in more detail in a lesson in our expository series on **Leviticus**: '*Calendar of the Feasts and Special Days (Leviticus 23)*'.

### III. Laws Concerning Vows

- a. Read **Numbers 30:1-3**.
- b. A man must *keep his commitment* and do what he promised, if:
  - i. He vows a vow to the Lord, or
  - ii. He swears an oath.
- c. The rest of the chapter is focused on how to handle it if a woman makes a vow or swears an oath (who is either a married woman under her husband or an unmarried daughter under the authority of her father).
- d. Examples that illustrate this.
  - i. Vowing a vow to the Lord. Consider the infamous example of Jephthah's vow to the Lord.
    1. Read **Judges 11:28-35**.
      - a. Some people read this passage and believe that Jephthah's daughter was killed by her father because of this vow. Others who read this story believe that he committed his daughter to a celibate life (no marriage, no offspring) as a result of her father's vow.
        - i. Either way, Jephthah kept his vow despite the fact that it led to a very unhappy outcome.
      - b. Most of us would consider Jephthah's famous vow to be rash or foolish. However, Jephthah is included among the heroes of faith, in **Hebrews 11:32**.
    - ii. Swearing an oath to another person. Consider three classic examples from Scripture.
      1. Read **Genesis 26:26-31**.
        - a. This was to resolve a dispute over wells of water between Isaac's servants and the Philistines who were under King Abimelech.
        - b. They made a solemn covenant and promised to not harm each other.
      2. "And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, 'Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.' He



also swore to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom.’” (**Mark 6:22–23**, NKJV)

3. Read **2 Chronicles 18:5-17**.
  - a. Ahab, one of the most evil kings in Israel’s history, made Micaiah the prophet *swear* to tell him “nothing but the truth” (in the words of the KJV and NKJV).
- e. The Law of Moses addressed integrity in what we say, to a relatively high degree, but not to the extent that Jesus would later call us.
  - i. In the Ten Commandments, it said, “Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (**Exodus 20:16, Deuteronomy 5:20**)
  - ii. Here in **Numbers 30**, it says we must keep our word when we make vows to the Lord, or when we swear an oath. That would include someone swearing to tell the truth.
    1. **Questions:** However, what about the rest of the time? What about when a person who makes a promise he or she does not keep or says something untrue, *but does not swear an oath*?
    2. The Law of Moses did not explicitly address a person’s integrity when they do not swear an oath.
    3. While the Law of Moses did call people to a certain level of righteousness regarding what they said (telling the truth, keeping promises and commitments), it only applied when someone made a vow to the Lord or swore an oath.
      - a. Therefore, if you wanted to make sure someone was telling the truth or would keep their promise, you needed to ask them to swear to it.
      - b. While the standard of righteousness in this area was undoubtedly a high one in comparison to the rest of the world, it clearly fell short of the standard that Jesus would later introduce.
- f. Jesus’ teaching on taking vows and swearing oaths.
  - i. Note that the format of **Matthew 5** is “You have heard it said...” (then quoting something from the Law of Moses), followed by Jesus saying, “but I tell you...” (with a more challenging law from Jesus that goes *beyond* what Moses wrote).
    1. Consider some examples:

- a. *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder...'"* (**Matthew 5:21**, NKJV). Here, Jesus points back to the Ten Commandments.
    - i. Then Jesus teaches that, instead, we cannot even be angry without cause. Furthermore, he says we must reconcile with others quickly.
  - b. *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'"* (**Matthew 5:27**, NKJV) Again, Jesus points back to the Ten Commandments.
    - i. Then Jesus teaches that, instead, we cannot even look lustfully at someone else.
  - c. *"Furthermore, it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'"* (**Matthew 5:31**, NKJV) Here, Jesus is referring to what Moses taught in **Deuteronomy 24:1-3**.
    - i. Then Jesus restricts divorce to cases of adultery and does not permit marrying a divorced person. (See also **Luke 16:18**.)
- ii. Then, Jesus proceeds with another teaching in the same format.
1. *"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.'"* (**Matthew 5:33**, NKJV)
    - a. **Question:** Jesus stated, *"You have heard it was said..."* But *where* did they hear that? Where is that statement found in the Law of Moses?
      - i. While not footnoted in most Bibles since it is not a direct quote, the closest passage I am aware of is **Numbers 30:1-3**!
  2. Jesus continues: *"But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black."* (**Matthew 5:34-36**, NKJV)
    - a. Here, the first thing Jesus says is that His followers should never swear.

- b. In some Christian groups that are known for taking the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount seriously, there may be many who react, “Yes, we are following what Jesus said here! We don’t swear oaths, we simply AFFIRM when we are in a legal or court-like setting.”
  - c. However, simply not swearing oaths is the *easier part* of Jesus’ teaching.
3. The much more challenging part is what follows:
- a. “But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” (**Matthew 5:37**, NKJV)
  - b. Once again, Jesus has a higher standard for integrity than Moses provided in the Law.
    - i. We are not to swear at all by anything (God, heaven, our own heads, etc.).
    - ii. We are called to simply let our ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and our ‘No,’ ‘No’.
      - 1. (Anything else is from the devil!)
    - iii. Jesus calls us to have *complete integrity with everything that comes out of our mouths*.
      - 1. Always keep our promises to the best of our ability.
      - 2. Always tell the truth, not just when we are swearing.
      - 3. This is such a higher standard than Moses’ standard given in the Old Testament.
4. In **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**, Moses prophesied that the Lord would raise up a prophet “like me” [= *like Moses*] from among the Israelites. We know from Peter (**Acts 3:22**) and Stephen (**Acts 7:37**) that Jesus was the one who fulfilled that prophecy.
- a. Eusebius, writing c. 320 AD, made the point in *Proof of the Gospel*, book 1, chapter 7 that in order for Jesus to have been “like Moses”, He would have to bring in new laws. The unique attribute of Moses was that he alone brought laws to God’s people. All of the prophets who

followed simply called the people to follow the laws given by Moses. None of them (until Jesus) brought new laws!

- b. In **Matthew 5**, we see Jesus fulfilling the promise of **Deuteronomy 18**. He was showing Himself to be the “prophet like Moses”, the only one who would have the authority to bring in new laws, ones that would surpass and supersede those handed down by Moses.
  - c. For that reason, Jesus also *fulfilled the law* (**Matthew 5:17**), since he completed what was promised by Moses in the Law.
- g. In the desire to lead a holy life, it is easier to focus on external things. However, Jesus said we need to focus on cleaning the *inside of the dish* first (**Matthew 23:25-26**). It is the things in our hearts that make us unclean.
- i. “And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, *deceit*, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’” (**Mark 7:20–23**, NKJV)
- h. James recalls this teaching of Jesus. Actually, James has a lot to say about various sins involving what comes out of our mouths. He speaks about how hard it is to tame our own tongues. (It is easier to tame wild animals, reptiles and even sea creatures!) He addresses cursing, pride, contentions, speaking evil of others, boasting and complaining. (**James 3-5**) He then concludes:
- i. “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.” (**James 5:12**, NKJV)
  - ii. James calls us back to the challenge that Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount, to make no distinction in what we say, but to have integrity with everything that comes out of our mouths.
    1. Speak simply and always honestly.
    2. Keep our commitments. Do what we say we are going to do.
- i. Peter, in his very practical first letter, expressed similar concern for the Christians.
- i. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, *all deceit*, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking....” (**1 Peter 2:1**, NKJV)

- ii. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth....’” (**1 Peter 2:21–22**, NKJV; where Peter is quoting from **Isaiah 53:9**)
  - 1. The Christian life is, first and foremost, about following the example of Jesus Christ.
    - a. It is not an advanced lesson in theology.
    - b. We certainly do want to get our doctrine right, to teach the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (**Jude v.3**). However, the quest for perfect theology should not be our overarching focus.
  - 2. The primary goal of the Christian life, and the church, is not to turn into a theological institute where we dot every single ‘i’, cross every ‘t’, and define every fine point down to the microscopic level.
  - 3. Our greatest goal is to follow Christ and be conformed to His example. Let us never ever lose sight of that!
  - 4. In this passage, Peter goes back to **Isaiah 53** and reminds us that no deceit was found in Jesus’ mouth.
    - a. Peter *calls us* to follow that example!
- iii. “For ‘He who would love life *And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit.* Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.’” (**1 Peter 3:10–12**, NKJV; quoting from **Psalms 34**, designated **Psalms 33** in the LXX)
- iv. Recall that Peter, who speaks so much about deceit in his letter, told one of the most famous lies in all of history and made a point of making sure everyone knew about it! Recall that Mark was a close companion of Peter, and Mark’s gospel is the gospel that he heard from Peter, according to multiple ancient sources.
  - 1. Read **Mark 14:66-72**.
    - a. Peter tripped down on his deceit and swore about it.
  - 2. However, he was later restored by Jesus and would prove in the end to be faithful even to death.

- a. In this regard, Peter's life provides a hopeful example to those of us who may struggle with the sins of deceit and dishonesty.
  - b. Also, we know that Mark was a companion of Peter and included material from Peter's perspective and life. Clearly, Peter wanted the details of his own deceit included in this Gospel. This says much about Peter's humility as he brings his sin of deceit (and betrayal) to light.
- j. Practical things to consider.
- i. Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Let us not imitate Satan! Hate deceit whenever we see it.
  - ii. Peter pointed to **Psalm 34**. Lessons there include:
    1. The foundation is fear of God (as opposed to fear of men).
    2. People lie and are deceitful generally because either:
      - a. they fear men more than God; or else,
      - b. they are more concerned with pleasing men than with pleasing God.
    3. God will not listen to those who are deceitful. He listens to the prayers of the righteous.
  - iii. Those who think this is so easy and basic that they don't need to pay attention to this are probably not dealing with their own lives. This is an incredibly hard teaching of Jesus to follow.
    1. This is the 'heavy lifting', the hard work of dealing with our hearts and our speech. This requires strict training, every day.
  - iv. This can be especially hard under certain circumstances, such as:
    1. Being honest when the consequences could be severely negative (Peter denying Jesus to avoid suffering the same fate as Jesus)
    2. Being honest when in a public setting (potentially embarrassing). For example, the incident where Ananias and Saphira lied, in **Acts 5**.
    3. Being honest when money is involved (including income taxes).

4. Being honest when our income, job or career could be on the line.
  - a. Job interviews.
  - b. In the business world, it is challenging to be completely honest all the time in business dealings.
5. The temptation to shade, tell part of the truth, leave out important details, and deliberately mislead to make ourselves try to look better than we are.
  - a. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
  - b. We all stumble in many ways. Admit it and confess our sins.

v. **A Closing Warning, from the Lord:**

1. “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (**Revelation 21:7-8**, NKJV)