

GUARDING THE HOLINESS OF GOD

In the first few chapters of the book of Numbers, God dictates the placement of the Israelites about the Tent of Meeting—the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle occupied the central location during the encampment of Israel, with the tribes allocated certain positions relating to the North, South, West, and East sides of the Tabernacle. On the North side of the Tabernacle were the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali. Behind the Tabernacle, on the West, were the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Encamped to the South were Gad, Rueben, and Simeon. The East side, the place of the single entry to the Tabernacle, were positioned the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun.

This divine arrangement of the tribes of Israel about the Tabernacle shows, of course, the centrality of God in their midst. The placement also illustrates how the “Meeting Place” must be a guarded and cherished Place. It was the responsibility of the men of war who resided in those tent encampments to guard the Tabernacle from any intrusion which might introduce itself from beyond. Those warriors were to defend the Tabernacle from any encroachment from outsiders.

However, there existed an innermost encampment closest to the Tabernacle itself. This innermost encampment which positioned themselves between the encamped tribes and the Tabernacle proper, were the Levities in their four distinctions—the Merarites, the Gershonites, the Kohathites, and, of course, Moses and Aaron. To the North, the Merarites; to the West, the Gershonites; to the South were the Kohathites and, finally, to the East is where Moses and Aaron encamped.

While the men of war in the outer encampments guarded the Tabernacle from any outward threat, likewise, the Levites were the guardians of the inner sanctuary. To them was given the safeguarding of the tent of Meeting and the handling of all the particulars of the Sanctuary. The Levites were never to be “men of war” because war involved killing, and killing meant dead bodies, and dead bodies meant “uncleanness.” Uncleanness meant unfit for Sanctuary service because of defilement. However, it was their duty to prevent “Israelites” from entering the Tabernacle wrongly or to prevent unacceptable sacrifices to be offered on the Tabernacle altar.

The people were to prevent themselves from being assaulted from outside forces, and the Levites were to prevent the people from defiling the Tabernacle inwardly. Jealously guarded!

While we as Christians must guard ourselves from any outwardly threat to our heart, mind, body, and spirit, it must also be understood that the ministry MUST guard the sanctity of the House of God! This includes guarding against unsound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 2:2), warding off false teachers (1 Tim 1:3), and correcting wrong spirits and worldliness among members (Gal. 6:1; 1 Thess. 5:12-14), and all this is to safeguard the Presence of God in the church! Whatever would endanger the Presence of God must be eliminated, as were those who were killed for encroachment on the Holiness of God, as stated in Numbers 3:38.

Guarding the sacred in our lives individually and corporately is still a vital part of our walk with God.

--jlg--