

Gospel Order and Working in other Territories

"That the churches in **different places may not be imposed upon by false brethren coming into their midst, to whom they are strangers, it seems necessary that brethren moving from place to place, should carry letters of commendation from the church with which they were last connected.** As a form of such letter of commendation we suggest the following: 'This is to certify that ----- is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church of -----, in good standing, and one whom we can recommend to the brethren where his (or her) lot may be cast. " 'By order of the church at -----.' " '-----, Church Clerk. " 'Dated-----, -----.' {1907 JNL, COOD 132.3}

"This step we regard as strictly in accordance with Rom. 16:1; 2Cor. 3:1. All of which is prayerfully submitted in behalf of the ministers of the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists." {1907 JNL, COOD 133.1}

Signed by nine members of the committee. {1907 JNL, COOD 133.2}

"Thus, the early Seventh-day Adventist church began to develop district pastors. These were not district pastors **as we understand them today—pastors in charge of two or more churches—but rather pastors who were each appointed to an area in which to conduct evangelistic meetings.** It became common for the conferences to divide their territories up into districts and to appoint a pastor to proclaim the Word in each district.

We had the privilege to grow up, until the age of about fourteen, while this system was still employed in the work of God in Australia. (This system apparently changed earlier in the United States than in Australia.) We were also privileged to have **for our father the "young" elder of the Hamilton Church in the city of Newcastle, Australia. This permitted us as lads to gain an understanding of the function of the pastor and of the officers of the church in such an organizational pattern.**

A pastor would be appointed to a district. If it was in a city, it would be a city district. Our city of Newcastle at that time had a population of about a quarter of a million people, and so was considered one district. In the more rural areas, a pastor would be appointed to a district which might contain three or four sizeable towns. **The major function of the pastor was that of proclaiming the Word of God to those not of our faith. The pastor would locate within the district. If assigned to a rural district, he would conduct a five- to six-months crusade in one town, usually holding meetings two nights a week and spending the rest of the time in visitation, presentation of Bible studies, and other soul-winning activities. He would then likely hold a crusade in a different town in his rural district each succeeding year until being transferred to another district. The evangelist appointed to a city district might also hold a crusade for five or six months of each year, but in varying suburbs instead of towns. After three or four years, the pastor in either type of district was usually transferred to another district. It was usual for the**

pastor and his family to become members of one of the churches within the district.

The deacons do little more than take up the offering, occasionally do a little busy-bee work around the church, and assist with an ordinance or a baptism. The ministry for which they are called and ordained is never fulfilled. The same is true of the elders. The responsibility of eldership in many churches has become not much more than a ceremonial post with the elders announcing a hymn, reading announcements, and offering corporate prayer, but in no wise giving the spiritual leadership for which they were ordained.

Finally, by ministers filling roles for which they were not ordained or called, they sometimes go through a whole year without bringing one soul to the Lord. That is not fair to the ministers, for others' respect for them generally drops dramatically as a result of this alteration of roles. It is certainly not fair to the laity, either. We make an earnest plea for our church to return to the pattern that God has ordained.

The whole purpose of church organization is to facilitate the mission and destiny of the church. This includes the following goals:

1. *To facilitate the spiritual growth of the members of the church;+*
2. *To retrain the members of the church in effective soul-winning witness;*
3. *To prepare a people to receive the latter rain;*
4. *Under the power of the Holy Spirit to take the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people;*
5. *To prepare a people who will stand unfailingly during the time of Jacob's trouble.*

The mission of the church is here demonstrated to be soul winning in focus. To accomplish these goals God has entrusted His end-time truth exclusively to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and He has provided **an organizational structure that, rather than hampering these soul-winning goals, provides the fullest opportunities for their perfect implementation.** Without following the God-given organizational structure it is impossible to accomplish the church's mission. Thus it is essential that we constantly review our church's structure at all levels, in the light of Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy directions.

We have fallen far away from God's paradigm. Sadly we have followed the practices of the fallen churches of Babylon. The ministry concentrates its efforts on the spreading of the gospel in those places where there is little or no witness to the everlasting gospel. **However, following the faulted principles of the fallen churches of Babylon, we have chosen rather to concentrate the effort of the ministry upon nurturing those who already have been long exposed to the truth.** This has led to two catastrophic consequences—

- 1) *The members of the church have tended to become man-dependent, spiritually indolent and ineffective witnesses, and,*

- 2) *We have largely left those areas without a Seventh-day Adventist presence to continue in ignorance of the three angels' messages.*

The apostolic model is truly important. The apostles (ministers), while not neglecting the flock that they had raised up in various places, **nevertheless continued to press forward bringing the gospel into new regions. Once established, they set up elders from the congregation to nurture the flock and to lead the flock in soul-winning efforts in the city, town, village or district in which the community of the faithful lived.**

This then freed the minister to move to another region where truth had not been established to raise up yet another company of believers. **The amount of time spent in each area was dependent upon the establishment of local leadership who understood God's truth and the speed with which the minister had been able to train the members of the new church in effective witnessing** so that they could fulfill, in their sphere of influence, the continuing progress of the gospel within range of the location of the church.

It was always meant that the members would attend the church closest to where they lived that they might provide the fabric for a strong outreach with the church acting as a lighthouse in that area to attract others to the gospel truth. **Too often today members travel long distances to go to the church of their choice far removed from their local habitation. Therefore, they are largely unable to play the role that God has ordained the local community to fulfill.**

With these alarming developments both the ministry and the laity have, to a great extent, **lost their direction, their vision, their purpose and their soul-winning ministry.** While ever the pastor baby-sits the church members, there is little time left to prosper the soul winning objectives of the pastoral ministry. While ever the laity are baby-sat by the pastor, **they fail to grow and develop in their ministry.** Thus, the Lord gave many counsels urging that the pastors leave the churches after thoroughly preparing the members for their role in spreading the gospel in the local community. **The pastors are then free to launch out in new fields where God's work can be prospered.**

When we review the many counsels that Sister White presented to the church, urging ministers against hovering over the church, it is sad to realize just how our insubordination in organizational structure has hindered rather than facilitated the entire mission of God's church.

*Undoubtedly, churches that go by the Bible value the testimony of Jesus through the Biblical gift of prophecy. **They should be interested in studying how they might restore the leadership model Christ so providentially gave to His remnant church. A reformation of the leadership of the local church may be a powerful catalyst to encourage a mission-driven lay movement that would contribute to the coming great worldwide revival of Revelation 18.*** –*Have Adventists Abandoned the Biblical Model of Leadership for the Local Church?*
By P. Gerard Damsteegt

Romans 15:20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

I have seen that it is now time for the messengers to move out wherever there is an opening, and that God will go before them and open the hearts of some to hear. **New places must be entered, and, wherever this is done, it would be well, if consistent, to go two and two, so as to hold up each other's hands. A plan like this was presented: It would be well for two brethren to start together and travel in company to the darkest places, where there is much opposition and where the most labor is needed, and with united efforts and strong faith set the truth before those in darkness.** And then, if they could accomplish more by visiting many places, **to go separately, but often meet, while on the tour, to encourage each other by their faith, and thereby strengthen and hold up each other's hands.** Also, let them consult upon the places opened for them, and decide which of their gifts will be the most needed, and in what way they can have the most success in reaching the heart. Then as they separate again their courage and energy will be renewed to meet the opposition and darkness and to labor with feeling hearts to save perishing souls. {EW 103.1}

I saw that the servants of God should not go over and over the same field of labor, but should be searching out souls in new places. Those who are already established in the truth should not demand so much of their labor; for they ought to be able to stand alone, and strengthen others about them, while the **messengers of God visit the dark and lonely places, setting the truth before those who are not now enlightened as to the present truth.** {EW 104.1}

In principle as just you will get acquainted with the ministers of other denominations so get acquainted with the fellow laborers in that field

It should ever be manifest that we are reformers, but not bigots. **When our laborers enter a new field, they should seek to become acquainted with the pastors of the several churches in the place. Much has been lost by neglecting to do this. If our ministers show themselves friendly and sociable, and do not act as if they were ashamed of the message they bear,** it will have an excellent effect, and may give these pastors and their congregations favorable impressions of the truth. At any rate, it is right to give them a chance to be kind and favorable if they will. Our laborers should be very careful not to give the impression that they are wolves stealing in to get the sheep, but should let the ministers understand their position and the object of their mission--to call the attention of the people to the truths of God's Word. **There are many of these which are dear to all Christians. Here is common ground, upon which we can meet people of other denominations; and in becoming acquainted with them we should dwell mostly upon topics in which all feel an interest, and which will not lead directly and pointedly to the subjects of disagreement.** --Review and Herald, June 13, 1912.

Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A

solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock. {6T 78.1}

We should not, upon entering a place, build up unnecessary barriers between us and other denominations, especially the Catholics, so that they think we are their avowed enemies. We should not create a prejudice in their minds unnecessarily, by making a raid upon them. There are many among the Catholics who live up to the light they have far better than many who claim to believe present truth, and God will just as surely test and prove them as He has tested and proved us.-- Manuscript 14, 1887.

Gospel Order and Discipline in Numbers Chapter 2

When Israel was encamped in the Wilderness, strict order was instructed so that no men **left his camp to go to another camp without permission.** Workers too should not be crisscrossing to other workers territories without consultation and prayers. In, fact Paul says:

Romans 15:20 Yea, **SO HAVE I STRIVED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL, NOT WHERE CHRIST WAS NAMED,** lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

If these instructions are followed, confusion shall be averted and many saved for work in regions which are not yet entered. This is the very reason we need a thorough Gospel Order and Discipline. The Messenger writes:

MINISTERS SHOULD LOVE ORDER, AND SHOULD DISCIPLINE THEMSELVES, AND THEN THEY CAN SUCCESSFULLY DISCIPLINE THE CHURCH OF GOD AND TEACH THEM TO WORK HARMONIOUSLY, LIKE A WELL-DRILLED COMPANY OF SOLDIERS. *If discipline and order are necessary for successful action on the battle-field, the same are as much more needful in the warfare in which we are engaged as the object to be gained is of greater value and more elevated in character than those for which opposing forces contend upon the field of battle.* **IN THE CONFLICT IN WHICH WE ARE ENGAGED, ETERNAL INTERESTS ARE AT STAKE.** {GW92 156.1}

Angels work harmoniously. **PERFECT ORDER CHARACTERIZES ALL THEIR MOVEMENTS.** *The more closely we imitate the harmony and order of the angelic host, **THE MORE SUCCESSFUL** will be the efforts of these heavenly agents in our behalf. If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, **CANNOT WORK FOR US SUCCESSFULLY.** They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization. All who desire the co-operation of the heavenly messengers, must work in unison with them. Those who have the unction from on high, will in all their efforts encourage order, discipline, and union of action, and then the angels of God can co-operate with them. But never, never, will these heavenly messengers place their indorsement upon irregularity, disorganization, and disorder. **ALL THESE EVILS ARE THE RESULT OF SATAN'S EFFORTS TO WEAKEN OUR FORCES, TO DESTROY COURAGE, AND PREVENT SUCCESSFUL ACTION.*** {GW92 156.2}

Satan well knows that success can only attend order and harmonious action. He well knows that everything connected with heaven is in perfect order, that subjection and thorough discipline mark the movements of the angelic host. It is his studied effort to lead professed Christians just as far from heaven's arrangement as he can; therefore he deceives even the professed people of God, and makes them believe that **ORDER AND DISCIPLINE ARE ENEMIES TO SPIRITUALITY**; that the only safety for them is to let each pursue his own course, and to remain especially distinct from bodies of Christians who are united, and are laboring to establish discipline and harmony of action. All the efforts made to establish order are considered dangerous, **A RESTRICTION OF RIGHTFUL LIBERTY, AND HENCE ARE FEARED AS POPERY**. These deceived souls consider it a virtue to boast of their freedom to think and act independently. They will not take any man's say-so. They are amenable to no man. I was shown that it is Satan's special work to lead men to feel that it is God's order for them to strike out for themselves, and choose their own course, independent of their brethren. {GW92 157.1}

I WAS POINTED BACK TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL. VERY SOON AFTER LEAVING EGYPT THEY WERE ORGANIZED AND MOST THOROUGHLY DISCIPLINED. God had in his special providence qualified Moses to stand at the head of the armies of Israel. He had been a mighty warrior to lead the armies of the Egyptians, and in generalship he could not be surpassed by any man. The Lord did not leave his holy tabernacle to be borne indiscriminately by any tribe that might choose. He was so particular as to specify the order he would have observed in bearing the sacred ark, and to designate a special family of the tribe of the Levites to bear it. When it was for the good of the people and for the glory of God that they should pitch their tents in a certain place, God signified his will to them by causing the pillar of cloud to rest directly over the tabernacle, where it remained until he would have them journey again. **IN ALL THEIR JOURNEYING THEY WERE REQUIRED TO OBSERVE PERFECT ORDER.** Every tribe carried a standard bearing the sign which distinguished that tribe, **AND EACH TRIBE WAS REQUIRED TO PITCH UNDER ITS OWN STANDARD.** When the ark moved, the armies journeyed, the different tribes marching in order, under **THEIR OWN STANDARDS.** The Levites were designated by the Lord as the tribe in the midst of whom the sacred ark was to be borne, Moses and Aaron marching just in front of the ark, and the sons of Aaron following near them, each bearing a trumpet. They were to receive directions from Moses, which they were to signify to the people by speaking through the trumpets. **THESE TRUMPETS GAVE SPECIAL SOUNDS, WHICH THE PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD, AND THEY DIRECTED THEIR MOVEMENTS ACCORDINGLY.** {GW92 158.1}

A SPECIAL SIGNAL WAS FIRST GIVEN BY THE TRUMPETERS TO CALL THE ATTENTION OF THE PEOPLE; THEN ALL WERE TO BE ATTENTIVE, AND OBEY THE CERTAIN SOUND OF THE TRUMPETS. THERE WAS NO CONFUSION OF SOUND IN THE VOICES OF THE TRUMPETS, THEREFORE THERE WAS NO EXCUSE FOR CONFUSION IN MOVEMENTS. THE HEAD OFFICER OF EACH COMPANY GAVE DEFINITE DIRECTIONS IN REGARD TO THE MOVEMENTS THEY WERE REQUIRED TO MAKE, AND NONE WHO GAVE ATTENTION WERE LEFT IN IGNORANCE OF WHAT THEY WERE TO DO. IF ANY FAILED TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS GIVEN BY THE LORD TO MOSES, AND BY MOSES TO THE PEOPLE, THEY WERE PUNISHED WITH

DEATH. IT WOULD BE NO EXCUSE TO PLEAD THAT THEY KNEW NOT THE NATURE OF THESE REQUIREMENTS; FOR THEY WOULD ONLY PROVE THEMSELVES WILLINGLY IGNORANT, AND WOULD RECEIVE THE JUST PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR TRANSGRESSION. *If they did not know the will of God concerning them, it was their own fault. They had the same opportunities to obtain the knowledge imparted as others of the people had, therefore their sin of not knowing, not understanding, was as great in the sight of God as if they had heard and then transgressed. {GW92 158.2}*

*The travels of the children of Israel are faithfully described; the deliverance which the Lord wrought for them, **THEIR PERFECT ORGANIZATION AND SPECIAL ORDER**, their sin in murmuring against Moses and thus against God, their transgressions, their rebellions, their punishments, their carcasses strewn in the wilderness because of their unwillingness to submit to God's wise arrangements,— **THIS FAITHFUL PICTURE IS HUNG UP BEFORE US AS A WARNING LEST WE FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE OF DISOBEDIENCE, AND FALL LIKE THEM.** {GW92 159.2}*

*“But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ... **NOW ALL THESE THINGS HAPPENED UNTO THEM FOR ENSAMPLES: AND THEY ARE WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION, UPON WHOM THE ENDS OF THE WORLD ARE COME.** Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” [1 Corinthians 10:5-12.] **HAS GOD CHANGED FROM A GOD OF ORDER?** —No; he is the same in the present dispensation as in the former. Paul says, **“GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION, BUT OF PEACE.”** [1 Corinthians 14:33.] He is as particular now as then. And he designs that **WE SHOULD LEARN LESSONS OF ORDER AND ORGANIZATION FROM THE PERFECT ORDER INSTITUTED IN THE DAYS OF MOSES, FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.** —Vol. I, p. 647. {GW92 160.1}*

The habit of workers moving into other districts where there are other workers of like-mind and same work without consulting them and the very needs of such district is lack of order and discipline in the highest sense. It is selfishness too and cannot be claimed as sin of ignorance. Workers should counsel together and move in concert as an army. Without organization, our work shall be spasmodic at best and the result will be kicking at each other and that is the masterplan that the devil has put in place and enjoys at such time as this when the work should be finished yet retarded and stagnant. Hence:

*I am thankful that there is to be a time when the **MISTS WILL BE CLEARED AWAY.** I hope that this time has begun here. We want the mists here to be cleared away. I want to say that from the light given to me by God, there should have been years **AGO ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS ARE NOW PROPOSED.** When we first met in Conference, it was thought that the General Conference should extend over the whole world. But this is not in God's order. **CONFERENCES MUST BE ORGANIZED IN DIFFERENT LOCALITIES, AND IT WILL BE FOR THE HEALTH OF THE DIFFERENT CONFERENCES TO HAVE IT THUS. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE TO CUT OURSELVES APART FROM ONE ANOTHER, AND BE AS SEPARATE ATOMS. EVERY CONFERENCE IS TO TOUCH EVERY OTHER CONFERENCE, AND BE IN HARMONY WITH EVERY OTHER CONFERENCE.***

GOD WANTS US TO TALK FOR THIS, AND HE WANTS US TO ACT FOR THIS.

We are the people of God, who are to be separate from the world. We are to stand as representatives of sacred truth. {GCB, April 5, 1901 par. 3}

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NUMBERS 2 – THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

The tribes of Israel arranged around the tabernacle.

1. (1-2) The command to arrange around the tabernacle.

And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: “Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblems of his father’s house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting.”

- a. **Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard:** Israel had been on this Exodus journey for more than a year and had assembled just about any way they had pleased. But now, ready to enter into the Promised Land, they had to take the next step in organization: Ordering themselves.
- b. **They shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting:** At the center of this order was the tabernacle itself. The tribes would arrange themselves to the east, south, west, and north in relation to the tabernacle. Since the tabernacle was symbolically the presence of God with them, this meant all order in Israel began being centered around God Himself.

2. (3-9) The tribes camped to the east of the tabernacle.

“On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies; and Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be the leader of the children of Judah.” And his army was numbered at seventy-four thousand six hundred. “Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar, and Nethanel the son of Zuar shall be the leader of the children of Issachar.” And his army was numbered at fifty-four thousand four hundred. Then comes the tribe of Zebulun, and Eliab the son of Helon shall be the leader of the children of Zebulun.” And his army was numbered at fifty-seven thousand four hundred. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Judah, one hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred; these shall break camp first.”

- a. **On the east side, toward the rising of the sun, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies:** Judah was first, and closest to the tabernacle itself. The tribes of Issachar and Zebulun followed in order after Judah. These tribes would order themselves after **the standard** (the banner or flag) of Judah, which was said to be a *lion*.

- b. **And Nahshon the son of Amminadab shall be the leader of the children of Judah:** God recognized a specifically called leader for the tribe of Judah (and for the other tribes following). The order and organization God called Israel to required *leadership*, with leaders both recognized by God and respected by the people.
- c. **One hundred and eighty-six thousand four hundred:** The total number of available soldiers among the eastward tribes was 186,400.
- d. **These shall break camp first:** There was an order to the encampment and the marching for the tribes. They were to move as an orderly army, not as a mob.

3. (10-16) The tribes camped to the south of the tabernacle.

“On the south side shall be the standard of the forces with Reuben according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur.” And his army was numbered at forty-six thousand five hundred. **“Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon, and the leader of the children of Simeon shall be Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai.”** And his army was numbered at fifty-nine thousand three hundred. **“Then comes the tribe of Gad, and the leader of the children of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel.”** And his army was numbered at forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty. **“All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Reuben, one hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty; they shall be the second to break camp.”**

- a. **On the south side shall be the standard of the forces with Reuben according to their armies:** On the **south side** of the tabernacle Reuben was the first tribe and set closest to the tabernacle itself. Then the tribes of Simeon and Gad followed in order. The tribes ordered themselves after **the standard** of Reuben, which was said to be a *man*.
- b. **One hundred and fifty-one thousand four hundred and fifty:** The total number of available soldiers among the southward tribes was 151,450.

4. (17) The tribe in the middle, with the tabernacle: Levi.

And the tabernacle of meeting shall move out with the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps; as they camp, so they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards.

- a. **With the camp of the Levites in the middle of the camps:** The priestly tribe was **in the middle of the camps**, closest to the tabernacle and surrounded by the other tribes.
- b. **So they shall move out, everyone in his place, by their standards:** Apparently, this was not only the way Israel was to make their camp, but also, the way they were to order their march. The taking of Canaan

would not be accomplished by a mob, but by an organized and orderly group.

5. (18-24) The tribes camped to the west of the tabernacle.

“On the west side shall be the standard of the forces with Ephraim according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud.” And his army was numbered at forty thousand five hundred. **“Next to him comes the tribe of Manasseh, and the leader of the children of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur.”** And his army was numbered at thirty-two thousand two hundred. **“Then comes the tribe of Benjamin, and the leader of the children of Benjamin shall be Abidan the son of Gideoni.”** And his army was numbered at thirty-five thousand four hundred. **“All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces with Ephraim, one hundred and eight thousand one hundred; they shall be the third to break camp.”**

- a. **On the west side shall be the standard of the forces with Ephraim according to their armies:** Ephraim was first, and closest to the tabernacle itself on the **west side**. Following the tribe of Ephraim were the tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin. The tribes ordered themselves after **the standard** of Ephraim, which was said to be a *calf*.
- b. **One hundred and eight thousand one hundred; they shall be the third to break camp:** The total number of available soldiers among the westward tribes was 108,100.

6. (25-31) The tribes camped to the north of the tabernacle.

“The standard of the forces with Dan shall be on the north side according to their armies, and the leader of the children of Dan shall be Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai.” And his army was numbered at sixty-two thousand seven hundred. **“Those who camp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, and the leader of the children of Asher shall be Pagiel the son of Ocran.”** And his army was numbered at forty-one thousand five hundred. **“Then comes the tribe of Naphtali, and the leader of the children of Naphtali shall be Ahira the son of Enan.”** And his army was numbered at fifty-three thousand four hundred. **“All who were numbered of the forces with Dan, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred; they shall break camp last, with their standards.”**

- a. **The standard of the forces with Dan shall be on the north side according to their armies:** Dan was first, and closest to the tabernacle itself on the north side. Following the tribe of Dan were the tribes of Asher and Naphtali. The tribes ordered themselves after **the standard** of Dan, which was said to be an *eagle*.
- b. **All who were numbered of the forces with Dan, one hundred and fifty-seven thousand six hundred:** The total number of available soldiers among the northward tribes was 157,600.

7. (32-34) Summary: Israel's order around the tabernacle.

These are the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses. All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty. But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel, just as the LORD commanded Moses. Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses.

- a. **These are the ones who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' houses:** The total of 603,550 available soldiers is ordered around the tabernacle; the number excluding the tribe of Levi.
- b. **So they camped by their standards:** Each tribal group was arranged after the **standards** of the tribes, and they **broke camp** and marched in that same order.

Observations.

1. God is a God of order; here, before Israel can take the Promised Land, He requires they order themselves also. Not only is it more efficient and useful, but it is also simply more like God – ordered and organized.

- a. *There is a limit to what we can be and what we can do for the LORD **without order and organization**. It isn't that order and organization are requirements for progress in the Christian life; **they are progress in the Christian life, becoming more like the LORD**.*
- b. **Nothing is accomplished in God's kingdom without order and organization.** While it may seem so to us, it is only an illusion – behind the scenes, **God is moving with utmost order and organization, though we cannot see it.**

2. God orders things according to His wisdom, not ours. In the arrangement of the tribes, He did not place the largest tribes closest to the tabernacle (as if bigger was always better); Ephraim, the closest westward tribe, is the third smallest tribe. Nor did He place all the large tribes on the outward perimeter for greatest protection (Benjamin, the second smallest tribe, is on the outer perimeter). God always has order and organization, but it may not make sense to us.

- a. **Our resistance to God's order and organization is almost always the product of simple selfishness – wanting to do things our own way, instead of the LORD's. For slaves, it is simple – slaves are always told what to do and don't need to be ordered and organized. But free men must be taught order and organization and must submit to it.**

3. Everything was positioned in relation to the presence of God, the tabernacle. God could have described where the tribe of Judah was in relation to the tribe of Dan, but He did not. The reference point was always God Himself.

- *It is hard to underestimate the trouble people get into in their walk with God because they position and measure themselves in reference to other people.*
God is to be our focus, not other people.

4. The tribes of Israel camped around four banners, which were said to be a lion, a man, a calf, and an eagle. We find the same four creatures surrounding the throne of God in Revelation.

- The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. ([Revelation 4:7](#)) “According to rabbinical tradition, the standard of Judah bore the figure of a lion, that of Reuben the likeness of a man or of a man’s head, that of Ephraim the figure of an ox, and that of Dan the figure of an eagle.” (Keil-Delitzsch)*

- God’s order is never arbitrary, or just made up on a whim. It is after His heavenly pattern. We must always accept God’s order and organization, even when we don’t understand it.**

God bless you all as you seek to do his will in Gospel Order and Organization