

Beloved sisters and brethren

The word Nazarite “nazir” is from the prime root of the word nazar and means to leave unpruned or unshorn. But what it means as regards the one, male or female, undertaking this vow is known only to the performer other of course than foregoing alcohol (we might say confess but we cannot assume here is any guilt involved) and it is known to God to whom he will have prayed.

Essentially it is a wish to feel nearer to God and a way is proscribed here where this might be accomplished. Being nearer is essentially avoiding anything that might reduce the level of service to God the Father and to being perfect before His eyes. Also it would seem this vow is a manifestation and special effort to show gratitude for the great gift of being called in His service.

It must be emphasised that it is voluntary (from the heart) and the worshipper must consider what is involved before entering into the vow. In this respect it is like baptism which itself is a commitment to give oneself wholly in the service of God. We remember that all Israel were baptised when escaping Egypt and, in particular, the words of the Almighty God in Deut 7 and 14v2 that all Israel were holy and a special people unto God.

The high priest when he ministered was under instruction and his sons: *when ye go into the Tabernacle of the congregation, to refrain from wine and strong drink lest ye die*. It was to be a statute forever throughout their generations and it was to put a difference between the holy and unholy, the clean and unclean. This shows clearly how God regards strong drink and wine when in the service of the Tabernacle as a priest Lev 10.

There were three main instructions for the one vowing the Nazarite vow: Not to consume anything of the vine nor any razor to come on his/her head and to be holy (sanctified-separate) unto the Lord. We

are shown that being holy is meant in particular a situation where he must not touch any dead body. If someone dies suddenly by him the days of his vow are cancelled and on the seventh day he must shave his head and the next day bring an offering of two doves or two young pigeons (see Lev 1v14-17 for the law relating to this as a burnt offering and Lev 5v7 for the sin offering)

So what of wine or strong drink/alcohol? We must be careful not to condemn its imbibing totally as this is not the truth as shown in the Bible which a little research will show:-1Tim5v23 and many more in both Testaments but there was clearly a time to refrain. In Lev 10 two sons of Aaron sinned in taking a censor to offer incense which they were not authorized to do and God consumed them with fire. The context strongly intimates that they had imbibed alcohol as seen in v9. But see also Deut 14 where strong drink was allowed.

So it was made clear that neither wine or strong drink were allowed by those officiating in the service of The Lord or for all during the term of this Nazarite Vow

But what of Jesus? The first of his miracles was to convert the water into wine being at a feast with His mother at a marriage in Cana see John 2. Then Matt 26 where the disciples went to a certain house to keep the Passover.

Mat 26:26-29 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye everyone of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

The effect of wine on the mind is to dull the senses. But Jesus kept his promise even when on the cross not only suffering the pain of the nails in His hands and feet but the crown of thorns on His head, His side being pierced and the fact that He was rejected by His own nation

which He had come to save and they preferred a robber. On the cross He declined even the vinegar as soon as the taste was on His lips. So he never sought to relieve his mental or physical suffering other than by The Word, faith and prayer.

The nature of the vow was that it was very evident and became more so by the hair being untrimmed whether male or female. It was not in the nature of alms which Jesus was clear upon, that they were to be secret “let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth” and the maker of the Nazarite vow would let his friends know so that they supported him in his wish rather than hindered or enticed. In this way also it was a witness of his service to God and faith. To some foregoing wine may not have been very arduous but to others it might be a problem.

What was the prize of the Nazarite? That he was dedicating himself unto the Lord, seeking to do something that would please God. But why? It would be an acknowledgement of all that God had done for him. As an Israelite they were a special people, delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt to be part of this great nation, brought to the Promised Land and loved by God.

Exo 4:22-23 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel *is* my son, *even* my firstborn: And I say unto thee, **Let my son go, that he may serve me.**

What could any man born of Adam want more other than to be called a son of God?

1Jn 3:1-3 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.-Or relating it to our study of the offer made to the natural Israelite he makes himself a Nazarite for a time of his own devising.

Jesus spoke of this principle of some followers changing for the Truth's sake: Mat 19:12 *For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.*

Long Hair and cutting the hair in the Scriptures

The hair is not to be cut until the days of the separation are fulfilled. In Jer 7:29-30 there is a meaning connecting it with lamentation: *Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.*

So as the Nazarite seeks to be nearer to God in Jeremiah cutting off the hair it is a token of abasement and God separating the sinner from Him.

There is the case of Samson, Judges 13, where Samson was to be a Nazarite from the womb and the spirit power of God went from him when he revealed his secret to a Philistine woman and she took advantage of him whilst asleep: Judg 16:17-21.

The Nazarite was to come at no dead body but to be holy. We remember the Lord Jesus' words when one called to be a disciple sought to bury his father but Jesus said: Mat 8:22 *But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.*

To the Nazarite the vow was first and foremost and it is so with the calling and in a way this is the calling of all who come to the Truth *Mat 10:36-39 And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of*

me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Thus it seems appropriate to view the Nazarite vow as Baptism as said earlier and the commencement of a life devoted to God in thanksgiving for His wonderful gift of the Truth, His Son and the opportunity of eternal life. As the words are:

Num 6:1-2 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD. Former friends and relations who do not share our faith do not have the same place in our hearts as those who do.

Mar 12:28-31 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Such is the mind of those privileged called to the service of Almighty God

Love to all in Christ

Brother Ken