

Nazirite – Numbers 6 – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

A Nazirite was a person, male or female, who vowed to separate themselves to God for a specified period of their choice (Num. 6:2; yet not be a hermit). They were not to drink wine, strong drink or eat anything that came from the vine during the time of the vow. Further, they were not to shave the head. Long hair was the visible sign of their consecration to the Lord. Finally, a Nazirite must not become ceremonially unclean by touching *any* dead body – including animals (as did Samson & a lion, Judg. 14:5-6) or even a near relative.

As time drew near for the vow to terminate, they appeared before a priest, made certain God prescribed offerings, shaved the head and burned the hair at the door of the tabernacle. After this, wine (or grapes, raisins, etc.) could again be taken (Num. 6:1-21).

Rather than for a limited time, one could take the vow for life and even be so dedicated before one's birth as was Samson (Judg. 13:4-5), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11 & 28) and – in the New Testament – John the Baptist (Luke 1:15).

Prior to departing Cenchrea, Paul took a vow & shaved his head (Acts 18:18-19); however, this was *not* a Nazirite vow. It required the hair shorn *after* the vows completion – not before. Again, the cutting & burning of the hair was to be done at the door of the tabernacle (Num. 6:13 & 18; or the temple – Acts 21:26). Still, Paul said he “must by all means” be at a feast in Jerusalem, implying he had to so be to complete this particular vow.

The foremost so designated as Nazirites in Scripture are:

Samuel – priest, prophet, & judge: **1 Sam. 1:11; Jer. 15:1**; cp. **Ezk. 14:14, 16, 20; 28:3**

John the Baptist – **Luke 1:15** – priest & prophet

Samson – **Judges 13:5-7** – judge

Jesus – the Creator come in human flesh (**John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17; 1Tim. 3:16**)

And he (Christ Jesus) came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. (**Matthew 2:23**)

“Nazarene” (a resident of Nazareth in Galilee) must not be confused with “Nazirite” (Mat. 26:71). Since Jesus drank wine (Mat. 11:19; Luk. 7:34) and touched a dead body (Luk. 8:54), He obviously was not a Nazirite during nearly all of His earthly ministry.

However, the “Nazarene” finally *became* a Nazirite. Jesus clearly took a Nazirite vow at the Lord's Supper when He said: “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” (**Mat. 26:29**).

This is why, when first placed on the Cross, He found the offered drink to have wine (or be a wine derivative) and **refused it** (**Mat. 27:34; Mk. 15:23**).

Later, in response to His “I thirst”, Jesus “**received the vinegar**” (**John 19:29–30**). We thus understand that this time He discerned the vinegar was made from cider (apples) or malt (grain) – and not wine (via Holy Spirit by word of knowledge; 1 Cor. 12:8; Heb. 2:4).

We affirm all this because Christ declared the entire Old Testament was about Himself (**Luke 24:27, 44**). With such authority, how could one expect a topic as significant as the Nazirite vow to not find its ultimate fulfillment in Messiah? After all, the vow covers most of an entire chapter in the Book of Numbers (**Num. 6:1–21; Judg. 13:5–7; 1 Sam. 1:11**).

Consequently, our Lord will return with a two-edged sword, His hair in seven locks, and riding on a white horse (**Judg. 16:19; Rev. 19:11 & 15**: the 2nd coming, not the Rapture).