

Exodus – Lesson 26

Funding the Tabernacle Construction

Read Exodus 35:1-29

1. (a) Compare Exodus 35:1-3 to Exodus 20:8-11; 23:12; and 31:12-17. What *similarities* and *differences* can you find between these various passages regarding the Sabbath?

The similarities include: 1) the Sabbath as a day of rest following six days of work (20:9, 23:12, 31:15), 2) the Sabbath as “*holy*” to the Lord (20:11, 31:14), 3) the Sabbath as a day of no work (20:10, 23:12, 31:14f), 4) and violating the Sabbath would result in death (31:14). The only “*difference*” is the statement in 35:3 that the people were not even to kindle a fire in their dwelling places on the Sabbath. However, this is probably just a *continuation* of the thought about work and rest, given that such a fire would be used for cooking.

- (b) Compare these passages to Luke 6:6-11 and John 9:1-16. How does *Jesus* interpret these commands of God?

Jesus understood *both* the *literal* and *spiritual* connotations of the Sabbath day: he understood fully the idea that the Sabbath was to be a day of rest (a literal connotation), but he understood (over against the Pharisees) the *spiritual* connotations even more. By choosing to “*do good*” on the Sabbath day (by healing), Jesus interpreted the Sabbath restrictions to be prohibitions *against* one thing, but *not* against another, namely, doing the work of God. In other words, Jesus understood that the Sabbath was designed to be a day in which human beings were to *rest* from secular employments in order to *concentrate* on the worship and work of God. Jesus said, “*we must work the works of him who sent me while it day; night is coming when no one can work.*” (John 9:4) By saying this, in regards to healing on the Sabbath, Jesus was articulating a higher *principle* regarding the Sabbath.

- (c) What *application* might there be from Jesus’ view of the Sabbath to the church today?

God desires for us, in the church today, to see the Sabbath as *more* than just a day to rest from work, but to see it as a day that we can rest from other entanglements in order to *do the work He has ordained for us to do*. This work would include such things as worship, fellowship, prayer, and ministries to those in need. The Sabbath work in the church age would be, then, to refrain from those things that lead to death (i.e., the regular work of living in a fallen world) and focus on the “*work*” that leads to life (i.e., communion with others set aside to be the new people of God redeemed from a fallen world and experiencing eternal life).

2. (a) From Exodus 35:4-9, list the things that the *people* were to bring for the construction project.

The contribution to be brought to the tabernacle was to include: 1) precious metals, 2) fine linens and yarns, 3) animal skins, 4) wood, 5) oil and spices, and 6) precious stones. All of this had already been in the instructions of God to Moses regarding the building of the tabernacle, so Moses simply passes on God’s instructions here. This “*offering*” of the people was to be a *complete* offering, requiring them to give of every valuable thing that they possessed.

- (b) What does the phrase “*whoever is of generous [or willing] heart*” mean in v. 5?

The phrase implies that the giving of these things to the construction of the tabernacle was done on the basis of a “*free will offering*,” not out of compulsion or under a legal standard established by God. This is in contrast to the Census Tax of 30:13, where each male over 20 was to give a full ½ shekel to the sanctuary. The construction of the tabernacle was to be a voluntary offering, not one based on a specific set of rules or regulations.

(c) Compare v. 5 to Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Psalm 51:9-10. Is this a *voluntary* contribution? Why or why not (see also Exodus 35:29)?

These two passages make it clear that the human heart (i.e., the control center and will) is desperately wicked and is not *automatically* inclined to do what God would require of us. Humans are, by nature, sinful and rebellious against God, and the only way for humanity to do what is required is for God to create in some a “new heart.” So, in many respects, the contribution required here by God (for the construction of the tabernacle) would require God to “move” in the hearts of his people to “make” them cheerful so that they could give voluntarily. Therefore, on the one hand, the contribution would *not* be voluntary since it would require God to move in their hearts to make them willing. On the other hand, however, it would be voluntary since they would choose, themselves, to give once God had “birthed” in them a desire to do so. This is similar to the New Testament concept of being “born again” (John 3); only those who have been regenerated at their most basic spiritual level are able to respond to the gospel in faith and repentance.

(d) Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-12. How do vv. 8-9 *define* the concept of a “cheerful” giver?

A cheerful giver is one who *responds* to the loving work and supply of God in all things. The cheerful giver recognizes that he or she has received *far more* than could rightly be expected and, therefore, *desires* to give back to the Lord a portion of the bounty received. However, it is important to understand that this “bounty” may not be in the form of material things (see 2e below). The bounty in question, according to v. 8, is the “*grace*” of God which makes it possible for us to do all the “*good work*” that God has designed for us to do. The Christian, the one having been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, now “*abounds*” in the grace of God and is able to follow Christ in the fullest assurance of faith and obedience, giving to God out of the “bounty” that God has given to him or her (regardless of its size). A cheerful giver is, then, a person who *recognizes* that all things come from God, especially grace, and desires to sow back to the work of God *in the same measure* as he or she has received.

(e) Compare the above verses to Proverbs 11:24-25. Is it true that those who give to the work of the Lord should *expect* blessings from God in return? Why or why not?

These verses are often used to justify the principle that giving to the Lord is *always* rewarded by God in material blessings (note the *Prayer of Jabez* fad). However, while it is certainly true to say that God *will* reward those who are obedient to his call of faith and giving, it is *not* true to say that those blessings will *always* be in the form of *monetary* or *material* blessing. Scripture is clear that God rewards his own in many ways, and the most *prolific* of those ways is the reward of *himself*, his presence, his love, his mercy, his grace. These “intangible” benefits are far greater than any material blessing could ever be, and Jesus warns never to seek these things over “rewards in heaven.” While it may be true that God does (in limited situations) give to his people monetary blessings, true Christians *do not seek these things as more important than the gift of God himself*, as that gift is manifest in the person of Jesus Christ and the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Gifts like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. are far more important than anything else, and they flow out of the very nature of God, something far more valuable than money.

3. (a) How does Paul connect the concept of a *voluntary contribution* to the “Sabbath” day in 1 Cor. 16:2?

Paul instructs the Corinthians to make the “collection” and present it to him *once* instead of forcing him to go around to the Corinthian believers and collect it one-by-one. Each Sunday the church would collect and store whatever the believers had brought to the church on that day, and Paul would receive this stored collection when he arrived. Paul puts the responsibility upon the Corinthian believers to bring their part of the collection to the church on each Sunday, thus signifying a *connection* between the collection and worship; the worship of the people each Lord’s Day would include a time in which the people would bring their gift.

(b) Why is it *important* that this connection be established?

This is important because *it is similar to the nature and purpose of the tabernacle*. The tabernacle (and, later, the Temple) would be the place where the people would bring their *sacrifice* to the Lord as a part of their worship. In a similar fashion, the Corinthian Christians would bring their “sacrifice” to the Lord during worship. The monies of the collection each Sunday would act in a *symbolic* fashion to mimic the work of the tabernacle; as the people brought their “sacrifice,” they would offer it to God as an act of thankfulness and praise.

4. (a) From Exodus 35:20-29, how did the people respond to the command of the Lord?

The text indicates that “*all the congregation*” (i.e., all the people; see 4b below) went to their dwellings and brought to Moses everything that would be necessary to build the tabernacle. Moses records that the people brought all sorts of items in this collection: brooches, earrings, rings, armlets, all sorts of gold items, various colored yarns and linens, animal skins, silver, bronze, acacia wood, special stones, and spices and oils for the lights. Everything commanded in the chapters on the description of the tabernacle is mentioned as being contributed here (see also vv. 4-9).

(b) Was this response *limited* by any sort of economic or gender differences? Why is this significant?

Verses 22 and 29 indicate that all people, including men *and* women, brought a gift. Regardless of their economic or gender differences, based on what they had, they brought a portion as their “*heart stirred*” them. The people were generous, and everyone participated in the offering. Even the “*skillful*” women spun colored yarns and linens, which would eventually be used to construct the curtains, and brought them as contributions.