

Numbers 11:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle.

Analysis

Moses' obedience 'And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the LORD' demonstrates faithful prophetic ministry—he delivered God's message exactly, whether pleasant or challenging. The prophet's responsibility is proclamation, not invention; transmission, not creation. Moses didn't modify divine words to make them more palatable but spoke them faithfully. This models the pastor's calling: to declare 'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:27), not selectively presenting only comfortable truths.

The action 'and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people' fulfilled God's command (verses 16-17) to share leadership burden. The number seventy has symbolic significance in Scripture (Genesis 46:27; Exodus 1:5; Exodus 24:1, 9; Luke 10:1), often representing completeness or representative leadership. These elders would assist Moses in governing and judging Israel, distributing responsibility that had crushed Moses when borne alone. This demonstrates the biblical principle that leadership should be shared, not concentrated—even Moses, the greatest Old Testament leader, needed help.

The phrase 'and set them round about the tabernacle' positioned the elders in God's presence for their commissioning. The tabernacle was the meeting place with God (Exodus 29:42-43), and leadership that would represent God to the people must first encounter God themselves. No one can lead God's people effectively without personal experience of God's presence. This foreshadows New

Testament eldership, where qualification requires spiritual maturity and relationship with God (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), not merely administrative skill.

Historical Context

The seventy elders represent the beginning of structured shared leadership in Israel. This pattern continued throughout Israel's history: seventy elders went with Moses to see God at Sinai (Exodus 24:1, 9), and later Judaism developed the Sanhedrin of seventy (or seventy-one) leaders. The tabernacle setting emphasized that spiritual leadership requires divine appointment and empowerment, not merely human selection. The positioning 'round about the tabernacle' may indicate they surrounded it at some distance, with Moses at the entrance, creating concentric circles of access to God's presence.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Moses' faithful delivery of God's words ('told the people the words of the LORD') model the minister's responsibility to proclaim Scripture accurately without modification?
2. What does the positioning of the seventy elders around the tabernacle teach about the necessity of spiritual leaders first encountering God before attempting to lead God's people?

Interlinear Text

וַיֵּצֵא א	מֹשֶׁה ה	וַיֹּדֶבֶר	אֶל	הָעָם	אֵת	דִּבְרֵי י	יְהוָה ה
went out	And Moses	and told	H413	of the people	H853	the words	of the LORD
H3318	H4872	H1696		H5971		H1697	H3068
וַאֲסָף	שִׁבְעִים	אִישׁ	מִזִּקְנֵי י	הָעָם	וַעֲמַד	אֶת	
and gathered	the seventy	H582	of the elders	of the people	and set	H853	
H622	H7657		H2205	H5971	H5975		
סָבִיב ת	הָאֵהֶל:						
them round about	the tabernacle						
H5439	H168						

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 11:16 (Temple): And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

Numbers 11:26 (Temple): But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.