

Numbers 4:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Analysis

According to the commandment of the LORD they were numbered by the hand of Moses, every one according to his service, and according to his burden: thus were they numbered of him, as the LORD commanded Moses.¹ This verse summarizes the Levitical census emphasizing individual assignment. The phrase 'every one according to his service, and according to his burden' shows God's specific calling for each person—service matched to capacity. The fourfold repetition of obedience to God's command stresses faithful execution of divine instruction. This teaches that God knows each worker's abilities and assigns tasks accordingly. No service is insignificant when divinely appointed. The careful organization demonstrates that God values order and proper administration in His work. This principle applies to the church—spiritual gifts should be recognized and properly deployed for effective ministry.

Historical Context

This summary concludes the census of Levitical clans (Kohathites, Gershonites, Merarites) ages 30-50 who served at the tabernacle. Each clan had specific duties—Kohathites carried most holy items, Gershonites transported curtains and coverings, Merarites carried structural elements (frames, posts, bases). The detailed job assignments prevented confusion and ensured efficient tabernacle

transport during wilderness travels. Ancient Near Eastern temple complexes required numerous servants, but Israel's tribe-based system was distinctive. The principle of matching service to capacity appears throughout Scripture—Paul teaches about spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12) following this pattern. The Levites' organization continued when the tabernacle became stationary and later in temple service. The emphasis on following God's exact commands in organizational matters teaches that both doctrine and practice matter to God.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does God's assigning service 'according to his burden' teach about matching calling to capacity in ministry?
2. How can churches today better identify and deploy individuals according to their Spirit-given gifts and abilities?

Interlinear Text

עַל

גִּי

יְהִי הָ

וּפְקִדְתִּי

H5921

According to the commandment of him as the LORD they were numbered

H6310

H3068

H6485

אוֹתָם

בְּ יָד

מֹשֶׁה

אִישׁ

אִישׁ

עַל

עֲבָדָתִ

H853

by the hand

Moses

every

every

H5921

according to his service

H3027

H4872

H376

H376

H5656

עַל

מִשְׁאָה

וּפְקִדְתִּי

אֲשֶׁר

צִוָּה

H5921

and according to his burden

they were numbered

H4853

H6485

H834

commanded

H6680

מֹשֶׁה

אֶת

יְהִי הָ

of him as the LORD

H853

Moses

H3068

H4872

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 1:54 (References Lord): And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they.

Numbers 4:21 (References Lord): And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Numbers 4:31 (Parallel theme): And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof,

Numbers 4:24 (Parallel theme): This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens:

Numbers 4:15 (Parallel theme): And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

