

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.' 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	פִּי	יְהוָה	וּפְקִדָּיו	
H5921	According to the commandment	of him as the LORD	they were numbered	
	H6310	H3068	H6485	
אוֹתָם	בְּיַד	מֹשֶׁה:	אֵשׁ	אֵשׁ
H853	by the hand	Moses	every	every
	H3027	H4872	H376	H376
			H5921	according to his service
				H5656
וְעַל	מִשָּׁא	וּפְקִדָּיו	אֲשֶׁר	צִוָּה
H5921	and according to his burden	they were numbered	H834	commanded
	H4853	H6485		H6680
	יְהוָה	אֶת:	מֹשֶׁה:	
	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.

