

INTRODUCTION TO EXODUS CHAPTER 35

What should have been said and done upon Moses' coming down the first time from the mount, if the golden calf had not broken the measures and put all into disorder, now at last, when with great difficulty reconciliation was made, begins to be said and done; and that great affair of the setting up of God's worship is put into its former channel again, and goes on now without interruption.

I. Moses gives Israel those instructions, received from God, which required immediate observance.

1. Concerning the sabbath, **#Ex 35:1-3**.

2. Concerning the contribution that was to be made for the erecting of the tabernacle, **#Ex 35:4-9**.

3. Concerning the framing of the tabernacle and the utensils of it, **#Ex 35:10-19**.

II. The people bring in their contributions, **#Ex 35:20-29**.

III. The head workmen are nominated, **#Ex 35:30**.

Ver. 1. thru Ver. 19

It was said in general (**#Ex 34:32**), *Moses gave them in commandment all that the Lord has spoken with him*. But, the erecting and furnishing of the tabernacle being the work to which they were now immediately to apply themselves, there is particular mention of the orders given concerning it.

I. All the congregation is summoned to attend (**#Ex 35:1**); that is, the heads and rulers of the congregation, the representatives of the several tribes, who must receive instructions from Moses as he had received them from the Lord, and must communicate them to the people. Thus John, being commanded to write to the seven churches what had been revealed to him, writes it to the angels, or ministers, of the churches.

II. Moses gave them in charge all that (and that only) which God had commanded him; thus he approved himself faithful both to God and Israel, between whom he was a messenger or mediator. If he had added, altered, or diminished, he would have been false to both. But, both sides having reposed a trust in him, he was true to the trust; yet he was faithful as a servant only, but *Christ as a Son*, **#Heb 3:5-6**.

III. He begins with the law of the sabbath, because that was much insisted on in the instructions he had received (**#Ex 35:2-3**): *Six days shall work be done*, work for the tabernacle, the work of the day that was now to be done in its day; and they had little else to do here in the wilderness, where they had neither husbandry nor merchandise, neither food to get nor clothes to make: *but on the seventh day* you must not strike a stroke, no, not at the tabernacle work; the honour of the sabbath was above that of the sanctuary, more ancient and more lasting; that must be to you a holy day, devoted to God, and not be spent in common business. It is a sabbath of rest. It is a *sabbath of sabbaths* (so some read it), more honourable and excellent than any of the other feasts, and should survive them all. A *sabbath of sabbatism*, so others read it, being typical of that sabbatism or rest, both spiritual and eternal, which *remains for the people of God*, **#Heb 4:9**. It is a sabbath of rest, that is, in which a rest from all worldly labour must be very carefully and strictly observed. It is a sabbath and a *little sabbath*, so some of the Jews would have it read; not

only observing the whole day as a sabbath, but an hour before the beginning of it, and an hour after the ending of it, which they throw in over and above out of their own time, and call a little sabbath, to show how glad they are of the approach of the sabbath and how loathe to part with it. It is a sabbath of rest, but it is rest to the Lord, to whose honour it must be devoted. A penalty is here annexed to the breach of it: *Whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death*. Also a particular prohibition of kindling fires on the sabbath day for any servile work, as smith's work, or plumbers, &c.

IV. He orders preparation to be made for the setting up of the tabernacle. Two things were to be done:--

1. All that were able must contribute: *Take you from among you an offering, #Ex 35:5*. The tabernacle was to be dedicated to the honour of God, and used in his service; and therefore what was brought for the setting up and furnishing of that was *an offering to the Lord*. Our goodness extends not to God, but what is laid out for the support of his kingdom and interest among men he is pleased to accept as an offering to himself; and he requires such acknowledgements of our receiving our all from him and such instances of our dedicating our all to him. The rule is, *Whosoever is of a willing heart let him bring*. It was not to be a tax imposed upon them, but a benevolence or voluntary contribution, to intimate to us, (1.) That God has not made our yoke heavy. He is a prince that does not burden his subjects with taxes, nor *make them to serve with an offering*, but *draws with the cords of a man*, and leaves it to ourselves to *judge what is right*; his is a government that there is no cause to complain of, for he does not rule with rigour. (2.) That God loves a cheerful giver, and is best pleased with the free-will offering. Those services are acceptable to him that come from the willing heart of a willing people, **#Ps 110:3**.
2. All that were skilful must work: *Every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make, #Ex 35:10*. See how God dispenses his gifts variously; and, *as every man hath received the gift, so he must minister, #1Pe 4:10*. Those that were rich must bring in materials to work on; those that were ingenious must serve the tabernacle with their ingenuity; as they needed one another, so the tabernacle needed them both, **#1Co 12:7-21**. The work was likely to go on when some helped with their purses, others with their hands, and both with a willing heart. Moses, as he had told them what must be given (**#Ex 35:5-9**), so he gives them the general heads of what must be made (**#Ex 35:11-19**), that, seeing how much work was before them, they might apply themselves to it the more vigorously, and every hand might be busy; and it gave them such an idea of the fabric designed that they could not but long to see it finished.

Ver. 20. thru Ver. 29.

Moses having made known to them the will of God, they went home and immediately put in practice what they had heard, **#Ex 35:20**. O that every congregation would thus depart from the hearing of the word of God, with a full resolution to be doers of the same! Observe here,

I. The offerings that were brought for the service of the tabernacle (**#Ex 35:21**), &c. concerning which many things may be noted.

1. It is intimated that they brought their offerings immediately; they departed to their tents immediately to fetch their offering, and did not desire time to consider of it, lest their zeal should be cooled by delays. What duty God convinces us of, and calls us to, we should set about speedily. No season will be more convenient than the present season.

2. It is said that *their spirits made them willing* (#Ex 35:21), and *their hearts*, #Ex 35:29. What they did they did cheerfully, and from a good principle. They were willing, and it was not any external inducement that made them so, but their spirits. It was from a principle of love to God and his service, a desire of his presence with them in his ordinances, gratitude for the great things he had done for them, faith in his promise of what he would further do (or, at least, from the present consideration of these things), that they were willing to offer. What we give and do for God is then acceptable when it comes from a good principle in the heart and spirit.
3. When it is said that as many as were willing hearted brought their offerings (#Ex 35:22), it should seem as if there were some who were not, who loved their gold better than their God, and would not part with it, no, not for the service of the tabernacle. Such there are, who will be called Israelites, and yet will not be moved by the equity of the thing, God's expectations from them, and the good examples of those about them, to part with any thing for the interests of God's kingdom: they are for the true religion, provided it be cheap and will cost them nothing.
4. The offerings were of divers kinds, according as they had; those that had gold and precious stones brought them, not thinking any thing too good and too rich to part with for the honour of God. Those that had not precious stones to bring brought goats' hair, and rams' skins. If we cannot do as much as others for God, we must not therefore sit still and do nothing: if the meaner offerings which are according to our ability gain us not such a reputation among men, yet they shall not fail of acceptance with God, who requires *according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, #2Co 8:12; 2Ki 5:23. Two mites from a pauper were more pleasing than so many talents from a Dives. God has an eye to the heart of the giver more than to the value of the gift.
5. Many of the things they offered were their ornaments, bracelets and rings, and tablets or locketts (#Ex 35:22); and even the women parted with these. *Can a maid forget her ornaments?* Thus far they forgot them that they preferred the beautifying of the sanctuary before their own adorning. Let this teach us, in general, to part with that for God, when he calls for it, which is very dear to us, which we value, and value ourselves by; and particularly to lay aside our ornaments, and deny ourselves in them, when either they occasion offence to others or feed our own pride. If we think those gospel rules concerning our clothing too strict (#1Ti 2:9-10; 1Pe 3:3-4), I fear we should scarcely have done as these Israelites did. If they thought their ornaments well bestowed upon the tabernacle, shall not we think the want of ornaments well made up by the graces of the Spirit? #Pr 1:9.
6. These rich things that they offered, we may suppose, were mostly the spoils of the Egyptians; for the Israelites in Egypt were kept poor, till they borrowed at parting. And we may suppose the rulers had better things (#Ex 35:27), because, having more influence among the Egyptians, they borrowed larger sums. Who would have thought that ever the wealth of Egypt should have been so well employed? but thus God has often made *the earth to help the woman*, #Re 12:16. It was by a special providence and promise of God that the Israelites got all that spoil, and therefore it was highly fit that they should devote a part of it to the service of that God to whom they owed it all. Let every man give *according as God hath prospered him*, #1Co 16:2. Extraordinary successes should be acknowledged by extraordinary offerings. Apply it to human learning, arts and sciences, which are borrowed, as it were, from the Egyptians. Those that are enriched with these must devote them to the service of God and his tabernacle: they may be used as helps to understand the scriptures, as

ornaments or handmaids to divinity. But then great care must be taken that Egypt's gods mingle not with Egypt's gold. Moses, though learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, did not therefore pretend, in the least instance, to correct the pattern shown him in the mount. The furnishing of the tabernacle with the riches of Egypt was perhaps a good omen to the Gentiles, who, in the fulness of time, should be brought into the gospel tabernacle, and their silver and their gold with them ([#Isa 60:9](#)), and it should be said, *Blessed be Egypt my people, #Isa 19:25.*

7. We may suppose that the remembrance of the offerings made for the golden calf made them the more forward in these offerings. Those that had then parted with their ear-rings would not testify their repentance by giving the rest of their jewels to the service of God: godly sorrow worketh such a revenge, [#2Co 7:11](#). And those that had kept themselves pure from that idolatry yet argued with themselves,

"Were they so forward in contributing to an idol, and shall we be backward or sneaking in our offerings to the Lord?"

Thus some good was brought even out of that evil.

II. The work that was done for the service of the tabernacle ([#Ex 35:25](#)): *The women did spin with their hands.* Some spun fine work, of blue and purple; others coarse work, of goats' hair, and yet theirs also is said to be done in wisdom, [#Ex 35:26](#). As it is not only rich gifts, so it is not only fine work that God accepts. Notice is here taken of the good women's work for God, as well as of Bezaleel's and Aholiab's. The meanest hand for the honour of God, shall have an honourable recompence. Mary's anointing of Christ's head shall be told for a memorial ([#Mt 26:13](#)); and a record is kept of the women that laboured in the gospel tabernacle ([#Php 4:3](#)), and were helpers to Paul in Christ Jesus, [#Ro 16:3](#). It is part of the character of the virtuous woman that she layeth *her hands to the spindle, #Pr 31:19*. This employment was here turned to a pious use, as it may be still (though we have no hangings to make for the tabernacle) by the imitation of the charity of Dorcas, who made coats and garments for poor widows, [#Ac 9:39](#). Even those that are not in a capacity to give in charity may yet work in charity; and thus the poor may relieve the poor, and those that have nothing but their limbs and senses may be very charitable in the labour of love.

Ver. 30. thru Ver. 35.

Here is the divine appointment of the master workmen, that there might be no strife for the office, and that all who were employed in the work might take direction from, and give account to, these general inspectors; for God is the God of order and not of confusion. Observe,

1. Those whom God called by name to this service he *filled with the Spirit of God*, to qualify them for it, [#Ex 35:30-31](#). Skill in secular employments is God's gift, and comes from above, [#Jas 1:17](#). From him the faculty is, and the improvement of it. To his honour therefore all knowledge must be devoted, and we must study how to serve him with it. The work was extraordinary which Bezaleel was designed for, and therefore he was qualified in an extraordinary manner for it; thus when the apostles were appointed to be master builders in setting up the gospel tabernacle they were *filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom and understanding.*
2. They were appointed, not only to devise, but to work ([#Ex 35:32](#)), *to work all manner of work, #Ex 35:35*. Those of eminent gifts, that are capable of directing others, must

not thing that these will excuse them in idleness. Many are ingenious enough in cutting out work for other people, and can tell what this man and that man should do, but the burdens they bind on others they themselves *will not touch with one of their fingers*. These will fall under the character of slothful servants.

3. They were not only to devise and work themselves, but they were to teach others, #Ex 35:34. Not only had Bezaleel power to command, but he was to take pains to instruct. Those that rule should teach; and those to whom God had given knowledge should be willing to communicate it for the benefit of others, not coveting to monopolize it.