

• *A second chance*

God has given Israel a second chance. After the idolatry and rebellion of Israel's worshipping the golden calf, and after Moses' intercession, God is willing to pick up with His people once again.

**1. God asks His people to live in obedience to the Sabbath-law**

• *Utmost importance in ancient Israel*

• *Emphasised in several ways*

• *Death penalty for disobedience*

1. **God asks His people to live in obedience to the Sabbath-law.** As we have seen, the renewal of the covenant brought with it an insistence that the law was to be kept. Before Moses starts the work on the tabernacle, one command is specially emphasised, the Sabbath-law<sup>□1</sup>. The Sabbath was of the utmost importance in ancient Israel. It was emphasised in a number of ways. (i) It was one of the Ten Commandments. (ii) The obligation to keep the Sabbath comes in at key points in the story recorded in Exodus. It was at the end of the block of legislation in Exodus 25–31<sup>□2</sup>. It comes at the beginning of the story of Israel's new beginning (chapters 35–40<sup>□3</sup>). (iii) It was emphasised by its being declared a covenant sign (like circumcision and three of Israel's festivals). (iv) Its sanctity is supported by its carrying the death-penalty for disobedience. The particular danger of its being broken in order to light a fire is mentioned. This might be needed to cook food or for the metalwork involved in the tabernacle. Exodus 35:3 is an addition to previous legislation but is implied in 16:23. There have already been mentions of the Sabbath-law in Exodus 16:5; 20:8–11; 23:12; 31:12–17; 34:21.

• *The Christian is not under this law at all*

What is its significance for the Christian? We are not **under** it at all, but what Israel was to learn from it we are to learn from it. Its fulfilment is in Christ. The Sabbath was a shadow of a future reality. It teaches spiritual lessons. There is no doubt that it came to an end in Christ.

• *Spiritual reminders for Christians*

(i) *God the creator*

(ii) *God works in stages*

(iii) *God's work eventually comes to a fulfilment*

(iv) *Great joy when God's work is accomplished*

The lessons of the Sabbath could be expressed as follows. (i) The Sabbath reminded Israel of God's work as creator. The most influential aspect of our faith in God is our faith in His being the Creator. (ii) The Sabbath reminded Israel that God works in accordance with a programme. God did not create the universe in a single breath. There were steps and stages to it. God works according to a programme. Equally He has steps-and-stages for Israel. He has steps-and-stages in each one of our lives. We have to allow God to do His work in the stages that He brings into being. (iii) The Sabbath reminded Israel that God's work eventually comes to a fulfilment. Eventually the work is done, and God ceases from that particular activity. God worked for six 'days'; then His work was done. (iv) The Sabbath reminded Israel that there is great joy when God's work is accomplished and what He has done can be enjoyed by men and women.

• *Our work for God follows a Sabbath pattern*

Our work for God follows a Sabbath pattern. God creates; He brings into being what He wants. There are steps and stages in what He does. If we follow Him with faith and patience, the work will one day be accomplished. Then God rejoices, and we rejoice with Him. We 'enter into rest' with God. This Sabbath pattern is so important to God that it was written into the very fabric of Israel's law. Six stages of labour, followed by accomplishment and resting in what had been done, was part of the lifestyle of Israel's national life. It taught them, and it teaches us, how to follow God's will until we 'enter rest' by fulfilling what He gives us to do for Him. Obedience to such a pattern was the first step in God's plan for Israel's recovery.

□1 35:1-3

□2 in 31:12-17

□3 in 35:1-3

## 2. God asks His people to voluntarily live in a sacrificial manner

• All the materials for the tabernacle

• Later – obligatory offerings

2. **God asks His people to voluntarily live in a sacrificial manner.** Moses passes on the instructions that he was given earlier (35:4–9 is Moses' obedience to 25:1–9). The tabernacle was to be built from the voluntary offerings of the people. All of the materials needed to be offered: metals (gold, silver, bronze), fabric (linen, scarlet cloth), animal skins (from rams and goats), oil, spices, jewellery<sup>□1</sup>. The people are told to bring their offerings<sup>□2</sup>; Moses mentions the materials<sup>□3</sup>. Later in the law we shall read about **obligatory** offerings. Certain sacrifices and the firstborn offerings and the tithes were compulsory, but here Israel has an opportunity to do something that is entirely voluntary. At this point what Moses is doing is more like Jesus' invitation to fuller discipleship. He told us what to do 'If any person wants to come after me.' God wants voluntary, unimposed, sacrificial living. This will be step two on the pathway to spiritual recovery.

- 1 34:4–9
- 2 35:4-5a
- 3 35:5b-9

## 3. God asks His people to offer their skills as well as their possessions

• The entire people responded well

• Personal sacrifice is the pathway to spiritual recovery

3. **God asks His people to offer their skills as well as their possessions.** The people are to offer their skills as well as their possessions. The tabernacle needed people skilled in woodwork, metalwork, construction-work, weaving. The main points of what had to be made are listed here in Exodus 35:10–19.

Exodus 35:20–29 records how the people took notice of Moses' demand<sup>□1</sup> and brought their gifts<sup>□2</sup>. The details are given. They brought gold from their jewellery<sup>□3</sup>, clothes and skins from their homes<sup>□4</sup>, silver, bronze, wood<sup>□5</sup>. Women prepared the fabrics that were needed<sup>□6</sup>. Wealthier people brought valuable oils and spices<sup>□7</sup>. The entire people responded well<sup>□8</sup>. It is the fulfilment of what Moses was told to do in 3 1:6–10.

- 1 35:20
- 2 35:21
- 3 35:22
- 4 35:23
- 5 35:24
- 6 35:25-6
- 7 35:27-8
- 8 35:29

This is the pathway to spiritual recovery for Israel. The people had to be willing to heed what God was asking. They had to act personally. They had to sacrifice valuable treasures for the sake of God's plans for Israel. God was giving them a second chance, and at this point they were grasping hold of the possibility of spiritual recovery, and giving themselves, their possessions and their skills to God, for Him to use. When God's mercy gives us a second chance we will sacrifice anything and everything to get back into zeal and enthusiasm for God once again.



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