

Exodus Chapter Thirty-One

Read **Exodus 31:1-11** – Men To Build God's Tabernacle

v.1-2 “THEN THE **LORD** SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING: “SEE, I HAVE CALLED BY NAME BEZALEL THE SON OF URI, THE SON OF HUR, OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH.”

God has completed his instruction to Moses regarding the building of the tabernacle and the furnishings to be used in His worship. Now, he gives Moses instruction regarding the men that He has chosen and prepared to over see this important work.

The first is Be-zal-el, son of Uri, son of Hur. As you may remember Hur was the man whom Moses left in charge of Israel along with Aaron when he and Joshua went up the mountain. His name means “in the shadow of God” or “under the shadow of God” indicating that he was a man of God whom God would overshadow, guide and protect. He is also of the tribe of Judah, the tribe of which Jacob gave this prophecy:

Genesis 49:10 “THE SCEPTER SHALL NOT DEPART FROM JUDAH, NOR A LAWGIVER FROM BETWEEN HIS FEET, UNTIL SHILOH COMES; AND TO HIM **shall be** THE OBEDIENCE OF THE PEOPLE.”

So it is from this tribe that many of the leaders and kings of Israel would come from the beginning of their existence as a nation until the King of Kings, Jesus the Messiah, came. So it is from this tribe that God chooses the man to lead and oversee the construction of the tabernacle.

v.3 “AND I HAVE FILLED HIM WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD, IN WISDOM, IN UNDERSTANDING, IN KNOWLEDGE, AND IN ALL **manner** OF WORKMANSHIP,”

God has prepared this man for this work. First of all, he is filled with the spirit of God. He will honor and respect, not only the commandments of God, but also execute the work out of honor, love and respect for God himself much like those appointed to oversee the administration to the widows in **Acts 6:3-6**.

He has been given wisdom; the ability to be wise, prudent, the ability to judge what is best to be done and the best way to do it.

He has been given understanding, how to follow a pattern, plan, or arrangement that will produce a completed tabernacle the way God wants it to look and function.

He has been given knowledge, the practical ability to do the things that are needed and with that the ability to oversee the kind of workmanship that God expects in His house.

v.4-5 “TO DESIGN ARTISTIC WORKS, TO WORK IN GOLD, IN SILVER, IN BRONZE, IN CUTTING JEWELS FOR SETTING, IN CARVING WOOD, AND TO WORK IN ALL **manner of** WORKMANSHIP.”

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All of the work on and in the tabernacle was to be of the highest skill and workmanship available. So God has provided the skills necessary for this man to be able to make sure that everything was done in accord with His requirements.

v.6 “AND I, INDEED I, HAVE APPOINTED WITH HIM A-HO-LI-AB THE SON OF A-HIS-A-MACH, OF THE TRIBE OF DAN; AND I HAVE PUT WISDOM IN THE HEARTS OF ALL THE GIFTED ARTISANS, THAT THEY MAY MAKE ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU:”

God now appoints a second man, an assistant perhaps, to Be-zal-el, this time from the tribe of Dan, the tribe that would eventually settle the most northern part of the land of Canaan. The meaning of his name is significant because it translates as “the tabernacle of the Father” or “the Father is my tabernacle.”

God has also taken those skilled in the work that is required and enhanced their abilities. This also points out to us once again that all abilities, talents, whether artistic or any other nature comes from God.

v.7 “THE TABERNACLE OF MEETING, THE ARK OF THE TESTIMONY AND THE MERCY SEAT THAT *is* ON IT, AND ALL THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE—“

These men were to be responsible for the crafting, making and constructing the house of God and its furnishings. God begins his list of their responsibilities with the tabernacle itself. The working from the innermost sanctuary outward He lists first the “ARK OF THE TESTIMONY” and the “MERCY SEAT” and “ALL THE FURNITURE OF THE TABERNACLE.”

v.8 “THE TABLE AND ITS UTENSILS, THE PURE *gold* LAMPSTAND WITH ALL ITS UTENSILS, THE ALTAR OF INCENSE,”

Then he turns to the Holy Place and its furnishings.

v.9 “THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING WITH ALL ITS UTENSILS, AND THE LAVER AND ITS BASE—“

Then the altar and laver in the courtyard along with the utensils used in their service.

v.10 “THE GARMENTS OF MINISTRY, THE HOLY GARMENTS FOR AARON THE PRIEST AND THE GARMENTS OF HIS SONS, TO MINISTER AS PRIESTS,”

They were responsible for the making of the garments that the priests were to wear and we remember that God gave specific and detailed patterns and instructions for those to be worn by the High Priest.

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v.11 “AND THE ANOINTING OIL AND SWEET INCENSE FOR THE HOLY *place*. ACCORDING TO ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU THEY SHALL DO.”

And then finally we're given the making of the incense and anointing oil. They were to have responsibility to make or oversee the making and/or construction of all that God had commanded concerning His house.

Read **Exodus 31:12-17** – Sabbath Keeping

v.12-13 “AND THE **LORD** SPOKE TO MOSES, SAYING, “SPEAK ALSO TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, SAYING: ‘SURELY MY SABBATHS YOU SHALL KEEP, FOR IT *is* A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND YOU THROUGHOUT YOUR GENERATIONS, THAT *you* MAY KNOW THAT I *am* THE **LORD** WHO SANCTIFIES YOU.”

Israel was to keep the Sabbath day as a holy day. We find the initial command as part of the ten in:

Exodus 20:8 “REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.”

This was to be done as a sign, a sign of what? Their close relationship with God, their love for God, their desire to serve him, as he had commanded them, to recognize that God is Lord over all of their being. Should it be any different for us today? No! But elders and preachers approach these things with their members many times the wrong way. We often quote the verses that emphasize the penalty for neglect of God's worship:

Hebrews 10:25-26 “NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER, AS *is* THE MANNER OF SOME, BUT EXHORTING *one another*, AND SO MUCH THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY APPROACHING. FOR IF WE SIN WILLFULLY AFTER WE HAVE RECEIVED THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, THERE NO LONGER REMAINS A SACRIFICE FOR SINS,”

And demand the attendance at every service and Bible Study because to absent ourselves without a good reason is willful sin. While this is true; it is the wrong motivation. That's why when we teach or admonish someone about this weakness we should back up in the chapter to about verse 16. God has made a new covenant with mankind. Verse 17, He will remember our sins and iniquities no more because Jesus Christ, our savior, has entered into the Holiest of Holy's and we have been sanctified “BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS.” v.18. Therefore:

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“LET US DRAW NEAR WITH A TRUE HEART IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, HAVING OUR HEARTS SPRINKLED FROM AN EVIL CONSCIENCE AND OUR BODIES WASHED WITH PURE WATER. LET US HOLD FAST THE CONFESSION OF **our** HOPE WITHOUT WAVERING, FOR HE WHO PROMISED **is** FAITHFUL. AND LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER IN ORDER TO STIR UP LOVE AND GOOD WORKS,” **Hebrews 10:22-24**

This is the reason that we should look forward to the opportunity to worship God as David did; because we love God, because we love to be in the presence of God, because we want to work to reciprocate the love that God has given us.

v.14 “YOU SHALL KEEP THE SABBATH, THEREFORE, FOR **it is** HOLY TO YOU. EVERYONE WHO PROFANES IT SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH; FOR WHOEVER DOES **any** WORK ON IT, THAT PERSON SHALL BE CUT OFF FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE.”

Just as God would hallow or make holy the tabernacle and all of its contents He has also hallowed or made holy the Sabbath day. The penalty for profaning the ark, or even touching it, or the other fixtures of the Holy Place was death as we see from the example in:

II Samuel 6:6-7 “AND WHEN THEY CAME TO NACHON’S THRESHING FLOOR, UZZAH PUT OUT **his hand** TO THE ARK OF GOD AND TOOK HOLD OF IT, FOR THE OXEN STUMBLLED. THEN THE ANGER OF THE **LORD** WAS AROUSED AGAINST UZZAH, AND GOD STRUCK HIM THERE FOR **his** ERROR; AND HE DIED THERE BY THE ARK OF GOD.”

So, since God has hallowed the Sabbath Day, the same penalty applies, death; typically in Israel, by stoning. What does profane mean? In Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words we see the word as an adjective that means “permitted to be trodden” as trodden under foot. As a verb we see it defined as to “defile” or “pollute”. One way that the Sabbath could be profaned would be to worship idols. Another is to present worship to God that he had not commanded. Another would be to ignore God’s commandments entirely.

The latter part of this verse would indicate that one who was guilty of working on the Sabbath Day, would simply be cut off, cast out, become a renegade, an outlaw to Israel, disowned, much as Cain was after he killed Abel. Is that what it means here? The commentators are divided, and Adam Clarke doesn’t touch this one. Verse 15 says that the person who worked on the Sabbath Day was to be put to death and we have an example where God commanded a man be punished by stoning for working on the Sabbath.

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Numbers 15:32 “NOW WHILE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE IN THE WILDERNESS, THEY FOUND A MAN GATHERING STICKS ON THE SABBATH DAY.” **v.35** “THEN THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, “THE MAN MUST SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH; ALL THE CONGREGATION SHALL STONE HIM WITH STONES OUTSIDE THE CAMP.”

What kind of work was not forbidden?

Matthew 12:10-12 “AND BEHOLD, THERE WAS A MAN WHO HAD A WITHERED HAND. AND THEY ASKED HIM, SAYING, “IS IT LAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH?”—THAT THEY MIGHT ACCUSE HIM. THEN HE SAID TO THEM, “WHAT MAN IS THERE AMONG YOU WHO HAS ONE SHEEP, AND IF IT FALLS INTO A PIT ON THE SABBATH, WILL NOT LAY HOLD OF IT AND LIFT *it* OUT? OF HOW MUCH MORE VALUE THEN IS A MAN THAN A SHEEP? THEREFORE IT IS LAWFUL TO DO GOOD ON THE SABBATH.”

Common sense was to apply. Nehemiah chastised Jerusalem for carrying on commerce on the Sabbath, but Jesus healed a man and allowed his disciples to pluck heads of grain to eat as they walked by the field on the Sabbath.

v.15 “WORK SHALL BE DONE FOR SIX DAYS, BUT THE SEVENTH *is* THE SABBATH OF REST, HOLY TO THE **LORD**. WHOEVER DOES *any* WORK ON THE SABBATH DAY, HE SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH.”

God reinforces two things, the Sabbath Day was to be a day of rest and was Holy unto Him. Secondly the penalty for working on the Sabbath was death.

v.16 “THEREFORE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL KEEP THE SABBATH, TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH THROUGHOUT THEIR GENERATIONS *as* A PERPETUAL COVENANT.”

There are those today that contend that we must keep the Sabbath because it was a “PERPETUAL” or everlasting covenant. Is this true? No. It would end with the end of the Mosaic dispensation of time and the Mosaic Covenant. This language is used throughout the scripture but many times we can see that there will be an end to the requirement, commandment or covenant. Example:

Genesis 9:16 “THE RAINBOW SHALL BE IN THE CLOUD, AND I WILL LOOK ON IT TO REMEMBER THE EVERLASTING COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND EVERY LIVING CREATURE OF ALL FLESH THAT *is* ON THE EARTH.”

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Is this covenant between God and man an everlasting covenant? No, it will end when the earth is destroyed, but will be kept throughout time. In the same manner, the commandment concerning the keeping of the Sabbath came to an end when the Mosaic Law was fulfilled and replaced with a new covenant. Is this new covenant an everlasting covenant? Yes, the covenant of Christ is everlasting.

Hebrews 13:20 “NOW MAY THE GOD OF PEACE WHO BROUGHT UP OUR LORD JESUS FROM THE DEAD, THAT GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP, THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE EVERLASTING COVENANT,”

v.17 “IT *is* A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FOREVER; FOR *in* SIX DAYS THE **LORD** MADE THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE RESTED AND WAS REFRESHED.”

Two observations about this verse: Sabbath keeping was to be a sign, it was to signify a relationship between the Israelite nation and God. A sign previously given was the sign of circumcision given to Abraham. Coffman contends in his commentary that since circumcision was practiced by many different peoples, other descendants of Abraham and possibly others that a new sign was needed.

Secondly; this is a verse of scripture that we should all memorize if we haven't already done so. If someone believes the Bible is inspired, God breathed, literally the words of God, Darwinism, the religion of the atheist is totally destroyed by this verse. The word “DAY” throughout these verses is the Hebrew word that describes a 24 hour day, morning and evening, light and darkness, a day as we know it today. While there are false teachers and so-called scholars that will dispute the application that God very clearly makes here; the validity of the creation history recorded in Genesis 1. None of the three commentators that I use as study reference in this series even mentions this. Clarke can be excused because he wrote before or about the time that Darwinism was invented. The others may have not thought it important because Darwinism, the religion of the atheist had not permeated our public education system nearly to the extent in their day as it has today.

Read **Exodus 31:18** – The Tables of Stone

v.18 “AND WHEN HE HAD MADE AN END OF SPEAKING WITH HIM ON MOUNT SINAI, HE GAVE MOSES TWO TABLETS OF THE TESTIMONY, TABLETS OF STONE, WRITTEN WITH THE FINGER OF GOD.”

God had promised Moses that when he came up on the mountain that he would give him tables of stone upon which the commandments had been written:

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Exodus 24:12 “THEN THE **LORD** SAID TO MOSES, “COME UP TO ME ON THE MOUNTAIN AND BE THERE; AND I WILL GIVE YOU TABLETS OF STONE, AND THE LAW AND COMMANDMENTS WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN, THAT YOU MAY TEACH THEM.”

And these are the tablets or tables that Moses received.

They had been written with the very finger of God, etched in stone by Jehovah God himself. What more could Israel want for law than this? But even as God is providing these tables to Moses, his people are violating these very commandments and that is the subject of our next chapter.