

New Creation and Sabbath Rest

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. It's good to see you, good to worship with you. Please turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 31. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand and we will have one of our members bring a copy of the Bible over to you that you can use while you're here.
- We've been in a sermon series through the book of Exodus for the last year or so, and we're actually almost done. We're in Exodus chapter 31.
- I'm going to read in the beginning verses 1 to 18. I'm also going to preach on chapter 35 verses 1 to 3 and verse 32, chapter 36, verse 7.
- But that second half is a repetition. God speaks to Moses, and then Moses later relays the same information to the Israelites, so a lot of it is word for word repeated, so I'm not going to read that at the beginning, but I will read chapter 31 verses 1 to 18.
- Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, everything is ultimately from you and to you.
- [1 : 2 0] We are creatures of dust, made alive by your breath, made new again by your spirit.
- We can do nothing apart from you. I cannot stand here and speak apart from you. We cannot sit here and listen apart from you.
- We cannot have the faith to believe and to obey you without your help. So, Lord, from the beginning to the end, you deserve all the glory.
- And we ask that you would be glorified and you'd be pleased by this time. Lord, I stand here not as an author, but as a messenger.
- Speak your word. Help me to say only what you would have me say. And incline our hearts to accept your word and to live in accordance with it so that Christ may be exalted in our lives.
- [2 : 3 9] It's in his precious name we pray. Amen. Please stand for the reading of God's word if you are able. I will read Exodus 31 verses 1 to 18.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
- Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Bye. Amen.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Speak to the people of Israel and say, Above all, you shall keep my Sabbaths.
- [4 : 2 9] For this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you.
- Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.

Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore, the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.

And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

This is God's holy and authoritative word. You may be seated. Twice a year or so, our denomination, Sovereign Grace Churches, publishes a journal whose articles are written by various pastors within our denomination.

[5 : 52] You can buy a hard copy of it or download a free PDF of it at [sovereigngrace.com slash journal](https://sovereigngrace.com/journal). In the latest issue, whose theme was a passion for the church, there was an excellent article by my friend, Mark Alderton, who pastors Sovereign Grace Church of Aurora, Colorado.

And I got the idea for my sermon introduction from his article, so I wanted to make sure I give him credit and encourage you to read the article. So think for a moment about what a typical Sunday morning looks like in our ordinary church.

And if you have been part of other local churches in the past, feel free to think back to what Sunday mornings look like in those local churches as well. People from various walks of life gather together in the same place at the same time, or at least mostly at the same time.

Some come early, some trickle in late. There are men and women, young and old, singles and families. There are empty nesters, young professionals, as well as retired, gray-haired saints.

They're all sinners and sufferers in their own ways. Each carries his or her own burdens. Sometimes they're standing during worship, sometimes they're seated, sometimes the auditorium or wherever they're meeting is packed, but more often than not, there are many empty seats.

[7 : 25] There are some people singing. Some are in tune. Some are not. They clap in different rhythms.

The PowerPoint malfunctions from time to time. The pastor preaches a sermon. Sometimes it's good, sometimes not so good, but it can always be improved.

Sometimes the battery dies in his microphone at the most climactic moment. Other times there's distracting feedback on the speakers.

A young man gets up to walk around to stop from dozing off. And a young mother takes her crying child outside to comfort her. A typical Sunday morning.

Now contrast that with what's happening in our big, fast world.

[8 : 26] The advancement of artificial intelligence and chat GPT are shaking up industries and schools. There are wars and rumors of wars in Ukraine, Russia, Taiwan, China, Afghanistan, and South Sudan.

There are mass shootings in Texas and Serbia. Natural disasters all across the world. There are CEOs becoming billionaires and CEOs going to jail. There are athletes winning MVPs and vying for championships.

There are autocrats up for election and presidential hopefuls making their case and kings being coronated. With all of these things going on in the backdrop in our world, does the ordinary local church really matter?

Mark Alderton writes in his article, most of the world has already answered no to that question. But the one who created the world and the church tells us differently.

The ordinary, imperfect, gospel-believing local church as an embodiment of the universal church is the most important gathering in the world.

[9 : 50] Why? Because it is the blueprint of a broken world remade. Continues, the hope for fallen humanity is to have God, our creator, dwell with us in peace and unending joy.

And as we survey the scriptures, we find that God's glorious plan has always been to do exactly that. The local church is the focal point of that plan being fulfilled.

There is nothing else like it on earth because the local church with all its limitations and flaws is nothing less than the lived out realization of God's glorious plan to dwell among his people.

The church is not merely the instrument or the means that God uses to fulfill his salvation purposes. She is herself the embodiment and fulfillment of God's saving purposes.

The church is God's dwelling place on earth. As Ephesians 1.23 puts it, the church is Christ's body, the fullness of God who fills all in all.

[11 : 07] 1 Corinthians 3.16 says that we are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in us. with the apostle as the foundation and Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

It says in Ephesians 2.20-22 that we are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the spirit. It's this glorious reality that our passage this morning about the tabernacle points to.

It teaches us that we are filled with the Holy Spirit to build God's house and to rest from our work in remembrance and anticipation of God's Sabbath.

So we're going to first talk about spirit-filled work and then we're going to talk about Sabbath rest. Chapter 31 verses 1-11 is the last section of God's instructions to Moses regarding the tabernacle.

God has already given Moses instructions on what to make, why, and how to make them. But now he gives him instructions about who is actually to make those things, those furnishings, the tabernacle.

[12 : 10] And God chooses two skilled craftsmen to lead the whole construction project. The first name is Bezalel and the second is Oholiab.

The name Bezalel means under the shadow or under the protection or under the shelter of God, which is quite fitting for a man in charge of building the literal shelter of God where the shadow or the glory of God will rest.

The name Oholiab means protection of the Father or more literally tent of the Father. Again, a very fitting name for someone who's going to be in charge of building the tent or the tabernacle for God.

So these men, handpicked by God himself, were destined for the work that they are about to embark on. We're not given many details about Oholiab, however we do know that both men are exceptionally skilled in their craft.

Later in 3535, when Moses is relaying the Lord's instructions to the Israelites, he says, the Lord has filled both Bezalel and Oholiab with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns in fine twine linen or by a weaver, by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

[13 : 25] So they're like Renaissance men. They're very skilled in all artistic designs and crafts related to the tabernacle. And the Hebrew word translated skill here is the word that is most often translated as wisdom.

And in Exodus 28.3, when it spoke of recruiting all the skillful whom the Lord has filled with the spirit of skill to make priestly garments, the word skillful there literally meant wise of heart.

Just as wisdom comes from applying the knowledge of God's word to one's life, self. So skill comes from applying one's technical knowledge to repeated practice.

So God recruits, calls the skillful, the wise of heart who have much experience in their craft, not novice craftsmen, but these skilled craftsmen to build the tabernacle and its furnishings.

And the reason for that, of course, is what we talked about a few weeks ago, Exodus 28.2, because these furnishings and tabernacle are meant for glory and for beauty. And a clumsy, novice craftsman cannot make that.

[14 : 33] It has to be beautiful, it has to be glorious because our God is the God of glory and beauty. There's something to be said here for doing our work that we do with skill and excellence.

Colossians 3.23-24 commends us, whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as a reward.

You are serving the Lord Christ. Whatever your work might be, not only if you're a pastor or a theologian, but also if you're a mom, an academic, a nurse, a doctor, a software engineer, architect, designer, analyst, lawyer, artist, musician, scientist, administrator, sales rep, or accountant, accountant, you are to work heartily as unto God and not unto men.

We should do our work heartily, not half-heartedly. A person who is working directly for a prominent CEO is going to work harder than someone who is working for a lowly manager.

How much more so than if we are working directly for the Lord? How much more if we are serving the Lord Jesus who is seated up above in the heavenly places at the right hand of God the Father?

[15 : 58] We should not work lackadaisically. We should work heartily with skill and excellence like Bezalel and Aholiab unto God and not unto men. Other than his skill, we're not given much information about Aholiab, but we do know more about Bezalel.

Bezalel is the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. Hur, you might remember from earlier in Exodus 17, is a man who, along with Aaron, held up Moses' arms when he was raising his arm when they were battling against the Amalekites in Exodus 17.

It's when Moses raised his arms with the staff of God in his hand that the Israelites were winning the battle and so they held his hand up and Hur, Jewish tradition has it, even though Scripture doesn't tell us explicitly that he was the husband of Miriam, Moses' sister, which would make him Moses' brother-in-law.

Whether that's true or not, Bezalel is Hur's grandson. Between Bezalel and Aholiab, Bezalel was the more important figure of the two. We know this because of a number of clues in Scripture.

One is that he is always the one that's mentioned first and we are also given much more information, description of him compared to Aholiab. And according to Exodus 37, 1-6, Bezalel alone is involved in the construction of the Ark of the Testimony and its atonement cover, the two holiest items in the entire tabernacle structure.

[17 : 31] So while both Bezalel and Aholiab are the craftsmen and the craftsmen who worked under them and their supervision were all filled with the spirit of skill, Bezalel in particular is filled with something more than skill.

We're told twice, once in chapter 31, verse 3, and again in 35-30 that God has filled Bezalel not merely with the spirit of skill but with the spirit of God himself.

The Lord says in 31-3, I have filled him with the spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting and in carving wood, to work in every craft.

Of course, this is not the same as the Holy Spirit dwelling in the new covenant people of God. We have the fullness of the spirit in the way that old covenant saints never knew. But this is still an exceptional statement.

The only other time previously in scripture in the Old Testament prior to this that anyone has been said to be filled with the spirit of God was in Genesis 41-46 when Joseph was described as a man in whom is the spirit of God.

[18 : 42] Just as Joseph was directed by the spirit of God and given his wisdom to interpret Pharaoh's dreams prophetically and then to administer the land. So here, Bezalel is filled with the spirit of God to provide prophetic and creative vision and practical management for the construction of the temple.

The mention of the spirit of God also recalls Genesis 1-2 when at the time God was creating the world it said the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.

In fact, the Hebrew word that is translated variously throughout Exodus 31, 35, and 36 as craftsmanship or craft or task or work to refer to the work of building the tabernacle is the exact same word that is used to describe God's work of creating the universe in Genesis 2-3 when it says that on the seventh day God rested from all his work.

God rested from all his craftsmanship that he had done in creation. So then the work that Bezalel is doing in building the tabernacle is modeled after the work that God did in creating the cosmos.

The tabernacle is a kind of a microcosmos, a microcosm of the world that God has created. This parallel is confirmed further by the four attributes that the Spirit of God has specifically endowed Bezalel with in 31-3.

[20 : 06] Ability, intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship. I already mentioned to you that the word craftsmanship is the same word that refers to God's creative work in creation.

But the other three words have an even more suggestive parallel in Proverbs 3-19-20 which describes how God created the world. And it says this, the Lord by wisdom founded the earth.

By understanding he established the heavens. By his knowledge the deeps broke open and the clouds dropped down the dew. Those three words, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, though translated differently in English here, are exactly the same three things that God has filled Bezalel with in Exodus 31-3.

In Hebrew, they're the exact same words. So then all four words used to describe Bezalel are taken from God's example in creation, his wisdom in understanding and knowledge.

Similarly, later on, when Solomon commissions the building of the temple, the Jerusalem temple, in 1 Kings 7-14, he says that Hiram, who is the master builder tasked with that, was full of wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze.

[21 : 23] Again, the four identical Hebrew words are used to describe Hiram to create that intentional parallel. Bezalel is constructing the tabernacle and Hiram is constructing the temple and they are both imitating the Lord who created the heavens and the earth.

In fact, we can even say that the tabernacle and later the temple are models of the created world. For example, we saw earlier that the tabernacle proper is modeled to be a symbol, a representation of heaven itself.

The holy place and the most holy place represent heaven. Moses was specifically commanded to build the tabernacle in accordance with the pattern of the heavenly things that he saw on Mount Sinai.

And then, the cherubim figures, the angels, that are on top of the atonement cover inside on the ark, or the cherubim that's woven on the veil that separates the holy place from the most holy place, and the cherubim on the inner curtains of the entire tabernacle structure surrounding the most holy place and the most holy place.

They all suggest that you are entering into a heavenly place. There are angels floating all around you. All the golden furnishings point to the heavenly glory.

- [22 : 38] All the golden, and where the ark of God is, which represents the footstool of God, it's the very throne room of God. You are sitting in his presence in his heavenly throne. And then, when you descend down the levels of holiness, from the golden level to the silver level, to down to, out into the courtyard, the furnishings are made of bronze, which suggests a more earthly character.

Because the courtyard is a representation of the earth, in the same way that the holy place, and the most holy place, the tabernacle is a representation of heaven. The earth is where the Israelites worship God and make their sacrifices.

So they have the bronze altar, which looms large as soon as you enter the tabernacle and represents the Mount Sinai, really, where they worshipped God and made sacrifices. That's where they will make sacrifices and worship God.

The bronze basin, beyond that, the body of water, later in the Jerusalem temple, its equivalent is called the bronze sea, represents the waters of the earth, in particular, the water that Israelites crossed in order to escape from the Egyptians and to enter into the promised land.

So the tabernacle structure, the whole thing, is a symbol of the heavens and the earth that God is bringing about. Remember, in the original creation, in Genesis 1-3, God was walking among men.

- [23 : 55] He lived, He dwelled among Adam and Eve. His presence was not foreign to the first human beings, but because of their sin and because of their rebellion against Him, they were exiled from that community, from that Garden of Eden.

And the question that's been hovering over humanity ever since is, will we ever be restored to God's presence again? Will God ever dwell with His people again?

And the tabernacle is a preview of God's unfolding salvation plan, His answer to that question, that He does intend to dwell with His people again, this time forever.

The tabernacle is a temporary fulfillment, temporary preview of that. that promise, what the tabernacle promised is fulfilled in the spirit-indwelt church of Jesus Christ.

Remember how God created the world with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge? And then the temple and the tabernacle were produced with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. And then later in Ephesians 1-17, Paul prays for the Ephesians believers that God may give them the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

- [25 : 08] so that they might be built together, quote, into the dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Paul, again, plays on this same theme.

The church, which is collectively God's dwelling place, is the final dwelling place for God that He is building. And that building project is right now going on as we speak.

One day in the new heavens and the new earth, the building will be finished. John recounts his prophetic vision in Revelation 21, 1-3, when I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

He will dwell with them and they will be His people. And God Himself will be with them as their God. Where will God dwell?

- [26 : 17] In the holy city, the new Jerusalem. And what exactly is this new city? It's the bride adorned for her husband. This is a reference to the church, which is referred to throughout Scripture as the bride of Christ, who is our bridegroom.

We, the church, the people of God, are the dwelling place for God. And we are currently being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit, as it says in Ephesians 2.22.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word that is used to describe Bezalel and Oholiab as skilled designer in Exodus 35.35 is the same word that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 3.10 to describe himself as the skillful, the skilled master builder who laid a foundation for the Corinthian church that others are now building upon.

And Paul says that he and Apollos and others are God's fellow workers and that the Corinthian church is God's building. And by extension, every local church is God's building.

Bezalel and his building of the tabernacle are fulfilled in the new building of the covenant church, the New Testament church. And not only do Paul and Apollos have a role to play as master builders, every single one of us as believers who are filled and dwelled by the Spirit of God have a role to play.

[27 : 44] In the old covenant, in Old Testament times, the Spirit of God only came upon and filled select individuals to complete particular God-ordained tasks like Bezalel who was charged with building in the tabernacle.

But in the New Testament period, in the new covenant, God had promised through prophets Ezekiel and prophets Joel that he will fill all of his people, all flesh, with his Spirit, not only some select individuals.

And that's why Ephesians 4 says that that day has not been fulfilled in Jesus and Ephesians 4 teaches us that grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift and God gave the apostles, the prophets, and the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to us as a church so that they might equip the saints, all of us, for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.

It means every single one of us is charged with building up the house of God, the house of the Spirit. And it's when we speak the truth of the gospel in love to one another, it's when each part it says in Ephesians 2 is working together that the body grows so that it builds itself up in love.

Do you know this grave task that God's given you? There are varieties of service, there are varieties of gifts, there are varieties of activities and God distributes all of them and entrusts all of them to his various people so that we would be an interdependent whole working together side by side for the sake of the gospel and building up his house.

[29 : 19] We are also, like Paul and Apollos, God's fellow builders. Are you doing your part in God's building project? What are you doing to build up God's house, his church?

The church, again, as I said before, is not merely a means to an end. The church is God's end game. The church is where God dwells with his people again.

What gifts has God given you? Do you share your tongues and their interpretation and prophecies with the people of God to build them up? Do you contribute generously to the ministry of the church and to the poor in the church?

Do you use your biblical knowledge and teaching ability to share valuable insights to people that you talk to informally or more formally in community groups? Are you using your sociability and friendliness to draw people into the bond and the unity of our church community together?

Are you sharing the gospel with your neighbors and friends to convert new bricks that can be added on to this structure that God is now building? On YouTube, there are thousands of time-lapse videos that show the construction of a house from start to finish.

[30 : 50] Have you guys seen any of this? Okay. Some of you might be thinking, well, that sounds really boring. But actually, it's like you watch it and it's downright fixed, like transfixing.

It's really hard to stop watching once you start watching it because, and these videos, these videos have millions and millions of views for a reason because it's amazing to watch the action unfold from the beginning to the end, to see how something is built from scratch, to see skilled laborers doing work and seeing something appear where there was previously nothing before.

It's also a huge time sucker, so don't get into it. Sometimes when I'm reading a children's Bible to my kids, I read the story of God's creating the world and there are these illustrations and I imagine to myself, man, it would be really cool if I could have been there, see God bring about the heavens and the new earth and the cosmos.

Well, we have an opportunity to do exactly that with God's building of the church.

This is God's work of new creation. If anyone is in Christ, as we saw in the assurance of pardon, 2 Corinthians 5.17, he is a new creation.

[32 : 17] Everything that is built out there in the world, no matter how grand and no matter how significant, no matter how monumental it might seem, will eventually pass away.

Jesus tells us repeatedly in the Gospels that heaven and earth will pass away. When the new heaven and earth comes, Revelation 21 tells us that the first heaven and the first earth will have passed away.

It says in 2 Peter 3.10, the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heaven will pass away with roar, with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

The monuments we build, the schools we build, the governments we build, Fortune 500 companies we build, the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal, the pyramids of Giza, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Great Wall of China, the Colosseum, the Empire State Building, the Palace of Versailles, La Sagrada Familia, the Burj Khalifa, all of these things will pass away.

But the church of Christ, built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, will never pass away.

[33 : 39] Because we are being built up as a spiritual house with living stones, not dead stones. Because we are being built up, we've been born again, not by a perishable seed, but by an imperishable seed of God's abiding word, the word that remains forever.

And when the bride of Christ, the church of Christ, is revealed, fully sanctified in all of her glory, and we get to behold that holy city, we get to be a part of that, she's going to be more beautiful than anything you have ever laid eyes on on this earth.

And brothers and sisters, we get to have front row seats for that construction project. More than that, we get to partake, be part of that glorious, eternal construction project.

Dear saints, do you really believe that? Do you believe that the most important thing being built in this world right now is the church of Jesus Christ?

If you want to be part of something that will truly have lasting significance, something that will last forever, join God in the building up of his house by putting your faith in Jesus, repenting of your sins, becoming a part of this household of God, that you might be indwelt by the spirit.

[35 : 26] It says in Exodus 36, verses 2 to 6, Moses called Bezalel and Aholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the Lord had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work and they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary.

They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came each from the task that he was doing and said to Moses, the people bring much more than enough for doing the work of the Lord that it has commanded to do.

So Moses gave command and the word was proclaimed throughout the camp, let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work and more.

The Israelites were so eager to bring their contribution, so eager to take part in this building project of the tabernacle that they had to be restrained from bringing too much material.

If they were so eager to be part of God's temporary building place, which is now gone, how much more should we be eager in building God's eternal dwelling place?

[36 : 50] that's the tension I feel in pastoral ministry all the time.

Like, I can't believe that I actually have to sell this to people. I don't have to sell this to anybody.

There should be lines after line after line of people just thronging to come to be a part of this. We get to be a part of God's eternal dwelling place.

As I mentioned last week, throughout the tabernacle narrative, we find the phrase the Lord said to Moses exactly seven times, six times, it's connected to the various instructions regarding the construction of the temple.

We saw the sixth occurrence in our chapter, Exodus 31, verse 1, when God gave Moses instructions about appointing Bezalel and Oholiab. So this six-day structure for the instructions confirms what we have already observed, that the tabernacle is a kind of new miniature creation.

[38 : 08] And we find the seventh occurrence of that phrase, the Lord said to Moses here in Exodus 31, 12 to 13. And the Lord said to Moses, you are to speak to the people of Israel and say, above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.

It's no coincidence that the seventh word that God speaks to Moses is about the Sabbath, which is about resting on the seventh day. This is following the pattern of God's work for six days and resting on the seventh day because the tabernacle represents God's new creation work where he will dwell with his people again.

It points to his ultimate new creation work in the church. And note how this command is emphasized. He says, above all, you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you.

I'm not going to speak at length about the Sabbath because I've already preached twice on the subject when we're in Exodus 16 and Exodus 20. I encourage you to listen to those sermons if you want to find out more about what the Sabbath means for us today as Christians.

But this repetition shows how enormously important this command to observe the Sabbath was for the old covenant people of God. Right after the Exodus, as they're embarking on their wilderness journey toward the promised land, God gave them the Sabbath command.

[39 : 31] He didn't wait long to give them that command. He gave it to them even before he gave them all the other commands in the Ten Commandments. And then in the Ten Commandments, as one of the Ten Greatest Commandments, God gave the command to keep the Sabbath again in Exodus 20.

And here, after completing the tabernacle, when they are about to begin the work of constructing the tabernacle, God gives them the command again to observe the Sabbath.

That's how important this command is to the Israelites. God says that it is nothing less than a sign between me and you. That's why in verses 14 to 15, expulsion from the community of God, God's covenant people, and a death penalty are threatened for violating it.

When God made his covenant with Noah, he gave the rainbow in Genesis 9 as a sign of the covenant with Noah. And in Genesis 17, when God made the covenant with Abraham, he gave circumcision as his sign of his covenant with them.

And here, as he makes another covenant with Moses and the Israelites, God gives another sign, and that sign is the Sabbath. And the Sabbath had the function of sanctifying or setting apart the Israelites for God as his special people.

[40 : 48] Because no other nation on earth kept the Sabbath, a strict weekly day of rest. Right? I've said this a few times before. No, you know, week is a very unnatural unit of time, right?

A year is based on the earth's rotation around the sun. That's natural. Right? The month is based on the lunar cycle.

That's natural. A day is based on the earth's rotation around its axis. That's natural. Anybody just observing the heavens and the creation can come up with those systems.

But a week, why a week? It's not based on any natural phenomenon. It exists by divine fiat.

Because it's intended to set God's people apart from the rest of the world, rest of the nations. The rest of the world takes their, take their orders from creation.

[41 : 48] They follow the patterns that they see in creation. But the Israelites God's chosen people, they take their orders from the creator himself. They follow the patterns set by the creator. to work six days and rest on the seventh day.

This is why the Sabbath is so important. Breaking the Sabbath is like an Olympic athlete taking off his country's uniform and putting on another country's uniform, saying, well, I don't belong there.

It's like someone burning your national flag. Because it's the sign of their covenant, the covenant between God and Israel.

This is why expulsion is the appropriate punishment. You're cut off from God's people because essentially you have renounced God and his covenant community by not observing the Sabbath. And when you're cut off from your relationship with God, who is the source of all life, death is the only appropriate consequence, whether that happens immediately or eventually after you're cut off from the community of God.

And this all-important Sabbath command applies even to the God-given, God-honoring work of building the very dwelling place of God. Isn't that amazing?

[43 : 15] We can see this in the fact that the word work used in Exodus 31, 14, 31, 15, 35, 2 is the same word that was used earlier to refer to the craftsmanship of Bezalel and Aholiab and the other craftsmen.

God's telling them in the Sabbath command to even rest from that work of building the tabernacle. Lest the Israelites think, well, we'll rest from all other work, but surely God wouldn't mind if we're building his house.

This is such wholly important work. God tells them explicitly, rest from that work. Exodus 35, 3 says this, you shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day.

It's kind of a curious command, right? What's wrong with kindling fire on the Sabbath day? God's not saying that the Israelites shouldn't cook on the Sabbath day or eat only cold food on the Sabbath day.

In the context of the construction of the tabernacle, the specific prohibition is probably referring to the work of smelting and metalworking that are happening day after day to build the gold and silver and bronze furnishings of the tabernacle.

[44 : 26] God's saying you must rest even from this special work of building my own dwelling place. This is very helpful for me personally, and I believe it has applications for all of us.

As a pastor, I can be tempted to work, work, and work, and to find my identity in ministry rather than in Christ. It's work that has eternal consequences.

It's such meaningful work. I get to preach God's eternal word, infallible word, and I get to care for God's people whom he purchased with the price of his only son, the blood of his only son.

But by resting even from this work, I'm reminded that God is the ultimate builder, not me. I'm dispensable.

The church can get another pastor. The church can't get another God. I might not be a pastor anymore one day, but I will forever remain God's child, adopted son of God.

[45 : 45] There are days and seasons of rest, even from the most important work that we engage in. So no matter how important your work might be in your eyes, I think this could apply to mothers as well, Mother's Day, and fathers, you could take your work so seriously because you're bringing up kids in instruction and discipline of the Lord and has eternal consequences.

But your identity is in something more than that. Whatever happens to your kids as they grow up cannot change your identity in Christ, cannot alter your standing in Christ before God's eyes.

God is the ultimate builder, not you. We are not the ultimate builders of our families. We're not the ultimate builders of our local church.

So even from this work, Christ offers us rest. The Sabbath is no longer the sign of the covenant between us and God because God has enacted a new covenant.

covenant. Hebrews 8.13 says, by saying a new covenant, he has declared that the first is obsolete. We no longer, we're no longer under the law, but we are led by the Spirit.

[47 : 03] He says, Galatians 5.18. Romans 10.4 says that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. And Jesus says in Matthew 5.17-20 that he has fulfilled the law.

He's brought it to its proper fulfillment and end so that we as Christians are no longer under its legal demands of the old covenant as law. And this is why in Colossians 2.16-17 Paul says specifically about the Sabbath, therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. The Sabbath was merely a shadow cast by the reality, the real substance of the rest we have in Jesus, the eternal spiritual rest that we have in Jesus as Hebrews 4 speaks of.

However, the fact that the Sabbath has been fulfilled and it's not legally binding on us as law doesn't mean that it doesn't have anything to teach us. It's still part of God's inspired word. It's still profitable for teaching and to make us complete, equipped for every good work.

So in its Christ-fulfilled, transformed form, the Sabbath still has many important things to teach us. I think one application is that we shouldn't be legalistic about its observance since Christ has already fulfilled it.

[48 : 28] It's not something you have to observe. Sometimes the Sabbath can be a cover for selfishness, an excuse for self-centered self-care.

Sometimes it can be an expression of pride like it was for the Pharisees, a way of showing other people how mature I am compared to others. But we also shouldn't disregard the Sabbath principle.

As Jesus says in Mark 2, 27, the Sabbath, or 22, 7, the Sabbath was made for man. In other words, for our sake, for our benefit. We can see this in our passage in Exodus 31, 17.

Please look there with me. Exodus 31, 17 says, It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.

God set this pattern for us so that we might rest and be refreshed. God wants to refresh you. The cure for burnout is not necessarily less work.

[49 : 38] Sometimes people who serve the least are the most burnt out. The cure for burnout is more rest in Jesus.

Jesus said in Matthew 11, 28 to 30, Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Rest for your soul is found in the finished work of Christ on the cross. We can rest only because Jesus declared on the cross after paying for our sins there and nailing it to the cross, he said, It is finished.

You don't need to save yourself with your own good works. You don't need to justify your own existence. You don't need to justify your own status.

You don't need to justify your own significance. You can rest in Christ today. Find your salvation in him. Find your sufficiency in him.

[50 : 44] Find your identity in him. Find your all in all in him. Find your soul in him. It's then, and only then, that your soul will be at rest.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you for the rest that you offer us.

Lord, it is so easy for us to fall into our old ways, our old habits of trying to justify ourselves.

Trying to prove by our own works, by our own efforts, that our lives mean something. That our lives are worth something. That we are significant. But Lord, teach us to live by grace and not by the law.

Teach us to live by your spirit and not by the law. To find all that we need and all that we have in Jesus.

[51 : 57] Find our significance, our identity in him. Lord, help us with that. So that we would give ourselves eagerly to the work of building up your house.

All the while trusting in and resting in the reality that Jesus, you, God the Father, you are the ultimate builder. Father, thank you for letting us be a part of this, Lord.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.