

Exodus 31-32

Exodus 31:1-18 NKJV Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. (3) **And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,** (4) to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, (5) in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all *manner of* workmanship. (6) "And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, 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:** (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— (8) the table and its utensils, the pure *gold* lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, (9) the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base— (10) the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, (11) and the anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy *place*. **According to all that I have commanded you they shall do."**

We spoke of this passage last week. There are three lessons:

1. And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8 NKJV)
2. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17 NKJV)
3. For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:36 NKJV)

(12) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (13) "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. (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.** (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. (16) **Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.** (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.'** " (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.

Before God was finished giving Moses the commandments and instruction, He once again told Moses about the Sabbath.

Let's look at some related Scriptures:

Genesis 2:1-3 NKJV Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. (2) And on the **seventh** day God ended His work which He had done, and He **rested** on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. (3) Then God **blessed** the seventh day and **sanctified** it, because in it He **rested** from all His work which God had created and made.

God rested, not from fatigue but simply ceased from working. The 7th day was blessed and made holy and sanctified because what He had created and made in the prior three days was “very good”!!!

It was also spoken of in Chapter 16 when the Israelites were commanded not to gather manna on the 7th day. God provided them with more than enough on the 6th day.

Exodus 20:8-11 NKJV "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) **Six days you shall labor and do all your work,** (10) but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you **shall do no work:** you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. (11) For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Clearly, the admonition was against doing anything that would provide for the family. One day of seven was a day when they were to trust God for their sustenance!

And, of course, there are numerous Scriptures regarding the Sabbath.

This is one of the simplest commands. There's a least two great religions built around it: Judaism and Seventh Day Adventism. A lot of legalism was created around this command. Over the centuries, the Jews have created over 200 laws that must be obeyed on the Sabbath. Most of these are related to what you are not allowed to do...even to the point of ridiculousness. The initial command was very simple, do no ordinary work. Orthodox Jews and Seventh Day Adventists make it a salvation issue.

Why was it given? This is simple as well. Demonstrate your trust in God's grace by not working to feed yourself or taking care of anything related to that, like tending your herds etc. In modern times, you take the seventh day of the week off work. That's Saturday.

The issue is not with the command. The issue is not with the penalty, if one looks at the calling of Israel: to declare the Creator of the Universe to the rest of the world! How? By telling the world about Him and His love for mankind that extends to even giving man a rest from his labor! One day not to have to toil on the earth that was cursed because of Adam's sin. How could Israel proclaim the True God if they were unwilling to show their love and obedience to Him?

Leviticus 22:31-33 KJV Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I *am* the LORD. (32) Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I *am* the LORD which hallow you, (33) That brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I *am* the LORD.

Now, there are 146 verses in the Bible about the Sabbath. Ninety-one are in the OT and 55 are

in the NT. In the NT all but 10 are in the Gospels.

One of the worse violations in the OT was the neglect of keeping the 7th year sabbath. God had commanded Israel to observe a Sabbath for the land, allowing it to rest every seven years ([Exo 23:10-11](#)). The people of Judah had denied the land its Sabbaths over a period of some 490 years, meaning that they “owed” the land 70 Sabbaths, and **to fulfill seventy years** God took the years back during the Babylonian exile.

[Numbers 15:32-36 NKJV](#) Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. (33) And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. (34) They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what should be done to him. (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." (36) So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.

The people knew he had violated the Sabbath but for some reason didn't know the punishment. The LORD reminded Moses that he had to be stoned to death. And so they did.

For the modern ear, this seems very harsh, almost cruel. But like the lake of fire, it's God's decision what He wants to do about sin. We only see the one act. We don't know what this man would have done in the future. God knows and we must trust Him in these things.

Now given our fallen nature, even what God gives us for our own good becomes devoid of all its meaning. The letter of the Law kills. The Spirit of the Law leads to life! When God came to earth, He was disgusted with the hearts of the Scribes, Pharisees, and other religious leaders. Even a quick read of Matthew 23 where Jesus portrays the religious leaders as hypocrites certainly reveals His displeasure!

One of the things they tried to catch Him doing was violating the Sabbath. In particular, they came against Him for healing on the Sabbath.

[\(Mark 2:27 NKJV\)](#) And He said to them, "**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**"

[Matthew 12:7-8 NKJV](#) **But if you had known what *this* means, 'I DESIRE MERCY AND NOT SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. (8) For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**"

With these two verses one can see that the Messiah is creator of this 7th day and therefore is the authority over it.

[Matthew 12:10-12 NKJV](#) 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. (11) 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? (12) Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (13) Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. (14) Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

The leaders had lost all compassion because they thought that God would actually want to strike a man down for doing a good work on the Sabbath. What a horrible opinion they had of God.

In the 1st Century we know that many Jewish believers thought that the Mosaic Law was still binding on both Jews and Gentiles. However, when the Jerusalem Jews met to discuss the issue of the new Gentile converts, they listed the things they needed to avoid and clearly violating the Sabbath was not one of them. Paul also wrote:

[Colossians 2:16-17 NKJV](#) (16) So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, (17) which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

I was taught that because this was written to Gentiles, I was still under the Law. But they didn't understand that I was a new creation in Christ and not subject to the Law of Moses which was nailed it to the Cross.

One last note: Why the reminder about the Sabbath? They had heard it before. Why was it repeated? The answer may lie in chapter 35 where Moses is directing the men to begin construction of the Tabernacle. Perhaps it was a reminder that not even the construction of the Tabernacle was important enough to skip the Sabbath rest.

So God gives Moses 2 tablets written by God Himself and was about to leave His Presence. He was unaware of one thing that stood between him and the construction of the Tabernacle.

[Exodus 32:1-16 NKJV](#) Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."

Moses was on the mountain for 40 days. That's a long time to go without communications. But I seem to see something in their words that make me believe that they do not have any respect for Moses nor the God he serves. The people seemed to forget that it was the LORD who went before them in a cloud and a fire to lead them to the promised land. How quickly they wrote off Moses as the one who performed the LORD's miracles and brought the plagues that were against their enemies.

How quickly they wanted to return to deaf and mute idols! It's almost laughable that they thought that these immovable pieces of wood and stone could lead them anywhere!

(2) And Aaron said to them, "Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, your

sons, and your daughters, and bring *them* to me.” (3) So all the people broke off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. (4) **And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf.** Then they said, “This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” (5) So when Aaron saw *it*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow *is* a feast to the LORD.” (6) Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, **and rose up to play.**

The brother of Moses, the other one who performed miracles of the LORD and spoke on His behalf...Aaron who would become the first High Priest of Israel; Aaron who would wear the gold band around his head which would say “**Holiness to the LORD**”; this Aaron quickly and irrationally forgot about His LORD and God. Thank God **we** serve a High-Priest that would never be intimidated by an angry crowd!

Aaron accepted the offerings of gold that they plundered from the Egyptians and he fashioned it with an engraving tool and made a golden calf. (btw: the word “molded” actually means “poured” and so the KJV renders it “molten calf”. Some believe that the gold may have been poured over some sort of wooden structure that resembled a calf”). Then in a fit of stupidity Aaron declared “This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!”. Calves were worshipped in Egypt. They symbolized virility and power. I would have given Aaron the benefit of doubt and thought that he was being sarcastic had it not been for his so-called confession to Moses (we’ll be there in a moment).

Notice that they tried to add this pagan idol into their God given sacrifices and actually tried to hold a “feast to the LORD”. Sacrifices were meant for the LORD alone. This was probably the first time we saw how man-made religions work. A little compromise here, a little tolerance there and a good dose of delusion and they think are still worshipping God and therefore it’s all acceptable. I could liken this to many churches today that seem to be microcosms of our secular society with similar programs and so-called ministries. All they do is tack-on Jesus and away they go!

(7) And the LORD said to Moses, "Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have **corrupted themselves**. (8) They have **turned aside quickly** out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This *is* your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' " (9) And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it *is* a stiff-necked people! (10) Now therefore, let Me alone, **that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.**" (11) Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, **why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people** whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? (12) **Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'?** Turn from Your fierce wrath, and **relent** from this harm to Your people. (13) **Remember** Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom **You swore by Your own self**, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit *it* forever.' " (14) So the LORD **relented** from the harm which He said He would do to His people. (15) And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony *were* in his hand. The tablets *were* written on both sides; on the one *side* and on the other they were written. (16) **Now the tablets were the work**

of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

The LORD knew what the Israelites did. He knew that they had quickly turned against Him. The pliable neck with which they could look up to God or bow down in His presence, was now hard as rock.

The LORD was angry. It wanted to destroy them and start over with Moses, creating a nation from his seed. But Moses interceded as he had done before (remember, chapter 14 at the Red Sea; chapter 16 when they demanded meat; and chapter 17 when there was no water). and certainly, he will do so again! Moses reminded God that He had rescued them from the Egyptians, and he didn't want God's reputation to suffer if He simply killed them off. And besides that, Moses reminded Him of His promises to the forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel – to be as the stars of heaven and to inherit the promised land!!! (is it ironic that Moses, the law giver didn't mention the blessed seed of the Nations?)

And the LORD **relented** – not **repented** as the KJV translates the Hebrew word. There's another Hebrew word for 'repent' that is more akin to "turn back or turn from where you are heading and back to face God". In this case the word 'relent' has the connotation of a 'sigh' and can mean pity. This is a better way to describe God's attitude. They are human and humans are to be pitied!

Now, regarding His anger: God's anger is not human anger. Our anger is like a flash flood or a lightning bolt – both are quick, and both are destructive. God's anger is a measured response to the situation.

Now, God didn't relent because of what Moses said, God relented because He had already seen the end from the beginning. But perhaps this was a test for Moses. How hard would Moses fight for His people? How much did he love them? How far would he go to protect them? And how far would he go to discipline them? We will understand more as we read the rest of this Chapter and the rest of his journey to the border of the Promised Land.

Verse 16 is amazing. Jesus actually engraved the words on the tablets, front and back. Next week we will see the consequences of their idol worship. We will also see Moses' anger explode which resulted in his throwing down the tablets written by the Hand of God.

While God was not taken by surprise, Moses, it seems, was. He knew that they were complainers and grumblers. But for some reason, he didn't see idol worship in the journey to the Promised Land. Perhaps he too needed to understand the depravity of the heart in mankind so that he could then understand the depth of love, mercy and grace of our Creator against whom mankind has sinned since the beginning.

Moses saw the heart but didn't have the right solution. The Law was powerless to change the heart. The consequences of disobedience were powerless to change the heart. Some other solution was needed.

Romans 8:1-4 NKJV *There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, (4) that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Galatians 3:1-5 NKJV O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? (2) This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? (4) Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain? (5) Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Galatians 2:20 NKJV I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.