

# Exodus 31 Commentary

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Summary Chart of The Book of Exodus									
DELIVERANCE FROM OPPRESSION						PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP			
Redemption from Egypt Ex 1:1-18:27						Revelation from God Ex 19:1-40:38			
Getting Israel Out of Egypt						Getting Egypt Out of Israel!			
Narration						Legislation			
Birth of Moses Ex 1-2	Call of Moses Ex 3-6	Conflict with Pharaoh Ex 7-10	Exodus from Egypt Ex 11-12	Red Sea Crossed Ex 13-15	Journey To Sinai Ex 16-18	Law Given Ex 19-24	Tent Plan Ex 25-31	Idol Worship Ex 32-34	Tent Built Ex 35-40
Subjection				Redemption		Instruction			
Suffering and Liberation of People of God				Guidance of God		Worship of God			
Moses and Burdens of Israel		Pharaoh and Plagues Upon Egypt		Red Sea Deliverance	Wilderness Provision	Sinai Instructions			
Bondage and Oppression				Deliverance and Provision		Law Pattern and Construction			
Israel in Egypt Ex 1:1-13:16				Israel to Sinai Ex 13:17-18:27		Israel at Sinai Ex 19:1-40:38			

God's People Enduring Bondage				God's Grace Revealed in Redemption		God's Glory Manifested in Worship			
Egypt 430 Years (15% of Exodus)				Wilderness 2 Months (30% of Exodus)		Mt Sinai 10 Months (55% of Exodus)			
From Groaning									To Glory!

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[Click for Events during the Sojourn at Kadesh-Barnea](#)

GENESIS	EXODUS
human effort and failure	divine power and triumph
word of promise	work of fulfillment
a people chosen	a people called
God's electing mercy	God's electing manner
revelation of nationality	realization of nationality

SUMMARY OF THE PENTATEUCH  
(from Believer's Study Bible)

**Exodus 31:1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

**David Thompson** - What is very clear from this specific passage is that only the best craftsmen were to be used in the construction of the tabernacle. All people were important to worship, but not all people were skilled and gifted in the same way. What we see here is this: GOD GIFTED AND APPOINTED CERTAIN CRAFTSMEN TO DESIGN AND BUILD WHAT GOD WANTED MOSES TO DESIGN AND BUILD. This passage forces us to make an assumption. The assumption is that when God wants something accomplished or built, He will sovereignly see to it that the right people are in place to carry out the assignment. He will bring the right people at the right time to do the right work. That is clear from this text. God spoke directly to Moses. 31:1 We have pointed out multiple times that nothing was done in this project without Moses. Moses was the key man of God. Moses was God's choice to lead this nation even though Moses didn't want the job. Moses did not do all the work concerning this project, but everything about this project was connected to him. He was the key authority and he was the one responsible for the ultimate oversight of this project. When the project of building this tabernacle was completed, all of the people of God could rejoice and share in the blessings and the contributions. But all of it was connected also to Moses. God chose him and decided to work with him to accomplish this task.

**Exodus 31:2 "See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.**

- **I have:** Ex 33:12,17 35:30 36:1 Isa 45:3,4 Mk 3:16-19 Joh 3:27
- **Bezaleel:** Ex 37:1 1Ch 2:19,20
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah- Bush on called by name** "That is, I have especially designated, appointed, and set apart to the superintendence of this work Bezaleel the son of Uri. His name signifies 'under the shadow of God,' but that it has any particular significance in this connexion we see no evidence. He was the seventh in descent from Judah, and the reader will find his genealogy expressly detailed, 1 Chron. 2:5–20."

**Bezalel and Oholiab** (v. 6) were uniquely gifted and chosen of God for the crucial tasks of fashioning and constructing the tabernacle. Note that mere human ability was insufficient for the task. Even though these two men had nothing to do with the priestly, teaching, or prophetic offices, they still needed the special filling of God's Spirit for their craftsmanship (v. 3). Every man who is a child of God has a unique contribution to make, and that must be made in the power of God's Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8), who bestows all gifts upon man. When God calls workmen, He equips them for His service. This is one of the early clear references to the work of the Holy Spirit.

**David Thompson** - God specifically singled out two key men to complete this project. Ex 31:2-6a There are two specific men that God mentions in this context: Man #1 - God specifically names **Bezalel**. Ex 31:2-5 We learn about his calling . 31:2a He was called by God. God specifically told Moses I have called this man by name to do this job. God can call people by name to do some amazing things physically. God does call people to do specific things for him. He does give people unique skills and abilities to accomplish His purposes. I have heard of individuals whom God has called to various ministries and churches, who have done some incredible things. I know of a sanctuary that was being constructed and it was being constructed wrong. One man saw it, not only had the skills and abilities to spot the problem, but fix the problem. God sent that man to that place for that purpose. I know of a church in the west in which God saved a very prominent wealthy man. In the aftermath of God doing that, He led that man to pay for land and build a church on the land that is operating to this very day. No one asked this man for anything; God just laid it on his heart to do it. That is apparently the kind of things God did with Bezalel. This was the specific man that God called to oversee this construction project. We must assume God gave him tremendous ability as a skilled builder. Pg. 344 (Fact #2) - We learn about his family . 31:2 Bezalel was the son of Uri, the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah.

#### Related Resource:

- [Who were Bezalel and Oholiab in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Exodus 31:3 "I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship,**

- **filled:** Ex 35:31 1Ki 3:9 7:14 Isa 28:6,26 1Co 12:4-11
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship-** God empowered these craftsmen with the Holy Spirit (cf Jdg. 6:34+ = "so the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon;" and 1 Sa 10:10).

**THOUGHT** - Beloved you who are called out of darkness into His marvelous light to proclaim His excellencies, are you living daily in the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit? If not, you cannot optimally realize your holy calling as a priest of the LORD God. You must be filled with the Spirit of Jesus to be fruitful (John 15:5). Are you continually being filled with the Spirit? Eph 5:18<sup>+</sup> Are you walking by the Spirit? (Gal 5:16<sup>+</sup>) Have you grieved the Spirit (Eph 4:30<sup>+</sup>) or quenched the Spirit (1 Th 5:19<sup>+</sup>) by harboring unconfessed sins and thus in effect cutting off the Spirit's power? If so, then confess your sins (1 John 1:9<sup>+</sup>) and walk in the light (1 John 1:7<sup>+</sup>), filled with and empowered by the Spirit of Christ! This is the way to walk **'in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship'** and to experience the abundant life and victory over the sin that so easily entangles you!

#### Related Resources:

- [Chart comparing Filled with the Spirit and the Word](#)
- [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

**David Thompson** - We learn about his filling . 31:3 Now this filling is a special enablement that would cause one to be able to carry out the assignment. There are four specific areas of filling and different words used to describe what God supernaturally did: Area #1 - God filled him with **wisdom** . 31:3a This particular word has to do with wisdom and intelligence that is given by God to one who fears and reverences Him. This refers to a very crafty ability to make very skilled judgments in a specific field (William Gesenius, Hebrew Lexicon, pp. 277-278). To gain this level of wisdom, one must be in a right relationship with God or God will not grant it. God

filled him with **understanding** . 31:3b This word refers to an intelligence that has great insight into something (Ibid., p. 855). Area #3 - God filled him with **knowledge** . 31:3c This word refers to actually intelligently knowing something versus speculating about something (Ibid., p. 205). Area #4 - God filled him with **craftsmanship** . 31:3d This refers to a very specific work of service that is specifically prescribed by God and enabled by God to accomplish the task (Ibid., p. 475).

**George Bush - I have filled him with the Spirit of God, &c** That is, with those intellectual gifts and endowments which are immediately specified, and which amounted to something like a divine inspiration, but at the same time not implying any thing of a moral character, the usual result of the operation of the Spirit of God. Both he and his associates in the work were to be the subjects of an influence which should improve their faculties and endow them with an ingenuity and skill far beyond the utmost stretch of their unassisted powers. This extraordinary ability now to be imparted, infinite wisdom doubtless, saw to be indispensable on the present occasion. The children of Israel had in Egypt been condemned to a hard bondage in brick and in mortar, and in all kinds of coarse, rough, and degrading labor, and consequently could not be supposed to be qualified for the curious workmanship which was now required. To engrave and to embroider, to work gold, to cut diamonds, and to mount jewels, would of course demand a degree of tact and dexterity for which, as they had served no previous apprenticeship at it, they must be indebted to a supernatural teaching. But he who had designed the work was abundantly able to qualify the work men.

#### **Exodus 31:4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,**

NET Exodus 31:4 to make artistic designs for work with gold, with silver, and with bronze,

NLT Exodus 31:4 He is a master craftsman, expert in working with gold, silver, and bronze.

ESV Exodus 31:4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze,

NIV Exodus 31:4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze,

KJV Exodus 31:4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

- Ex 25:32-35 26:1 28:15 1Ki 7:14 2Ch 2:7,13,14
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**to make artistic designs (KJV = "cunning works") for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze,**

**David Thompson** - We learn about the results of the filling. 31:4-5 There are three specific results of this filling of God: Result #1 - He would be able to make artistic designs. 31:4 Result #2 - He would be able to cut stones. Ex 31:5a Result #3 - He would be able to carve wood. Ex 31:5b This man was specifically given the ability by God to construct and build.

**Bush - To devise cunning works.** Heb לחשב מחשבת lahashob mehashoboth to think thoughts, or to ponder devices Gr. ἀρχιτεκτονῆσαι, lit. to architectonize. Chal. 'To teach artificers;' i. e. to act in the capacity of chief designer, director, and overseer, in executing the various works prescribed. The term does not, however, in this connexion imply that Bezaleel or any of his assistants were to exercise their ingenuity in contriving or originating any of the utensils or decorations of the Tabernacle. They were merely to execute the plans of the divine Draftsman. But in doing this there was still room for the display of much mechanical tact, or device, in accomplishing every thing with exactness, readiness, and elegance.

#### **Exodus 31:5 and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.**

- Ex 28:9-21
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.**

**Bush - In carving of wood,** Heb. בחרשית baharoshith, from חרש harash, which has the general sense of making incisions, or furrows, whether by a ploughshare in the soil, or by a graving tool in metal, wood, or stone. It is the same word with that rendered 'cutting' in the preceding clause, which has reference mainly to the engraving of the names on the gems of the breast-plate. We do not indeed read elsewhere expressly of there having been any 'carved work' about the Tabernacle, which has led Patrick to suppose that the term indicated merely the common work of carpenters and joiners. But we deem it altogether probable that there was some

ornamental carved work about the pillars; and if, as we have hinted above, several of the utensils were made from moulds, there can be little doubt that these were carved out of wood.

**Exodus 31:6 "And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you:**

NET Exodus 31:6 Moreover, I have also given him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, and I have given ability to all the specially skilled, that they may make everything I have commanded you:

NLT Exodus 31:6 "And I have personally appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to be his assistant. Moreover, I have given special skill to all the gifted craftsmen so they can make all the things I have commanded you to make:

ESV Exodus 31:6 And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you:

NIV Exodus 31:6 Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you:

KJV Exodus 31:6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;

- **I Myself have appointed:** Ex 4:14,15 6:26 Ezr 5:1,2 Ec 4:9-12 Mt 10:2-4 Lu 10:1 Ac 13:2 Ac 15:39,40
- **Oholiab:** Ex 35:34 36:1
- **who are skillful :** Ex 28:3 35:10,25,26,35 36:1,8 1Ki 3:12 Pr 2:6,7 Jas 1:5,16,17
- **they may make** Ex 37:1-38:31 Nu 4:1-49 1Ki 6:1-8:66 2Ch 3:1-4:22 Eze 43:1-48:35
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you** Skillful is literally "wise of heart" and would seem to imply those who could make "skillful decisions." Some of the men like [Bezalel](#) were skillful because Jehovah had filled them with the Spirit of God. Others ([Oholiab](#), et al) were skillful because God had placed that skill within their hearts. It was first of all to be a work of their hearts (speaking of devotion, adoration, worship) and that would "work its way out" (so to speak) into a work of their hands.

**THOUGHT** - This is the still the (perfect) pattern for ALL work **FOR** the LORD. It must first be energized by a "work **OF** the LORD" (His Spirit) in our hearts, and then with hearts aflame for His glory, we enter joyfully, supernaturally into the works He has prepared for us since eternity past. As Paul put in Ephesians 2:8-9, we are not saved **BY** works but we are saved **FOR** good works - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 NOT as a result of **works**, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship ([poiema](#)), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Eph 2:8-9+, Eph 2:10+) (See - [Poiema - God's Masterpiece](#))

[David Thompson](#) - God specifically names Oholiab. Ex 31:6-11 There are two key facts we learn about Oholiab: (Fact #1) - He had been appointed by God Himself. 31:6a We must assume from this that he was needed to help Bezalel. (Fact #2) - He was the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan . 31:6b **OBSERVATION #3** – God specifically called all to accomplish the project. Ex 31:6c-11 Fact #1 - God put skill in the hearts of all skillful. 31:6d God put the skill in their hearts to make all God commanded to be made. Ex 31:6e-11 Now we get a list of things that God gave people the skill to be able to construct. In order to do this in a way that was acceptable to God, they needed God to give them the skill. There are at least fourteen worship realities that needed to be in place in order to have acceptable worship. Each reality was important and without it, God would not accept it. Now in order for this to be in existence, God needed to give the skill necessary to build it.

**Exodus 31:7 the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent,**

- **tabernacle:** Ex 26:1-37 27:9-19 36:8-38
- **ark:** Ex 25:10-22 37:1-9

- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent,**

[David Thompson](#) - (Reality #1) - God gave the skill to build the tent . 31:7a (Reality #2) - God gave the skill to build the ark . 31:7b (Reality #3) - God gave the skill to build the mercy seat. 31:7c (Reality #4) - God gave the skill to build all the furniture . 31:7d (Reality #5) - God gave the skill to build the table with its utensils. 31:8a (Reality #6) - God gave the skill to build the lampstand with its utensils. 31:8b (Reality #7) - God gave the skill to build the altar of incense . 31:8c (Reality #8) - God gave the skill to build the altar of burnt offering and its utensils. 31:9a (Reality #9) - God gave the skill to build the laver and its stand. 31:9b (Reality #10) - God gave the skill to make woven garments. 31:10a (Reality #11) - God gave the skill to make holy garments for Aaron. 31:10b Pg. 346 (Reality #12) - God gave the skill to make the garments for Aaron's sons. 31:10c The purpose is so that they could carry out their ministry. (Reality #13) - God gave the skill to make the anointing oil . 31:11a (Reality #14) - God gave the skill to make fragrant incense . 31:11b Notice in order to make "all that I have commanded you," God needed to provide the skill and ability to certain people in order for them to do it.

**Exodus 31:8 the table also and its utensils, and the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense,**

- **the table:** Ex 25:23-30 37:10-16
- **pure gold lampstand** Ex 25:31-40 37:17-24
- **the altar:** Ex 30:1-10 37:25-28
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**the table also and its utensils** Discussed in Ex 25:23-30 (see commentary)

**and the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils** - Discussed in Ex 25:31-40 (see commentary)

**and the altar of incense** - See comments on Ex 30:1-10.

**Exodus 31:9 the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils, and the laver and its stand,**

- **the altar:** Ex 27:1-8 38:1-7
- **the laver:** Ex 30:18-21 38:8 40:11
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**the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils** - Discussed in Ex 27:1-8 (see commentary)

**and the laver and its stand** - Discussed in Ex 30:18-21 (see commentary)

**Exodus 31:10 the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, with which to carry on their priesthood;**

- Ex 28:1-43 39:1-43 Lev 8:7,8,13 Nu 4:5-14
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**the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, with which to carry on their priesthood** Discussed in Ex 28:1-43 (see commentary)

**Exodus 31:11 the anointing oil also, and the fragrant incense for the holy place, they are to make them according to all that I have commanded you."**

- **the anointing:** Ex 30:23-33 37:29
- **incense:** Ex 30:34-38

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**the anointing oil also** - Discussed in Ex 30:23-33 (see commentary)

**and the fragrant incense for the holy place** - Discussed in Ex 30:34-38 (see commentary)

**they are to make them according to all that I have commanded you** - No deviations or improvising. All that the LORD said they were to do with skill and for the glory of God.

#### Exodus 31:12 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,**

**Ryrie** - Vs. 31:12-17 The Sabbath was made a sign of God's unique relationship with Israel as His own people. The importance of this sign is seen in the insistence of later prophets that **Sabbath-keeping was an indication of the spiritual condition of the people** (Jer. 17:19-27; Ezek. 20:12-24)

[David Thompson](#) - The LORD spoke this truth about the Sabbath Day to Moses .Do not overlook this key point in this matter pertaining to the Sabbath Day. **God did not speak this Sabbath Day stuff to Paul** God did not speak this to John. God did not speak this to Peter. He spoke this to Moses. Now we would naturally think that if this were such a critical factor for the Church, at least one of the Apostles would have addressed it. When Jesus Christ revealed the Gospel to Paul, we would think that He would have mentioned the importance of the Sabbath Day. Also when Jesus addressed the seven churches of Revelation, we would expect that He would say don't forget to remember the Sabbath Day. The truth is the Sabbath Day was revealed to Moses because it was connected to Israel, not the Church. Clearly we see that in verse 12.

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[David Thompson](#) - **BACKGROUND ON THE SABBATH** - If ever there has been a maze of confusion in the world of theology, it is concerning the subject of the Sabbath Day. The Sabbath Day has been the subject of controversy and trouble. But I don't know of any passage that is clearer on this subject of the Sabbath Day than this one right here in Exodus. It is so clear that that the Sabbath Day is not for the Church; it is for Israel . Now one of the critical questions that most neglect when studying this subject is why did God wait for several hundred years before He gave His Law? God was perfectly capable of dealing with men long before Moses, so why did He wait so long to even give data on the Sabbath if the Sabbath is so critical to man? Well, the simple answer is the Sabbath is a specific part of the Law given to the nation Israel . It was not given to people other than Israel. It totally amazes me how this point is overlooked; but if you read the Bible with any contextual sense, this point is very clear. I do not know how anyone can read Nehemiah 8:16-9:1, 7-14 or Ezekiel 20:5, 10-11 and actually conclude that the Sabbath was for anyone other than Israel. It is beyond my reason to figure out how anyone can read these passages and say that the Sabbath Day is for the Church.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SABBATH WAS TO BE A SIGN BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND ISRAEL** God never said this was a sign between Jehovah and the Gentiles. This was a reminder to the nation Israel that she, as a nation, had been separated unto God. The Sabbath Day was part of the Old Testament Law and it was a day of complete physical rest from any sort of physical activity. No fire was to be kindled; no food was to be prepared; no journey was to be undertaken. There was to be no buying or selling; no burden borne; no work was to be done. Whoever broke any of these legal mandates of the O.T. Law was in grave danger of being put to death—Numbers 15:32-36; Exodus 31:12-17; 35:3; 16:22-26; Neh. 10:31; 13:15-21. Now when we read the New Testament, it becomes crystal clear that the Law ended with Jesus Christ and specifically it ended with His work on the cross—John 1:16-17; Romans 6:14; 7:6; Galatians 3:19-25; Colossians 2:14. When Jesus said that He was Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28; Luke 6:5), He specifically meant that He had absolute authority to change and even abolish the Sabbath Day. Two key points that Sabbatarian's miss is that: 1) there is absolutely no record of early Christians observing the Sabbath Day; and 2) there is no mention of keeping the Sabbath Day in any of the Grace Age church epistles. In Colossians 2:10-17 the point is that a believer in Jesus Christ is complete in Christ and the Law has been nailed to the cross and therefore the Sabbath is no more (Col. 2:16-17). In Galatians 4:9-10 believers are warned not to put themselves back under enslavement to the Law

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**Exodus 31:13 "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.**

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NET Exodus 31:13 "Tell the Israelites, 'Surely you must keep my Sabbaths, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

NLT Exodus 31:13 "Tell the people of Israel: 'Be careful to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you from generation to generation. It is given so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

ESV Exodus 31:13 "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.

NIV Exodus 31:13 "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

KJV Exodus 31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.

- **You shall surely observe My sabbaths:** Ex 20:8-11 Lev 19:3,30 23:3 25:2 26:2
- **this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.:** Ex 31:17 Ne 9:14 Eze 20:12,20 44:24
- **that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you:** Lev 20:8 21:8 Eze 37:28 Joh 17:17,19 1Th 5:23 Jude 1:1
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SABBATH OBSERVANCE TO BE A SIGN

**But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you** - One purpose of the Sabbath was to be a sign which you recall is simply a physical manifestation of something (in this case cessation of work on the seventh day, something all could see, including the pagans) which points to a spiritual reality. In this case, when Israel kept the seventh day holy, they were demonstrating that Jehovah was their God Who Himself was Holy and Who set His people apart to be holy as He is holy (cf Lev 11:44+, cf 1 Peter 1:14-16+).

### Related Resource:

- [Jehovah Mekeddeshem \(Mekadesh\): LORD Who Sanctifies \(Jehovah M'Kaddesh\)](#)

**NET Note** - The instruction for the Sabbath at this point seems rather abrupt, but it follows logically the extended plans of building the sanctuary. B. Jacob, following some of the earlier treatments, suggests that these are specific rules given for the duration of the building of the sanctuary (Exodus, 844). The Sabbath day is a day of complete cessation; no labor or work could be done. The point here is that God's covenant people must faithfully keep the sign of the covenant as a living commemoration of the finished work of Yahweh, and as an active part in their sanctification.

**Criswell** - Even those doing the Lord's work building the tabernacle were not exempt from the commandment concerning the Sabbath. To do work was to defile the Sabbath. As the cross is for many Christians the symbol of Christianity, the Sabbath was the symbol of Israel's relationship with God. To defile it amounted to a rejection of that relationship.

**David Thompson** - The LORD told Moses to speak this to the sons of Israel . 31:13a Do not overlook this point. He did not tell Moses to speak this to the Church or to Gentile nations. He said you speak this to the "sons of Israel." Frankly, I don't know how God could be much clearer on this point. This Sabbath Day is for Israel, not for the Church. J. Vernon McGee said whenever someone would come to him and ask him when was the Sabbath Day changed, he would say, "it was never changed." It was done away with as far as the Church is concerned. We do not worship God on Saturday because on Saturday, Jesus Christ was dead. We worship on Sunday, which was the day that Christ arose from the dead. The Sabbath Day is not given to the Church, it was given to Israel. The LORD told Moses specifically what to say to Israel.....The "**Sabbaths**" plural are to be observed by Israel. Now there were various Sabbath days that Israel was required to keep and they were required to keep all of them. There were the **Sabbath of years** and there were the **jubilee Sabbaths** (Leviticus 25). Israeli The Sabbaths are a **sign between God and Israel to their generations**. The nation Israel was to *shut down* as a sign of the special relationship she had with God as a nation. This was a **national shut down day**. The Sabbath is so that Israel may know that God is the one who sanctifies her. This Sabbath Day was to be a day in which the nation Israel realized that they were the nation that had been **set apart by God**. It was a day to realize that



God had chosen Israel and set Israel apart from all the nations of the world. Now this right here shows how much this has been distorted. First of all, if you are Israel and you do observe some religious Sabbath, there is no way she spends the day thinking about the fact that God has set this nation apart and blessed this nation from all nations of the world. Most Jewish people who celebrate the Sabbath today wish God would do something for them. Most do not think about how special and set apart she is before God. This was a national statement. This is not a Church statement. The statement for the Church is when people go to church to worship God, not when they sit at home and don't do anything. We have specifically been set apart by God and as we sit here on our couch in our home, we testify of this to the entire nation.

**Bush - Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep.** This command is here repeated from the divine foresight of its necessity under the circumstances. It is as if he had said, 'You are indeed about to be employed in an important and sacred work, one requiring great assiduity and despatch; nevertheless let it not be thought that this circumstance affords sufficient ground for encroaching upon holy time with the work in which you are engaged. Let the most urgent business come to a pause during the hallowed hours of the Sabbath.'

**Bush - that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.** That is, by an external consecration of the race of Israel to himself, as a sign and token of which the Sabbath was ordained as a day of worship and of rest from secular labor. The institution of the weekly Sabbath as a sanctified season, was an expressive indication of the character of the **covenant relation** which was to subsist between God and Israel. **They were continually reminded by it that they were to be a sanctified people, chosen, separated, and distinguished from the rest of the world, with whom all traces of the primitive Sabbath had become nearly extinct.** Consequently this institution would not be a sign to the Israelites only, but to the surrounding nations. They would be taught the same truth by the same medium. As the religious rites and ceremonies of all people are an index of the character of the deities whom they serve, so the stated observing of the Sabbath in a holy manner would testify to all the world the holy attributes of that God whom they worshipped and with whom they were in covenant.

**Exodus 31:14 'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, 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.'**

NET Exodus 31:14 So you must keep the Sabbath, for it is holy for you. Everyone who defiles it must surely be put to death; indeed, if anyone does any work on it, then that person will be cut off from among his people.

NLT Exodus 31:14 You must keep the Sabbath day, for it is a holy day for you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; anyone who works on that day will be cut off from the community.

ESV Exodus 31:14 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.

NIV Exodus 31:14 " 'Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people.

KJV Exodus 31:14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

- **you are to observe the sabbath:** Ex 20:8 De 5:12-15 Ne 9:14 Isa 56:2-6 58:13,14 Eze 20:12 44:24,
- **you are to observe the sabbath** Isa 56:2,6 Eze 20:13,16,21,24
- **shall surely be put to death:** Ex 35:2,3 Nu 15:35
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **FAILURE TO KEEP SABBATH IS SERIOUS**

**Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death** This severe penalty emphasized how important Israel's observing this day was to Him. Later in Numbers we find an example of Israel carrying out a stoning a man who broke the Sabbath gathering wood! And what was the effect? There are not other records after this stoning of anyone breaking the Sabbath!

Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. 33 Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation; 34 and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. 35 Then the LORD said to Moses, **"The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones**

**outside the camp.” 36 So all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones,** just as the LORD had commanded Moses. (Numbers 15:32-36)

**Bush - It is holy unto you.** Heb. קֹדֶשׁ חוּא לָכֶם kodesh hi lakem, it is holiness or sanctification unto you. **Shall surely be put to death.** Heb. מוֹת יוֹמָת moth yumath, dying shall be made to die. That is, by the hands of the magistrate if the iniquity could be proved; if not, by premature death at the hand of God himself, which seems, from the Rabbinical writers, to have been understood as the penalty denounced against daring crimes when there were no human witnesses to bear testimony to the fact. See on Gen. 17:14.

**for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people-** Note the parallel **put to death** and **cut off**, so we don't have to guess at what cut off means!

**David Thompson** - - The Sabbath is to be observed because it is holy to Israel. This day is “holy” to Israel, not to the Church. These Sabbath days were very important to Israel. Sabbath days for Israel were very sacred days. If the Sabbath is profaned by any Israelite, he shall be put to death . The assumption here is that God has total charge of both civil and religious government in Israel. When God was working with Israel, He had total charge over religious and civil leaders and they were responsible to carry out His Word and will, including put people to death who violated the Sabbath Day. One commentator said he loved to ask people who claimed they kept the Sabbath whether or not they kept every element of it all the time. Because if they didn't they were to be put to death. For example, if they ever turned up the heat in their house when it was cold or turned their furnace on or cooked on a stove, the Law required they be executed (Ex. 35:2-3). This point proves this is given to national Israel and not the N.T. Church. First of all, if the Church put someone to death for violating some Sabbath Law, those responsible would be put in jail and punished by the court. You would not be blessed for killing a Sabbath violator; you would be punished. Every now and then we read of some weird religious cult that tries to impose these legal codes on their members and actually have executed people. These are religions that do not realize that we are not Israel and we are not under the Law. However, for national Israel to not put someone to death, who violated the Sabbath Day, meant you could end up severely punished by God. This fact alone proves this is not for us. If someone works on the Sabbath, he is to be cut off from the people.

**Exodus 31:15 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death.**

ET Exodus 31:15 Six days work may be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; anyone who does work on the Sabbath day must surely be put to death.

NLT Exodus 31:15 You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day must be a Sabbath day of complete rest, a holy day dedicated to the LORD. Anyone who works on the Sabbath must be put to death.

ESV Exodus 31:15 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.

NIV Exodus 31:15 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.

KJV Exodus 31:15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

- **Six days:** Ex 31:17 16:26 20:9 34:21 Lev 23:3 Eze 46:1 Lu 13:14
- **the sabbath:** Ex 16:23 20:10 Ge 2:2 Lev 23:3,32 Lu 23:56 Heb 4:9 \*Gr:
- **whoever:** Nu 15:32-36 Jer 17:24-27
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death** - This is amazing that God repeats the warning of capital punishment for breaking the Sabbath! See the [example above from Numbers](#) of a man gathering wood presumably for a fire, disobedience which cost him his life! Note the Exodus passages above implying there was to be "no cooking" just eating the necessities which were pre-prepared.

**David Thompson** - No work, no activity was the mark of this national day between God and Israel. For the Christian, Sunday is an active day. Why was this such a critical day? Because this day for Israel showed that the nation was actually interested in God. God

was responsible for choosing Israel as a nation and it was a sign that basically showed God that Israel was interested in Him and His Word.

**NET on a sabbath of complete rest**, -The expression is שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּבוֹת (shabbat shabbaton), “a Sabbath of entire rest,” or better, “a sabbath of complete desisting” (U. Cassuto, Exodus, 404). The second noun, the modifying genitive, is an abstract noun. The repetition provides the superlative idea that complete rest is the order of the day.

**Bush - Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord** Heb. שַׁבַּת שַׁבְּבוֹת קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה shabbath shabbathon kodesh laihova, a sabbath of sabbatism, holiness to Jehovah. Gr. ἀναπαύσις ἁγία τοῦ κυρίου, a rest holy to the Lord. The phrase is peculiarly intensive in the original. Upon comparing this with the preceding verse, it is clear that the two parties, God and Israel, were each to hold the Sabbath holy to the other; and upon this ground the observance of it is called v. 16, a ‘perpetual covenant.’

**Henry Morris** - 31:15 seventh is the sabbath. Breaking God's rest day was defined by Him as a capital crime among His chosen people, and this shows all people how vital its observance is to Him. As far as Israel was concerned, it was to be observed perpetually. Since its use long antedates the calling of Israel, it should actually be regarded as a perpetual reminder to all people of the preeminent importance God placed on His completed work of creation and His abhorrence of any religion or any practice which denied or trivialized this foundational doctrine.

**Exodus 31:16 'So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.'**

NET Exodus 31:16 The Israelites must keep the Sabbath by observing the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

NLT Exodus 31:16 The people of Israel must keep the Sabbath day by observing it from generation to generation. This is a covenant obligation for all time.

ESV Exodus 31:16 Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.

NIV Exodus 31:16 The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant.

KJV Exodus 31:16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

- **a perpetual covenant:** Ge 9:13 17:11 Jer 50:5
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant** - Israel's continual celebration served as a sign to the polytheistic pagans that Israel was different, set apart, a holy nation.

**David Thompson** - The Sabbath is a perpetual covenant sign to be celebrated by Israel. The keeping of the Sabbath Day was a sign for Israel that she was in a covenantal, national relationship with God. Now an application we could make is that when we worship on Sunday at church, we show that we are in a covenant relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Bush - To observe the sabbath** Heb. לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת laäsoth eth hash-shabbath, lit. to do or make the sabbath. The expression in the original is peculiar and conveying an idea not easily transferable into English. Our phrases ‘keep the Sabbath’ and ‘observe the Sabbath’ are hardly to be distinguished in import from each other, carrying with them mainly the idea of cessation from secular work. But the Hebrew formulary ‘to do the Sabbath’ has the additional involved sense of the active doing or performing of certain acts and exercises essential to the due sanctification of a day which was yet emphatically a day of rest. The same phrase occurs Deut. 5:15, ‘And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day. (לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת יוֹם שַׁבַּת, to do the day of rest).’ So also, Deut. 16:1, ‘Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover (עָשִׂיתָ פֶּסַח asitha pesah, do the passover) unto the Lord thy God.’ Comp. Mat. 26:18, ‘The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover (אֶכְלֶם אֶת הַפֶּסַח I will do or make the passover) at thy house with my disciples.’ Again Deut. 16:13, ‘Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles (אָנָּה תַעֲשֶׂה הַחַג hag has sukkoth taäseh, the feast of tabernacles thou shalt do or make) seven days,’ &c.

**Exodus 31:17 "It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed."**

NET Exodus 31:17 It is a sign between me and the Israelites forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed."

NLT Exodus 31:17 It is a permanent sign of my covenant with the people of Israel. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and was refreshed."

ESV Exodus 31:17 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."

NIV Exodus 31:17 It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.' "

KJV Exodus 31:17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

- **a sign:** Ex 31:13 Eze 20:12,20
- **six days:** Ge 1:31 2:2,3 Heb 4:3,4,10
- **and was refreshed:** Ge 1:31 Job 38:7 Ps 104:31 Jer 32:41
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **SABBATH A SIGN FOREVER**

**It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed** - He reiterates the idea of perpetual covenant in Ex 31:16. God Who needs nothing gives us an example to follow that we might too be refreshed.

**David Thompson** - The Sabbath is a sign forever between God and Israel. Notice the emphasis again; this is a sign between God and Israel, not God and the Church.

**Bush - A sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.** Chal. 'Between my Word and the sons of Israel.' Was refreshed. Heb. יִנָּפֵשׁ yinnaphesh, fetched breath. Of course to be understood as spoken of God after the manner of men, on the principle of anthropomorphism, of which a very expanded detail is given in Rev. J. P. Smith's Comparative View of Scripture and Geology.

**NET on refreshed** - The word "rest" essentially means "to cease, stop." So describing God as "resting" on the seventh day does not indicate that he was tired—he simply finished creation and then ceased or stopped. But in this verse is a very bold anthropomorphism in the form of the verb יִנָּפֵשׁ (vayyinnafash), a Niphal preterite from the root נָפַשׁ (nafash), the word that is related to "life, soul" or more specifically "breath, throat." The verb is usually translated here as "he was refreshed," offering a very human picture. It could also be rendered "he took breath" (S. R. Driver, Exodus, 345). Elsewhere the verb is used of people and animals. The anthropomorphism is clearly intended to teach people to stop and refresh themselves physically, spiritually, and emotionally on this day of rest.

### **Related Resources:**

- [What is the Sabbath day? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What day is the Sabbath, Saturday or Sunday? Do Christians have to observe the Sabbath day? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How is Jesus our Sabbath Rest? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Does God require Sabbath-keeping of Christians? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why does Exodus 35:2 require the death penalty for working on the Sabbath? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Exodus 31:18 When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.**

NET Exodus 31:18 He gave Moses two tablets of testimony when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, tablets of stone written by the finger of God.

NLT Exodus 31:18 When the LORD finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God.

ESV Exodus 31:18 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.

NIV Exodus 31:18 When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

KJV Exodus 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

- **gave:** Ex 24:12,18 32:15,16 34:1-4,28,29 De 4:13 5:22 9:9-11 2Co 3:3
- **written by the finger of God:** Ex 8:19 32:16 Jer 31:33 Mt 12:28 Lu 11:20 2Co 3:7,8
- [Exodus 31 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God** - Sadly Moses would end up breaking these precious tablets in righteous indignation against Israel's sin of the golden calf.

**NET Note** on finger of God - The expression "the finger of God" has come up before in the book, in the plagues (Exod 8:15) to express that it was a demonstration of the power and authority of God. So here too the commandments given to Moses on stone tablets came from God. It too is a bold anthropomorphism; to attribute such a material action to Yahweh would have been thought provoking to say the least. But by using "God" and by stating it in an obviously figurative way, balance is maintained. Since no one writes with one finger, the expression simply says that the Law came directly from God.

[David Thompson](#) - God made certain that His nation had His Word in written form. This written Word was for Israel. This Word was literally written with the "finger of God." God's written Word is to be taken very seriously. To disregard the Word is to disregard God. God has made certain that we have God's written Word for the Church.

**Bush - When he had made an end of communing with him.** At the close of the forty days' sojourn upon the mount, during which time all the preceding laws and ordinances had been delivered to him. The clause occurs at a point where it forms a very suitable transition in the progress of the narrative. In the ensuing chapter he is about to relate the fact of his having broken the tables under the impulse of a holy indignation at the sins of the people, and he accordingly here premises the necessary information respecting the tables themselves, what they contained, and whence they were received.

**Bush - Two tables of testimony.** The grounds of this appellation have already been explained, Ex 25:16. The laws written on them testified the will of God as to the duties of his creatures, and by being received and deposited in the Ark, they were a testimony on the part of Israel that they had covenanted to receive and obey them upon the penalty of incurring all the judgments and curses by which they were enforced. They were written on tables of stone to denote their perpetual and unchangeable obligation; and they were written not by the commandment, but by the immediate power of God himself, here termed his 'finger,' which is elsewhere used in the same sense, Ps. 8:3, Luke, 11:20. As however, the 'finger of God' is spoken of by our Savior as equivalent to the 'Spirit of God,' the power by which devils were cast out, some have supposed that all that is meant here is, that these tables were written by Moses indeed, but still by the direct prompting and dictation of the Spirit of God, so that it was more entitled to be considered as a divine than a human work. But the following passages would seem to be too explicit to allow of any other than the common explication. Ex. 24:12, 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give the tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.' Ex. 32:15, 16, 'And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.' Deut. 5:22, 'These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness with a great voice; and he added no more: and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.' 'Of the Decalogue, above all other holy writ, God seems to say, as Paul, Philem. 19, 'Behold, I have written it with mine own hand.' ' Trapp.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY - Resources Quoted in Commentary

- Exodus 31 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

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- [Alan Cole - Exodus - TOTC](#)
- [John Currid - Epsc Exodus Volume 1 \(1-18\)](#)
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- [Philip Ryken - Preaching the Word - Exodus](#)
- [Douglas Stuart - Exodus - An Exegetical and Theological Commentary \(NAC Series\)](#)
- [Warren Wiersbe - Exodus - Be Delivered](#)