

The construction of the tabernacle, the ark, the altars, etc. would require expert craftsmanship to build properly and the LORD names certain men He has gifted with the skills necessary to do the work. He also reminded the children of Israel that observing the sabbath still took priority over this work and was a distinctive feature of the exclusive covenant between Israel and Himself.

**Exodus 28-30:** Chapter 28 covers the instructions for creating the garments that the priests are to wear, including the accouterments of the high priest (breast plate, ephod, mitre, etc.). Chapter 29 describes the week-long ceremony for consecrating Aaron and his two sons for the priesthood. Chapter 30 gives the instructions for building the altar of incense, where it should be placed, and how incense should be burned on it. The chapter also describes the brazen laver, which was to be filled with water so that the priests can wash their hands and feet before ministering before the LORD. Also included are the ingredients for holy anointing oil and incense that were to be used exclusively in the tabernacle.

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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;

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In verses 1-5, the LORD specifies a man named Bezaleel that He has gifted with the knowledge and craftsmanship to be able to work with wood, metal, and precious stones. Here in v. 6 the LORD names a second man, Aholiab, who has also been gifted with similar skills. The LORD also says that He has provided other men with “wisdom” (skills and knowledge) in order to assist Bezaleel and Aholiab with the task of constructing the tabernacle and all the furniture and utensils described in the previous chapters.

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7 The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, 8 And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, 9 And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,

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The LORD gives a brief summary of the items that He has commanded to be built and He has gifted men like Bezaleel, Aholiab, and others with the skills and knowledge required to do the work. It will take a high level of craftsmanship to properly build these things because they will be used for centuries and they will need to reflect the glory of the heavenly versions.

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10 And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,

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In addition to the skills needed to construct the items mentioned in vs. 7-9, the skills for creating beautiful garments for the priests would also be needed. The LORD also gifted people with the skills to create these garments, which are described in chapter 28.

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11 And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy *place*: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

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The ingredients for making the anointing oil and sweet incense are given in Ex. 30:22-25 (anointing oil), 34-36 (sweet incense). These two mixtures are to be made “after the art of the apothecary” (perfumer) and the LORD had also gifted people with the skills of a perfumer in order to produce them.

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12 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 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.

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**“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel”** – After the instructions for building the tabernacle, its furniture, the priestly garments, the holy anointing oil and incense, LORD wants to caution the children of Israel in the midst of their enthusiasm for completing the work.

**“saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep”** – Despite the importance of constructing the tabernacle and the other items to be used for the worship of the LORD, observing the sabbath took priority over the construction work. Honoring the LORD should always take priority over any work we do for Him. See Luke 10:38-42 where Martha was busy with the work of preparing and serving a meal while her sister Mary was sitting at Jesus’ feet listening to Him teach. When Martha complained and asked Jesus to have Mary help her, He responded that Mary had chosen to give her attention to the thing that was the most important and necessary and that He would not deprive her of it.

**“for it is a sign [distinguishing mark] between me and you throughout your generations”** – The keeping of the sabbath distinguished Israel from other nations who did not serve the LORD. The LORD rested (ceased from His labor) on the seventh day and Israel was also to rest on the seventh day, identifying them as the people of the LORD. The keeping of the sabbath was not a temporary arrangement but will distinguish them as God’s people throughout all future generations.

**“that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify [consecrate; to set apart as sacred] you”** – The children of Israel were not their own to do as they pleased but they belonged to the LORD. The LORD had sanctified them, setting them apart as His people for His holy purposes. Keeping the sabbath was the weekly reminder that they were the people of the LORD and that they were in a covenant with Him. As Christians today, we also do not belong to ourselves (**1 Cor. 6:19-20** “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”). Although we are not required to keep the sabbath as Israel was, we are not free to follow our own desires but are to glorify God with our lives for we have been sanctified in Christ (**1 Cor. 6:11** (after listing some of the types of sinners that will not inherit the kingdom of God) “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”).

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.

**“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy [sacred; set apart] unto you”** – The sabbath day was sacred and not like the other days of the week. It was the day that distinguished Israel from other nations (v. 13) as well as the day set aside to commemorate the fact that the LORD rested on the seventh day of the creation week (v. 17; Ex. 20:11). The root Hebrew word for “sabbath” means “to cease,” which is what the LORD did on the seventh day.

**“every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death”** – Defiling the sabbath meant to treat it like any other day instead of recognizing and respecting its sacredness. Anyone who did so would be under the death penalty.

**“for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people”** – Doing work on the sabbath day was considered a defilement of the sabbath since the person who did so was not observing the sabbath as sacred. The expression “cut off” meant to be put to death.

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 may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD”** – The LORD repeats the details of the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8-11), apparently due to the importance of it. He is making it very clear that the sabbath is on the seventh day of the week and that He has established it as a sacred and holy day.

**“whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death”** – Once again the LORD states that to disrespect the sabbath by doing work meant certain death, indicating the seriousness that the LORD placed on Israel observing the sabbath.

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

The commandment to keep the sabbath is part of the covenant the LORD exclusively made with Israel (Ex. 24:2-8), one that will be in effect forever. Gentiles were never expected to observe the sabbath unless they were living among the children of Israel (Ex. 20:10) and the NT church is never required to observe the sabbath:

**Rom. 14:5-6** *“One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”*

**Col. 2:16-17** *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”*

**Acts 15:28-29** (from the letter sent to the Gentile believers in Antioch) *“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”*

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.

**“It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever”** – The observance of the sabbath was a “sign” (a distinguishing mark) that showed that the relationship between the LORD and the children of Israel was unique. The LORD never made a covenant with any other nation on earth and so only Israel had the privilege of being used to reveal the word of God to the world and having a relationship with Him.

**Rom. 3:1-2** *“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”*

**Eph. 2:12** *“That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:”*

**“for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed”** – The LORD again points back to Himself as the example for observing the sabbath. After working for six days creating the heavens and the earth, the LORD “rested” (the Hebrew word means “to cease”) and was “refreshed” (the Hebrew word literally means “to take a breath”). The LORD obviously did not rest because He was tired and needed to catch His breath. He ceased working because He had nothing else to create and wanted to be our example since we do get tired and need refreshing.

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.

Moses has been on the mountain for forty days in the presence of God and now the LORD has concluded the instructions He has been giving Moses. When He finishes, He gives Moses the two stone tablets on which He has written the decalogue (the Ten Commandments) with His own finger. He is about to send Moses back down to the people, but the next chapter describes what Aaron and the people have been doing while Moses has been away for the past forty days.