

# NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

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F. H. Revell

## Exodus 31

The opening of this brief chapter records the divine call and the divine qualification of “**Bezaleel and Aholiab**” to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation.

**“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship . . . 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.”**

Whether for “**the work of the tabernacle**” of old, or “**the work of the ministry**” now, there should be the divine selection, the divine call, the divine qualification, the divine appointment; and all must be done according to the divine commandment. Man could not select, call, qualify, or appoint to do the work of the tabernacle; neither can he, to do the work of the ministry.

Furthermore, no man could presume to appoint himself to do the work of the tabernacle; neither can he to do the work of the ministry. It was, it is, it must be, wholly and absolutely divine.

Men may run as sent of their fellow, or men may run of themselves; but let it be remembered that all who run, without being sent of God, shall, one day or other, be covered with shame and confusion of face. Such is the plain and wholesome doctrine suggested by the words:

- **“I have called,”**
- **“I have filled,”**
- **“I have given,”**
- **“I have put,”**
- **“I have commanded.”**

The words of the Baptist must ever hold good, “**a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven**” (John 3:27). He can, therefore, have but little room to boast of himself; and just as little to be jealous of his fellow.

There is a profitable lesson to be learnt from a comparison of this chapter with Genesis 6. **“Tubal-cain was an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.”** The descendants of Cain were endowed with unhallowed skill to make a cursed and groaning earth a delectable spot, without the presence of God. **“Bezaleel and Aholiab,”** on the contrary, were endowed with divine skill to beautify a sanctuary which was to be hallowed and blessed by the presence and glory of the God of Israel.

Reader, let me ask you just to pause and put this solemn question to your conscience, “Whether am I devoting whatever of skill or energy I possess to the interests of the Church, which is God’s dwelling place, or to beautify an ungodly, Christless world?”

Say not, in thine heart, “I am not divinely called or divinely qualified for the work of the ministry.” Remember that though all Israel were not Bezaleels or Aholiabs, yet all could serve the interests of the sanctuary. There was an open door for all to communicate. Thus it is now. Each one has a place to occupy, a ministry to fulfil, a responsibility to discharge; and you and I are, at this moment, either promoting the interests of the house of God - the body of Christ - the Church, or helping on the godless schemes of a world, yet stained with the Blood of Christ and the blood of all His martyred saints. Oh! let us deeply ponder this, as in the presence of the great Searcher of hearts, whom none can deceive - to whom all are known.

*Our chapter closes with a special reference to the institution of the Sabbath.*

It was referred to in Exodus 16 in connection with the manna; it was distinctly enjoined in Exodus 20, when the people were formally put under law; and here we have it again in connection with the setting up of the tabernacle. Whenever the nation of Israel is presented in some special position, or recognized as a people in special responsibility, then the Sabbath is introduced. And let my reader carefully note both the day and the mode in which it was to be observed, and also the object for which it was instituted in Israel.

**“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. 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.”**

This is as explicit and absolute as anything can be. It fixes **“the seventh day”** and none other; and it positively forbids, on pain of death, all manner of work. There can be no avoiding the plain sense of this. And, be it remembered, that there is not so much as a single line of Scripture to prove that the Sabbath has been changed, or the strict principles of its observance, in the smallest degree, relaxed. If there be any Scripture proof, let my reader look it out for his own satisfaction. Now, let us inquire if indeed professing Christians do keep God’s Sabbath on the day and after the manner which He commanded. It were idle to lose time in proving that they do not. Well, what are the consequences of a single breach of the Sabbath? **“Cut off” - “Put to death.”**

But, it will be said, “**we are not under law, but under grace.**” Blessed be God for the sweet assurance! Were we under law, there is not one throughout the wide range of Christendom who should not, long since, have fallen beneath the stone of judgment, even upon the one solitary point of the Sabbath. But, if we are under grace, what is the day which belongs to us? Assuredly, “**the first day of the week,**” “**the Lord’s day.**” This is the Church’s day, the resurrection day of Jesus, who, having spent the Sabbath in the tomb, rose triumphant over all the powers of darkness, thus leading His people out of the old creation, and all that pertains thereto, into the new creation, of which He is the Head, and of which the first day of the week is the apt expression.

This distinction is worthy of the serious attention of the reader. Let him examine it prayerfully in the light of Scripture.

There may be nothing and there may be a great deal in a mere name. In the present instance, there is a great deal more involved in the distinction between “**the Sabbath**” and “**the Lord’s day**” than many Christians seem to be aware of.

It is very evident that the first day of the week gets a place, in the Word of God, which no other day gets. No other day is ever called by that majestic and elevated title, “**the Lord’s day.**”

Some, I am aware, deny that Revelation 1:10 refers to the first day of the week; but I feel most fully assured that sound criticism and sound exegesis do both warrant, yea, demand the application of that passage, not to the day of Christ’s advent in glory, but to the day of his resurrection from the dead.

But, most assuredly, the Lord’s day is never once called the Sabbath.

So far from this, the two days are, again and again, spoken of in their proper distinctness. Hence, therefore, my reader will have to keep clear of two extremes.

- In the first place, he will have to avoid the legalism which one finds so much linked with the term “**Sabbath;**” and,
- In the second place, he will need to bear a very decided testimony against every attempt to dishonour the Lord’s day, or lower it to the level of an ordinary day.

The believer is delivered, most completely, from the observance of “**days and months, and times and years.**”

Association with a risen Christ has taken him clean out of all such superstitious observances. But, while this is most blessedly true, we see that “**the first day of the week**” has a place assigned to it in the New Testament which no other has. Let the Christian give it that place. It is a sweet and happy privilege, not a grievous yoke.

Space forbids my further entrance upon this interesting subject. It has been gone into, elsewhere, as already intimated, in the earlier pages of this volume. I shall close these remarks by pointing out, in one or two particulars, the contrast between “**the Sabbath**” and “**the Lord’s day.**”

1. The Sabbath was the seventh day; the Lord's day is the First.
2. The Sabbath was a test of Israel's condition; the Lord's day is the proof of the Church's acceptance, on wholly unconditional grounds.
3. The Sabbath belonged to the old creation; the Lord's day belongs to the new.
4. The Sabbath was a day of bodily rest for the Jew; the Lord's day is a day of spiritual rest for the Christian.
5. If the Jew worked on the Sabbath, he was to be put to death: if the Christian does not work on the Lord's day, he gives little proof of life.

That is to say, if he does not work for the benefit of the souls of men, the extension of Christ's glory, and the spread of His truth. In point of fact, the devoted Christian, who possesses any gift, is generally more fatigued on the evening of the Lord's day than on any other in the week, for how can he rest while souls are perishing around him?

6. The Jew was commanded by the law to abide in his tent; the Christian is led by the spirit of the Gospel to go forth, whether it be to attend the public assembly, or to minister to the souls of perishing sinners.

The Lord enable us, beloved reader, to rest more artlessly in, and labour more vigorously for, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! We should rest in the spirit of a Child; and labour with the energy of a man.

**~ end of chapter 31 ~**

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