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## Exodus 31

<http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/default.aspx>

Bezalel of the tribe of Judah and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan were chosen to build the items for the tabernacle. Though naturally born with these talents—and, as a result, skilled in working with gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood, as well as in carving and embroidered work—the most important thing to notice is that, just as He did with the garment makers, God also filled them with wisdom by His Spirit to enable them to accomplish this most important responsibility.

Also in this chapter, God stresses that it is important to keep His Sabbaths (weekly and annual), as they are a sign between God and His people. It serves as a visible badge and witness to others manifesting those who serve the true God. Furthermore, verse 12 says, “It is a sign...that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.” Thus, it is a sign that regularly points us to the true God. Indeed, the weekly Sabbath memorializes creation, as stated in this passage—and creation points to the Creator, the true God. The Sabbath is a reminder that we do not worship “gods” of rocks and trees, sun moon or sky, or figments of human imagination, but the very Creator who made all these things—including the human mind. And all of God’s Sabbaths reveal His plan for the salvation of all mankind. Notice that the Sabbath is given as a special covenant—a perpetual covenant—distinct from the Sinai covenant (verse 16).

Indeed, God’s Sabbaths are important for us even today, as He said they would be “a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever” (verse 17). Notice: “...for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth...” (same verse). Why would this only be for the Jews alone? That wouldn’t make any sense. Rather, it is clear that, as Christ said, “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27-28)—that is, for all mankind. What ties it all together is that all people must become part of spiritual Israel (compare Romans 11:17, 24; Galatians 3:28-29; 6:16)—and that is defined as those who obey God’s law (Romans 2:25-29), which includes His Sabbath.

After God finished talking with Moses, He gave him the two stone tablets of His Ten Commandments, which He had already written (24:12) with His very finger (31:18). Though we often think of each of these tablets as containing separate sections of the Ten Commandments, it is possible that “all ten commandments appeared on each tablet. Middle Eastern treaties were typically written in duplicate” (Nelson Study Bible, note on 24:12). As these were “tablets of testimony,” it would seem that this would provide the testimony of “two witnesses,” a requirement of God’s law for judgment to be carried out (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). Perhaps that is even one reason the Ten Commandments are recorded twice in the Bible (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5). Still, as the front and back of the tablets were written on (Exodus 32:15), it is possible that the first four commandments, concerning duty to God, were inscribed on one side, while the last six commandments, concerning duty to man, were engraved on the other side. In that case, putting the two tablets together, with one turned over, would still yield the traditional picture.

## **Isaiah 59-62**

Chapter 59 is a continuation of a catalog of Israel’s national and individual sins (in addition to those already described in chapters 57-58). It is sin that cuts people off from God and leaves them groping in confusion and darkness (59:1-2). When Paul cited a string of statements from the Psalms regarding the wickedness of man (Romans 3:10-18), he also included a passage from Isaiah, taken from 59:7-8.

The New Bible Commentary: Revised states in its note on verse 15: “Perhaps the most revealing touch [of how bad things are] is the victimizing of the decent man, the only one out of step. It is a worse breakdown than that of Amos 5:13 [see verses 12-15]; i.e., not only public justice has warped, but public opinion with it.”

In the midst of this evil, God finds no one to intercede and “wonders” at it (see verse 16). “The Lord’s concern is even sharper than our versions suggest. Wondered should be ‘was appalled,’ as at 63:5” (New Bible Commentary, note on verse 16). So God Himself will intervene, symbolically putting on the spiritual armor Paul elaborates on in Ephesians 6:10-17 (Isaiah 59:16-17). We will see a description of this taking place in Isaiah 63:1-6, which foretells the righteous war Jesus Christ will make at His return (see Revelation 19:11). Paul says Israel will eventually be saved (Romans 11:26), citing Isaiah 59:20 to support his statement.

“At v. 19 they [the Israelites] are introduced as making an ample confession of their sins, and deploring their wretched state in consequence of them. On this act of humiliation a promise is given that God, in His mercy and zeal for His people, will rescue them from this miserable condition; that the Redeemer will come like a mighty Hero to deliver them; He will destroy His enemies, convert both Jews [i.e., Israelites] and Gentiles to himself, and give them a new covenant, and a law which shall never be abolished” (Adam Clarke’s Commentary, note on chap. 59).

In verse 21, the New King James Version and some other modern translations refer to God's Spirit as a "who." But the word should be "that," as it is in the earlier King James Version and in the New Revised Standard Version.

Chapter 60 focuses on the glory of Zion to come. It begins and ends with allusions to the light that will come—the light being God Himself, and His glory (verses 1-3, 19-20).

Several of these verses were cited by John in the book of Revelation as he described the New Jerusalem of the final age. Yet the millennial Jerusalem, prior to the New Jerusalem, will experience a limited measure of this glory. The gates will not be shut, so that the wealth or glory and honor of the nations can be brought in (verse 11; Revelation 21:25-26). There will no longer be a need for the sun to give light, and the light of God will continue day and night (verse 19)—true of the millennial Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:7) and the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:23; 22:5).

And those who have afflicted the city and its people, or at least the descendants of the guilty, will come and bow down at the feet of its inhabitants (Isaiah 60:14). Several passages in this chapter and elsewhere in the Bible describe people flowing to Jerusalem and generously bringing fine gifts. God's purpose for this seems twofold—for the humbling of those who in the past have been hostile to physical and spiritual Israel, and for the building and beautification of Jerusalem and God's temple.

While the bowing down by others may occur in a limited sense toward the human Israelites of the millennial age, it will occur in a much more profound way toward the truly converted of this age who will be the glorified inhabitants of the Holy City. Jesus said they will even be worshiped, showing that they will have been elevated to divine existence (Revelation 3:9; compare 19:10; 22:8-9).

Chapter 61 begins with "the song of the Lord's anointed. Although the term 'the Servant of the Lord' is absent from this song...it seems artificial to make the 'me' of v. 1 a new speaker" (New Bible Commentary, note on verses 1-4). Indeed, God was speaking in Isaiah 60:22. And He is still speaking in the next verse, 61:1. Yet He mentions another here as God. This makes sense only when we understand that God the Father and Jesus Christ are both God.

When Jesus was visiting the synagogue of Nazareth, He read from the scroll of Isaiah (Luke 4:18-19). The passage He read was the beginning of chapter 61. This passage—concerning the proclamation of liberty, release and time of acceptance—is also reminiscent of the year of jubilee (Leviticus 25:9-13). Indeed, this ties back to the "acceptable time" of Isaiah 49. There it was referred to as the "day of salvation." Isaiah 61:2 says, "acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." Isaiah 34:8 says, "the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion." Isaiah 63:4 says, "the day of vengeance...and the year of My redeemed." A day in this usage represents a year—apparently the final year before Christ's return.

Take note the Acceptable year mentioned is the Sabbatical year. The years Yehshua read this was 28 AD at Passover. This was the beginning of this Sabbatical year. A clue as to when certain events would take place in the future according the Sabbatical cycles.

But the Day of the Lord can have a broader application. In one sense, it represents all of future eternity from the time of God's intervention. In another sense, it can even be seen to have started with the New Testament era—the forerunners in God's plan of spiritual redemption. Indeed, as mentioned in the highlights for Isaiah 49, Peter related a prophecy of the “last days” and “Day of the Lord” to the event's beginning in his day (see Acts 2:14-21). Indeed, the seven-day week is thought by many to represent 7,000 years in God's plan for mankind (each day representing a thousand years, compare 2 Peter 3:8)—thus, 6,000 of man's history followed by a seventh 1,000-year period (a millennial Sabbath day, compare Hebrews 3-4). In such a plan, anything beyond the midway point—as apostolic times were—would be the “last days” (though “last days” is normally a clear reference to the period much closer to Christ's second coming).

At the time of this writing we are in the 5847 year since the creation of Adam. Each Millennial day is 20 Sabbatical cycles of 49 years, or a total of 980 years for each Millennial day and not a thousand. The sixth day will end when we have had 6, 980 year Millennial days. That will be after 5880 years. The 5880th year comes in 2044 on our current calendar. But Yehshua comes much earlier than that.

In quoting Isaiah 61:1-2 in Luke 4, Jesus explained that He came in fulfillment of this prophecy. Included in what He quoted was the part about the acceptable year of the Lord—but He did not quote the next phrase regarding the day of vengeance. This perhaps indicates that, while the Day of the Lord was actually in the future, it would have a measure of advance fulfillment for some in His day (just as Peter indicated in Acts 2 regarding another end-time prophecy)—that is, the liberty and acceptance of redemption would begin for some in Christ's day. But the vengeance-on-the-nations aspect of the Day of the Lord was not to come in any sense in His human lifetime. It was completely for the future. He would fulfill it at His return to earth in power and glory.

The remainder of Isaiah 61 speaks of a future time of renewal, both physical and spiritual. God hates “robbery and iniquity” (verse 8, NIV)—“robbery for burnt offering” (NKJV) apparently being a mistranslation (see also Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary, note on verse 8, available on-line at [www.biblestudytools.net](http://www.biblestudytools.net)). But He loves judgment and truth (same verse). He will clothe the city in righteousness (verse 10; see also Revelation 21:2)—clothing in Scripture often representing spiritual condition. And righteousness and praise will spring forth (verse 11).

Isaiah, and by extension God, will not rest in continuing the warning until righteousness has been established (62:1-2, 6-7, 10-11). At that time Jerusalem will no longer be called “Forsaken” and “Desolate” but Hephzibah (“My Delight Is in Her”) and Beulah (“Married”). Hephzibah was “the name of Hezekiah's wife [2 Kings 21:1], a type of Jerusalem, as Hezekiah was of Messiah (ch. 32:1)” (JFB Commentary, note on Isaiah 62:4).

God is seen as married to Jerusalem and its land—although it should be understood that physical Jerusalem is also symbolic of the spiritual Zion, the bride of Christ. Yet all of Israel and Judah are to eventually come into the same covenant marriage with Him—their God (see 1 Corinthians 10:4). There seems to be some confusion in the metaphor in verse 5, where Jerusalem is told, “So shall your sons marry you.” The JFB Commentary explains: “Rather, changing the [vowel] points, which are of no authority in Hebrew [since they were not part of the original Hebrew text], [the phrase “your sons” should actually be translated] ‘thy builder’ or ‘restorer,’ i.e., God; for in the parallel clause, and in vs. 4, God is implied as being ‘married’ to her; whereas her ‘sons’ could hardly be said to marry their mother; and in ch. 49:18 they are said to be her bridal ornaments, not her husband” (note on 62:5). The NIV Study Bible’s note on the same verse also states that “the Hebrew for ‘sons’ could be read as ‘Builder.’”

God will at last not only deliver His people, but establish them forever.

## **Prov 2**

Whereas the wicked sought through evil means to be enriched by the precious possessions of others in the previous chapter (Proverbs 1:13), it is here in the second exhortation (2:1-22) stated that God’s commands, wisdom and proper understanding constitute the treasures the son should be seeking (verses 1-7; compare 3:13-15; 8:10-11). As one would mine for silver, so the son so we must dig, in a sense, exerting effort to uncover the wonderful hidden treasures that God has laid in store (2:4-7). The focus here is on coming to properly fear God and choosing to follow his ways. The choice before the son, the choice before all of us, is presented as two paths of life. The “paths of justice,” by which God’s saints are preserved through wisdom (verses 8-11), stand in stark contrast to the crooked and devious “ways of darkness” (verses 12-15).

The need for deliverance from the way of evil is illustrated by the immoral woman (verses 16-22). “As the father instructs his son in the first nine chapters, there is really one teaching that prevails: avoid immoral women. Proverbs 2:16-22; 3:13-18; 4:4-9; 6:20-35, and the entirety of chapters 5 and 7 are occupied with this theme. The father pulls out all of his stops to bombard his son with this warning. After all, as he points out to his son, the consequences of this foolish act are dire. After this major emphasis, it is a bit surprising, perhaps, to see how little attention is given to the subject in the second part of the book (only Prov 22:14; 23:26-28; 31:2). Indeed, the relevant proverbs simply reinforce the teaching of the discourses in the first part of the book. Who are these women that young men are told to avoid? There are two types: the prostitute and the promiscuous wife. These women, in Hebrew, are referred to as “strange” (zara, translated [in 2:16 as] ‘immoral woman’ in [the NKJV and] NLT [New Living Translation, 2002]) and ‘foreign’ (nokriyya; translated [in the same verse as] ‘seductress’ in the NKJV and] ‘promiscuous woman’ in NLT). They are strange and foreign because they act outside the bounds of law and social convention, seeking sexual liaisons outside of marriage” (Tremper Longman III, How

to Read Proverbs, p. 133). Indeed, this should have been more characteristic of women of foreign nations, not God's people.

While we are to understand the immoral woman literally on one level, we should also realize a figurative representation here. We have already seen wisdom portrayed as a woman and folly is later represented as a woman too. The immoral woman can be seen to represent the faithless way of foolishness and evil generally. Again, there is a choice to be made between two paths, between two ways of life, the right one leading to life and ultimately an eternal inheritance in God's Kingdom and the wrong one leading to suffering and death.

## **Acts 1**

**<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Acts/JesusPostresurrection>**

(with editing on my part to remove church replacement theology)

What in the world should the believers be doing as we face a new millennium? Jesus' missionary mandate, which is a preview of the content of Acts, gives us the answer: You will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth (1:8). The entire preface so undergirds and clarifies this command that we are led not only to the conviction that Acts must be viewed from a missionary perspective but to realize that we too must find our places in fulfilling that mandate, which is also a promise. Review of the Gospel of Luke (1:1-5)

Luke's review of his gospel stresses comprehensiveness: all that Jesus began to do and to teach (v. 1). It also provides forward-looking continuity with the second volume: presumably Acts will report what Jesus continued to do and teach (as in 2:47; 9:34; 14:3; 16:14; 18:10).

The review focuses on Jesus' post resurrection preparation of the apostles to be authoritative guarantors of the truth of his resurrection and the gospel's content. Luke notes that the risen Lord instructed the apostles whom he had personally chosen through the Holy Spirit (Lk 6:13), thereby emphasizing the authoritative link between the words and work of Jesus and the message and mission of those chosen.

Jesus qualified the apostles as guarantors of the truth of the resurrection by appearing to them repeatedly over a period of forty days (Acts 1:22; 10:41-42). The many pieces of empirical evidence could lead to no other conclusion than that he was alive.

During his post resurrection appearances, Jesus spoke to the apostles "things pertaining to the kingdom of God." "Kingdom of God" became for Luke a shorthand phrase for the content of the early church's preaching (see 8:12; 19:8; 28:31). And rightly so, for the final reign of God has arrived "in the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and to proclaim these facts, in their proper

setting, is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God” (Dodd 1964:24; Is 33:22; Zech 14:9; Lk 11:20).

The importance of such continuity for Luke’s evangelistic purpose and the believer’s fulfillment of its missionary mandate cannot be overestimated. Here is the proof that a gospel message that claims to go back to the apostles can be trusted: the apostles received it from Jesus. Here too is the clearly articulated basis for belief that the gospel’s key salvation event has actually happened. The empirical evidence of the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances point steadily in only one direction: Jesus is alive! We can boldly and unashamedly invite unbelievers to hear our witness and consider the evidence.

Luke’s review climaxes with Jesus’ command to wait for the Holy Spirit’s coming (1:4-5; see also Lk 24:49). Jesus gave this instruction on a number of occasions (not only one, as in the NIV).

Luke understands the Spirit’s baptism as occurring at Pentecost. It is a foreshadowing of the end-time deluge of the Spirit and fire (Is 66:15; Ezek 36:25-27; 39:29; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:1-13). “The future encounter with God’s Holy Spirit-and-fire will be like an angry sea engulfing and sinking a boat, or like a massive surge of flood water suddenly sweeping down on a man as he attempts to cross the river and overwhelming him. It will be immense, majestic and devastating” (Turner 1981:51). This coming baptism, then, is to be an overwhelming eschatological experience of God’s Spirit. It is unique, unrepeatable in history.

Jesus promises that in a little while God will supply the believers with all the resources they need for fulfilling its missionary mandate. Lloyd Ogilvie observes, “We have been instructed in the things Jesus did, but know too little of what He continues to do today as indwelling Spirit and engendering power” (1983:26). Believers who have not done so need to appropriate the power that is already theirs, all because Jesus’ promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. Preview of Acts (1:6-11)

The disciples’ question Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?—which they asked repeatedly (NIV indicates only one asking)—was most natural for Jews to address to the resurrected Messiah.

Central to Old Testament faith was the conviction that God would in the end time fully restore his people to their inheritance in the land, where they would live securely without foreign domination (Jer 16:15; 23:8; 50:19; Hos 11:11; Joel 3:17). In response to Jesus’ resurrection or to his teaching about the kingdom (Acts 1:3; also see Lk 22:28-30), the disciples want to know a date. Such a question is selfishly nationalistic and betrays an eagerness for the end of history and an ushering in of God’s perfect reign. The disciples had consistently asked such questions throughout Jesus’ ministry (Lk 19:11; 21:7).

Jesus' mild rebuke affirms that God alone is qualified to know such things, since by means of his own authority he has established the times or dates, the stages and critical events through which humankind must pass until the kingdom comes (compare Acts 17:26).

Acts 1:8 sets out clearly what the church is to be doing until Jesus returns. Through a command-promise, Jesus tells his disciples of the resources, content and scope of their primary task. The essential resource is God the Holy Spirit, who will come on them at Pentecost as he did on Mary at the incarnation (Lk 1:35). By this Spirit-baptism they will receive the supernatural ability to work miracles and preach effectively (Acts 4:7-10, 31, 33; 6:5, 8; 8:13). Their witness will be bold and will produce conviction leading to positive or negative decisions (2:37, 41; 4:8, 13, 31; 6:5, 10; 7:54-58).

The whole body, and each member of it, must take up this task. All who receive the apostles' teaching become witnesses (14:2-3; 22:15-18, 20). Richard Longenecker rightly concludes, "This commission lays an obligation on all brethren. . . . according to Acts, this is a missionary body that responds obediently to Jesus' commission" (1981:256).

The mandate, expressed with a future-tense verb (will be), can be taken as both a command and a prophetic promise. Luke may well have intended that it be understood in both ways. Not only does he show the church obediently carrying out this mandate (2:47; 4:31, 33; 6:4, 7; 8:4; 11:19-20), but he also shows how God intervenes at strategic points to give impetus and direction for taking the mission across another cultural threshold or into another geographical region (8:16-17, 26, 29; 10:9-16, 19-20; 11:20-21; 13:2; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 23:11). God in his grace makes sure the mandate is completely fulfilled.

And so today the call for the brethren to be a missionary body is still in force.

Jesus says to be his witnesses. To be a witness (martyr) is to speak from personal knowledge of facts and their significance. The apostles, as eyewitnesses of the saving events, were witnesses in a unique sense. But all those who will believe and appropriate the truth of their testimony also qualify as witnesses.

The scope of the task is given in geographical terms. Acts presents the evangelization of the first two geographical regions (Jerusalem, 2:42–8:3; Judea and Samaria, 8:4–12:25). Luke probably has no particular place in mind when he uses the phrase to the ends of the earth. He is thinking of a mission that will reach throughout the whole earth in fulfillment of Isaiah 49:6 (Acts 13:47). Since the narrative concludes geographically in Rome—the empire's center, from which roads reach to the limits of the then-known world—the mission is potentially complete but actually remains unfinished.

When the scope of the task is viewed ethnically, however, we realize that by the time of the Jerusalem Council (15:1-35) "the gospel has already reached all possible manner of men"



(Menoud 1978b:123). The gospel has been extended to Palestinian and Hellenistic Jews (2:513), Samaritans (8:4-13), a proselyte (8:26-40), a Gentile God-fearer (10:1-48) and pagan Gentiles (11:20-21; 13:46-48; 14:8-20).

Today the unfinished task remains a formidable challenge. But it is possible to complete the task—to take the witness to the ends of the earth and plant the truth in all groups. It is here in Acts one that the truth was high jacked by those who now call themselves Christians. It is to these very same people that we must take the truth of Torah and reeducate them in what Yehshua actually did say and do.

There are 1.7 billion professing Christians in the world, most of whom have no idea what the scriptures actually do say. We have an enormous task in front of us, but we are only to plant the seed and let Yehovah do the work of calling those whom He wants to call. Only a few are chosen.

Immediately after Jesus gives this command, as the disciples are watching, he is taken up from the earth, and a cloud so envelopes him that the disciples can no longer see him. The cloud probably refers to the Shekinah glory, which at once manifests and hides the divine presence (Ex 19:16; 40:34). It may also point to Christ's return (Dan 7:13; Lk 21:27; Acts 1:11).

The disciples stand in awe, looking intently up into the sky for an extended period. Luke will use the verb "to look intently" often in Acts in connection with the miraculous (3:4, 12; 6:15; 10:4; 11:6; 13:9; 14:9).

Suddenly two angels appear—two witnesses (Deut 19:15)—to interpret God's mighty act in Jesus' ascension. Their gentle rebuke to the sky-gazing disciples implies that in the interim there is a task to be done: fulfillment of the missionary mandate.

The angels describe in simple terms what has just happened: Jesus has been taken up into heaven. The implications are unmistakable. Jesus will no longer be with the disciples in the way he was with them during his earthly ministry or in post resurrection appearances. In heaven Jesus is in a position of authority, at the Father's right hand, whence he can pour out salvation blessings as by his Spirit he directs and empowers those doing His will (Acts 2:33; 4:10-12; 5:30-31). The angels conclude with an affirmation of the certainty of Christ's return.

He will come in the same way that he has gone.

The fact that the Great Commission is the last instruction of the risen, now ascended and imminently returning Lord gives it great weight. He is not mentioning an optional ministry activity for individuals with cross cultural interests and churches with surplus funds. The Great Commission is the primary task the Lord left his church. The brethren must always be a missionary body.