

Exodus 35:1-3

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-35/exodus-351-3/>

The preparation for the construction of the tabernacle began with a reminder that, while building the tabernacle, the Sabbath rest must be observed. There would be dire, if not fatal, consequences for anyone violating this very important law.

Moses had been with the LORD for forty days and nights receiving His instructions. Now *Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel* in order to convey to them the *things that the Lord has commanded you to do*.

The first item to be discussed was keeping the Sabbath. Earlier, in the section concerning the blueprints for the tabernacle (Chapters 25 – 31), the commands to keep the Sabbath were at the end of the section ([Exodus 31:13 – 17](#)). Here, they are at the beginning of the section concerning the actual construction of the tabernacle (Chapters 35 – 40). This makes sense, given that God is instructing the people to initiate a work project, and this law pertains to work. Moses emphasizes to the Israelites once again the importance of keeping the Sabbath.

He reminded them that *for six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to the Lord*.

The *Sabbath rest* was established in [Exodus 16:23 – 29](#) and added as one of the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:8 – 11](#)). It was also reestablished in the renewal of the covenant in [Exodus 31:14 – 16](#). This shows that keeping the *Sabbath rest* was very important to the LORD, and thus no one was allowed to break the *Sabbath* even during the construction of the tabernacle.

Although man needs to work to earn a living ([Genesis 2:5](#)), work was not meant to dominate man's existence. The Sabbath was established to give men *rest* from having to work to provide for their needs. It was to be withheld from ordinary use so that it might be consecrated to God, thus giving the Israelites a chance to switch their focus on work to honor God by ceasing from their labors, as God ceased from His labors. To remember their Creator, the one who gave them the necessary strength to work. Thus, Sabbath-keeping was essential because it allowed the Israelites to obtain *rest* in the presence of their Suzerain (Ruler) God.

The consequences of breaking the Sabbath were the same during the tabernacle construction period as with any other period. The fact that the tabernacle had religious significance did not exempt work performed upon it from the Sabbath law. As stated earlier—*whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.*

The LORD also stipulated that the people were to *not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day.* This might have been included here to demonstrate the lowest level of activity that would constitute work, so the people could interpret how to keep the Sabbath. Kindling *a fire* within their *dwellings* is routine activity. Any activity like it, or more vigorous than it would constitute work that should be avoided, so the people might have their Sabbath *rest.*

Biblical Text:

¹ Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, “These are the things that the Lord has commanded *you* to do:

² “For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy *day*, a sabbath of complete rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. ³ You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day.”