

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 31:1-11

To understand more about how the Spirit of God inspires craftsmanship and creativity.

Read the Text:

The LORD said to Moses, 2 See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, 4 to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, 5 in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. 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: 7 the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, 8 the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, 9 and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, 10 and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do. (Exodus 31:1-11, ESV)

Study the Text:

Bezalel and Oholiab

After detailing the tabernacle's specifications and emphasizing the use of the finest materials in previous chapters, Exodus now shifts focus to another crucial element: the artisans. Just as precision mattered in selecting materials, it matters equally in choosing who will build the tabernacle. Below is a brief overview of some of the key details in this passage.

CALLED BY NAME

When God calls a person by name, it carries profound significance. In Psalm 147, He names each star. In Isaiah 43, He calls a nation by name. Most remarkably, He even names those who don't yet know Him—like Cyrus, whom Isaiah prophesied about by name centuries before his birth (Isaiah 45; 2 Chr. 36:22). The Lord calls by name before He empowers for His purpose, and as we see here, Bezalel, the son of Uri, is no different. The Lord called him by name to construct all the objects Moses had spent the last few chapters outlining.

THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

While the tribe of Judah here is not tied to Christ specifically, it is always good to pause when the Bible includes the tribe of Judah. And yes, while the Messiah will come from Judah, the tribe and its namesake - who fell way short of perfection (Gen. 38) - are just one part of the 12 tribes that make up Israel, and are therefore a part of the historical account. What is interesting about a man from Judah being named here is that it is not a Levite who God will use to make all that the Lord has commanded Moses. Douglas Stuart writes, "Levites were the only persons allowed responsibility in all aspects of tabernacle service and maintenance. They alone could set up, take down, transport, maintain, or utilize anything about the tabernacle... No Judahite would be able to touch anything in the tabernacle once it was constructed and sanctified. Still, until then, the best craftsmen, regardless of tribe, would handle every part of it as they made it

into a beautiful, portable divine dwelling for Israel's God."¹ This once again demonstrates the importance of excellence. God would not only use the most excellent materials to construct the tabernacle, but He would also choose the most excellent craftsmen to build it.

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD

Exodus 31:3-5 says, "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft." Douglas Stuart notes that this verse "correctly translated says that He gave Bezalel mainly one thing: His Spirit, which then perfected Bezalel's wisdom, insight, knowledge, and work performance in general."² Proverbs 16:9 comes to mind here, as well: "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps." Bezalel had been in Egypt. He had followed Moses, drunk from the rock, and eaten manna. He had in his heart been a craftsman, and now the Lord called him by name and filled Him with the Spirit of God to perfect his craftsmanship to the level needed for God's purposes, namely, the detailed items discussed over the past few weeks. God's designs are intricate, beautiful, and very, very specific. They are to detail the physical and spiritual aspects of meeting with God, dealing with sin, and reflecting His dwelling place.

GIVEN TO ALL ABLE MEN

Chapter 35 gives a small summary of the above passage, but notes that Bezalel and Oholiab are also given the ability to teach. The Lord knows that the project He has commanded is a significant undertaking that will take more than Moses, Bezalel, and Oholiab. Therefore, He does not leave them alone. They are to teach because He has given all men the ability. Worth noting is that while men are stated here, we see that women are mentioned as able as well: "And every skillful woman spun with her hands, and they all brought what they had spun in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. All the women whose hearts stirred them to use their skill spun the goats' hair" (Ex 35:25-26). In the same way that Jethro emphasized the importance of delegation to Moses, there is also a kind of delegation here.

I COMMAND, THEY SHALL DO

Having skill and being filled with the Holy Spirit did not give Bezalel freedom to do anything he desired. He was to do what the Lord had commanded Moses to complete. He was to teach what the Lord had instructed. And while this was a command, it was for the people's benefit. The closer the tabernacle replicates the Lord's design, the more beautiful it would be, and the more it benefited the workers to see what God had designed and what God could accomplish with men. It's worth noting that the Lord twice says, "all that I have commanded you." The Lord is not directly commanding the people, but is commanding Moses, who would subsequently direct the people according to God's command. We later discover in Hebrews that Jesus is the *greater* Moses. Similarly, all that God commanded Jesus would be fulfilled by Jesus. He, too, led by example, and his followers, filled with the Spirit of God, are to do what He commanded.

What About Now?

Now that Jesus has been glorified, those who believe in Him receive the Spirit of God (John 7:39). And while the Spirit is not given to create physical tabernacles or temples for God to dwell in, He is still working in the

¹ Douglas K. Stuart, Exodus, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 649.

² Douglas K. Stuart, Exodus, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 650.

people whom He calls to make them a temple for the living God. The Spirit of God empowers believers to use and perfect their gifts to do all that God has commanded to build up the church. So whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as if you are working for the Lord and not for men. We also see God did not leave Moses or Bezalel alone to do all the work He commanded. He had given “all able men ability” to help carry the burden. The Lord has made the church similarly. You are never alone. You have a gift that can help people feel the presence of God. You have been filled with the Spirit of God. You must likewise do what the Lord commanded with those in your community.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 31:1-3. Who does God call by name to lead the construction work? What tribe is he from, and who are his father and grandfather?

2. According to verse 3, God filled Bezalel with?

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 31:4-5. What specific types of work and materials is Bezalel gifted to work with? List them all.

2. Read Exodus 31:6. Who does God appoint to work alongside Bezalel? What tribe is he from?

Day Three

1. Read Exodus 31:7-9. List the first six items God commands them to make for the tabernacle.

2. Continue reading Exodus 31:9-11. What are the remaining items they are to make? Include the garments, oil, and incense mentioned.

Day Four

1. Read Exodus 31:10-11. Whose garments are specifically mentioned? What purpose will these garments serve?

2. Reread Exodus 31:11. According to what standard are they to complete all this work? What does this tell us about the importance of following God's instructions?
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Discuss the Text!

Week 79 Discussion: Filled to Serve

When we look at our lives, it is not uncommon to fail to see the purpose God has given us, His Spirit, to complete. We are told that we have been called and that the Lord's Spirit has been poured out on us, but sometimes, we fail to see our abilities, intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship as something the Lord, with His Spirit, can use for His purposes. Talk as a group about your abilities and the Lord's purposes.

1. You have been called as a believer in Christ's completed work on the cross. What does your calling mean to you?
2. What does it mean that you are filled with the Holy Spirit?
3. What abilities do you believe God has given you?
4. How can we use those abilities in our daily lives?
5. How do you use those abilities to build up the church?
6. Kid Talk (For Home): Give your kids some Play-Doh, blocks, or art supplies. As they create something, explain how God helped Bezalel use his abilities to create beautiful things for God's house. Tell them that God gives each of us abilities, too - maybe they're good at being kind, helping others, or making people laugh. Ask them what they think they're good at and how they can use it to serve God.

Takeaways:

1. God calls Bezalel by name and fills Him with the Spirit of God.
2. God uses Bezalel, Oholiab, and able men to create all He has outlined.
3. They are to create what God has commanded Moses.