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C0710 – March 14, 2007 – Ex 31:1-18 – The Craftsmen & The Sabbath

15. The Craftsmen (31:1-11)

In verses 1-6 we learn about the two key craftsmen, the chief, Bezalel and the assistant, Oholiab.

a. The Chief: Bezalel (31:1-5)

Exodus 31:1-5 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²“See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. ³“I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all *kinds of* craftsmanship, ⁴to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all *kinds of* craftsmanship.

God **called out by name** this man named **Bezalel**, that is, He appointed Him for the task of chief craftsman.

PRINCIPLE: God calls each believer to a certain task and gifts him with the ability to carry out the task. Each of us must discover our calling and our gift(s). It is not true that all should teach or all should administer church affairs. Each of us has a gift and we should focus on discovering our gift and operating in that sphere.

Bezalel was called to be a craftsman. I think he was a craftsman by trade but is given the Spirit of God for the building of the Tabernacle furnishings. His

name means “in the shadow of God”. Of the twelve tribes he was **of the tribe of Judah** (meaning: “praised”). Within the **tribe of Judah** he was **the grand-son of Hur** (meaning: “noble”) and **son of Uri** (meaning: “Light”). His grandfather **Hur** was probably the same **Hur** who was with Moses during the battle of Amalek and supported Moses hands when they became heavy (Exod 17:8-16). He was also commissioned by Moses to handle legal matters in his absence (Exod 24:14). He was a top administrative official and Josephus said he was the husband of Miriam. So, **Bezalel** was descended from an important line of men in Israel.

To carry out his task, verse 3 says the Lord **filled him with the Spirit of God**. The **Spirit of God** is the Holy Spirit. He is a person and not an influence or active force. He is the third member of the Triunity. The **Spirit of God** would be necessary to carry out the fine craftsmanship. No human apart from the Spirit of God could accomplish the task. Thus, God called him and filled him for this purpose. Not all believers were filled with the Spirit of God in the OT. In the OT filling of the Spirit was not a command to be followed as in the NT (Eph 5:18). It was rather a sovereign act of God. Thus, there is one way to be filled by the Spirit in the OT and two ways to be filled in the NT. In the OT you could only be filled by a sovereign act of God. In the NT you can be filled by a sovereign act of God or by obeying the commandment to be filled with the Spirit.

What would the Spirit of God fill him with? **wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and craftsmanship**. Why would he need these things? Why not just **craftsmanship**? Why does he need **understanding and knowledge and wisdom**? Because the making of the crafts will require **wisdom, understanding and knowledge**. It will require more than simply sitting down and mindlessly going about some activity. It will require extensive use of the mind to create these **artistic designs**. First, he will need **wisdom**, this is *chokmah* which means “skill” or “expertise”. He will need expertise in the techniques of craftsmanship. This is “how to” and includes the steadiness of hand and right order of putting each part together. Second, he will need **understanding**, this is the ability to use knowledge to solve problems that may arise during the work. Third, he will need **knowledge**. This is the increase in expertness that comes with practice. So, the Spirit of God will supply the expertise, ability to solve problems and increasing knowledge that will come with practice.

For what purpose? V 4-5 say **to make artistic designs** or literally, “to think thoughts” or “devise designs”. His job will be to devise just how he will make these designs from the information he hears from Moses. His work will be **in gold, in silver, and in bronze, ⁵and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.** He will have to be a goldsmith, silversmith, bronze smith, a mason, a gemologist, mineralogist, and a carpenter. Several of these arts require special knowledge in physics and chemistry. For one person to be highly gifted in all of these areas would be a remarkable achievement. Bezalel will be gifted by the Holy Spirit to achieve the task and gain the necessary expertise.

b. The Assistant: Oholiab (31:6)

Nevertheless, Bezalel will need an assistant.

Exodus 31:6 “And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you:

His assistant is also **appointed** by the Lord. His name is **Oholiab** (also Aholiab meaning: “Tabernacle of my father”). Of the twelve tribes this man was **of the tribe of Dan** (meaning: “judge”). He was the **son of Ahisamach** (meaning: “brother of support”) which role Oholiab plays for Bezalel. **and in the hearts (*leb*) of all who are skillful**, literally, the wise (*hakam*), intelligent people, **I have put skill**, wisdom (*chokmah*). For the purpose **that they may make all that I have commanded you.** So, basically, YHWH chose the cream of the crop and placed within them, by His Spirit wisdom which supplied the means by which they could tie all their knowledge together into the vessels they must make.

c. The Crafts (31:7-11)

The crafts are noted in verses 7-11 all of which have now been studied in detail

Exodus 31:7-11 the tent of meeting, and the ark of testimony, and the mercy seat upon it, and all the furniture of the tent, ⁸the table also and its utensils, and the pure *gold* lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, ⁹the altar of burnt offering also with all its utensils, and the laver and its stand, ¹⁰the woven garments as well, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, *with which* to carry on their priesthood; ¹¹the anointing oil also, and the fragrant incense for the holy place, they are to make *them* according to all that I have commanded you.”

Again, they are **to make** each article **according to all that I have commanded you**. Whatever these grand designs are they must be made according to that pattern. To rise to such a feat requires the Spirit of God investing wisdom in these already talented and intelligent artisans.

16. The Sign of the Mosaic Covenant: Sabbath (31:12-18)

In light of the command to make everything just as YHWH commanded they should not forget that the Sabbath was a day not to make anything. The command to build the Tabernacle did not set aside the Sabbath.

Exodus 31:12-18 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹³“But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. ¹⁴Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’ ¹⁷“It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased *from labor*, and was refreshed.” ¹⁸When He had finished

speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

The command still stands in light of the work of the Tabernacle, that **'You shall surely observe My sabbaths**. The word **Sabbath** (Heb. = *Shabbat*) means "rest". They are His **sabbaths** because that day is to be devoted to Him. They were to devote their bodies to their work six days a week and their spirit to worship Him one day a week. The reason given, **for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations**. What is it a **sign** of? **that...the Lord** is the one who **sanctifies**. In other words, it would serve as a weekly reminder that the Lord set them apart. He had set them apart from all the nations of the earth. This was a gracious election extending from the mercy of God. Since the Lord had set them apart they were to set the Sabbath apart. Thus, each Sabbath they will be reminded of the Lord's gracious election of that nation. It was a **holy** or "set apart" day. **Everyone who profanes** (*halal*) it, literally "bores through" **shall surely be put to death**. The way a person would **profane** the sabbath was by working on it. The kind of work here was ones daily work. If one were a farmer he should abstain from farming. If a businessman then he should abstain from his business. Verse 14 is clear that for a person to be **cut off** refers to one being **put to death**. This was a serious offense against the Lord. It was His day and not their day. It was therefore to be used for His purposes and not their own. He gave them **six days** for their work but **the seventh day** was for **complete rest**. This, of course, does not mean "do nothing" for that is not even possible, but rather, "do none of your work".

Verse 16 is very important, it is for **the sons of Israel to observe** and not for any other nation or the Church. As v 17 says it is the **sign** between God and Israel of the Mosaic **covenant**. That was a covenant between God and Israel not God and other nations or God and the Church. There is no Sabbath for the Church. Sunday is not the Christian Sabbath. The Sabbath was a part of the Mosaic Covenant it was put to rest when the Mosaic Covenant was put to rest (Rom 10:4). Therefore, there is no more Sabbath. The Church is free to worship any and every day of the week. Early Christians met on the first day of the week, Sunday, because Christ was resurrected on the first day of the week. But, a man may set apart any day of the week unto God. This is the explicit teaching of Rom 14:5. But during the times of Israel God set up a

covenant with Israel and gave a **sign** for that covenant. That **sign** was the Sabbath. God always gives a **sign** when he makes a covenant with man.

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| • Noahic Covenant | Rainbow |
| • Abrahamic Covenant | Circumcision |
| • Mosaic Covenant | Sabbath |
| • Land Covenant | Israel's Perpetual Existence? |
| • Davidic Covenant | Perpetual Royal Line |
| • New Covenant | Lord's Supper |

The reason God chose the **Sabbath** as the sign is given in verse 17, **for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.** The point is that He is the God of creation and covenant. Since God rested on the seventh day of creation the Israelites should rest on the seventh day of the covenant. Every seventh day was a day of rest and recollection of the Mosaic covenant between God and Israel. The conclusion that God **was refreshed** on the **seventh day** is fitting. Israel would be refreshed by ceasing from **labor** on the **Sabbath**.

It should be noted here that this verse is another proof that the days of creation in Gen 1-2 are literal days of 24 hours and not extended periods of thousands, millions or billions of years. The Jews rested on the seventh day of each week because God rested on the seventh day of the first week. There are four basic arguments for literal days.

- Argument from day + numeral (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31)
- Argument from evening and morning (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31)
- Argument from purpose of stars (Gen 1:14)
- Argument from direct statements (Exod 20:11; 31:17)

Attempts to harmonize the story of Genesis with the story of cosmology are doomed to failure. A literal reading of both serves up numerous contradictions. We are faced with either mythologizing the story of Genesis or the story of cosmology. Many scientists argue that we can have both because the story of Genesis is religious and the story of cosmology is science.ⁱ Then they argue that religious narratives should not be read literally but metaphorically. Therefore, Genesis is just a metaphor but science is historical fact. This all sounds good until one realizes that if he wants to be a follower of Jesus he will have to follow what Jesus said when he affirmed a literal

understanding of Genesis 1-11 as historical facts (Matt 19:4 quotes Genesis 1:27 and 5:2; Matt 19:5 quotes Genesis 2:24; John 8:44 refers to Gen 3:4; Matt 23:35 quotes Genesis 4:8; Matt 24:37-38 refer to Genesis 6-7). If the scientists want to play hardball you don't have to cave in. You don't have to take the heat. You just throw the ball back harder and let them deal with the heat. Say, "Well, your cosmology story is based on unobservable, unprovable, untestable assumptions. Therefore, when I read your story I read it for its metaphorical value. They have a category for it down at the library called "Science-Fiction". See how they like that one. "Oh, you can't do that. You can't call science mythology or metaphor." "Well why not? You call my Bible mythology. Why can't I call your Bible mythology." See, they don't want to play by the same rules. They want to be able to mythologize you but they don't want to be mythologized. But there's no reason you can't do this. They may be struck if you do this but that's only because the truly pagan mind can't entertain any other possible notion. They are the one's who have their minds closed. They are the one's who are narrow minded. You don't have to be afraid of these guys. I've been on the other side of the fence and they don't have any ammunition. I checked the storehouses and they were empty.

Finally, verse 18, **When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.** This is at the close of 40 days and 40 nights and here we see that there were **two tablets**. These tablets contained the Decalogue or "ten words". These were **tablets of stone**. Jewish tradition says the **stone** was taken from Mt Moriah where Abraham supposedly offered Isaac and where the Ark of the Covenant rested in the Holy of Holies. The writing on the tablet was done **by the finger of God**. This is the only portion of Scripture authored solely by God. All other Scripture has dual authorship. God is the primary author and man is the secondary author. Man played no role in the writing of the Decalogue.

ⁱ This is a part of post-Kantian thought which is antagonistic to the word of God.

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