

# Exodus – Lesson 27

## Constructing the Tabernacle – Part 4

### Read Exodus 35:30-38:31

- (a) From Exodus 35:30-35, what things set *Bezalel* and *Oholiab* apart from all of the other craftsmen who would build the tabernacle?

These men had been “filled with the Spirit of God” (see v. 30). This means that these men had been *supernaturally* endowed with the ability and *desire* to build the tabernacle. They *may* have possessed a certain amount of *natural* ability, but the Spirit of God had filled them with a *greater* set of skills that would be *specifically* used to build the tabernacle. The Spirit had given them 1) skill (abilities to design & build), 2) intelligence (abilities to think through the process and lead), 3) knowledge (understandings of what it would take to do the job), and 4) craftsmanship (all of which are listed in vv. 32-34).

- (b) What does it mean in Exodus 35:34 that God had “*inspired [Bezalel] to teach?*”

Constructing the tabernacle would require a *team* of skilled men and women (see 1b below), and *Bezalel’s primary* job would be to teach others how to implement their skills in this *specific* building project. *Bezalel* would need to *delegate* responsibilities to others (specifically, *Oholiab*) and would need to *oversee* the project. This would require from him the ability to *teach*, to instruct others how to put their skills to the specific requirements established by God in the tabernacle construction. Without this leadership, and ability to teach others what was needed, the project would fail. So, God gave this ability, *supernaturally*, to this man who would then lead others to the finished project.

- (c) From Exodus 36:1-2, who *else* would be involved in the construction of the tabernacle? *Why* were these men involved in the project?

A *team* of people would be required to this job: those who could sew, those who could fabricate items out of wood, gold, silver, and bronze, and those who could do the heavy lifting of putting things where they need to be. No one person could accomplish the task; a team of people *working in harmony* would be required. The additional laborers are needed 1) because the project was too big for one person alone, and 2) the use of multiple laborers to do the work would build a sense of *camaraderie* that the tabernacle would *imply* by its very existence. The funding of the tabernacle *by the entire population*, and its construction by a highly skilled *team* would cement in the minds of the Israelites the importance of this building to the *corporate* life of the community. In other words, by building the tabernacle using a large cross-section of the community would make the building “owned” by the people as a whole, not just by a select few.

- (d) According to these verses, what was *Moses’* job to be in the work of building the tabernacle?

*Moses* is *not* mentioned in this text, and it would appear that he was not to be *directly* involved in the building project. It is clear, from previous passages, that *Moses* was to remain the *spiritual* leader of the community, while *Bezalel* and *Oholiab* would lead the construction project. In simplest terms, *Moses* was to *delegate* this responsibility to these men and trust them to do it (and they were to trust him to do his job).

(e) Compare the role of Bezalel and Oholiab in these verses to Acts 6:1-7. What *similarities* do you find between their work and the role of *deacon* in the church today?

The role of these two men is similar to the role of deacon as established in Acts 6: the apostles (i.e. elders) were to trust the deacons to handle the “physical” responsibilities of the church while they focused their efforts on the *spiritual* needs of the flock. The apostles were to trust the deacons, and the deacons were to trust the elders; neither was to *assume* responsibility for the other’s work, although the elders would maintain *ultimate* authority over the church in their role as spiritual leaders, just as Moses would maintain his authority over the people of Israel and over this construction project.

2. (a) What *problem* do the craftsmen first encounter in their work, according to Exodus 36:3-5?

The first “problem” that the craftsmen encounter is the *over-generosity* of the people in bringing the necessary materials for building the tabernacle. The people had been *too* generous, and the craftsmen were unable to keep up the work while receiving more stuff. So, they complained to Moses about the situation, and Moses cut off the supply by instructing the people that they had given enough. This “problem” is certainly not one of complaint, and the craftsmen are not angry or bitter. Instead, the generosity of the people, while fully appreciated, was a distraction for the workers and they gently dealt with it.

- (b) Why do *you* think that this problem arose?

Since it was God himself who opened the heartstrings of the people to give to this project, the people were compelled by the *generosity* and *holiness* of God to bring all that they had. God had *supernaturally* opened their hearts to see his generosity and holiness, and they responded in like kind. The principle here is simple: for those who have come to understand the gravity of the generosity of God in freeing them from sin and who have come to taste the holiness and majesty of God, such people *desire* more than anything else to respond to God in like-kind. The *natural* state of human beings (apart from the Spirit’s work) is selfishness and avarice. But, the *supernatural* state of regenerated human beings is to give without hesitation to God. There is no *selfishness* involved in such giving, for such people *know* that they could never give to God that God should repay them (see Romans 11:33-36), but give out of sheer love and gratitude for all that God has done for them.

3. Who is the “*he*” mentioned in Exodus 36:10-38 (see 37:1)? Why does Moses, in this account, give *all* the credit to this man for the construction of the tabernacle starting at this point (see also 38:22)?

Exodus 37:1 and 38:22 seem to indicate that Bezalel is the referent in the word “*he*” used throughout chapters 36 through 38. It is clearly *not* Moses, for Moses is not mentioned in connection with the building itself (see 1d above). The reason for the use of “*he*” (instead of “*them*”) is because Bezalel is given the *final* authority (and responsibility) to see that the project was completed. It was Bezalel who taught the other workmen what needed to be done. It was Bezalel that oversaw the work itself, and made any corrections that were necessary. It was Bezalel who made sure that everything was being done according to the instructions given to Moses. And, it was Bezalel who was *held accountable* for everything as it was completed. While Bezalel certainly was “given credit,” in the sense that it is “*he*” who did the work (i.e. from a supervisory position), Bezalel was also responsible for its *perfection*, and Bezalel would carry the burden of answering to God himself for anything that was *not* done to the perfect standard God had established. This principle applies to *everyone* in leadership, especially those who teach and guide others (see James 3:1).

4. From Exodus 36:10-38:20, list the items (in order) that were constructed. Is there any significance to this order?

The items were constructed in this order: 1) the tabernacle itself, starting with the curtains, then the frames and bases, then the veil 2) the ark, 3) the table of showbread, 4) the lampstand, 5) the altar of incense, 6) the altar of burnt offering, 7) the bronze basin, and 8) the courtyard walls. The order is different from the instructions given to Moses in chaps. 25-30 (there the ark is first, followed by the table of showbread, the lampstand, and then the tabernacle). Bezalel *seems* to have built this in a *logical* and *practical* order. Since the ark, the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the altar of incense went *inside* the tabernacle, it seems logical that the construction of the tabernacle should be *first*. Then, when the other items are built, they can be placed inside. Once the tabernacle and its instruments were in place, then Bezalel formed the items in the courtyard (the bronze altar and basin), then finished up the project by building the outer courtyard walls.

5. (a) According to Exodus 38:21, who was responsible for *accounting* for the work of the tabernacle?

It would appear that the *Levites*, under the direction of Aaron's son Ithamar, accounted for everything as it was constructed (at Moses' very wise command). It was probably the job of these Levite priests to watch the building project and the work of the craftsmen, accounting for everything that they used. There is a principle here: nothing should *ever* go to waste in "building" the "house" of God; what God has supplied is *always sufficient* for the work, and we must never waste the gifts or resources that God has supplied us with to accomplish his work in the world.

(b) How *much* gold, silver, and bronze was used in the construction (see Exodus 38:24-31)? Where did the bulk of the *silver* come from, according to Exodus 38:25-26 (see also Exodus 30:11-16)?

**Gold: 29 talents + 730 shekels (~2193.25 pounds [talent = 75 lbs, shekel = 2/5 ounce]). Silver: 100 talents + 1775 shekels (~7544.375 pounds – note: each base under the tabernacle frame weighed 1 talent [i.e. 75 pounds; see v. 27]). Bronze: 70 talents + 2400 shekels (~5310 pounds).** The silver came from the 603,500 adult men (i.e. aged 20 and up) as part of the Census Tax (see 30:11-16). This number compares to Exodus 12:37; since the period of time elapsed from Exodus 12 is only about a year (see 40:1-2), the number of men over 20 would not have appreciated significantly.