

God gives Israel one supremely gifted man

1. *God wants His work to be done under the gifting of the Holy Spirit*

2. *The gifts of the Holy Spirit may be very practical and down-to-earth*

3. *There are different measures of the gifting of the Holy Spirit*

A summary of Moses' instructions speaking of

- Fellowship with God

- Atonement and cleansing

- Mediators

- Intercession

The things not found in the tabernacle

- No shoes bringing in dirt from the outside world

God gives Israel one supremely gifted man – Bezalel – to lead the people in the work of making the tabernacle^{□1}. He is given special skills by the Holy Spirit^{□2}. Alongside him is a gifted colleague, Oholiab^{□3} and many others^{□4}.

1. God wants His work to be done under the gifting of the Holy Spirit. It is notable that even in Mosaic times there were gifts of the Holy Spirit. Although there was an outpouring of the Spirit that had not yet been given – and would only come on the day of Pentecost – yet the Holy Spirit was nevertheless at work in the people of God.

2. The gifts of the Holy Spirit may be very practical and down-to-earth. The Holy Spirit gave gifts of wisdom to Joseph^{□1} and Joshua^{□2□3}. Now the tabernacle is to be built by men who have special gifts of the Holy Spirit^{□4}. We recall too how even physical strength would be given to Samson by means of the Holy Spirit.

3. There are different measures of the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Clearly Bezalel had greater gifts than Oholiab. God tends to raise up one man with mighty gifts and then put around him men and women with lesser gifts. All are needed, but not all have the same level of ability. Alongside Bezalel was a gifted colleague, but Oholiab had to be content to be under Bazalel's leadership. Then there were others who were still less gifted and do not even get a special mention by name. Yet they too were needed. Bezalel could not have succeeded without them.

In Exodus 31:7–17 we have a summary of the main items about which Moses has been given instruction in Exodus 25–31. Exodus 31:7 mentions the two main items in the holy of holies. Exodus 31:8 mentions the three main items in the holy place: table, lampstand, altar of incense. Exodus 31:9 mentions the two main items in the courtyard: altar and laver. Exodus 31:10 mentions the holy garments for the priests and the high-priest. Exodus 31:11 mentions the oil and the incense.

It all ensures that we have in mind an overview of what is involved in the tabernacle: (i) table, lampstand, altar of incense speaking of three different aspects of fellowship with God, (ii) altar and laver speaking of atonement and cleansing, (iii) holy garments speaking of the necessity of God's mediators if the presence of God is to be enjoyed in Israel, (iv) oil and the incense reminding us of the need of God's enabling and never-ending intercession.

It is worth our noticing some things that were not found in the tabernacle. We notice for example that there were no shoes in the priestly clothing. The priests did all of their work in bare feet. Shoes tend to bring in dirt from the outside world. In many religions and cultures, shoes are left outside when you go into the holy building. It was the same in Israel's faith. The taking off of one's shoes would represent a concern not to bring in alien uncleanness from the outside world. Moses was told to take off his shoes when he stood on the holy ground where God was speaking to him. It was holy ground in the tabernacle also.

□1 31:1-2

□2 31:3-5

□3 31:6a

□4 31:6b

□1 Genesis 41:38

□2 Numbers 27:18

□3 Deuteronomy

34:9

□4 28:3; 31:3; 35:31

• *No chair – work was never finished*

Even more important: there was no chair in the tabernacle. The priests were never allowed to sit down! Their work was never done. The New Testament is saying something strikingly original when it says that after Jesus offered a sacrifice for sins He sat down!¹ That was the one thing that could never be done inside the tabernacle or temple of Israel. The full atonement for sin was never made. The work was never finished. No priest could sit down while he was about his duties.

¹ Hebrews 1:3

• *No bed – no rest until work done*

There was no bed in the tabernacle. The priests were not to sleep while they were within the actual building itself. While they were there they were ever-busy. It was not a time to be sleepy. There was no rest for them until their work was done.

The Sabbath

• *The essential sign of obedience to the covenant*

The Sabbath is mentioned again in 31:12–17. It is a ‘sign’¹. It brings a knowledge of the sanctifying work of God². It must be kept³; the death-penalty is the punishment for breaking it⁴. It is the essential sign of obedience to the covenant⁵, recalling God’s rest at creation into which God plans to bring His people⁶.

¹ 31:12-13
² 31:13
³ 31:14
⁴ 31:14-15
⁵ 31:16
⁶ 31:17

• *Sabbath pattern written into the very fabric of Israel’s law*

God asked His people to live in obedience to the Sabbath-law. Again and again this command is emphasized. We shall see it again in 35:1–3. The obligation to keep the Sabbath comes in at key points in the story recorded in Exodus. There have already been mentions of the Sabbath-law in Exodus 16:5; 20:8–11; 23:12. It reminded Israel that God works in accordance with a programme. He has steps and stages for Israel. The God’s work eventually comes to a fulfilment. There is great joy when God’s work is accomplished. God rejoices, and we rejoice with Him. We ‘enter into rest’ with God. This Sabbath pattern was written into the very fabric of Israel’s law. We shall have occasion to consider the matter again.

Instructions given to Moses

Meanwhile among the people...

Exodus 31:18 marks the close of this part of Exodus. One must remember that everything that we have been reading in Exodus 25–31 is instruction, given to Moses. None of it has happened yet. The people of Israel do not even know about it. They are at the foot of the mountain while all this is being given to Moses. What has been happening among the people is now to be told us in Exodus 32–34.

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