

March 16

Scriptures: Read Exodus 31

Key Verse: “I have appointed... and... put wisdom in the hearts of all who are gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you.” (31:6)

Overview

God did not leave Moses alone with just the plans for the tabernacle; He was interested to see the plans carried out in the exact way He had prescribed. Therefore, along with providing the materials, He also provided the people with the necessary skills, for those whom God calls for a purpose He also equips to do the job. He called the gifted craftsman, Bezaleel, to be chief over the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings. Bezaleel was the first man in the Bible ever spoken of as being “filled... with the Spirit of God” (31:3). He needed this divine empowerment, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge for the important work he was to do for the Lord. God also gave him an able, Spirit-filled assistant, Aholiab. They were willing and honored to be used of God in this manner, as we many other “gifted artisans” who came under their supervision. All the workers were divinely motivated. Through the Spirit, their natural, yet God-given abilities, were enhanced to carefully, with unity and sensitivity, carry out His plans diligently and precisely as He had commanded.

When God calls believers today, the most important thing is that they be willing to perform the task and bring Him glory, having confidence that He will equip them by His Spirit. While enslaved in Egypt, one of the most advanced nations of their day, many of the Israelites would have learned the necessary skills for doing the delicate and ingenious work required. Little did they know that what they had learned during their slavery would one day be used by God for a greater service: to build what was to become the centre of society for their own nation. Jesus Christ commanded those who followed Him to build His Church, the tabernacle of the Lord today, but before they were able, they were first filled with His Spirit. Since this new tabernacle is greater (Heb. 9:11), so also are the divinely given spiritual gifts which are distributed as God wills to each member of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:1, 27) for the purpose of building up His Church.

After God finished telling Moses all His plans concerning the tabernacle, thus giving the go-ahead, “according to all that I have commanded you they shall do” (31:11), He immediately re-emphasized the fourth commandment, “surely [nevertheless] My Sabbaths you shall keep” (31:13). The people were not to be in such a great rush, nor so zealous to build the Lord’s tabernacle that they would disregard their day of rest. This important command was to be a sign which distinguished God’s people from all others. Its observance proved their obedience to God and respect for Him. Its observance was foundational for the whole law. The reason for the Sabbath was God’s example in creation (31:17). It was instituted before any other laws (Gen. 2:2, 3) and it was given as central in the moral law (Ex. 20:8-11). It was restated in the judicial law (Ex. 23:10-12), and here we find it included in the judicial law (Ex. 23:10-12), and here we find it included in the ceremonial law. It was given for mankind’s benefit (see Mark 2:27) as well as for the honor and service of God. It was to be sanctified, a holy day, not a common day, just as the holy incense and oil were not for a common use. The seriousness of breaking these commands was expressed in the severity of the penalty, that of death, being “cut off” from among the living (30:33, 38; 31:14).

Thank God that today we live under the dispensation of grace (Eph. 3:2) with the intercession of Christ and His forgiveness. This and most other outward observances of the Law have been translated in the New Testament to inward spiritual evidences of discipleship (Rom. 2:28, 29; Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 8:10).

Before Moses descended the mountain, after communing with the Lord for forty days, God gave him the two promised tablets of stone (Ex. 24:12), upon which He wrote with His finger Holy Spirit) the ten commandments, thus indicating their extreme holiness. Moses was to take them down for all to see and then place them in the ark as a reminder of their covenant with God. Now, concerning believers, the new house of Israel, God has said, “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Heb. 8:10).

Prayer

We want to present back to You, O God, the gifts which You have bestowed upon us for the building of Your kingdom.