EXODUS

Chapter 31

*Bezalel and Oholiab*

**Then the Lord said to Moses, 2 “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, 3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts— 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 5 to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. 6 Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you: 7 the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent— 8 the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, 9 the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand— 10 and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, 11 and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you.”**

**31:2** *Bezalel.* Means “in the shadow/protection of God.” (CSB)

*Hur.* See note on 17:10. (CSB)

Grandfather of Bezalel. (TLSB)

**31:3** *filled him with the Spirit of God.* Ability to work as a skilled craftsman was a spiritual gift, equipping a person for special service to God. (CSB)

In addition to their God-given talents as created beings, these men received supernatural abilities from the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

**31:4** *to devise*. Though the Lord revealed the general plans for the tabernacle (25:40; 27:8), the details had to be finalized. (TLSB)

**31:6** *Oholiab.* Means “The (divine) father is my tent/tabernacle.” The names of Bezalel (see note on v. 2) and Oholiab were appropriate for the chief craftsmen working on the tabernacle. (CSB)

*him*. Bezalel. As senior leader, Bezalel was mentioned first in the list (v 2) and distinguished by his specific responsibilities. (TLSB)

**31:7** *Tent of Meeting.* See note on 27:21. (CSB)

**31:1–11** Artisans assemble to begin the work, and they follow the Lord’s plans exactly. As you serve in your congregation, remember that “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Ps 127:1). Value the service of each person, but give all glory to the Lord, who forgives your sins and makes you one in Christ. • Jesus, we are unworthy servants. “We have only done what was our duty” (Lk 17:10). Lead us to use our gifts in honorable service to spread Your Gospel. Amen. (tlsb)

*The Sabbath*

**12 Then the Lord said to Moses, 13 “Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy. 14 “ ‘Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. 15 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. 16 The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. 17 It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.’ ” 18 When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.**

**31:13** *observe my Sabbaths.* Instructions for building the tabernacle and making the priestly garments are concluded by impressing on the Israelites the importance and necessity of keeping the Sabbath even while carrying out this special task. (CSB)

The Sabbath was the pinnacle of God’s revelation. (TLSB)

*I, the Lord, sanctify you*. The Lord lived with His people in these rites and removed their guilt. Physical rest pointed to spiritual rest (cf Mt 11:28–30; Heb 4:2–6). TLSB)

**31:14** *cut off from his people.* See note on 12:15. (CSB)

Not trusting in the Lord’s rest invited temporal death, a precursor to eternal death. (TLSB)

**31:16–17** *covenant … sign.* In her rhythm of work and rest in the service of God, Israel is to emulate God’s pattern in creation as an ever-renewed sign of her covenant with God (see note on Ge 9:12). (CSB)

**31:17** *in six days the Lord* *made heaven and earth*. Connects the building of the tabernacle to creation. The tabernacle would be a Sabbath-house, a house of rest. (TLSB)

*refreshed*. The people’s refreshment came in part through physical rest and all the more from a conscience cleansed by the Word of God. (TLSB)

**31:18** *two tablets.* In keeping with ancient Near Eastern practice, these were duplicates of the covenant document, not two sections of the Ten Commandments. One copy belonged to each party of the covenant. Since Israel’s copy was to be laid up in the presence of her God (according to custom), both covenant tablets (God’s and Israel’s) were placed in the ark (see 25:21). (CSB)

Common in ancient Near East to record important public documents on enduring surfaces. Cf Jsh 8:32. (TLSB)

*Testimony.* See notes on 16:34; 25:16. (CSB)

*inscribed by the finger of God.* Because it was God’s covenant (see 19:5–6), and the stipulations of the covenant (20:1–17) were his. (CSB)

God Himself wrote the Commandments. Cf Lk 11:20. (TLSB)

**31:12–18** Plans for construction are revealed. Craftsmen, imbued with the Spirit of God, are secured. Such work is not an end in itself. It finds its fulfillment in the Sabbath rest for the sin-wearied soul. • Lord Jesus, may Your Spirit work in our hearts, leading us to repentance, that we may remain in the rest You have for us through all eternity. Amen. (TLSB)