

## Exodus Chapters 25-26: God The Builder

From the Theology of Work Bible Commentary on Exodus

The book of Exodus does not easily separate Israel's life in the categories of sacred and secular. The building of the Tabernacle crossed multiple categories for the people of Israel. It was not only their place to worship. It was about establishing the presence of God in their midst. This is clear from the outset in God's words, "Have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8). Christians today understand that God dwelt among us in the person of his Son. Through Jesus' work, the entire community of believers has become God's temple in which God's Spirit lives. In light of these observations, we can make two claims about the Tabernacle that relate to work. First, God is an architect. Second, God equips his people to do his work.

The large section in Exodus about the tabernacle is organized according to God's command and Israel's response. But God did more than tell Israel what he wanted from them. He provided the actual design for it. This is clear from his words to Moses, "In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, so you shall make it" (Exod. 25:9b). The Hebrew word for "pattern" (tavnit) here pertains to the building and the items associated with it. God's work as architect does give dignity to that particular career. But in a general

sense, the people of God may engage in their work (whatever it is) with the awareness that God has a design for it too. There are many details to work out within the contours of God's plan, but the Holy Spirit helps with even that.

The accounts of Bezalel, Oholiab, and all of the skilled workers on the tabernacle are full of work-related terms. Bezalel and Oholiab are important not only for their work on the tabernacle, but also as role models for Solomon and Hiram-abi who built the temple. The comprehensive set of crafts included metalwork in gold, silver, and bronze as well as stonework and woodwork. The fabrication of garments would have required getting wool, spinning it, dyeing it, weaving it, designing clothes, manufacturing and tailoring them, and the work of embroidery. The craftsmen even prepared anointing oil and fragrant incense. What unites all of these practices is God filling the workers with his Spirit.

The Bible does not have to name every noble profession for us to see it as a godly thing to do. The point about the Spirit-gifting of the tabernacle-workers is that God cared about this particular project for these particular purposes. Based on that truth, perhaps the enduring lesson for us in our work today is that whatever God's work is, he does not leave his great work in our unskilled hands. He provides us with every blessing in abundance so that we may share abundantly in every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).