

Who were Bezalel and Oholiab in the Bible?

Bezalel and Oholiab were two men God chose to aid in the construction of the tabernacle, the holy tent where God dwelled in the midst of His people.

During the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, God called Moses to Mount Sinai, where He gave His Law to the people (Exodus 19-24). In the course of His conversation with Moses, God instructed Moses to gather the people and build the tabernacle (chapters 25-31). As these events took place over 1,500 years before the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit would reside in this tabernacle. God gave specific instructions for the building of the tabernacle, including plans for the tent itself, the courtyard, the consecration of the priests, the priests' garments, and even the furniture. The rich materials to be used in the construction were to be donated as an offering from the people (Exodus 25:1-7; 30:11-16). In the end, the people were generous and brought even more than was needed (Exodus 36:3-7).

Many craftsmen would be needed for this work, and in Exodus 31:2-6 God tells Moses that He had given many men the skills they would need to bring His plans for the tabernacle to fruition. Two of these men God mentions by name: Bezalel from the tribe of Judah and Oholiab from the tribe of Dan. Bezalel in particular was filled with God's Spirit (verses 31:2-3), a rare occurrence in Old Testament times. God's Spirit empowered Bezalel and Oholiab with talent and intelligence, giving them the ability to work in every kind of crafting, including woodwork, stonework, metalwork, engraving, embroidery, and weaving. The Spirit's empowering gave Bezalel and Oholiab skill to work with the raw materials and to form the artistic designs (Exodus 31:4-5; 35:30-32, 35). Bezalel himself constructed the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 37:1).

In addition, God inspired both Bezalel and Oholiab to teach all the other craftsmen who had been given special skill by God. Together, led and aided by Bezalel and Oholiab, the craftsmen were able to complete the tabernacle according to God's specifications (Exodus 36:8-39:43).

The story of Bezalel and Oholiab shows us that God cares about aesthetics; He is a God of beauty and design. Fine craftsmanship and skill in various artistic endeavors is a gift from God. Bezalel and Oholiab should encourage Christian artists today to create works of art for the glory of God.