

The Glory of the Lord Fills the Tabernacle (Exodus 36:8-40:32)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Exodus

I. Review and Background

- a. Moses has come down from Mount Sinai with the second copy of the Ten Commandments.
 - i. Recall that he smashed the first set of the Ten Commandments in anger, when he saw the idolatry that the people committed with the golden calf.
- b. When he came down from the mountain, his face was radiating light. Consequently, he covered his face with a veil, uncovering it when he went in to speak before the Lord.
- c. Recall that the prior time Moses ascended Mount Sinai, he had been given detailed instructions on how to build the tabernacle (**Exodus 25-31**). Those instructions covered:
 - i. Materials of construction
 - ii. The construction of the tabernacle proper and furnishings inside it included:
 1. Ark of the covenant, to be located in the Most Holy Place
 2. Veil separating the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place
 3. Things in the Holy Place, where the priests would minister
 - a. Table of showbread
 - b. Golden altar of incense
 - c. Lampstand
 - iii. Things outside the tabernacle proper:
 1. Courtyard, with a system of posts and curtains surrounding it
 2. Bronze altar of sacrifice
 3. Bronze laver, where the priests would wash themselves
 - iv. Special priestly vestments:

1. Breastplate of the High Priest, with twelve precious stones
 2. Special garments (robe, ephod, turban, sash, etc.)
 3. Golden plate for High Priest, with the inscription: 'Holiness to the Lord'
- v. Formulas for the anointing oil and incense
 - vi. Instructions for sacrifices and for consecrating the priests
 - vii. Designation of Bezalel and Aholiab to oversee workmanship of building the tabernacle and associated accessories.
- d. The people were invited to give the materials needed for the construction of the tabernacle, some of which were very expensive (gold, silver, precious gems, etc.). They responded generously, freely giving even more than what was needed.

II. Construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 36-39)

- a. **Question:** The material now before us, in **Exodus chapters 36-39**, seems to be repeating what was previously covered in **Exodus chapters 25-30**. Why does Moses repeat all these details here?
- i. In **Exodus 25-30**, Moses explains how they constructed the tabernacle and fabricated the furniture, garments, etc.: *just as the Lord had told him on Mount Sinai* (which we covered in prior lessons covering **Exodus 25-30**).
 - ii. While we will not repeat this material by reading it aloud in this lesson, I encourage you to read this on your own. You can see for yourself that Moses did, indeed, make sure that everything was made just as the Lord had instructed.
- b. Throughout the description of fabrication and construction, it says that they made everything "according to the instructions that the Lord commanded Moses". This is illustrated in the following passages (which we will read from):
- i. **Exodus 36:8**
 - ii. **Exodus 36:14**
 - iii. **Exodus 36:30**
 - iv. **Exodus 36:35-39**
 - v. **Exodus 37:19-20**

vi. **Exodus 39:40**vii. **Exodus 39:17-23**

- c. Everything had to be done *exactly as the Lord had commanded* (including dimensions, materials of construction, colors, orientation, etc.).
- i. (The Jewish priests under the old covenant) “...serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, ‘See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” (**Hebrews 8:4–5**, NKJV; where **Exodus 25:40** is quoted)
 - ii. The reasons why it had to be done *exactly that way*:
 1. First, *because the Lord said so*.
 2. Second, because there was a reason behind it which Moses could not fully appreciate, which would be made manifest 1400 years later.
 - a. These things were a shadow of heavenly things, and had to be made that way to reflect spiritual realities (about God, Christ the High Priest, the Holy Spirit, the body of Jesus, heaven, the church, prayer, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, angels, etc.).
 - b. Even the geometric 3:1 ratio of the tabernacle construction points to something significant (the nature of one God, in three persons).
 - iii. There are wonderful blessing that comes from simply doing what God says, whether we understand the reason for it (at the time) or not. Sometimes those blessings do not come until much later, perhaps even after our lives are over.
 - iv. Examples of people in the Bible who were blessed by obeying what God said, even though they did not fully grasp the reason behind the command, include:
 1. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (**Hebrews 11:7**, NKJV)

2. "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." (**Hebrews 11:8**, NKJV)
3. *In contrast:* Lot's wife was someone who *did NOT obey a command she did not understand the reason for*, in **Genesis 19:15-26**. Let us consider the fate she suffered as a result, as a warning for us.
 - a. Jesus called us to heed the lesson of this story when He said, "Remember Lot's wife." (**Luke 17:32**, NKJV)
 - b. She was told not to look back, but disobeyed and was turned into a pillar of salt.
4. "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son," (**Hebrews 11:17**, NKJV)
 - a. Abraham tried in his own way to reason why God would ask him to kill a son through which the Lord had promised many descendants would come. Abraham reasoned that the Lord planned to raise up Isaac from the dead after Abraham had killed him.
 - b. While Abraham did correctly conclude that God *is able* to raise the dead, he did not actually understand, in advance, what God would do in this particular case.
5. The walls of Jericho fell "by faith" when the people obediently marched around the city for seven days, then blew the trumpets and shouted, and the walls came down. (**Hebrews 11:31**, pointing back to the story in **Joshua 6**)
6. In the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus concludes: "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great." (**Luke 6:46-49**, NKJV)
7. Jesus said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My

Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (**John 14:21**, NKJV)

8. Also, consider in this light another statement by Jesus:
 - a. “...Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and *become as little children*, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (**Matthew 18:3**, NKJV)
 - b. Small children are (or at least should be) taught to trust and obey their parents, regardless of whether they understand the reason for obeying (at the time).
9. James wrote, in the first chapter of his letter, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” (**James 1:22-25**, NKJV)
- v. **Question:** If God tells you in the Scriptures to do something that is hard or that you don’t understand the reason for, what is your attitude? Do you have the attitude of Moses (following down to the detail exactly what God says, even if you don’t fully understand the reason behind it)?
 1. How and when you pray and fast
 2. Giving to the poor
 3. Being promptly reconciled with others; unity among Christians
 4. Loving your enemies, nonresistance
 5. Teachings related to marriage (don’t be yoked with unbelievers; the permanence of marriage until death)
 6. How you dress, head covering
 - a. Recall that Paul does give understandable reasons why women need to cover their heads when praying or prophesying (and men need to uncover their heads at those times). However, Paul also gives one reason that *we may never understand*: “...because of *the angels*”! (**1 Corinthians 11:10**)
 7. Gossip, slander, unwholesome talk

8. Loving the world, greed, selfishness
 9. Submission (to governing authorities, parents, spouses)
 10. Honoring your parents; children obeying your parents
 11. Having a patient and loving attitude toward others who may be harder to love
- vi. I am not saying, “Just suck-it-up / tough-it-out and obey (even with a lousy attitude).” As Paul said, even if we give all we possess to the poor and surrender our bodies to the flames *but have not love*, we gain nothing (**1 Corinthians 13:1-3**).
1. We should obey out of love for God and love for others (fear of God is a perfectly good motivation as well), even if a teaching is personally hard for us, or if we don’t understand the reason.
 2. Good to always wrestle to try to find out the reason (to understand God better). However, love and trust God, that He knows more than we do and wants what is good for us.
 3. Obey God in the most important things first, but not neglecting even the smaller commands.
 - a. The craftsmen did NOT say, “Well, the *important thing* is to make the ark of the covenant a gold-covered box for the 10 Commandments. As long as it is big enough to contain the two tablets, the exact dimensions probably don’t matter... and make the covering with angels on it or not is just a minor detail, so probably not absolutely essential...”
 - b. The craftsmen did NOT say, “This breastplate would look more balanced with nine gemstones on it (3x3 pattern), or all twelve stones of the same type gem, as opposed to twelve different gems.
- vii. **Question:** Do you have an attitude that you need to understand the reason for everything, *that it needs to make sense to you* before you obey? Or do you trust that God knows what is best in the long term and as the old gospel song says, “We’ll understand it better by-and-by”?

III. Setting Up the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:1-27)

- a. Read **Exodus 40:1-27**.
- b. Timeline:

- i. Tabernacle is set up on the first day of the first month of the second year after their departure from Egypt (**Exodus 40:15**).
- ii. Since they had a lunar calendar (28 days/month), the first day of the month was a new moon (**Exodus 40:1**).
- iii. The calendar of the Hebrews was established by the Lord in Egypt, before the first Passover, in **Exodus 12**.
 1. Read **Exodus 12:1-6**.
 2. On the tenth day of the first month, they were to select a lamb to be sacrificed.
 3. On the 14th day of that month (full moon), they were to kill the lamb at twilight.
 4. For the next seven days, there was to be no yeast in their households)until the 21st day of the month).
 5. This month, the month of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, was to be the first month of the calendar year.
- iv. Therefore, the tabernacle was set up one year after they left Egypt.
 1. They took about 2 months to go from the Red Sea crossing to Mount Sinai.
 2. Then they spent about 10 months encamped at Mount Sinai, during which time:
 - a. Lord came down on Mount Sinai and spoke the 10 Commandments in the hearing of the people.
 - b. Moses went up on the mountain (twice) to receive the 10 Commandments on stone tablets (and instructions on other laws and on tabernacle construction).
 - c. The tabernacle parts were built; then it was assembled.
 - d. This marks the end of the book of **Exodus** (at the end of their first year in the Wilderness, still camped at Mount Sinai, just having built the tabernacle).
 3. After this, they would spend another 39 years wandering in the Wilderness before Moses dies (at the age of 120), and the people would enter Canaan under Joshua's leadership.

- v. Significant things happen that first and second month, following the one year anniversary of the first Passover and departure from Egypt.
 - 1. On the first day of the first month, they begin to set up the tabernacle (**Exodus 40:1 & 40:15**).
 - 2. The people are told to celebrate the Passover on the 14th day of the first month (**Numbers 9:1-5**).
 - 3. On the first day of the second month, the Lord tells Moses to take up a census of all the men over the age of 20, a military-type census (**Numbers 1:1-3**).
 - 4. On the 20th day of the second month, the cloud ascends from the tabernacle, and the people break camp and depart from Mount Sinai (**Numbers 10:11-12**).
- c. After setting everything up for the tabernacle, it says, “So Moses finished all the work” (**Exodus 40:27**).
 - i. Moses was faithful; he completed everything as God told him to do.
 - ii. The next move is the Lord’s!

IV. Lord’s Glory Fills the Tabernacle (**Exodus 40:28-32**)

- a. Read **Exodus 40:28-32**.
- b. Read **Numbers 9:15-23**.
- c. Storyline:
 - i. After the tabernacle was set up by Moses according to all the Lord’s instructions, the cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled it.
 - 1. Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle when the Lord’s glory filled it.
 - 2. Thereafter, over the tabernacle was the form of a cloud by day and a fire by night.
 - ii. Whenever the cloud ascended, the people broke camp and follow where it led.
 - iii. When the cloud overshadowed the tabernacle, the people would stay in that place for as long as the cloud remained.
- d. This scene is similar to what would occur about 400 years later, when King Solomon sets up the temple (a structure permanently located in Jerusalem

that would be modeled after, and would replace, the portable tent-like tabernacle).

- i. Read **2 Chronicles 5:1-6:2**.
- ii. Read **2 Chronicles 6:12-7:3**.
- iii. What we learn about the *temple* (also applies to the *tabernacle*, which it replaced):
 1. God does not actually (physically) dwell in it. Heavens cannot contain God (the Father), much less some structure built by the hands of men.
 2. God's name resides there.
 3. The temple is much more than simply a place where the priests conducted their ministry. It is important to all the people of God as *the focal point of their prayers to God*.
 - a. The Lord (from heaven) will hear prayers made in that place.
 - b. When people are punished by defeat or famine or drought and return to the Lord in repentance and pray toward the temple, He will hear them.
 - c. He will even listen to the foreigner (who is not an Israelite) who comes to the temple to pray to Him.
 - d. When the people are taken captive to a foreign land, and from there they seek the Lord and pray toward the temple, He will hear their prayers.
 4. Examples of prayer at (or toward) the temple:
 - a. Hannah was praying at the tabernacle for a child, before Eli, in **1 Samuel 1** (designated **1 Kingdoms 1** in the LXX).
 - b. While in captivity in Babylon, Daniel was cast into the lion's den because he was caught praying (facing Jerusalem) in **Daniel 6:11-12**.
 - c. Read **Isaiah 56:3-8**.
 - i. The foreigner who obeys the law is welcome.
 - ii. My house will be called a House of Prayer for All Nations.

- iii. “Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a *house of prayer*,” but you have made it a “den of thieves.”’” (**Matthew 21:12-13**, NKJV)
 - 5. Whenever we think of the tabernacle or the temple in the Old Testament, let us see it as *the focal point of prayer*, rather than as a structure in which God lives.
 - a. This should remind us of the tremendous importance of prayer in our own spiritual lives, as well!
 - iv. The tabernacle/temple would be replaced by something better for us.
 - 1. “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’” (**John 4:19-24**, NKJV)
 - e. The Holy Spirit transforms a manmade structure into something spectacular.
 - i. The pillar of cloud and fire foreshadows the Holy Spirit
 - 1. **1 Corinthians 10:1-3** “all baptized into Moses, in the cloud and the sea”.
 - 2. It appeared right after the Passover Lamb slain, in **Exodus 13:21-22**.
 - a. Similarly, Jesus explained to the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come after He departed.
 - b. “But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage

that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”
(John 16:5-7, NKJV)

3. The pillar of cloud (representing the Spirit) led them safely to and through the water and then all the way through the time of testing, to the Promised Land.
 4. It unified them and was at the center of the community.
 - a. Whenever the people encamped in a new location, the Levites and priests would set up the tabernacle at the point where the cloud stopped.
 - b. Then the twelve tribes would encamp around that, three tribes to each side, with the cloud and the tabernacle at the center of the community.
 5. This all testifies to the critical importance of the Spirit to us on our journey to the Promised Land (heaven)!
- ii. Now, for Christians, *the church* is described as the tabernacle/temple in which the Spirit dwells.
1. “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but *fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a *holy temple in the Lord*, in whom you also are being *built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*” **(Ephesians 2:19-22, NKJV)**
- f. While this marks the end of our study in the book of **Exodus**, the journey of Moses and the Israelites does not end here.
- i. To continue on the next leg of this journey, we will need to turn to the book of **Numbers!**