

Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, VIC. 3166

DHW

LESSON 22

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

CHAPTERS 25 - 27

INTRODUCTION

Moses was forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai (22:18). God had given him the Ten Commandments. They were laws pertaining to man's relationship with God in the first part and man's relationship with his fellowmen in the second part. God gave these laws to man to be learned and applied universally in life so that men might live in peace with one another. God also gave Moses good judgments and laws that were related to the communal life of the Israelites as a nation.

In chapters 25 to 27, God

continued to instruct Moses still on the mountain to make a sanctuary that He might dwell among the people (25:8, 9). Then God gave to Moses the blueprint and specifics of the Tabernacle. The three chapters describe the details of the furniture of the various parts, furnishings and Tabernacle. They included the pattern of the Tabernacle, the materials and metals that were to be used. The different colours for the curtains were also specified and these colours were significant because they convey a divine message to the people. Moreover, the symbolic significance of every part of the Tabernacle conveys spiritual application and fulfilment in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the Tabernacle foreshadows the Person and Word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This study of the Tabernacle will excite us in

that it will certainly enhance our knowledge of God, His nature and character, and shall exhort us to worship and praise the Lord our God.

The following outline facilitates the study of this lesson:

- 1) The LORD required that the Israelites brought a freewill offering to Him (Exodus 25:1-9);
- 2) The LORD gave specific instructions to make the Ark, the Table of Shewbread & the Lampstand (Exodus 25:10-40);
- 3) The LORD gave specific instructions to erect the Tabernacle (Exodus 26:1-37);
- 4) The LORD gave specific instructions to make the Brazen Altar and the Courtyard (Exodus 27:1-19);

- 5) The LORD commanded the Israelites to bring olive oil for the burning of the lamps (Exodus 27:20-21)

STUDY THE WORD

Purpose of the Tabernacle

The LORD told Moses clearly to speak to the children of Israel that they should *bring an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart* (25:2). God listed out the things that they should offer to Him. Metals of gold, silver and brass only could be used for the building of the Tabernacle (25:3). The colours for the curtains were also specified, namely, blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen (25:4). The skins and hairs of certain animals only could be used, namely, goats, rams, and badgers (25:4. 5). Wood must be shittim wood for making the furniture.

Oil would be used for light, some spices used for anointing and for sweet incense. Certain stone like the onyx was chosen to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate (25:9). And the LORD reminded Moses that the Tabernacle must be made according to His specifications, nothing added or subtracted.

The Ark, Shewbread & Lampstand

Significantly was the requirement that the gifts which were to be offered must be made willingly. It therefore ruled out any gifts given grudgingly or even as a matter of duty or obligation. This reveals the graciousness of the LORD God. He had saved, protected and provided for the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt to Sinai. Yet God asked gifts from His people, for whom He had done so much, not out of duty but out of a willing heart. This

was God's way wanting His people to show that they really loved and were devoted to Him. God could have supernaturally provided all the materials for the building of the Tabernacle. But He would rather choose to do it by inviting the people to give willingly and have a part in the building of the Tabernacle and all the things needed for it.

The purpose of the Tabernacle was that God might dwell among His people (25:8). In this way the presence of God was constantly sensed by the people. God became the centre of focus of their life. Later as we shall see that when the children of Israel pitched their twelve tribal tents they pitched around the Tabernacle having it in the centre. The Tabernacle became a place of worship for the children of Israel in accordance with the way prescribed by God. It

established the relationship between God and His people. It would be the place of meeting for all the people where God would instruct them through Moses and the people were to live out what God intended them to be and to do. The ultimate purpose of the Tabernacle was to point to Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead, who would come and fulfil all the object lessons of the Tabernacle.

The materials used were gold, silver and brass. The symbol of these metals depicted royalty, service, and judgment in that order. The colours were also symbolically meaningful: blue indicating heaven, purple royalty, scarlet blood, fine twined linen (white) purity. Goats' hair, rams' skin dyed red, and badgers' (dugong or sea cow) skins, and shittim wood: all symbolically picturing the

Humanity and Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The oil and spices for making sweet incense, and the precious stones described the beauty of God's holiness, compassion and love.

The Furniture of the Tabernacle

In the Tabernacle there were all together seven pieces of furniture. Five of them are mentioned here. In the order given, the first was the Ark (25:10), then the Mercy Seat (25:17), next the Table of Shewbread (25:23), and the Lampstand (25:31), and finally the Brazen Altar (27:1). The two other pieces of furniture are introduced later. They were the Altar of Incense (30:1), and the Laver (30:18, a huge bowl containing water for washing).

Observe that the Ark and the Mercy Seat are mentioned first. God explained that He would be above the Mercy Seat between the two cherubim

so as to meet and commune with the people. The spiritual significance of this order is that God came to man and not the reverse. He provided man with a way of approaching Him. It was no different in the Garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, he hid himself, and God came to look for him. In His holiness, love and mercy God came to seek man. The Mercy Seat which was fitted on top of the Ark, was placed in the Most Holy Place, which was also known as the Holy of Holies (26:34).

The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle proper would be covered by curtains. Four curtains would cover the Tabernacle proper (26:1-14). The first inner layer was the fine twined linen with embroidery of cherubim, with colours of blue, purple and scarlet. So from the inside of the tent, the design and colours could be seen. Then over this

covering was the goats' hair curtain, followed by the rams' skin dyed red and finally the outer most covering was the badgers' skin.¹ As we have mentioned above, a veil made of fine twined linen with colours of blue, purple, and scarlet with embroidery work of cherubim hung from four pillars dividing the Tabernacle into two sections—the Most Holy Place and the Holy Place.

The Tabernacle proper (sometimes called the Tent), was rectangular with three sides walled with boards made from shittim wood. The north and south sides had twenty boards (26:15-20). The twenty boards on each side were held together by rods running through the boards, and the west side had eight boards (26:22-25). So, the tent had

¹ The Hebrew *tahas* is closely related to the Arabic *tukhas* or *duksash*, a name for a marine animal resembling the sea, more particularly the dugong or sea cow. This animal is often found among the coral rocks of the Red Sea (John J. Davis, p. 252).

three sides boarded, north, south and west, and the measurement, 30 cubits by 30 cubits by 8 cubits. Taking one cubit to be 18 inches, then the measurement would be 45 feet by 45 feet by 12 feet.²

The Tabernacle proper was divided into two sections by the Veil (26:31-36). The outer section was called the Holy Place. The Table of Shewbread and the Lampstand were placed opposite to each other in this place—the Table on the north side, and the Lampstand exactly opposite on the south side (26:35). Only the priests were allowed to eat the Shewbread and it must be eaten in that place. This indeed indicates the sustaining grace of God upon His people. The Lampstand provided light to the place otherwise it would be very dark. Symbolically, it

² Chapter 26:24 has been interpreted in various ways. It is best to take the two corner boards to have the same dimension of the other boards, that is 10 by 1½ cubits.

speaks of the light of God and His Word. We are reminded of what the Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples and the multitude, *I am the Bread of life*, and *I am the Light of the world*.³

The other inner section was the Holy of Holies. In it was placed the Ark which was crowned with the Mercy Seat which had two cherubim on each side. As mentioned earlier, God's actual presence was here (25:8). It is sometimes referred to as the "shekinah glory of God."

The Brazen Altar

The Brazen Altar was made of shittim wood and overlaid with bronze. It was square in shape measuring five

³ John 6:35 *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*

John 8:12 *Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*

cubits by five cubits and three cubits in height. It was the largest of all the furniture. It was placed outside the Tabernacle proper but within the Courtyard a distance away from the entrance of the Tabernacle. At the four corners of the altar there were four horns (27:1, 2). The construction of the Brazen Altar was such that there was a network of grating at the top of the altar for burning of the sacrifices, then the special compartment below for collecting the ashes. Then there were shovels, basins for collecting blood of the sacrifices, and fleshhooks (27:3, 4). This was the place where the priests burnt the sacrifices brought to them by the people. This place of sacrifice symbolizes the place of judgment of God foreshadowing the atoning work of Christ for the sins of the world.

The Courtyard

The Courtyard was fenced by fine twined linen curtains measuring 100 cubits by 100 cubits on the north and south sides, and by 50 cubits on the west side. The curtains were held up by pillars. The height of the curtains was 5 cubits (27:18). The east side was special. On each side of the east the curtains measured only 15 cubits; so both sides totalled 30 cubits. This left an opening of 20 cubits which was called the Gate. The gate was covered by curtains measuring 20 cubits with the same colours and embroidery work of cherubim. There was only one single entrance into the Courtyard of the Tabernacle. As the height of the Tabernacle proper was higher than the curtains by 5 cubits, a person could see the top of the tent from the outside. But it was not a beautiful sight, because he

could see the covering of dugong skin, which was without form, nor comeliness, nor beauty. There was nothing wonderful to attract the bystander. This intimated a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is the Only Way to God. Outwardly, *he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him* (Isaiah 53:2).

PRACTICAL VALUE

We stand amazed at the marvellous way in which God revealed about Himself. It is He who comes to seek man, as our Lord Jesus Christ declares that the Son of man comes to seek and save those who are lost. God shows that He can be approached, but it must be according to His prescribed way. There is only One Way, as there was only one entrance into the Tabernacle. So, Christ is the Only Way to God. Our

Lord Jesus declares (John 14:6): *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Another important lesson is that God is immanent. God wants to be near us to the extent of indwelling every child of His. Although He has revealed that He is transcendent, far above in all respects, yet He wants to be in the midst of His people. We should therefore realize this wonderful and comforting truth and draw near to Him sensitive to His ever-presence in our midst where we are and whatever we do. The Lord be praised!

Another precious lesson we learn is that we should never approach and worship God empty handed. God is happy that His children learn this about Him. We can bring our whole being a living sacrifice to Him. We can bring the material and physical gains

He has blessed us with. And we must always meet Him either individually or corporately with joy and a willingness of the heart. God loves a cheerful and ready servant. AMEN