

Sunday, April 21, 2024 pm

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (26)

Israel at Mt. Sinai (3)

The Tabernacle

Exodus 25-40

This lesson serves as somewhat of a supplement to our study of the 17 time periods of Bible history. In our last lesson, we addressed the conduct of Israel as Moses was on Mt. Sinai, both the first and second times. When he comes down he reveals the instructions of the LORD. They will remain at Sinai for about 9 more months during which time they will build the tabernacle for God and establish the Levitical priesthood. This is an important subject as we see both concepts were forerunners to the church and priesthood of believers. There are many parallels between the OT & NT in these areas. So let us take a lesson to examine some thoughts about them.

I. The Tabernacle

- a. Recorded in Exodus 25-27 (instructions on Mt. Sinai); 30-31 – Altar of incense; 35 – offerings and gifted artisans, 36-38 – the tabernacle is being built.
- b. The word tabernacle means a tent. This implies an easily movable structure, though we learn that it was much more than just a tent, with paneled walls and metal bars as a support structure.
- c. Instructions given to the people (NOTE: We will combine both Moses' instructions and the actual building of the tabernacle for continuity).
 - i. Exodus 25:1-9 – the people are instructed to bring precious materials – garments, medals, wood, oil & spices, etc., to build the tabernacle, priestly garments and offerings. The people would use whatever talents they had to help prepare these things.
 - ii. NOTE: vs. 9, **According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.** This is a phrase that will be repeated continually. Exodus 25:40, 26:30; 27:8, “as it was shown you on the mountain” Exodus 34:4, 32, 34; 35:29, 38:22, 39:1, 5, 7, 21, 26, 29, 31, 32, 42-43, 40:16, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32, all state, “as the LORD had commanded Moses”, as they built the tabernacle and made the priestly garments, furniture and sacrificial implements (oil, etc.). At least 26x we find emphasis on the pattern. The phrase also continues into the book of Leviticus-Deuteronomy, etc.
 - iii. NOTE: One might wonder where the wealth came from. The answer is (at least in part) from the Egyptians who gave them whatever they asked for before they left the land (Exodus 11:2-3, 12:35-36). As we can see, their gifts were not just for personal gain, but YHWH intended them to be used to build His tabernacle.
 - iv. Exodus 31:1-3..., 6ff – YHWH called Bezalel and Aholiab to lead the building process. He filled them “with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and all manner of workmanship...” to design and construct everything. NOTE again, God is in COMPLETE control of HOW this place of worship to Him was to be made. The details matter!
 - v. Exodus 35 records that as Moses is giving instructions to the people to give he notes that it was to be done voluntarily (“Whoever is of a willing heart” – vs. 5). Vs. 10, ALL gifted artisans were to use their talents to help construct the tabernacle and its furnishings. Vs. 20ff show the people bringing liberally what they had for this project. Exodus 36:2-7

records the people keep bringing so much that they had to be restrained from bringing any more.

d. The tabernacle

- i. Exodus 26 records instructions to build the tabernacle. We read of its construction in Exodus 36:8-38. Chapter 36 records the people, under the direction of the “gifted artisans” following the instructions.
 - ii. The tabernacle was a rectangle, approximately 45 feet long by 15 feet wide by 15 feet high (30x10 cubits, with a cubit being ~18 inches). Its structure consisted of panels made of Acacia wood (20 panels on each long side, joined together, 6 panels for the back side with 2 boards in the 2 back corners). They would be joined together with a network of bars. The entrance would also be covered by a curtain of white linen.
 - iii. INSIDE this network, there was a layer of “fine linen” that was white with cherubim of blue, purple and scarlet thread artistically embroidered within. There were 10 curtains that would be joined together.
 - iv. OUTSIDE of this structure. A second layer of goats hair was put over the top of the tabernacle described.
 - v. Then 2 layers (rams skin and badgers skin) were put over the top of the goatskin.
 - vi. Inside the tabernacle was 2 chambers – the holy place and holy of holies. The holy place was 2/3 of the tabernacle (30x15), while the holy of holies was 1/3 (15x15). Between these 2 chambers, another veil was woven with the design of the cherubim that would separate them. The ark of the covenant was to be placed inside the holy of holies (26:33-35).
- e. **The courtyard** is described in Exodus 27:9-19 & 38:9-20. It was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide (100 X 50 cubits, ~3x longer and 5x wider than the tabernacle). It was also made of whit fine linen and secured on bronze pillars. The walls were to be 7½ feet tall (5 cubits). The entrance was 30 feet wide and covered with a screen. The entrance faced to the east, the same direction as the entrance to the tabernacle.
- f. The furnishings
- i. There are several items associated with the tabernacle and proper worship. Just remember that with each piece, God gave them the specific pattern. This will factor in later in our study. NOTE: I am addressing them based upon location at the entrance to the tabernacle complex.
 - ii. **The altar of burnt offering** – Exodus 27:1-8. It was to be a 7½ foot square, 4 ½ feet high. It was made of acacia wood and overlaid with bronze . This alter would be used for the various sacrifices Israelites were to offer to God. It, like all the pieces of furniture (except the candlestick), had 4 rings on its corners and was to be transported by Levites with poles of acacia wood. In the tabernacle complex, this stood outside of the tabernacle and closest to the entrance of the complex.
 - iii. **The bronze laver** – Exodus 30:17-21. This was a bronze laver was to be placed between the altar of burnt offerings and the entrance to the tabernacle. Before priests could enter the tabernacle, they were to wash themselves (hands and feet). We are not give the measurements of this laver.
 - iv. **The table of showbread** – Exodus 25:23-30, 26:35, etc. Inside the tabernacle, this was a table 3 feet x 1½ feet & 2ft, 3in tall. There were also several dishes to be made to accompany this. Leviticus 24:5-9 describes its use. Each Sabbath, they were to place

12 loaves of unleavened bread (representing the 12 tribes) with frankincense on each row. At the conclusion of the next week, the priests could eat the bread in a holy place.

- v. **The golden candlestick** – Exodus 25:31-40. The only piece that did not have rings to transport it, this candlestick was to be made of pure gold. It was to have 6 branches – 3 on either side. It was to be hammered with ornamental knobs (pomegranates) and flowers. On each lampstand there was to be a bowl for holding oil and a wick. This source of light was to be kept burning while the tabernacle was in use. The high priest would maintain these bowls each day (Leviticus 24:1-4)
- vi. **The altar of incense** – Exodus 30:1-10. Placed in front of the veil that separated the two chambers, it was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It was to be 18 inches square and 3 feet high. Each morning Aaron (the High Priest) was to burn sweet incense as he tended to the lampstand, and at twilight he was to burn more incense on this altar. This is the ONLY thing offered on this altar (though once a year, on the day of atonement, some of the blood of the sin offering would be placed on its horns. EVEN the incense was special – the “recipe” was described in Exodus 30:34-38. It was to be regarded as holy and used EXCLUSIVELY for the altar. The people were not to make that incense for their own personal use. To do so was to be “cut off from his people.”
- vii. **The ark of the covenant** – Exodus 25:10-22. The final object was the most important, the ark of the covenant. It was the only thing in the holy of holies. Made of acacia wood, it was 4½ feet long, 2¼ feet wide and 2¼ feet tall. It too was overlaid with gold. It too had rings on its 4 corners with gold overlaid poles that were to remain in place. Within it the “Testimony” was to be placed (the 10 commandments – Deuteronomy 10:2). Other items would eventually be put into this ark as well – a golden pot of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded. ON TOP of the ark, the mercy seat was to be placed (same diameter). 2 cherubim facing each other were to be hammered at the two ends of the mercy seat. They were to stretch their wings. This would be the place where God would meet with His people. Each year, the High Priest would bring blood of atonement into this chamber interceding for the sins of the people.
- viii. **THESE are the furnishings for the tabernacle complex.** With further instructions, it would be set up in the midst of the camp of the Israelites.

II. **The tabernacle is erected** – Exodus 40, the final chapter describes the completed work as the tabernacle is erected and furnished. Then in Ex. 40:34-38 we read of the cloud covering the tabernacle and the glory of the LORD filling it. It was consecrated and the place of meeting established by God.

III. **Lessons for today**

- a. The tabernacle was a TYPE of the church.
 - i. Recall how everything about the tabernacle was patterned by God. We learn the importance of this in the New Testament. We find parallels today as we shall see here. Hebrews 8:4-6 finds the writer describing Jesus as our High Priest. He makes reference to the instructions to Moses.
 - ii. Also consider Ephesians 3:10-11 which reminds us that the church was planned eternally. Now let us notice Hebrews 9:1-5 where the tabernacle is contrasted with Christ and His work. Hebrews 9:23-24 again addresses this.
 - iii. The tabernacle was a place where only the priests could enter. We are reminded that today, we ARE the priesthood of Christ – 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

iv. What must we do to become priests?

1. The altar of sacrifice - We may also consider how Jesus IS the sacrifice that once and for all achieved our forgiveness – Hebrews 7:26,27, 9:13-14.
 2. The bronze laver – to be able to enter the tabernacle, priests had to wash. WE to have to was away our sins in **baptism** (Acts 22:16, Romans 6:3-4, etc.)
 3. The tabernacle (holy place) - When we obey the gospel we are added to **the church** – Acts 2:47. Revelation 21:3, “*Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.*” As we have noted in times past, this is a reference to “the New Jerusalem” which would be the kingdom of God. In times past, we have established that the Kingdom of God IS the church (cf. Matthew 16:18-19)
 4. The candlestick - 3 observations. First, Jesus is our source of light in the church – John 8:12. 2nd – His word is the source of our light – Psalm 119:104-105; 2 Peter 3:19. 3rd – we are to be reflecting His light – Matthew 5:14-16
 5. The table of showbread – each week the priests changed it out and partook. It served as a memorial to them of God’s provisions. Today, each Sunday, we partake of the Lord’s supper – 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.
 6. The altar of incense – before the veil entering into the Holy of Holies. Offered daily. This could be our prayers that we offer regularly to God – Revelation 5:8.
 7. The veil – separates where we are now from where God (and Jesus) is, in heaven. While on this earth we are absent from the Lord – 2 Corinthians 5:6-9
 8. The Holy of Holies – heaven itself. Hebrews 9:24. Of course, He is our High Priest – Hebrews 9:11.
 9. The Ark of the Covenant - where God is, the mercy seat. Jesus is seated at His right hand – Hebrews 10:12. Forgiveness is made possible because of all of this.
 10. NO WONDER, God was so specific in giving Moses instructions.
- b. **God’s pattern is important** – Just as following God’s pattern was important back then, it continues to be important today. The only way we can be assured of our salvation is by keeping His commandments – John 14:15; 2 Peter 1:3 – He has given us “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” 2 John 9 warns us not to transgress the doctrine of Christ.
- c. **How is our giving?** Recall how the people gave to the point that they needed to be restrained. While we will likely not reach that point, how is your giving? Do you give liberally – 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, etc.

As we can see, God has had a purpose for everything He has done. We learn that as we see the relevance of the tabernacle to us today. It was in God’s plan all along. If you desire access to God today and a hope of heaven when this life is over, it will be through His church. Are in His church today?