

Week 7: A Place for God's Name
Exodus 35:4-9, 30-36; 39:20-21, 32-33; 40:1-2, 34-38
February 16/17, 2019

INTRODUCTION:

Years ago, I spoke with a church member about his job situation. He explained to me that he had been working for a company for many years, but he had grown frustrated that his career had not advanced the way that he had hoped. However, he said all of that recently changed when his management approached him with the possibility of a big promotion. They offered him more money, more support staff, and much more responsibility. Everything sounded like a dream come true until they got to one small detail in the new job description: travel. In this new role, they informed him that every week he would have to travel across the country, and at times, even around the world. While he knew this would be a challenging new venture, he told me that he felt like it was the right move for him in his career, and in his ability to provide for his family.

Fast-forwarding several months later, he caught up with me at church on a Sunday morning. I checked in to see how things were going, and he said the new job was amazing and he listed all of the incredible places he had visited in recent weeks. He talked about his passion for the new position and all of the exciting new assignments he was given. I congratulated him and thought he finally found the satisfaction he was looking for in the workplace. However, I was surprised with his response to my words of affirmation. He told me, "I'm actually going to quit in a few months." His response took me off guard, especially after he had just rattled off so many positive effects. I simply asked him, "Why are you doing that?" His answer stuck with me for many years. He simply responded, "I miss my children." He explained that while he could now give them many things, he could not give them the one thing that he wanted to give the most: his presence.

Every loving father wants to be with his kids. There is a unique joy that fathers can only experience through walking in relationship with their children. Likewise, there is a God-given peace and love that children can only experience when their fathers are active and present in their lives. And today in our lesson, we're going to see that these principles are especially true when it comes to our Heavenly Father and His kids.

Like my friend at church, our Heavenly Father desires to be with his children! In fact, the Bible tells us that He delights in us and desires to walk in relationship with us every day. The Creation Era illustrates this truth as we learned in Genesis 1-2 that our Father created man and woman in His image, and His intention was for mankind to forever enjoy fellowship with Him in His presence. However, as we studied in in the Creation Era, Adam and Eve tragically turned their backs on God and fractured that relationship. Because of their sin, God in His justice had no choice but to dismiss them from His holy presence; and in that moment, separation between God and mankind was established here on this earth.

Fortunately, the good news of the Gospel is that our Father's love never changed despite our willful rebellion against Him. Instead of accepting that separation, the rest of scripture explains that our Father rolled out a plan to redeem His people and restore His presence with his children forevermore. If you fast forward to the End Times Era, you would see how *Revelation 21:3* tells us how this story will end one day when the Apostle John recorded his vision of what is to come, **“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”**

One day God will indeed dwell with his children in a real and tangible way in the new heavens and the new earth. But before we get to that climactic moment in human history, the rest of the scriptures explain how our Father will bring that full redemption to fruition. Throughout the Bible, God progressively revealed His plan, with many amazing milestones and steps that build towards the reestablishment of His unhindered presence with us. So far, we have seen this in the Creation Era, Patriarch Era and today as we continue in the Exodus Era.

Today in Exodus 35-40, we find one of those milestone moments in human history. As we learned in recent weeks, God chose a people for Himself, the nation of Israel. In our daily reading we saw how He delivered them from Egyptian captivity through the mighty 10 plagues and through their exodus across the Red Sea. He guided them through the wilderness, provided the law, and established a covenant with them.

Today, we are going to see that He is now set on building a tabernacle for His presence to physically manifest with them here on this earth. While Israel will still not have unhindered access to Him through this Tent of Meeting (tabernacle), God will still establish a means for Him to reside with His people. Through this newly constructed tabernacle, we'll see the Father's resting presence will bring joy to his children and communicate His endless love and affection for them.

EXPOSITION:

Primary Text #1 –

Exodus 35:4-9, (February 12, 2019 - Page 165) ⁺And Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, “This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying: ⁵ ‘Take from among you an offering to the LORD. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the LORD: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁶ blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats’ hair; ⁷ ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; ⁸ oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; ⁹ onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate.”

As we learned last week, God has been abundantly patient and steadfast in His love for Israel. Shortly after God faithfully and miraculously rescued his people from Egyptian bondage, we learned that they foolishly exchanged the glory of God for a golden calf that they constructed at the bottom of Mt Sinai. As we witnessed last week, God disciplined them justly and severely, as 3,000 Israelites fell there in the wilderness. Nonetheless, God does not give up on His people and instead stays committed to His promise and His mission to establish His presence with them. He renews His covenant with Israel through the intercession of Moses, and He presses forward in His mission to dwell with His people. He does this by instructing them to build a tent for Him to meet with them.

As we just read in Exodus 35, Moses gathers the nation together and communicates this pressing construction project that God has commanded of him and the nation of Israel to complete. Moses begins his speech by speaking of the materials that he will need to build the tabernacle for the Lord. God gave Moses very specific instructions regarding what materials needed to be used for the various pieces of the tent and its furnishings. Moses lists the fine metals like gold, silver and bronze. He also talks about precious materials such as scarlet thread and oils. As you can imagine, these were big-ticket items that only the affluent could have had in that time, not recently freed slaves. But what's amazing is Moses already knew this nation of former slaves had everything they needed! How did they have it? This brings us to our first point today.

Point 1 – GOD PROVIDES RESOURCES FOR HIS PURPOSES

When the Israelites left Egypt, God instructed them to plunder the Egyptians. In fact, the scriptures tell us they did not even have to argue or fight with Egypt to acquire those resources. Instead God compelled the Egyptians to give them whatever they asked for (**CF. Exodus 12:36**). In a matter of minutes, the Israelites were transformed from starving slaves with reduced rations, to emancipated men and women walking in royalty! What an amazing blessing it must have been. I can imagine they were in shock and overwhelmed by their good fortune. However, I can also imagine many of them might not have realized that they were actually being blessed to be a blessing.

That is how the grace of God works in our lives. He always blesses people according to own His sovereign will and perfect wisdom. But regardless of “how much” He blesses each of us with, He still blesses us all with the same goal in mind. His desire is that we will use those resources to glorify Him and to accomplish His purposes here on this earth. Just as God knew that Israel had the resources to fulfill this massive task, He knows the resources that He has given us, and he too invites us to use them for eternal purposes.

For some right now, you are already pushing back against this idea in your mind. After all, this teaching is antithetical to the way we view “our things.” Most of us would say our treasure was earned, not handed out to us like those lucky Israelites.

However, the Bible explains differently. James 1:16-17 says, ¹⁶*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.* ¹⁷*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*”

James says anything in your life that you would call “good” is not there by accident, nor by merit, but rather because a good Father loves giving good gifts to his kids. You might say, “but that’s my money...I earned it!” Yes, but God gave you the job. You might say, “well I qualified for that job.” Yes, but God would say it was because He provided the education and skills to be chosen. You might say “But I worked hard in school.” God would say He gave you the intellect and ability to do so. It does not matter what we point to in our lives, every single thing can in fact be traced back to the grace and goodness of our maker.

David says it best when he tells us in *Psalms 24:1*, “*The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.*” So, if all resources are in fact from God, and He gives them to us to accomplish His purposes, how do we go about giving them? Hopefully, we will do it the same way Israel did in our passage. Let’s keep reading...

Exodus 39:20-21, (February 13, 2019 – Page 170) “²⁰And all the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. ²¹Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD’s offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.

It said everyone “whose spirit was willing” brought the offerings. This is a key principle behind Biblical giving. God is not looking for begrudging submission; He’s looking for a spiritual act of worship! When we give with the right understanding in our heart, we will always give joyfully, thanking God for providing all things and in most cases letting us keep 90% of it!

God is not looking for a monthly bill to be paid to Him, He’s looking for a spiritual act of worship from a cheerful heart (**CF. 2 Cor 9:7**). Amazingly, this is exactly what Israel does. Shortly after their rebellion, you can see that their hearts have softened. They are so generous with the Lord, Moses actually has to tell them to stop giving **Exodus 36:3-7) (February 12, Page 165)**.

Do you walk in this world with open hands and open hearts? When God stirs your heart to give to accomplish his mission, do you respond joyfully and willingly like Israel...or do you turn your heart from His invitation? If Israel had said “no” to Moses, they would have missed the blessings that we are about to see. Tragically, many in this world miss the blessings that God has in store for us if we walk obediently to His purposes. May we all say “yes” to His invitation and be a part of something bigger than ourselves, just like Israel in this text.

Primary Text #2 –

Exodus 35:30-36, (February 12, 2019 – Page 165) “³⁰ And Moses said to the children of Israel, “See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; ³¹ and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, ³² to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, ³³ in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship. ³⁴ “And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, in him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. ³⁵ He has filled them with skill to do all manner of work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen, and of the weaver—those who do every work and those who design artistic works.

So, Israel stepped up to the plate and provided all of the necessary resources, but giving those gifts was really just the beginning of the work. Now that God had provided the necessary resources through them, the bigger task was now at hand. Many might have been asking, “Now, how on earth are we going to build that tent with these things?” After all, God provided Moses a grand vision of what this tent of meeting was going to look like, but how would that vision truly become a reality? Once again, God always provides us with everything we need to accomplish His will, as we’ll see in our second point today.

Point 2 – GOD EQUIPS PEOPLE FOR HIS PURPOSES

Our text tells us that Moses was informed by the Lord exactly who would be able to carry out this grand construction project. The Lord tells Moses that He has called Bezalel and Aholiab to be the leaders of the jobsite. Moses says the spirit of God filled those two men with wisdom and understanding, creativity to design, and a heart to teach others and duplicate themselves. God knew that no man was big enough to accomplish His purposes with that tent. Because of that, He supernaturally gifted Bezalel and Aholiab with all of the abilities and wisdom they would need to accomplish His mission.

This is the greatness of our God. He does not just demand us to walk in His will and to fulfill his purposes here on this earth; He actually goes a step further and equips us to do so! God knows that we have deficiencies, insecurities, and weaknesses. Simply put, we cannot fulfill any God-sized assignment on our own, but that is why God tells us that His grace is sufficient, and His power will be made perfect in our weaknesses (**CF 2 Cor 12:9**).

Like Bezalel and Aholiab, God fills every believer of Jesus Christ with his Spirit. This experience happens at the moment we place our faith in Him (**CF Ephesians 1:13-14**). And when the Spirit of God begins to live in us, He also begins to change us. Every single believer of Christ is given at least one spiritual gift from God when they surrender to Him (**CF Ephesians**

4:7-8). And like Bezalel and Aholiab, those gifts are given to us not for our own desires, but for the purpose of building up His house.

Every day, our church does God’s work through ordinary men and women that are supernaturally empowered and equipped by Him. God has given our church an amazing mission to go and make disciples across this city, this nation, and around the world. With a church of 80,000 members and a city of millions, Pastors and leaders, like Moses, will never be able to take that task on by themselves. So, our God calls out new leaders just like he did with Israel, He equips them with his Spirit, and He sends them to fulfill his will and build up His house.

Has God stirred up your heart to use your talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts for His purposes? Just as God wanted to build His tabernacle, He wants to build up his church today. But the work will only be finished if all of us rise up like Bezalel and Aholiab and say, “yes,” to his invitation for service.

Primary Text #3 –

Exodus 39:32-33a, (February 14, 2019 – Page 171) “³² Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished. And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. ³³ And they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings...”

(February 14, 2019 – Page 172) Exodus 40:1-2, “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ² “On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.”

(February 14, 2019 – Page 173) Exodus 40:34-38, “³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ³⁶ Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. ³⁷ But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸ For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

Bezalel and Aholiab stay faithful throughout the project, train up other workers, and as a unified nation, Israel completes the work of the tabernacle. The text tells us they finished creating the tent and its articles by the end of their first year out of Egypt and they take those items to Moses. Like any good leader, we’re told in Chapter 39 that Moses inspects the work to ensure the tasks have been completed properly. You have to imagine that Moses was proud of His people!

It's amazing to consider their maturation during this short time since the exodus. This is the same nation that complained and grumbled as Moses led them out of captivity, and then abandoned the Lord who rescued them when they constructed that golden calf. However, chapters 39 and 40 paint a different picture. You see a quiet and gentle obedience from Israel. They are commanded 18 times in these final two chapters, and amazingly the scriptures tell us they continue doing "all that was commanded of them." This truly is a picture of Biblical repentance. Not only did they feel remorseful about their rebellion and seek forgiveness from God, but they now are taking pro-active steps towards walking in obedience with Him.

Moses receives all the items and the Lord gives him instructions on when to erect the tent. As our passage said, at the beginning of their second year, they pitched that tent of meeting for the first time. They put up the veils, furnished the tent with the various articles, and Moses lit the lamp and placed the bread on the table. In that moment, all of Israel received the reward for their obedience, which brings us to our final point today.

Point 3 – GOD ABIDES WITH PEOPLE WHO WALK IN HIS PURPOSES

We're told in Exodus 40 that the cloud covered the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled that place of Worship. Some translations say the cloud "settled" or "abode" in the temple. The Hebrew translates to "shekinah," in English, meaning the abiding presence of God. Moses tells us that this shekinah glory was so overwhelming that he personally could not even enter the tent! What a display it must have been for God's people. The manifestation of God's glory was so overwhelming and so awe-inspiring, that they must have had their eyes and their hearts fixed on Him.

Israel had worked so hard in recent months and had come so far from those 400 years of captivity. God saw that they were trusting and obeying him, so He blessed them with the greatest gift that day: His presence.

God's desire is for you and me to experience the joy of His presence every day. Just as a good earthly father knows that a child will never experience the fullness of this life without his presence, I too can guarantee that none of us will ever experience the fullness of joy in this life without our Heavenly Father. And the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that all of us can experience His presence today. While the tabernacle is no longer here, we actually get to experience the greater reality of God's presence.

Paul reminds us in *1 Corinthians 6:19a*, "***Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?***"

The structures of the tabernacle and temple have come and passed, but Paul says there still is a temple where God rests with us. This temple is in our hearts. If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the scriptures tell us that you are in fact a temple walking throughout

Houston, TX. Make no mistake about it, the same God who manifested in the tabernacle during the Exodus Era, now manifests inside you today. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the glory of God lives in you and through you every single day. And when we walk in obedience to God's purposes like Israel, the glory of the Lord is still captivating! When we join God in His work and say "yes" to his purposes for our lives, we too experience the joy of his presence every single day.

CONCLUSION

God spoke by giving clear instructions to His people concerning the building of the Tent.

God speaks to us today by giving clear instructions on how to live, how to serve, how to give, how to Worship in 2019.

God acted by manifesting His presence among His people through the cloud and the fire.

God acts today by dwelling in each believer through the Holy Spirit, never leaving us or forsaking us on our journey.

God revealed His desire to be among His people. God is holy. Man is sinful. Yet God desired to make His presence known through His people and did so at the Tent of Meeting.

God reveals Himself today through His Word, His Spirit, and His Truth that is never changing and still relevant in an ever-changing world.

The promise of Exodus 40: 38 still holds true today, the presence of God is visible and available to you throughout your journey, whatever stage of life you are in and in the days to come.