

Sermon Notes

26th January 2020

Exodus 25-31

You can't carry the mountain with you!

- The Israelites had met God on Mt Sinai. Moses had sealed the covenant and he had given them God's laws.
- God had given them a system of sacrifices so that sins could be forgiven (remember: this was a pointer to Jesus – Hebrews 10:1-10).
- They had been so close to God that they had shared a meal in his presence and lived (Ex 24:9-11).
- But Sinai wasn't their final destination – they were headed for the promised land. How were they still to experience the presence of God when they left?
- He gives them plans to build the 'Tabernacle' – a place where God will continue to be with them as they travel.

The Tabernacle

- The Tabernacle was a kind of portable temple (when they eventually conquered Jerusalem and built the temple, that would take over the role).
- God gives them detailed instructions on how to build it (Ex 25-31). These are about the tent (Ex 26), the furniture and equipment within it (Ex 25, 27, 30), the clothes for the priests (Ex 28), the ceremony to consecrate the priests (Ex 29).
- He also fills Bezalel with his Spirit to carry out the design work (Ex 31:1-6). An affirmation for all artists and creative people!
- The tabernacle had different areas and, as you approached the centre, the most holy place and the ark of the covenant, the number of people allowed there became less and the ceremonies more stringent. There was always a reminder of God's holiness.
- The daily sacrifices reminded people that sin needed to be forgiven and that they were there only by God's grace.
- The whole thing was glorious and expensive (see Ex 12:36 for where some of the money came from). We are rightly suspicious of 'bling' in worship but doing God's work 'on the cheap' equally doesn't honour him.
- The story is told in a particular way to remind people of two other things – the Garden of Eden and Mount Sinai – both places where God had met with people in intimacy. You'll have to follow that one up in the commentaries!

But we live in the New Testament era

- The Tabernacle isn't there any more. The temple isn't there any more. And Jesus prophesied its destruction (Mark 13:1-2).
- We don't have to go to a temple, or have priests offering animal sacrifices. Something has changed.
- You should read Hebrews alongside Exodus!
- Jesus ended the old system of sacrifices by offering himself as the once and for all sacrifice to take away sin (Hebrews 10:1-7).
- Hebrews 8:1-5 and Hebrews 9:23-26 go a step further. They say that the true tabernacle/temple is in heaven, and that the reason Moses was given such detailed instructions was that he was making an earthly copy of the real one.
- We may find particular places helpful, because they have memories or affect our senses or emotions. But they aren't essential to meet God. Jesus has opened the way for us to come into God's presence anywhere, with confidence and assurance (Hebrews 10:19-22).
- You have this privilege of access to God. But God is still holy. He's still majestic. The old tabernacle reminded people of that, and they approached God with awe. Does our access risk making us too familiar, and losing that sense of awe? How do we retain it? How do we worship?

Space for your notes

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