

EXODUS

Part IV: Chapters 20-40

THE LAW, THE CALF, AND THE TABERNACLE

ASBURY

IS THIS THE HARDEST PART OF THE BIBLE?

In some ways this final section of Exodus is the most challenging part of the whole book, and among the most challenging parts of the entire Bible. This is because, for modern readers, Exodus chapters 20-40 seem overwhelmingly *boring*. What relevance do the meticulous instructions for the construction of the tabernacle have for my life? How can reading Old Testament law possibly help me today?

If we are willing to approach the Bible with open minds and do a little bit of work, however, I'm convinced that these seemingly boring passages are really a blessing to us. We've been reading through Exodus for months, let's finish the story and see what the Lord has for us!

3 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF EXODUS 20-40

1. **Pay attention to where you are in the overall story.** Context matters, and when you trace the overall arc of the story, some of the passages that at first seem boring actually become really interesting. Remember, the process *is* the point. So, for example, we'll see that when the tabernacle instructions are repeated almost verbatim, there is something really important going on. (Spoiler: the instructions are repeated *after* the incident with the golden calf; the repetition shows that the Lord is giving the people a chance to start over—the repetition is a good thing! If you're interested, you can read ahead to the commentary for Thursday, June 13 to find out more.)
2. **Think about the point *behind* the law.** After the revelation of the Ten Commandments, the Lord gives the Israelites more detailed laws about how to live and represent Him well. The Ten Commandments are like a constitution, and the subsequent laws amplify its intent by giving greater specificity—“*If this happens, then do this.*” What we see when we pay attention to the point *behind* the laws is the heart of God. By thinking about God's intention with the laws, we can see how seemingly obsolete Old Testament law can inform how we live today.
3. **Remember that the question Exodus is trying to answer is, *how can a Holy God live in the midst of a sinful people?*** The tabernacle is meant to provide the means by which the Lord can be close to the people and sustain them as they move into the Promised Land. The Lord wants to guide them and strengthen them, but their fear and idolatry is a constant threat to His purposes.

SUMMARY OF THE STORY SO FAR

- The children of Israel were enslaved by Pharaoh;
- Moses was spared by the Lord and then sent by the Lord to lead the children of Israel to freedom;
- The Lord sent the plagues and brought judgment on the so-called gods of Egypt;
- The Lord delivered His people through the Passover and the Red Sea;
- And He brought them to Mount Sinai to commission them as His representatives to the nations.

The people have been rescued for a purpose. At Mount Sinai (chapters 20-40), they receive that purpose.

First, they receive the Ten Commandments.

Second, they receive additional laws so they can live well.

Third, they are told how to properly worship through the construction of an ornate tent in the middle of their desert camp—a tent called “the tabernacle”—and there is a priesthood ordained to lead them in proper worship.

From the time of the Passover until the end of the Book of Exodus, one-year period elapses, and so things are moving along relatively quickly.

But God’s plan is interrupted by the shocking Israelite decision to make and worship a golden calf while Moses is on the mountain hearing from the Lord. Literally right after they have been told in the Second Commandment not to worship idols, that’s exactly what they do!

IF YOU WERE GOD, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

We are confronted at Mount Sinai with the central tension of the entire biblical story—how does a good God stay committed to a rebellious and sinful humanity?

What we will see is that the Lord remains committed to Israel but that nevertheless there are consequences for their sin. In fact, the entire sacrificial system of worship the Lord institutes at the tabernacle is meant to teach Israel about the deadly consequences of sin and His desire to forgive them and reinstate them into a right relationship with Him.

How this Reading Plan Works

Remember, consistency is more important than intensity! That is, don't try to read the whole Bible in one sitting—rather, pace yourself and make a commitment to be consistent. To that end, the readings are parceled out on weekdays only—if you get behind, catch up each weekend. Each day I've written brief commentary to help you get something out of your reading. The commentary is NOT the point; the Bible is the point. If the commentary helps you, great! If it doesn't, no worries—just skip it.

WHY EXODUS MATTERS TO YOUR LIFE TODAY

As we will see, the Ten Commandments are guidance from God about how to live well. The Ten Commandments (and the other laws that follow) are revealed from God to His people so that they can be His representatives to the nations.

The church has that same purpose today (see 1 Peter 2:9-12)—we represent the Lord to the world. It's my prayer that these readings will show us how to live well so we can be a blessing to our neighbors and to the nations.



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P.S. Want to receive these daily readings and commentary each weekday morning in your inbox? Sign up on my website: andrewforrest.org.

P.P.S. What did the tabernacle look like? What's the point of the ark of the covenant and the lampstand and the high priest's clothing, etc.? What are we supposed to do with all the Old Testament laws? **I'll be teaching my final All-Church Bible Study on Exodus on Wednesday, May 29, 6:30-8:00pm in the Asbury Sanctuary.**

ORDER FOR DAILY PRAYER

In a Bible study or small group?

Use the order below to provide some structure to your gathering.

1. GREETING

This is the day that the Lord has made! Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:24

2. THE INVITATORY

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

O God, make speed to save us;

O Lord, make haste to help us;

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

Amen.

3. OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you, no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

4. SCRIPTURE LESSON

The day's scripture is read and briefly expounded.

5. PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory

For ever and ever. Amen.

6A. MORNING PRAYER

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night and turns the shadow of death into the morning: you have brought us safely to the beginning of this day, and we ask that you drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

6B. EVENING PRAYER

O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night and so thereby bring us in safety to the morning hours. Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all this we pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

7. CLOSING BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace;
And now may the blessing of God Almighty,
The Father the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
Be with us and remain with us now and forever. Amen.

OCCASIONAL PRAYERS

I have included below some occasional prayers that you may find helpful. Often at a birth or a death I find myself fumbling for the right words to say, and these occasional prayers have been a help to me. (I'd suggest copying to your phone the ones that seem most useful to you, so you can easily text them to others when the need arises.)

A GRACE BEFORE MEALS

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

or

Blessed are you, O Lord God, King of the Universe, for you give us food to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR OUR NATION

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure conduct. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom, in thy Name, we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all of which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR A BIRTHDAY

O God, our times are in your hand: Look with favor, we pray, on your servant *N.* as *he* begins another year. Grant that *he* may grow in wisdom and grace, and strengthen *his* trust in your goodness all the days of *his* life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR A CHILD, OR FOR A BIRTHDAY

Watch over your child *N.*, O Lord, as *his* days increase; bless *him* and guide *him*, and keep *him* unspotted from the world. Strengthen *him* when *he* stands; comfort *him* when discouraged or sorrowful; raise *him* up if *he* falls; and in *his* heart may your peace which passes understanding abide all the days of *his* life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR A MARRIAGE OR ANNIVERSARY

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and His Church: Send your blessing upon these your servants [as they begin another year], that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

A THANKSGIVING PRAYER

Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love. We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side. We thank you for setting us at tasks that demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments that satisfy and delight us. We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone. Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of His Word and the example of His life; for His steadfast obedience, by which He overcame temptation; for His dying, through which He conquered death; and for His rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom. Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make Him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. Amen.

FOR OUR ENEMIES

O God, the Creator of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth; deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you in Jesus Christ; in whose Name we pray. Amen.

FOR THE RECOVERY OF A SICK PERSON

O God, the strength of the weak and the comfort of sufferers: Mercifully accept our prayers, and grant to your servant *N.* the help of your power, that *his* sickness may be turned into health, and our sorrow into joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Rest eternal grant to *N.*, O Lord; and may *his* soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace and in the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection. Amen.

FOR DESIRING GOD

O God, grant that we may desire you, and desiring you seek you, and seeking you find you, and finding you be satisfied in you forever. Amen.

FOR A PERSON IN TROUBLE OR BEREAVEMENT

O merciful Father, you have taught us in your holy Word that you do not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men: Look with pity on the sorrows of your servant *N*. Remember *him*, O Lord, in mercy; nourish *his* soul with patience; comfort *him* with a sense of your goodness; lift up your countenance upon *him*; and give *him* peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR THE DISCOURAGED AND DOWNCAST

O God, almighty and merciful, you heal the broken-hearted, and turn the sadness of the sorrowful to joy: Let your fatherly goodness be upon all whom you have made. Remember in pity all those who are this day destitute, homeless, elderly, infirm, or forgotten. Bless the multitude of your poor. Lift up those who are cast down. Mightily befriend innocent sufferers, and sanctify to them the endurance of their wrongs. Cheer with hope all who are discouraged and downcast, and by your heavenly grace preserve from falling those whose poverty tempts them to sin. Though they be troubled on every side, suffer them not to be distressed; though they are perplexed, save them from despair. Grant this, O Lord, for the love of him who for our sakes became poor, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

FOR HELP TO BEAR BEREAVEMENT

Heavenly Father, help us to entrust our loved ones to your care. Though sorrow darkens our lives, help us to look up to you, remembering the cloud of witnesses by which we are surrounded. And grant that we on earth, rejoicing ever in your presence, may share with them the rest and peace which your presence gives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR QUIET CONFIDENCE

O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(I've selected these prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer*.)

MONDAY, MAY 13
EXODUS 20:22-26

DO YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC SPOT FOR PRAYER?

²² And the Lord said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. ²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵ If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it you profane it. ²⁶ And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it.’

After the Ten Commandments, the Lord gives more specific instructions to Moses. Here, the Lord repeats the injunction against making idols and then explains how the Israelites are to make altars.

Altars, Not Idols

Israelite worship should not consist of little statues but rather simple altars. (This simplicity is why they are not meant to use hewn stone, but rather just use field stone as they find it.) And, because these altars are for ordinary people who won't be clothed in priestly robes, they need to be careful that they remain appropriately clothed and dignified when they worship.

Why Should We Care?

The Israelites are not to worship idols, but they are to construct altars. I think the lesson here for us is that it is good for us to have particular places in which to pray and worship. Obviously, our churches play this function, but we live most of our lives outside the church building so I think it's also good to have a particular spot at home to pray. Your closet? Upstairs? Downstairs? Back patio? Front stoop? Breakfast table? The garden? At the foot of your bed? Pick a spot and make a practice of just sitting there and praying. It will change your life.

TUESDAY, MAY 14

EXODUS 21:1-36

THE BIBLE AND SLAVERY

21 “Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. ² When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. ³ If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. ⁵ But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ ⁶ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

⁷ “When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. ⁸ If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has broken faith with her. ⁹ If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. ¹⁰ If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. ¹¹ And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

¹² “Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. ¹³ But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. ¹⁴ But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

¹⁵ “Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

¹⁶ “Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

¹⁷ “Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.

¹⁸ “When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist and the man does not die but takes to his bed, ¹⁹ then if the man rises again and walks outdoors with his staff, he who struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed.

²⁰ “When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be avenged. ²¹ But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for the slave is his money.

²² “When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely

be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine.²³ But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life,²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

²⁶ “When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye.²⁷ If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth.

²⁸ “When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall not be liable.²⁹ But if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not kept it in, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death.³⁰ If a ransom is imposed on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed on him.³¹ If it gores a man's son or daughter, he shall be dealt with according to this same rule.³² If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.

³³ “When a man opens a pit, or when a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it,³⁴ the owner of the pit shall make restoration. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his.

³⁵ “When one man's ox butts another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and share its price, and the dead beast also they shall share.³⁶ Or if it is known that the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall repay ox for ox, and the dead beast shall be his.

To orient ourselves: the Lord has made a covenant with Israel, and they have agreed to its terms. The first set of terms are the Ten Commandments. As we have seen, the Ten (given in chapter 20) are general principles that offer guidance on how to live well. Then, chapters 21-23 will provide more detailed instructions, based on the Ten.

Modern readers are often troubled by the fact that there was slavery in Ancient Israel. Shouldn't the people who themselves had been slaves in Egypt have refused the practice?

The overall direction of the Bible is anti-slavery, but in the ancient world slavery was like how electricity is today—utterly part of life, and unthinkable to be without. So, what we have here is the Lord beginning to tighten the screws and make slavery less and less of an option for Israel.

Many of these laws in chapters 21-23 are “casuistic laws,” that is laws that are “if...then” laws. In other words, they are not speaking to the ideal but to the actual—they are for the people how and where they actually are, not how they should be. What we will see is that these laws are meant to protect the vulnerable from the powerful. Strange as they seem on first reading, when we dig deeper we see that they are a way of restricting oppression, not amplifying it.

Slavery in Israel was NOT the same thing as the institution of American slavery. For one thing, it wasn't what we could call “race-based.” (In fact, the concept of race as being related to skin pigmentation is a modern concept from the past several hundred years; this concept did not exist in the ancient world.) In the ancient world, people groups—what we might call tribes or nations—were the primary divisions between peoples. So, for example, we read in the Bible of the Israelites and the Egyptians and the Midianites and the Philistines, etc. These groups are defined by their common ancestry and by the land they inhabited.

One of the ways that people became enslaved was through war—slaves were enemy captives. When Julius Caesar made war in Gaul, he enslaved the Gauls in the hundreds of thousands. Note that the Romans (from modern day Italy) enslaved people—the Gauls (from modern day France)—who had similar skin tones.

Also, American slavery had its roots in kidnapping—Africans were kidnapped in Africa and brought against their will across the terrible Middle Passage to be sold in the Americas. But, in Exodus, kidnapping is a capital crime, punished by the death penalty:

Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death. [Exodus 21:16]

Note that both the slave seller and the slave buyer are put to death!

The word translated “slave” here in the English Standard Version actually has a range of meanings. The Hebrew word (spelled with English letters) is *ebed*, and it can mean:

- Servant;
- Slave;
- Indentured servant.

In fact, it is that last category that makes the most sense in our context, because the reason someone would be enslaved in Ancient Israel was as a way to pay off debts. Selling yourself into domestic servitude in order to pay off debts is, as strange and off-putting as it is to us, a social safety net.

So, with that in mind, look at 21:1-4:

1 "Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. 2 When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. 3 If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. 4 If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. [Exodus 21:1-4]

When you become an indentured servant, you automatically are released from your debts every seven years. If a husband and wife come into service together, then they go out together. But, if an indentured servant ends up getting married while in servitude, then his wife will not automatically go out with him, because she will still need to work off her own debts.

We still might have problems with the entire system of indentured servitude, but nevertheless looking at those initial verses above in this way helps understand a bit more the heart behind the laws.

Now, let's look at 21:7-11, which initially seem really troubling:

7 "When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. 8 If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has broken faith with her. 9 If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. 10 If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. 11 And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money. [Exodus 21:7-11]

Remember that in the ancient world, women found security and provision by being tied to a man, either as a daughter or as a wife or as a mother. Verses 7-11 therefore are about *protecting* women by making it impossible for female indentured servants to be traded around between men as sexual objects. If a female indentured servant becomes a sexual partner to a man in her household, she cannot then be cast aside.

If a man decides that he cannot survive on his own and prefers to stay with another household, then he has that choice:

5 But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' 6 then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him

to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever. [Exodus 21:5-6]

But it must be clear to everyone that this is his choice, hence the pierced ear. Otherwise, he would go free after seven years and have to make his own way in the world.

What's interesting to me is that the very first laws after the Ten Commandment are focused on household service. The Lord is here restricting how vulnerable people might be oppressed. Servitude is not permanent but must be lifted every seven years. If you physically abuse your indentured servants, then they go free even if their debts are not yet paid:

²⁶ "When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye. ²⁷ If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth. [Exodus 21:26-27]

What does this first section of laws tell us about the heart of God and the temptations of humanity?

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15

EXODUS 22:1-31

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. ² If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, ³ but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

⁵ "If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed over, or lets his beast loose and it feeds in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best in his own field and in his own vineyard.

⁶ "If fire breaks out and catches in thorns so that the stacked grain or the standing grain or the field is consumed, he who started the fire shall make full restitution.

⁷ "If a man gives to his neighbor money or goods to keep safe, and it is stolen from the man's house, then, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. ⁸ If the thief is not found, the owner of the house shall come near to God to show whether or not he has put his hand to his

neighbor's property. ⁹ For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, 'This is it,' the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbor.

¹⁰ "If a man gives to his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any beast to keep safe, and it dies or is injured or is driven away, without anyone seeing it, ¹¹ an oath by the Lord shall be between them both to see whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor's property. The owner shall accept the oath, and he shall not make restitution. ¹² But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. ¹³ If it is torn by beasts, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn. ¹⁴ "If a man borrows anything of his neighbor, and it is injured or dies, the owner not being with it, he shall make full restitution. ¹⁵ If the owner was with it, he shall not make restitution; if it was hired, it came for its hiring fee.

¹⁶ "If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife. ¹⁷ If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins.

¹⁸ "You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

¹⁹ "Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.

²⁰ "Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction.

²¹ "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. ²² You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. ²³ If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, ²⁴ and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

²⁵ "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. ²⁶ If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, ²⁷ for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

²⁸ "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

²⁹ "You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to me. ³⁰ You shall do the same with your oxen and with your sheep: seven days it shall be with its mother; on the eighth day you shall give it to me.

³¹ "You shall be consecrated to me. Therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs.

Remember, these laws teach us about what matters to God. In general, we see two main categories here:

- First category: protecting the vulnerable;
- Second category: keeping people away from serious sin and error.

In the first category, see vv. 21-24:

²¹“You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. ²² You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. ²³ If you do mistreat them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry, ²⁴ and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. [Exodus 22:21-24]

In the second category, see vv. 18-20:

¹⁸ “You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

¹⁹ “Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death.

²⁰ “Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction. [Exodus 22:18-20]

These actions are so destructive to the community that those who take them face the ultimate punishment: death.

Which of the laws in today’s reading is most needed in our society today?

P.S. Did you note 22:16-17? That law is saying that if you sleep with a woman, you had better be committed to marry her and pay the price. This is another example of a law that at first seems reprehensible to us, but was a way of protecting women, who were always vulnerable in the ancient world.

THURSDAY, MAY 16

EXODUS 23:1-19

WHY JEWS DON'T EAT CHEESEBURGERS

²³ “You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. ² You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, ³ nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit. ⁴ “If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

⁶ “You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in his lawsuit. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and righteous, for I

will not acquit the wicked. ⁸And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

⁹“You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

¹⁰“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, ¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.

¹²“Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.

¹³“Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.

¹⁴“Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. ¹⁵You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. ¹⁶You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. ¹⁷Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God.

¹⁸“You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my feast remain until the morning.

¹⁹“The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.

“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

Remember, the laws are meant to teach us important principles that lay behind the specific statutes. These principles show us the heart of God.

What do you think of this law?

¹⁰ *“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, ¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard. [Exodus 23:10-11]*

Farmers are meant to let their fields stay unharvested every seven years, so that the poor might harvest whatever is there for their own sustenance. The very structure of Israelite society is meant to provide for the poor.

P.S. See that note about not boiling “a young goat in its mother's milk” [v. 19b]? This prohibition—repeated three times in the Bible—is the reason

the rabbis developed the prohibition against mixing meat and dairy, a prohibition that observant Jews keep to this day. The reason for this law may be to prevent the mixing of life and death—milk provides for life but cooking means death. Throughout Leviticus, we see that it's important that the Israelites learn to separate death from life (hence the concern with blood—the “life” of an animal).

FRIDAY, MAY 17

EXODUS 23:20-33

DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO STAY AWAY FROM FALSE GODS

²⁰ “Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. ²¹ Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him.

²² “But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.

²³ “When my angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, ²⁴ you shall not bow down to their gods nor serve them, nor do as they do, but you shall utterly overthrow them and break their pillars in pieces. ²⁵ You shall serve the Lord your God, and he will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from among you. ²⁶ None shall miscarry or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. ²⁷ I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. ²⁸ And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and possess the land. ³¹ And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. ³² You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

The reason why it is so important that the Canaanites are driven out of the Promised Land is because their idolatry is likely to trip up the Israelites.

There is an important lesson here about how easy it is for God's people to become like their unbelieving neighbors. In the American church, we talk a lot about influencing others, but it often seems as if we are more *influenced by* the larger culture than we are actively influencing and shaping it.

Why do you think that is?

Where in your own life are you living too much like an unbeliever?

MONDAY, MAY 20

EXODUS 24:1-18

THE SET UP TO WHAT FOLLOWS

24 Then he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship from afar. ² Moses alone shall come near to the Lord, but the others shall not come near, and the people shall not come up with him."

³ Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do." ⁴ And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. ⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." ⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

⁹ Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. ¹¹ And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

¹² The Lord said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." ¹³ So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴ And he said to the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever has a dispute, let him go to them."

¹⁵Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The glory of the Lord dwelt on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Chapter 24 is setting us up for what will follow.

- In chapter 19, the Lord tells the people that they will be His representatives to the nations; they only need to listen to the terms of the covenant and obey them;
 - In chapter 20, the Lord gives the Ten Commandments, which are the first part of the covenant;
 - In chapters 21-23, the rest of the terms of the covenant are given.
-

Setup #1 – the Golden Calf

Here, the people agree to the terms of the Lord's covenant:

³Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do." ⁴And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. ⁵ And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. ⁶And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. ⁷Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." ⁸And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words." [Exodus 24:3-8]

Twice, Moses tells the people the terms of the covenant, and twice they agree. Then, Moses sprinkles the people with the blood of the sacrifice, essentially saying, "the stakes of this covenant are life and death."

But, as we will see shortly, the people almost immediately break the covenant when they create and worship the golden calf (Exodus 32)! So, what will be the consequences?

Setup #2 – Aaron’s sons

Moses goes up the mountain, but he brings some of the leaders of Israel with him; Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu are specifically mentioned.

⁹ Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, ¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. ¹¹ And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank. [Exodus 24:9-11]

It’s an amazing scene. The very ground itself is transformed by the presence of the Lord, and these leaders picnic in the presence of God and aren’t consumed by His glory!

It seems, however, that this experience will give Aaron’s sons a dangerous and irreverent sense of familiarity with the Lord. Later in Leviticus, immediately after their ordination to the priesthood, they fool around in the tabernacle, taking advantage of their position, and they are killed as a result:

¹ Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’” And Aaron held his peace. [Leviticus 10:1-3]

This episode here in Exodus has set us up for what will follow.

Setup #3 – Joshua

Joshua has only been mentioned in one previous episode, the fight with the Amalekites in chapter 17. Here is our second reference to him:

¹² The Lord said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” ¹³ So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. [Exodus 24:12-14]

The reason this matters is because while Moses is up on the mountain, the people below—under Aaron’s leadership—will create and worship the golden calf.

What we learn here is that when that happens, Joshua is not with them! Joshua, who will be Moses’s successor, has no part in the people’s idolatry.

TUESDAY, MAY 21

EXODUS 25:1-40

HOW TO BUILD A REPLICA OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN IN YOUR BACKYARD

25 The Lord said to Moses, ²“Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. ³ And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, ⁴ blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, ⁵ tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, ⁶ oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁷ onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. ⁸ And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. ⁹ Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.

¹⁰ “They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. ¹¹ You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. ¹² You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. ¹³ You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. ¹⁵ The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. ¹⁶ And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you.

¹⁷ “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. ¹⁸ And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends. ²⁰ The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. ²¹ And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. ²² There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

²³ “You shall make a table of acacia wood. Two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. ²⁴ You shall overlay it with pure gold and make a molding of gold around it. ²⁵ And you shall make a rim around it a handbreadth wide, and a molding of gold around the rim. ²⁶ And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and fasten the rings to the four corners at its four legs. ²⁷ Close to the frame the rings shall lie, as holders for the poles to carry the table. ²⁸ You shall make the poles of

acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, and the table shall be carried with these. ²⁹ And you shall make its plates and dishes for incense, and its flagons and bowls with which to pour drink offerings; you shall make them of pure gold. ³⁰ And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me regularly.

³¹ “You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. The lampstand shall be made of hammered work: its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it. ³² And there shall be six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; ³³ three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. ³⁴ And on the lampstand itself there shall be four cups made like almond blossoms, with their calyxes and flowers, ³⁵ and a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out from the lampstand. ³⁶ Their calyxes and their branches shall be of one piece with it, the whole of it a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. ³⁷ You shall make seven lamps for it. And the lamps shall be set up so as to give light on the space in front of it. ³⁸ Its tongs and their trays shall be of pure gold. ³⁹ It shall be made, with all these utensils, out of a talent of pure gold. ⁴⁰ And see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain.

Short Summary of the Bible So Far

The Lord created humanity in His image, to represent Him to the world. Humanity is both incredibly powerful and incredibly vulnerable, and so the Lord set up the Man and the Woman in the Garden of Eden to be instructed in how to live well. In the middle of the Garden was the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—the fruit of both trees was meant to help the humans grow and learn and live in God’s presence.

Rather than trust the Lord, however, they reach out and take from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil on their own. This action tears at the trust that is necessary for people to live with God, and so they leave Eden.

The Lord doesn’t give up on humanity, however, and chooses one man—Abraham—and his family to bring blessing to the entire world.

Abraham’s family finds itself enslaved in Egypt, but the Lord rescues them and brings them to Mount Sinai and tells them they will be His representatives to the nations. He gives them the Ten Commandments and the Law so that they will know how to live well.

And then He gives Moses blueprints to create an Eden-like enclosure and tent in the midst of the Israelite encampment. The purpose? So that the Lord can be close to the people.

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. [Exodus 25:8]

It's as if the Lord is going to start all over again and teach people what they need to flourish and live at peace with the rest of creation.

Some Notes on the Tabernacle Instructions

This is the kind of material in the Bible that many of us skip, but, when I slow down and actually pay attention, I find it really interesting.

Some quick notes:

- The Israelites have come up out of Egypt and are currently in the middle of the wilderness. So, any building materials will have to come from what they themselves brought out of Egypt.
- The offering is voluntary! The Lord just asks people to give as they feel led to give (v.2).
- Some of the jewels and precious metals are first mentioned as being in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2.)
- Cherubim are these terrifying spiritual beings with wings; the last time we heard of them was in Genesis 3:24, where they were stationed with flaming swords to keep the Man and the Woman from coming back into the Garden of Eden.
- The plan for the lampstand is obviously to make it look like a tree! Read the details and you can see that it will look tree-like when it is completed.

All of this is to say that the plans for the inner part of the tabernacle are meant to invoke imagery from the Garden of Eden. After those long years of exile from the Lord's presence, now the Lord is making plans to be close to His people again.

I can't be the only person who:

1. Faces discouragement;
2. Faces confusion.

I'm discouraged sometimes because so many things seem so difficult and depressing. There is so much bad news and life is so difficult for so many people.

I'm confused because I often don't know what to *do*.

The solution to both discouragement and confusion is to spend time with the Lord.

The more we experience the Lord's presence, the more convinced we are that:

In the end, everything will be okay.

If it's not okay, then it's not the end.

And if it's not the end, then the Lord still has work for us to do.

It's not that the bad things go away when we spend time with the Lord, it's that we become more convinced that somehow and someday, everything is going to be okay. We have the strength to carry on.

And, the more time we spend with the Lord, the more we become like Him and the more His wisdom influences how we see and act in the world. We learn how best to live.

The presence of God is life itself, and apart from Him we can do nothing.

What if you lived today as if you were desperate for the Lord to be close?

P.S. One of the ways that I believe modern Christianity has lost its way is in the manner by which we build churches today: spare, utilitarian spaces that don't look much different from department stores or schools or hospitals. What if we took inspiration from the *tent* the Lord has the Israelites construct *in the desert* and decided that spaces dedicated to the worship of God ought to be the best and most beautiful spaces we could build?

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

EXODUS 26:1-37

THE CURTAIN BETWEEN THE HOLY PLACE AND THE MOST HOLY PLACE

26 "Moreover, you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skillfully worked into them. ² The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits; all the curtains shall be the same size. ³ Five curtains shall be coupled to one another, and the other five curtains shall be coupled to one another. ⁴ And you shall make loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain in the first set. Likewise you shall make loops on the edge of the outermost curtain in the second set ⁵ Fifty loops you shall make on the one curtain, and fifty loops you shall make on the edge of the curtain that is in the second set; the loops shall be opposite one another. ⁶ And you shall

make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains one to the other with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may be a single whole.

⁷ “You shall also make curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle; eleven curtains shall you make. ⁸ The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits. The eleven curtains shall be the same size. ⁹ You shall couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and the sixth curtain you shall double over at the front of the tent. ¹⁰ You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that is outermost in the second set.

¹¹ “You shall make fifty clasps of bronze, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together that it may be a single whole. ¹² And the part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle. ¹³ And the extra that remains in the length of the curtains, the cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle, on this side and that side, to cover it. ¹⁴ And you shall make for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and a covering of goatskins on top.

¹⁵ “You shall make upright frames for the tabernacle of acacia wood. ¹⁶ Ten cubits shall be the length of a frame, and a cubit and a half the breadth of each frame. ¹⁷ There shall be two tenons in each frame, for fitting together. So shall you do for all the frames of the tabernacle. ¹⁸ You shall make the frames for the tabernacle: twenty frames for the south side; ¹⁹ and forty bases of silver you shall make under the twenty frames, two bases under one frame for its two tenons, and two bases under the next frame for its two tenons; ²⁰ and for the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side twenty frames, ²¹ and their forty bases of silver, two bases under one frame, and two bases under the next frame. ²² And for the rear of the tabernacle westward you shall make six frames. ²³ And you shall make two frames for corners of the tabernacle in the rear; ²⁴ they shall be separate beneath, but joined at the top, at the first ring. Thus shall it be with both of them; they shall form the two corners. ²⁵ And there shall be eight frames, with their bases of silver, sixteen bases; two bases under one frame, and two bases under another frame.

²⁶ “You shall make bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of the one side of the tabernacle, ²⁷ and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the side of the tabernacle at the rear westward. ²⁸ The middle bar, halfway up the frames, shall run from end to end. ²⁹ You shall overlay the frames with gold and shall make their rings of gold for holders for the bars, and you shall overlay the bars with gold. ³⁰ Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain.

³¹ “And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. ³² And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with

hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. ³³ And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy. ³⁴ You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place. ³⁵ And you shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand on the south side of the tabernacle opposite the table, and you shall put the table on the north side.

³⁶ “You shall make a screen for the entrance of the tent, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework. ³⁷ And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold. Their hooks shall be of gold, and you shall cast five bases of bronze for them.

The tabernacle is a big tent, and inside are two rooms. The bigger, outer room is called the Holy Place. The inner, smaller room is called the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies, and the high priest only goes in there once a year.

“The veil, which hangs by clasps on four acacia-wood pillars, separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Behind it is the ark and the ark’s cover. In front of it are the table on one side and the lampstand on the other. The altar of incense will end up there too, but it has not yet been mentioned (30:1-6).”

-Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*

Why the division between the “hot spot” of God’s presence in the Holy of Holies and everything else? Why can’t the people just approach the Lord willy-nilly?

In a way that’s hard for us to understand, human sin makes it impossible for us to be in God’s presence without dying, and so the Lord sets up zones for the people, so they know how far to go, and no farther. In fact, even the high priest himself only enters the Holy of Holies one day of the year. Like the sun itself, if we draw too near to God’s presence we will be consumed. Somehow, human sin needs to be atoned for.

This is what happens on the cross. Jesus dies in the place of sinful humanity, and thereby reconciles the world back to God. This is why when Jesus dies, the curtain in the Temple is torn.

³⁷ *With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.*

³⁸ *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”* [Mark 15:37-39]

THURSDAY, MAY 23

EXODUS 27:1-21

THE LAMPS ARE MEANT TO BURN ALL NIGHT

27 “You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad. The altar shall be square, and its height shall be three cubits. ² And you shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze. ³ You shall make pots for it to receive its ashes, and shovels and basins and forks and fire pans. You shall make all its utensils of bronze. ⁴ You shall also make for it a grating, a network of bronze, and on the net you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. ⁵ And you shall set it under the ledge of the altar so that the net extends halfway down the altar. ⁶ And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. ⁷ And the poles shall be put through the rings, so that the poles are on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. ⁸ You shall make it hollow, with boards. As it has been shown you on the mountain, so shall it be made.

⁹ You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side the court shall have hangings of fine twined linen a hundred cubits long for one side. ¹⁰ Its twenty pillars and their twenty bases shall be of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. ¹¹ And likewise for its length on the north side there shall be hangings a hundred cubits long, its pillars twenty and their bases twenty, of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. ¹² And for the breadth of the court on the west side there shall be hangings for fifty cubits, with ten pillars and ten bases. ¹³ The breadth of the court on the front to the east shall be fifty cubits. ¹⁴ The hangings for the one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and three bases. ¹⁵ On the other side the hangings shall be fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and three bases. ¹⁶ For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework. It shall have four pillars and with them four bases. ¹⁷ All the pillars around the court shall be filleted with silver. Their hooks shall be of silver, and their bases of bronze. ¹⁸ The length of the court shall be a hundred cubits, the breadth fifty, and the height five cubits, with hangings of fine twined linen and bases of bronze. ¹⁹ All the utensils of the tabernacle for every use, and all its pegs and all the pegs of the court, shall be of bronze.

²⁰ “You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. ²¹ In the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel.

I love that last detail:

²⁰ “You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light, that a lamp may regularly be set up to burn. ²¹ In the tent of meeting, outside the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout their generations by the people of Israel. [Exodus 27:20-21]

The priests are meant to tend the lamplight all night, so that it never goes out.

“The Old Testament’s teachings on keeping the lamps burning regularly may provide background for Jesus’s admonition in Luke 12:35. There he says, “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.” For Jesus, keeping one’s lamp burning continually is a symbol of watchfulness, being ready and waiting of the master’s return.”

-Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*

Are you prepared?

FRIDAY, MAY 24 **EXODUS 28:1-34**

THE CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN

²⁸ “Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. ² And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. ³ You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron’s garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. ⁴ These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash. They shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother and his sons to serve me as priests. ⁵ They shall receive gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen.

⁶ “And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and of fine twined linen, skillfully worked. ⁷ It shall have two shoulder pieces attached to its two edges, so that it may be joined together. ⁸ And the skillfully woven band on it shall be made like it and be of one piece with it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. ⁹ You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, ¹⁰ six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. ¹¹ As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones

with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree.¹² And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for remembrance.¹³ You shall make settings of gold filigree,¹⁴ and two chains of pure gold, twisted like cords; and you shall attach the corded chains to the settings.

¹⁵ “You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, in skilled work. In the style of the ephod you shall make it—of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen shall you make it.¹⁶ It shall be square and doubled, a span its length and a span its breadth.¹⁷ You shall set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle shall be the first row;¹⁸ and the second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond;¹⁹ and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst;²⁰ and the fourth row a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold filigree.²¹ There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes.²² You shall make for the breastpiece twisted chains like cords, of pure gold.²³ And you shall make for the breastpiece two rings of gold, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece.²⁴ And you shall put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece.²⁵ The two ends of the two cords you shall attach to the two settings of filigree, and so attach it in front to the shoulder pieces of the ephod.²⁶ You shall make two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod.²⁷ And you shall make two rings of gold, and attach them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, at its seam above the skillfully woven band of the ephod.²⁸ And they shall bind the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, so that it may lie on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, so that the breastpiece shall not come loose from the ephod.²⁹ So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the Lord.³⁰ And in the breastpiece of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before the Lord. Thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the Lord regularly.

³¹ “You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue.³² It shall have an opening for the head in the middle of it, with a woven binding around the opening, like the opening in a garment, so that it may not tear.³³ On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, around its hem, with bells of gold between them,³⁴ a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, around the hem of the robe.

It's worth taking our time and thinking through the instructions for the high priest's clothing.

- The clothes are meant to dazzle and delight!

You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. [Exodus 28:2]

- Some people have been specifically gifted by the Holy Spirit for creative endeavors and craftsmanship.

You shall speak to all the skillful, whom I have filled with a spirit of skill, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. [Exodus 28:3]

- We take for granted today all the colors we see around us in our clothing, but in the ancient world colored clothing was rare and expensive. For example, purple dye was only available from the crushed shells of a particular shellfish, and so only royalty could afford it, as a whole basketful of the shells would yield only a few drops of the dye. Imagine then how dazzling the high priest's robe would have appeared with all its colors!
- On the breastplate are twelve precious stones, one for each tribe of Israel. The high priest then "carries" or "bears" the names of the tribes every time he goes before the Lord. This is the exact same phrase that is used in the Name Command, the Third Commandment:

You shall not ["carry" or "bear"] the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who ["carries" or "bears"] his name in vain. [Exodus 20:7]

- The hem of the robe has little bells on it, so that even when the high priest moves there is beauty that would catch the attention of Israel.

MONDAY, MAY 27

EXODUS 29:1-45

ORDINATION

29 "Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. Take one bull of the herd and two rams without blemish,² and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil. You shall make them of fine wheat flour.³ You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams.⁴ You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with

water. ⁵ Then you shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the coat and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod. ⁶ And you shall set the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban. ⁷ You shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him. ⁸ Then you shall bring his sons and put coats on them, ⁹ and you shall gird Aaron and his sons with sashes and bind caps on them. And the priesthood shall be theirs by a statute forever. Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

¹⁰ “Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. ¹¹ Then you shall kill the bull before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting, ¹² and shall take part of the blood of the bull and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. ¹³ And you shall take all the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar. ¹⁴ But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.

¹⁵ “Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, ¹⁶ and you shall kill the ram and shall take its blood and throw it against the sides of the altar. ¹⁷ Then you shall cut the ram into pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its pieces and its head, ¹⁸ and burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the Lord. It is a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord.

¹⁹ “You shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, ²⁰ and you shall kill the ram and take part of its blood and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and on the tips of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands and on the great toes of their right feet, and throw the rest of the blood against the sides of the altar. ²¹ Then you shall take part of the blood that is on the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and his sons' garments with him. He and his garments shall be holy, and his sons and his sons' garments with him.

²² “You shall also take the fat from the ram and the fat tail and the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of ordination), ²³ and one loaf of bread and one cake of bread made with oil, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the Lord. ²⁴ You shall put all these on the palms of Aaron and on the palms of his sons, and wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. ²⁵ Then you shall take them from their hands and burn them on the altar on top of the burnt offering, as a pleasing aroma before the Lord. It is a food offering to the Lord.

²⁶ “You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron’s ordination and wave it for a wave offering before the Lord, and it shall be your portion. ²⁷ And you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering that is waved and the thigh of the priests’ portion that is contributed from the ram of ordination, from what was Aaron’s and his sons’. ²⁸ It shall be for Aaron and his sons as a perpetual due from the people of Israel, for it is a contribution. It shall be a contribution from the people of Israel from their peace offerings, their contribution to the Lord.

²⁹ “The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him; they shall be anointed in them and ordained in them. ³⁰ The son who succeeds him as priest, who comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the Holy Place, shall wear them seven days.

³¹ “You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. ³² And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket in the entrance of the tent of meeting. ³³ They shall eat those things with which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration, but an outsider shall not eat of them, because they are holy. ³⁴ And if any of the flesh for the ordination or of the bread remain until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it is holy.

³⁵ “Thus you shall do to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. Through seven days shall you ordain them, ³⁶ and every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. Also you shall purify the altar, when you make atonement for it, and shall anoint it to consecrate it. ³⁷ Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it, and the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

³⁸ “Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. ³⁹ One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. ⁴⁰ And with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and a fourth of a hin of wine for a drink offering. ⁴¹ The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord. ⁴² It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. ⁴³ There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. ⁴⁴ I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵ I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

Ordination is the process by which certain people are set apart for religious work. In the old covenant, it was for the priesthood and the overseeing of sacrifices; in the new covenant, it is for the leadership of the church and the administration of the sacraments. It is meant to be a sacred responsibility.

Here, this initial ordination ceremony is meant to take seven days! Can you imagine how solemn it must have been for Aaron and his sons to put their hands on the sacrificial animals before they were killed and then to have the blood of the sacrifice placed on their earlobes and their thumbs and their toes?

The message is clear: this is a heavy responsibility with life and death consequences. How can you pray for a pastor today?

TUESDAY, MAY 28

EXODUS 30:1-38

SWEET SCENTS

30 “You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. ² A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. ³ You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. ⁴ And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it. ⁵ You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. ⁶ And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. ⁷ And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, ⁸ and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the Lord throughout your generations. ⁹ You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. ¹⁰ Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the Lord.”

¹¹ The Lord said to Moses, ¹² “When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for his life to the Lord when you number them, that there be no plague among them when you number them. ¹³ Each one who is numbered in the census shall give this: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs), half a shekel as an offering to the Lord. ¹⁴ Everyone who is numbered in the census, from twenty years old and upward, shall give

the Lord's offering. ¹⁵The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when you give the Lord's offering to make atonement for your lives. ¹⁶You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it for the service of the tent of meeting, that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord, so as to make atonement for your lives."

¹⁷The Lord said to Moses, ¹⁸"You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, ¹⁹with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. ²⁰When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the Lord, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. ²¹They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations."

²²The Lord said to Moses, ²³"Take the finest spices: of liquid myrrh 500 shekels, and of sweet-smelling cinnamon half as much, that is, 250, and 250 of aromatic cane, ²⁴and 500 of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. ²⁵And you shall make of these a sacred anointing oil blended as by the perfumer; it shall be a holy anointing oil. ²⁶With it you shall anoint the tent of meeting and the ark of the testimony, ²⁷and the table and all its utensils, and the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense, ²⁸and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils and the basin and its stand. ²⁹You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them will become holy. ³⁰You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. ³¹And you shall say to the people of Israel, 'This shall be my holy anointing oil throughout your generations. ³²It shall not be poured on the body of an ordinary person, and you shall make no other like it in composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you. ³³Whoever compounds any like it or whoever puts any of it on an outsider shall be cut off from his people.'"

³⁴The Lord said to Moses, "Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), ³⁵and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. ³⁶You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you. ³⁷And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the Lord. ³⁸Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people."

Remember: the central image of the tabernacle is that of the Garden of Eden, filled with the glory of God.

The tabernacle enables the presence of God to come close to the people. So, here we first read (vv. 1-10) of the altar of incense and how it is supposed to stand in the outer room of the tabernacle, by the lampstand. It's not very big because it's just for the burning of incense. Once a year, the high priest— "Aaron"—touches it with the blood of the sacrifice to make it ritually pure, but otherwise his job is to tend it every day.

Then, we read (vv. 17-21) of the little basin—sometimes called a "laver"— for the priests to use to for the ceremonial washing of their hands and feet before they enter the tabernacle. It stands in the courtyard, outside the tent.

And finally, we read specific instructions for the incense (vv. 22-38), instructions that close with this detail:

³⁷ And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the Lord. ³⁸ Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people. [Exodus 30:37-38]

In other words, this particular scent is to be used only in the tabernacle and set apart for the Lord, and if you make it and use it for everyday life, you will be cast out of Israel.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29

EXODUS 31:1-11

THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF CARPENTRY?

1 The Lord said to Moses, ² "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, ⁴ to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, ⁵ in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. ⁶ And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: ⁷ the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent, ⁸ the table and its utensils, and the pure lampstand with all its utensils, and the altar of incense, ⁹ and the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin and its stand, ¹⁰ and the finely worked garments, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense for the Holy Place. According to all that I have commanded you, they shall do."

We are specifically told that the Spirit of God has filled Bezalel so that he is gifted at craftsmanship and carpentry. Not Moses, not Joshua, not Abraham, but Bezalel: a craftsman is gifted by the Spirit for his work here.

It's good for us to remember that so-called ordinary trades and professions matter to the Lord, and that the Lord gives skills to people so that they can do their everyday tasks in ways that honor Him.

Thursday, May 30

Exodus 31:12-18

EVEN BUILDING THE TABERNACLE DOESN'T TRUMP THE SABBATH COMMAND

¹² And the Lord said to Moses, ¹³ “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”

¹⁸ And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

We've been reading detailed instructions for the building of the tabernacle and its sacred equipment and furniture, but all these instructions are concluded with a reminder from the Lord of the importance of the Sabbath.

The point is clear: even important “religious” work is not more important than the rhythm of work and rest.

Why is it, again, that we think our work is too important to cease one day a week?

Friday, May 31

Exodus 32:1-6

THE GOLDEN CALF

1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” 2 So Aaron said to them, “Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” 3 So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!” 5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.” 6 And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

Some background is in order.

- Adam and Eve rebel against the Lord in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) and the ruined state of the world results (Genesis 4-11).
- But the Lord does not give up on humanity; rather, He begins again with one man—Abraham—and promises to use that man’s family to bring blessing to the entire world (Genesis 12:1-3).
- Abraham’s family (now called the children of Israel) becomes enslaved in Egypt.
- The Lord sends Moses to Egypt and with power brings them out of slavery to the foot of Mount Sinai.
- At Sinai, the Lord makes a covenant with the people and tells them that they will be His representatives to the nations. They agree.
- The presence of the Lord is still up on the mountain, and the people are afraid to go up.

¹⁸ Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off ¹⁹ and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” ²⁰ Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.” ²¹ The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. [Exodus 20:18-21]

- So, Moses goes up into the presence of the Lord, while the people stay below. On the mountain the Lord gives Moses additional laws to help the people live rightly and gives specific instructions about how the Israelites can feel safe to approach the Lord.
- The Lord is like the sun—the source of light and life and power, but if you aren't careful His glory will burn you up.
- The goal with the tabernacle is for the presence of the Lord to dwell in the midst of the people!

And, with all that in mind, we come to the incident of the golden calf.

Moses has been up on the mountain, and the people begin to panic, *even though they can see the Lord's presence on the mountain!*

So, they come to Aaron and ask for an idol they can see and control.

32 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." [Exodus 32:1]

Aaron, who comes across as weak and cowardly in this entire episode, acquiesces to their demands. He does not remind them of the Ten Commandments or otherwise remonstrate with them.

2 So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. 4 And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" [Exodus 32:2-3]

Note that Aaron makes the idol, but it is the people who immediately name it as their delivering god. Have they forgotten everything they saw with their own eyes that the Lord did for them?!

It's almost as if Aaron is trying to save face by pretending that the idolatrous worship is really worship of the Lord and so he declares a feast day to the Lord!

5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." [Exodus 32:5]

The narrative has set us up for the presence of the Lord to come and dwell with the people, just as it was in Eden. But, now with the idolatry of the golden calf, everything will have to be reset.

Sin has consequences. How can you flee from sin today?

Monday, June 3

Exodus 32:7-14

A LEADER STANDS IN THE GAP FOR HIS PEOPLE

⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made for themselves a golden calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” ⁹ And the Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. ¹⁰ Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.”

¹¹ But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴ And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

Moses is up on the mountain with the Lord; meanwhile the people are brazenly committing idolatry below.

The Lord tells Moses what has happened and declares His intention to destroy the people and start over again with just Moses himself.

Moses, however, pleads with the Lord to spare the people and remember His commitment to Abraham.

The Lord has brought Moses into the problem—how do you remain faithful to sinful people? I think in some ways Moses here passes the test—rather than abandon the Israelites and take the Lord’s offer to strike

out on his own, Moses commits himself to the people. He has grown so much since his early days leading the people in Egypt!

As we shall see, Aaron is a model of weak, cowardly leadership, whereas Moses shows us what godly leadership is like—a leader sacrifices himself on behalf of his people.

Tuesday, June 4

Exodus 32:15-35

MOSES SACRIFICES HIMSELF FOR THE PEOPLE

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tablets. ¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “There is a noise of war in the camp.” ¹⁸ But he said, “It is not the sound of shouting for victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.” ¹⁹ And as soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf that they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder and scattered it on the water and made the people of Israel drink it.

²¹ And Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?” ²² And Aaron said, “Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. ²³ For they said to me, ‘Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ ²⁴ So I said to them, ‘Let any who have gold take it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.”

²⁵ And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies), ²⁶ then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me.” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. ²⁷ And he said to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.’” ²⁸ And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. ²⁹ And Moses said, “Today you have been ordained for the service of the Lord, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day.”

³⁰ The next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin.

And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”³¹ So Moses returned to the Lord and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin. They have made for themselves gods of gold.”³² But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written.”³³ But the Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book.”³⁴ But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; behold, my angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.”³⁵ Then the Lord sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf, the one that Aaron made.

The narrator goes out of his way to tell us that Joshua was not with the people during the golden calf incident. Rather, he was waiting for Moses halfway up the mountain. The reason this is important is because Joshua is the successor of Moses, and we learn here that he has clean hands, so to speak.

Aaron’s weaselly speech shows us his character:

21 And Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought such a great sin upon them?” 22 And Aaron said, “Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. 23 For they said to me, ‘Make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ 24 So I said to them, ‘Let any who have gold take it off.’ So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf.” [Exodus 32:21-24]

It’s as if Aaron says, “It’s not my fault—the fire did it!”

The consequence of the idolatry of the people is severe: death. Moses enlists men from his tribe—Levi—to help root out the idolaters. This action by the Levites earns them the privilege of being the permanent class of priests in Israel.

The incident concludes with Moses asking for the Lord’s forgiveness, and offering himself:

But now, if you will forgive their sin—but if not, please blot me out of your book that you have written. [Exodus 32:32]

Moses here totally identifies with the sinful people. A true leader stands in the gap for his people, which is what Moses does here. In this way he is a forerunner of Christ, who dies on behalf of a rebellious and idolatrous people.

P.S. Note that the tablets were written on the front and the back, and that there are two tablets. In the ancient world, one copy of the treaty-covenant would reside in one people’s temple, and the other copy would reside in

the other people's temple. Here, both copies are intended for the ark of the covenant. Moses, when he sees the golden calf, breaks the tablets, in essence saying that the covenant has been broken.

How can you pray for a leader today?

Wednesday, June 5

Exodus 33:1-6

THE PEOPLE LEAVE **WITHOUT** THE LORD

³³ The Lord said to Moses, “Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give it.’² I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.³ Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”⁴ When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.⁵ For the Lord had said to Moses, “Say to the people of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.’”⁶ Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward.

There is a consequence for sin. Yes, the Lord is slow to anger and quick to forgive, but nevertheless there is a consequence for our rebellion.

Here, the consequence is that the Lord sends the people forward without His presence. Remember that the purpose of the tabernacle is to provide a way for the Lord to be in the midst of the people; their idolatry has made the Lord's presence unsafe for the people. Because it is the Lord who has won their victories, the people mourn—how can they possibly move into the Promised Land on their own strength?

Thursday, June 6

Exodus 33:7-11

THE TENT OUTSIDE THE CAMP

⁷ Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp.⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people

would rise up, and each would stand at his tent door, and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. ⁹ When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. ¹⁰ And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, each at his tent door. ¹¹ Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Although we have read of the instructions for the tabernacle—which will be set up in the midst of the Israelite camp—it has not yet been actually constructed. And, because of the Israelite idolatry, the Lord does not immediately come into the midst of the camp. Rather, Moses puts a tent up *outside* the camp, and he goes there to be with the Lord. Joshua is there to stand guard at the tent, and the people go there to seek the Lord. The Lord has not abandoned the people.

I think this is a good way of thinking about the consequences of our sin today—the Lord will not abandon us, but one of the consequences of our sin is that it puts up a barrier between us and the Lord. The Lord’s desire is to be close, but our sin pushes Him away.

This is exactly the way sin works between parents and children. A father wants to be close to his children, but when they tantrum and misbehave, it makes that kind of closeness temporarily impossible.

Friday, June 7

Exodus 33:12-23

HOW CAN YOU SEE GOD AND LIVE?

¹² Moses said to the Lord, “See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, ‘I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.’” ¹³ Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.” ¹⁴ And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” ¹⁵ And he said to him, “If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. ¹⁶ For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?”

¹⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, “This very thing that you have spoken

I will do, for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”¹⁸ Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”¹⁹ And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”²⁰ But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.”²¹ And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock,²² and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by.”²³ Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”

The Lord is pleased that Moses wants to be close, but He tells Moses that “man shall not see me and live” (v. 20). There is something about the spiritual power of God that the human mind cannot approach without being destroyed—He’s too bright for us.

But, with the Incarnation, the Lord has come close to us. Look what the Apostle Paul has to say about Jesus:

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by¹⁴ him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. [Colossians 1:15-20]

Monday, June 10

Exodus 34:1-9

HOW MY SIN AFFECTS MY CHILDREN

³⁴ The Lord said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. ² Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain. ³ No one shall come up with you, and let no one be seen throughout all the mountain. Let no flocks or herds graze opposite that mountain.” ⁴ So Moses cut two tablets of stone like the first. And he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand two tablets of stone. ⁵ The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. ⁶ The Lord passed before him and

proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” ⁸And Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshiped. ⁹And he said, “If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.”

Exodus 34:6-7 is one of the most important passages in the Bible. It is repeated over 20 times in the Old Testament.

“The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” [Exodus 34:6-7]

What I find interesting is that though our sin will affect the generations after us, nevertheless the Lord contains the damage to only the third or fourth generation.

Tuesday, June 11

Exodus 34:10-27

AN OPPORTUNITY TO START OVER

¹⁰ And he said, “Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.

¹¹ “Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ¹² Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. ¹³ You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴ (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), ¹⁵ lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶ and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

¹⁷ “You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal.

¹⁸ “You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib, for in the month Abib you came out from Egypt. ¹⁹ All that open the womb are mine, all your male livestock, the firstborn of cow and sheep. ²⁰ The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty-handed.

²¹ “Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest. ²² You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end. ²³ Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. ²⁴ For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year.

²⁵ “You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover remain until the morning. ²⁶ The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.”

²⁷ And the Lord said to Moses, “Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” ²⁸ So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Because of the sin of the golden calf, the Lord here restates the terms of the covenant. He is in essence starting over again with the people.

One of the great blessings of being a Christian is the opportunity the Lord offers us to start over. Every time we confess our sins in church, we receive forgiveness, are set free from the past, and can begin again.

How can you start over again today?

Wednesday, June 12

Exodus 34:29-35

THE SHINING FACE OF MOSES

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses

called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them.³² Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai.³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.

³⁴ Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil, until he came out. And when he came out and told the people of Israel what he was commanded,³⁵ the people of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face was shining. And Moses would put the veil over his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

You are what you love.

That is, who or what you focus on and spend time with shapes you.

If you spend time with violent, vulgar companions, then you will become violent and vulgar.

This is why it's so important that we take the Apostle Paul's words seriously:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
[Philippians 4:8]

The most true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy thing of all, of course, is the Lord. The more time you put your attention on the Lord, the more luminous you will become.

The most important need in the world today is people who are becoming more like Jesus because they spend time with Him.

How much more light and life might the Lord have for you, if you would just spend more time with Him?

Thursday, June 13

Exodus 35:1-35

WHEN THE MOST BORING PART OF THE BIBLE
BECOMES THE BEST PART OF THE BIBLE!

³⁵ Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel and said to them, "These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do. ² Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath

of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. ³ You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day.”

⁴ Moses said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “This is the thing that the Lord has commanded. ⁵ Take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze; ⁶ blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen; goats' hair, ⁷ tanned rams' skins, and goatskins; acacia wood, ⁸ oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, ⁹ and onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece.

¹⁰ “Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded: ¹¹ the tabernacle, its tent and its covering, its hooks and its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; ¹² the ark with its poles, the mercy seat, and the veil of the screen; ¹³ the table with its poles and all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; ¹⁴ the lampstand also for the light, with its utensils and its lamps, and the oil for the light; ¹⁵ and the altar of incense, with its poles, and the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle; ¹⁶ the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils, the basin and its stand; ¹⁷ the hangings of the court, its pillars and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court; ¹⁸ the pegs of the tabernacle and the pegs of the court, and their cords; ¹⁹ the finely worked garments for ministering in the Holy Place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, for their service as priests.”

²⁰ Then all the congregation of the people of Israel departed from the presence of Moses. ²¹ And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him, and brought the Lord's contribution to be used for the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the holy garments. ²² So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the Lord. ²³ And every one who possessed blue or purple or scarlet yarns or fine linen or goats' hair or tanned rams' skins or goatskins brought them. ²⁴ Everyone who could make a contribution of silver or bronze brought it as the Lord's contribution. And every one who possessed acacia wood of any use in the work brought it. ²⁵ And every skillful woman spun with her hands, and they all brought what they had spun in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. ²⁶ All the women whose hearts stirred them to use their skill spun the goats' hair. ²⁷ And the leaders brought onyx stones and stones to be set, for the ephod and for the breastpiece, ²⁸ and spices and oil for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense. ²⁹ All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord.

³⁰ Then Moses said to the people of Israel, “See, the Lord has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; ³¹ and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, ³² to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, ³³ in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft. ³⁴ And he has inspired him to teach, both him and Oholiab the son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan. ³⁵ He has filled them with skill to do every sort of work done by an engraver or by a designer or by an embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, or by a weaver—by any sort of workman or skilled designer.

As you read through chapters 35-40, you are going to think, “Haven’t I read this before?”

And the answer is, YES.

Exodus chapters 35-40 repeats much of the material in Exodus chapters 25-31, the instructions for the construction of the tabernacle. In chapters 25-31 we read of the instructions for the tabernacle, whereas in chapters 35-40 we read of its actual construction.

Why the repetition?

Remember, while Moses is on the mountain receiving the instructions for the tabernacle, the Israelites are below creating the golden calf. Moses then goes down the mountain and has to deal with their sin, and the tabernacle doesn’t get built.

Even though the people don’t deserve it, the Lord remains faithful to them, and He renews the covenant and begins again.

Here, then, the fact that we are told that the tabernacle is constructed is a remarkable sign of the grace of God. Despite their sin, the Lord is committed to dwelling in the midst of His people and His instructions are actually carried out.

What might at first seem like the most boring part of the Bible is in fact one of its best parts—human sin doesn’t ultimately stop the purposes of God!

Friday, June 14

Exodus 36:1-20

WHEN PEOPLE ARE TOO GENEROUS

36 “Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded.”

² And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the Lord had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work. ³ And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, ⁴ so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, ⁵ and said to Moses, “The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.” ⁶ So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, “Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.” So the people were restrained from bringing, ⁷ for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.

⁸ And all the craftsmen among the workmen made the tabernacle with ten curtains. They were made of fine twined linen and blue and purple and scarlet yarns, with cherubim skillfully worked. ⁹ The length of each curtain was twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits. All the curtains were the same size.

¹⁰ He coupled five curtains to one another, and the other five curtains he coupled to one another. ¹¹ He made loops of blue on the edge of the outermost curtain of the first set. Likewise he made them on the edge of the outermost curtain of the second set. ¹² He made fifty loops on the one curtain, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was in the second set. The loops were opposite one another. ¹³ And he made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains one to the other with clasps. So the tabernacle was a single whole.

¹⁴ He also made curtains of goats' hair for a tent over the tabernacle. He made eleven curtains. ¹⁵ The length of each curtain was thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits. The eleven curtains were the same size. ¹⁶ He coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves. ¹⁷ And he made fifty loops on the edge of the outermost curtain of the one set, and fifty loops on the edge of the other connecting curtain. ¹⁸ And he made fifty clasps of bronze to couple the tent together that it might be a single whole. ¹⁹ And he made for the tent a covering of tanned rams' skins and goatskins.

²⁰ Then he made the upright frames for the tabernacle of acacia wood.

Remember, the repetition in chapters 35-40 is important, because it's a sign that the Lord didn't abandon the Israelites.

Here, when the people are tasked with bringing their offerings to the master craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab, they are so generous that Moses has to ask them to stop!

² And Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whose mind the Lord had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to do the work. ³ And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, ⁴ so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, ⁵ and said to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do." ⁶ So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing, ⁷ for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more. [Exodus 36:2-7]

This is exactly the right response to the Lord's faithfulness to us—abundant generosity!

How can you show your gratitude to the Lord by being generous today?

Monday, June 17

Exodus 37:1-29

OUR FINAL WEEK OF EXODUS READINGS!

³⁷ Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half was its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. ² And he overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold around it. ³ And he cast for it four rings of gold for its four feet, two rings on its one side and two rings on its other side. ⁴ And he made poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold ⁵ and put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark. ⁶ And he made a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half was its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. ⁷ And he made two cherubim of gold. He made them of hammered work on the two ends of the mercy seat, ⁸ one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat he made the cherubim on its two ends. ⁹ The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat were the faces of the cherubim.

¹⁰ He also made the table of acacia wood. Two cubits was its length, a cubit its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. ¹¹ And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made a molding of gold around it. ¹² And he made a rim around it a handbreadth wide, and made a molding of gold around the rim. ¹³ He cast for it four rings of gold and fastened the rings to the four corners at its four legs. ¹⁴ Close to the frame were the rings, as holders for the poles to carry the table. ¹⁵ He made the poles of acacia wood to carry the table, and overlaid them with gold. ¹⁶ And he made the vessels of pure gold that were to be on the table, its plates and dishes for incense, and its bowls and flagons with which to pour drink offerings.

¹⁷ He also made the lampstand of pure gold. He made the lampstand of hammered work. Its base, its stem, its cups, its calyxes, and its flowers were of one piece with it. ¹⁸ And there were six branches going out of its sides, three branches of the lampstand out of one side of it and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side of it; ¹⁹ three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on one branch, and three cups made like almond blossoms, each with calyx and flower, on the other branch—so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. ²⁰ And on the lampstand itself were four cups made like almond blossoms, with their calyxes and flowers, ²¹ and a calyx of one piece with it under each pair of the six branches going out of it. ²² Their calyxes and their branches were of one piece with it. The whole of it was a single piece of hammered work of pure gold. ²³ And he made its seven lamps and its tongs and its trays of pure gold. ²⁴ He made it and all its utensils out of a talent of pure gold.

²⁵ He made the altar of incense of acacia wood. Its length was a cubit, and its breadth was a cubit. It was square, and two cubits was its height. Its horns were of one piece with it. ²⁶ He overlaid it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And he made a molding of gold around it, ²⁷ and made two rings of gold on it under its molding, on two opposite sides of it, as holders for the poles with which to carry it. ²⁸ And he made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold.

²⁹ He made the holy anointing oil also, and the pure fragrant incense, blended as by the perfumer.

This is our last week of Exodus. In chapters 25-31 the Lord provided instructions for the building of the tabernacle, so that He could dwell in the midst of His people. Their rebellion and idolatry in the golden calf incident (chapter 32) interrupted this plan, but the Lord remained faithful and here we finally have the account of the construction of the tabernacle.

Take the time today to read slowly through this account, maybe over lunch or as a family during dinner. What does this tell you about the Lord? What jumps out at you?

Tuesday, June 18

Exodus 38:1-31

WHEN'S THE LAST TIME YOU TOOK CARE TO GET IT EXACTLY RIGHT?

38 He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood. Five cubits was its length, and five cubits its breadth. It was square, and three cubits was its height. ² He made horns for it on its four corners. Its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with bronze. ³ And he made all the utensils of the altar, the pots, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the fire pans. He made all its utensils of bronze. ⁴ And he made for the altar a grating, a network of bronze, under its ledge, extending halfway down. ⁵ He cast four rings on the four corners of the bronze grating as holders for the poles. ⁶ He made the poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with bronze. ⁷ And he put the poles through the rings on the sides of the altar to carry it with them. He made it hollow, with boards.

⁸ He made the basin of bronze and its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered in the entrance of the tent of meeting.

⁹ And he made the court. For the south side the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, a hundred cubits; ¹⁰ their twenty pillars and their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. ¹¹ And for the north side there were hangings of a hundred cubits; their twenty pillars and their twenty bases were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. ¹² And for the west side were hangings of fifty cubits, their ten pillars, and their ten bases; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. ¹³ And for the front to the east, fifty cubits. ¹⁴ The hangings for one side of the gate were fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and three bases. ¹⁵ And so for the other side. On both sides of the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three bases. ¹⁶ All the hangings around the court were of fine twined linen. ¹⁷ And the bases for the pillars were of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver. The overlaying of their capitals was also of silver, and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver. ¹⁸ And the screen for the gate of the court was embroidered with needlework in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It was twenty cubits long and five cubits high in its breadth, corresponding to the hangings of the court. ¹⁹ And their pillars were four in number. Their four bases were of bronze, their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of their capitals and their fillets of silver. ²⁰ And all the pegs for the tabernacle and for the court all around were of bronze.

²¹ These are the records of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were recorded at the commandment of Moses, the responsibility of the Levites under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the

priest. ²²Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that the Lord commanded Moses; ²³and with him was Oholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and designer and embroiderer in blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen.

²⁴All the gold that was used for the work, in all the construction of the sanctuary, the gold from the offering, was twenty-nine talents and 730 shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary. ²⁵The silver from those of the congregation who were recorded was a hundred talents and 1,775 shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary: ²⁶a beka a head (that is, half a shekel, by the shekel of the sanctuary), for everyone who was listed in the records, from twenty years old and upward, for 603,550 men. ²⁷The hundred talents of silver were for casting the bases of the sanctuary and the bases of the veil; a hundred bases for the hundred talents, a talent a base. ²⁸And of the 1,775 shekels he made hooks for the pillars and overlaid their capitals and made fillets for them. ²⁹The bronze that was offered was seventy talents and 2,400 shekels; ³⁰with it he made the bases for the entrance of the tent of meeting, the bronze altar and the bronze grating for it and all the utensils of the altar, ³¹the bases around the court, and the bases of the gate of the court, all the pegs of the tabernacle, and all the pegs around the court.

The Israelites are given specific details about the construction of the tabernacle, and they punctiliously follow them. It is important for them to get it right when it comes to the things of the Lord.

When is the last time you approached worship with that sort of specific concern to get it right? When's the last time you worked hard to memorize a specific verse and know it perfectly? When's the last time you made a specific plan to get the most out of going to church on a Sunday?

One of the lessons of Exodus to us is that, regarding the things of God, the small details matter.

How can you tend to a small detail today?

Wednesday, June 19

Exodus 39:1-43

CARRYING THE NAMES

39 From the blue and purple and scarlet yarns they made finely woven garments, for ministering in the Holy Place. They made the holy garments for Aaron, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

²He made the ephod of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. ³And they hammered out gold leaf, and he cut it into

threads to work into the blue and purple and the scarlet yarns, and into the fine twined linen, in skilled design. ⁴They made for the ephod attaching shoulder pieces, joined to it at its two edges. ⁵And the skillfully woven band on it was of one piece with it and made like it, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

⁶They made the onyx stones, enclosed in settings of gold filigree, and engraved like the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the sons of Israel. ⁷And he set them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod to be stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

⁸He made the breastpiece, in skilled work, in the style of the ephod, of gold, blue and purple and scarlet yarns, and fine twined linen. ⁹It was square. They made the breastpiece doubled, a span its length and a span its breadth when doubled. ¹⁰And they set in it four rows of stones. A row of sardius, topaz, and carbuncle was the first row; ¹¹and the second row, an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond; ¹²and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; ¹³and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They were enclosed in settings of gold filigree. ¹⁴There were twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel. They were like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes. ¹⁵And they made on the breastpiece twisted chains like cords, of pure gold. ¹⁶And they made two settings of gold filigree and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two edges of the breastpiece. ¹⁷And they put the two cords of gold in the two rings at the edges of the breastpiece. ¹⁸They attached the two ends of the two cords to the two settings of filigree. Thus they attached it in front to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. ¹⁹Then they made two rings of gold, and put them at the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inside edge next to the ephod. ²⁰And they made two rings of gold, and attached them in front to the lower part of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, at its seam above the skillfully woven band of the ephod. ²¹And they bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, so that it should lie on the skillfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece should not come loose from the ephod, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

²²He also made the robe of the ephod woven all of blue, ²³and the opening of the robe in it was like the opening in a garment, with a binding around the opening, so that it might not tear. ²⁴On the hem of the robe they made pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. ²⁵They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates all around the hem of the robe, between the pomegranates— ²⁶a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate around the hem of the robe for ministering, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

²⁷ They also made the coats, woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, ²⁸ and the turban of fine linen, and the caps of fine linen, and the linen undergarments of fine twined linen, ²⁹ and the sash of fine twined linen and of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, embroidered with needlework, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

³⁰ They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engraving of a signet, “Holy to the Lord.” ³¹ And they tied to it a cord of blue to fasten it on the turban above, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

³² Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished, and the people of Israel did according to all that the Lord had commanded Moses; so they did. ³³ Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its utensils, its hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; ³⁴ the covering of tanned rams' skins and goatskins, and the veil of the screen; ³⁵ the ark of the testimony with its poles and the mercy seat; ³⁶ the table with all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; ³⁷ the lampstand of pure gold and its lamps with the lamps set and all its utensils, and the oil for the light; ³⁸ the golden altar, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance of the tent; ³⁹ the bronze altar, and its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils; the basin and its stand; ⁴⁰ the hangings of the court, its pillars, and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court, its cords, and its pegs; and all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; ⁴¹ the finely worked garments for ministering in the Holy Place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons for their service as priests. ⁴² According to all that the Lord had commanded Moses, so the people of Israel had done all the work. ⁴³ And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, so had they done it. Then Moses blessed them.

I love the thought of the high priest carrying the names of the tribes of Israel on his breastplate when he ministers before the Lord.

We no longer need a high priest, because Jesus is the ultimate high priest who makes atonement for us.

Now, He sends us out as “priests” and representatives of God to the world.

I think, therefore, that one of the things we should do when we gather for worship is bear the names of others before the Lord. We should come to worship ready to intercede and pray for people who are in need. It’s a beautiful thought—bearing the names of others on your heart and lifting them up before the Lord.

For whom will you be interceding this week?

Thursday, June 20

Exodus 40:1-33

WE BEGIN AGAIN AT THE END

40 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “On the first day of the first month you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. ³ And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. ⁴ And you shall bring in the table and arrange it, and you shall bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. ⁵ And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. ⁶ You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, ⁷ and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ⁸ And you shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen for the gate of the court.

⁹ “Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it may become holy. ¹⁰ You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar may become most holy. ¹¹ You shall also anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. ¹² Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall wash them with water ¹³ and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest. ¹⁴ You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, ¹⁵ and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.”

¹⁶ This Moses did; according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did. ¹⁷ In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. ¹⁸ Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars. ¹⁹ And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁰ He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. ²¹ And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²² He put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil, ²³ and arranged the bread on it before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁴ He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, ²⁵ and set up the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁶ He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil, ²⁷ and burned fragrant incense on it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ²⁸ He put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle. ²⁹ And he set the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tabernacle of the

tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the Lord had commanded Moses. ³⁰ He set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing, ³¹ with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. ³² When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses. ³³ And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work.

Dates matter in the Bible. Those of the kind of details we skip over because they don't mean anything to us right away, but they are important.

So, when was the tabernacle is completed?

In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. [Exodus 40:17]

The tabernacle was completed on New Year's Day (according to the calendar of Israel). The reason this is significant is because of what we earlier learned about the Israelite calendar:

¹The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²“This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. [Exodus 12:1-2]

The Lord resets the calendar of Israel to begin again with the Passover. It's like the Passover starts a new period of their history.

So, it is significant that the tabernacle is completed one year later, at the beginning of a new year. The tabernacle's completion, narrated here at the end of Exodus, is a new beginning for the people.

Life is here beginning again.

But how the book ends will shock you!

Friday, June 21

Exodus 40:34-38

THERE IS A PROBLEM IN THE LAST VERSES OF EXODUS

³⁴Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. ³⁷But if the

cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. ³⁸For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

We've been reading Exodus for six months. Forty chapters! We've read:

- How the children of Israel were enslaved by Pharaoh;
- How Moses was spared by the Lord and then sent by the Lord to lead His people to freedom;
- How the Lord sent the plagues and brought judgment on the so-called gods of Egypt;
- How the Lord delivered His people through the Passover and the Red Sea;
- How He brought them to Mount Sinai to commission them as His representatives to the nations;
- How He made a covenant with them and gave them the Ten Commandments and the Law;
- How the Lord instructed the people to build the tabernacle so He could dwell in their midst;
- How the people rebelled and worshipped the golden calf;
- How the Lord remained faithful to His covenant;
- How Moses led the people to finally construct the tabernacle,
- And how on New Year's Day it was finally completed, one year after they left Egypt!

And then, finally, the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle!

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. [Exodus 40:34]

And then we read this astonishing verse:

And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. [Exodus 40:35]

After all that, Moses is unable to enter the tent! Why?

Well, we'll have to read on to the next book of the Torah, Leviticus, which explains how to properly worship the Lord.

Here, the reason Moses is unable to enter the tent once the glory of God has come in the midst of the people is because of their sin. They still aren't ready to come close to the Lord. Though Moses on his own has been communing with the Lord, when he is in the midst of Israel their sin makes it impossible for him to enter the Lord's presence.

How can people enter the Lord's presence?

We'll have to read on to find out, but ultimately the story of the Old Testament is that the Lord himself will have to pay the price and reconcile people back to Him. Jesus is the way that we enter the presence of God.

For six months we have been reading through Exodus. There are many lessons that I've learned through our study, but today perhaps the most important one for me is that the Lord is at work in the world, rescuing and shaping men and women to be His representatives to the nations. He has given us what we need and there is work for us to do.

In the end, everything will be okay.

If it's not okay, then it's not the end.

And if it's not the end, then the Lord still has work for us to do.

Let's GO.

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