

Exodus 25-31

So what is the book of Exodus all about? We have been studying it now for several months. Could you say in a simple sentence what its message is? If I asked you I suspect that sentence would have God's rescue of his people at its heart. It is certainly at the forefront of the narrative. God comes down in power, bringing plagues on Pharaoh's Egypt and rescues his people from slavery parting the Red Sea in the process. You could say that the book of Exodus is all about God's rescue plan. But the rescue itself is as good as complete by chapter 15. There are 25 more chapters after that, of which the last 15 chapters are all devoted to the building of this great tent called the tabernacle. There is more than rescue going on.

A clue to the focus of the book comes in the great summary of God's work in Exodus 19 that we looked at a couple of weeks ago. Verse 4 reads

Exodus 19:4 (NIV)

⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

God brought them to himself. This is the theme of the Exodus. At the beginning God comes down to rescue his people. His arrival brings judgment for Egypt and rescue for his people. Then his people set out to live in his presence. He guides them. He gives them the Ten Commandments to prescribe their way of life as they enjoy his presence. And now as we have a cursory look at the last fifteen chapters of Exodus, devoted mainly to the building of the tabernacle we are going to see that the tabernacle is all about living in God's presence.

And as such this whole book anticipates our story. The New Testament describes how in Jesus, God turned up again. How Jesus rescued us from our sins by dying on the cross. But 1 Peter 3:18 points out that he did that for a great purpose.

1 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

If you are a Christian here this morning you have the incredible privilege of having been reconciled to God through Christ's death on the cross, and so today you live in his presence – though you cannot see him – and you are assured that one day you will see him face to face and you will find pleasure and contentment and satisfaction and joy that our present mortal frames could not endure.

The Bible tells us this tent, this tabernacle, is a kind of visual aid to help us to see what living in God's presence is like. So what are we supposed to learn from it? This morning I just want to introduce you to three answers that the tabernacle gives to this central question: what is it like to live in the presence of God?

1. It's easy

☞ *Picture of tabernacle*

The tabernacle modelled on a royal tent for a nomadic king

A courtyard – screened off by curtains

A two roomed tent proper

Front room – called the Holy Place

Smaller back room – the Most Holy Place

The fact that it is a tent

God was committed to entering their world

God would stay alongside them.

Deut 4:7

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us

Anticipates Jesus “tabernacled amongst us” John 1:14

Jesus dwells amongst us still

Revelation 1 – Jesus “walking amongst the lampstands”

Lampstand features in the tabernacle –

Using tabernacle language to is still here in the midst of his churches.

Jesus promised wherever two or three are gathered in my name there I am.

- The privilege of having God near us!
 - Muslim friends – God is unutterably distant
 - Most of my Western friends – unknown confusing
 - Bible says - You can know him, you can enjoy his presence.

2. It's amazing

Three elements of that message

We are approaching perfection

☞ Diagram of tabernacle dimensions

The courtyard

100 x 50 – two squares



Exo 27:9-13

The Holy Place

20x10x10 – two cubes

The Most Holy Place

10x10x10 – a single cube

- The courtyard symbolises Israel or even the world
- Enter the Holy Place
 - Approaching God is a journey towards perfection
- Most Holy Place
 - Perfection
 - Cf Revelation 21 - New Jerusalem – global sized cube – the most Holy Place has expanded to accommodate an innumerable number from every tribe and nation.

☞ We are approaching royalty

Bronze – silver – Gold

Bronze bases for courtyard curtains

Silver tops for courtyard curtains, and silver bases for tabernacle proper

Gold tops for tabernacle curtains and all inside of tabernacle

Wonderful variety of colours

Blue purple scarlet for all doors–



Exo 26:36

Blue – heaven?

Purple – royal?

Scarlet – sacrifice?

- The awesomeness of moving from the bronze of the this world to the gold purple, blue and scarlet of the presence of God.

The table



Exo 25:23-24

In the Holy Place – ***show***

Covered in gold – belongs to the Most Holy Place but displaced so that the priest have access

Perpetual bread

Eaten by priests

- Eating at the King's table

The ark



Exo 25:10-11

In the most Holy Place - *****show***

Gold

Flanked by golden cherubim

The throne of God

☞ *We are approaching a new creation*

Cherubim

Inside of tabernacle curtains

Curtain into Most Holy Place

- Cherubim guarded the way back into the garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were banished
 - To go into the Most Holy Place is to return to the garden of Eden!

The lampstand



Exo 25:31-33

Tree – as in garden of Eden

Almond tree – cf first cultivated plants

Seven lights – light of the world?

- As you live in the presence of God
 - God is re-creating you – you are a new creation
 - God is shedding his light into your heart

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NIV)

⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

- God is giving you eternal life
- God will renew his whole creation

3. It's difficult

The multiple layers of curtains - cherubim

The laver - bowl of water

Stood between the worshipper and the Holy Place

Later called "the sea" – symbolic forces of chaos in the world – separating us from God.

The altar of sacrifice

The centre of the two squares

Altar of sacrifice – ark of covenant

☞ Diagram of tabernacle dimensions

Two great foci – altar, throne of God.

- Imagine the excitement of bible reading first Christians
 - IN gospels Jesus died – the curtain of the temple torn in two – God is not separated from us
 - In Hebrews

Hebrews 10:11–14 (NIV)

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ... ¹⁴ For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

- In Revelation 21 – "there was no longer any sea"
- Cast minds back over the whole story of the Exodus – it is YOUR STORY
 - God turned up – in Jesus
 - God rescued you – through Jesus our Passover lamb
 - God guides you in the wilderness through difficult confusing times
 - God gives you a commission to be a royal priesthood to the world
 - God gives you his charter of freedom – the Ten Commandments
 - GOD IS WITH YOU!!!!

- Everything else is nothing
 - Light and momentary troubles – compared to weight of glory
 - Fading glory of riches and fame – eternal light of God's smiling face
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