

God dwelling with man

Scripture:

Exodus 35-40

Background Information:

We've come to the end of our study of Exodus! This final section describes God's people preparing (Exo 35:1-36:7), constructing (Exo 36:8-39:43), and assembling (Exo 40:1-33) the tabernacle, which God then fills with his glory (40:34-38). The order of the construction of the elements of the sanctuary corresponds to how Moses was instructed to assemble the Tabernacle (see 40:2-15). They are back on track after the horrible sinful detour in Exodus 32. The assembly of the tabernacle is the visible guarantee of God's continuing presence with and care of Israel. The length of the account of the work underlines its importance. Yet, at the end, we will see that the tabernacle is still a shadow of a greater reality to come.

Questions:

1. The TEXT: What are some repeated phrases and themes in Exodus 35-36? What does that say about how the people took part in the construction of the tabernacle (Exo 35-36)? What is the phrase that is repeated most often in Exodus 39-40? What does that tell you about God's expectation, and the right response from them?
2. The TEXT IN THE BIGGER PICTURE: God is the author of our life, and the one who makes us unique with different gifts and talents (Gen 1:27; Psa 139:13-14; Exo 31:1-6; Exo 36:1-2; Ephesians 2:10). His purpose for giving us these gifts is that we may serve Him, and others, for His glory (Gen 1:28; Exo 31:6; Exo 36:2; Isa 43:7; 1 Pet 4:10). This is our expression of love for Him, and for others that is the essence of true worship (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18; Matt 22:36-40). However, because we have all sinned, instead of acknowledging that these gifts and talents are from God, and therefore should be used for His glory, we attribute them to ourselves, and oftentimes use them selfishly. Take a moment to acknowledge the gifts and talents that are present in your group. Take a moment to reflect on the source of these gifts and talents. Where did they come from? Does recognising that they all come from God change the way you view the purpose of your talents.
3. JESUS COMPLETING THE STORY: The willingness of the people in their construction of the tabernacle (Exo 35:21), prefigures the perfect willingness of Christ to follow the commands of God (Jn 10:18). In our best moments, because of our sinfulness, there isn't a perfect willingness to follow God, there is always some reluctance. Christ, followed Christ perfectly on earth, and perfectly as He went to the Cross. When we place our faith in Him, that willingness is credited to us as ours. In God's eyes, we have already served Him perfectly! And then, by His Spirit, He works that willingness out in us practically (Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 8:9-15; 9:7, 13-15). The construction of the tabernacle according to God's design (Exo 36:10) prefigures the building of God's church exactly as He intends (Eph 4:11-16), and the building of the new and restored world that will come about completely when Christ comes again (Rev 21:2). The filling of the tent with God's glory (Exo 40:34) is a shadow of the fullness of the Spirit that is ours in Christ (Matt 3:16-17; Jn 1:14, 3:34-35) and in the church (Acts 2:3-4; 1 Cor 3:16). As great and glorious as the construction of the tabernacle and the worship in the tabernacle was, they were but shadows of the greater reality that Christ brings to us. How does the reality of Christ bringing the greater fulfilment of the tabernacle, and of willing service and worship changes the way you view your own worship and service of God?
4. LIVING OUT THE STORY: God desires us to worship and serve Him with all of our talents and all of our lives, in a way that is accordance with His commands. Cutting corners, and "innovation" (in the negative sense of the word) will not do. This perfect willingness and obedience can only come about as we come to Christ and the Gospel more and more. Think about how you are using your gifts and talents to serve God today. Are there areas that you know you are "cutting corners" and not doing what you should be doing exactly? Why are you doing that? Does knowing that God sees you as *perfect* in Christ help you to *willingly* bring those areas in line with God's commands?

Prayer:

- **Praise** God for the things that He has done in the last 40 or so days through Exodus. Thank Him for giving the power and providing the way by which we can love, serve and honour Him willingly and perfectly because of Jesus.
- **Confess** that you don't always want to serve and worship God the way He deserves.
- **Ask** God to melt your heart afresh with the reality that God has first served you in Jesus. Ask that He would make that such a vivid reality, so that your desire and practical action, will be to serve Him in the world, in every way He intends.