

EXODUS 40:1-16 (SEVEN “I AM’S”)

As always, Sunday night I was concerned about the sermon typing coming up on the next day. There is, once again, a great deal of repetition in these verses as the obedience of Moses to the command of the Lord is being evaluated.

I asked the Lord for His hand to be upon me as is my custom, and then in the morning I asked Him to prepare my fingers for the battle which lay ahead. As I got going, I began to realize that there is a pattern which seemed to match things going on in another book of the Bible. Being a bit dull, it took me several verses, maybe even half the sermon, to realize that the pattern didn't just match that other book's pattern, but it matches it exactly.

Considering that Exodus was written at the time of Moses, almost 1500 years before the coming of Christ, and considering that John wrote from memory what he had heard, and finally... considering that this pattern was (at least to my knowledge – I did an internet search) never seen before 31 October 2016, it shows, once again, that the word of God has many secrets waiting to be revealed.

How can it be that countless scholars have poured over this book, time and time again, and yet the pattern remained unknown? It is because it wasn't yet ready to be revealed. But as we go on, you will see that it is precise, and it is also as obvious as the nose on your face, once you see it. What a gift! What a treasure! And yet, we find more time to watch sports or movies than we do reading this precious jewel, handed to us by God through the inspiration of His Spirit. Where are our priorities? Where indeed...

Text Verse: “The secret *things belong* to the LORD our God, but those *things which are revealed belong* to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29

The Bible is literally filled with secret things. In His own providential timing, the Lord whispers them out to us. He opens our ear and speaks softly into it. Or maybe He wakes us up late in the night with a spark of His divine will filling our mind with something that we had never considered before.

Or, He may even open our eyes to something while we are reading the word. When He does, we need to grab the moment, seize the opportunity, and search out what He is telling us. It is true that not everything people think they find is actually valid.

Far too often we find those who claim they have found something that is so far off base that we blush in embarrassment, looking for a way to tell them they've missed the target, but there are a lot of targets that won't be missed as well.

One of them is seen in today's passage concerning the erection of the sanctuary and its consecration. This is then followed up with the consecration of Aaron and his sons. But it matches something going on in the book of John in a marvelous way.

And... it is all to reveal to us Jesus. Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Setting up the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting (verses 1-8)

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

v'dabber Yehovah el mosheh lemor – these exact words haven't been spoken to Moses since Exodus 31:1. That was seventeen sermons ago, a time which

included the incident with the golden-calf and everything that transpired since then.

Now the words are spoken again to introduce an entirely new thought, one which has actually been anticipated since Exodus 25 and the calling of the people by the Lord to donate for the construction of a tabernacle. That was a full 37 sermons ago.

Once again now, the words of introductory preparation are written for us to stop... and to consider what lies ahead. Something new and marvelous is one thought away. What will it be?

²“On the first day of the first month

What is to be done will be done at the turn of the year. It is a new time, and a new season. The chosen first month for the redemptive calendar year was given in Exodus 12:2. It was the month of their deliverance from Egypt, and the Lord told them that it would be the first of their months from that point on –

“This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.” Exodus 12:2

The name of the month, Aviv, was specifically given in Exodus 13:4. It is to be on the first of this month, and exactly 345 days after departing from Egypt and 300 days since arriving at Sinai, that this new instruction was to be carried out.

Thus, it will occur on the first day of their first full year of freedom, and it will be the first day of the designated redemptive year in the year 2515AM, or “in the year of the world.” And that instruction is...

^{2 (con't)} you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

The words are correct. Both the term *mishkan*, or tabernacle, and *ohel moed*, or tent of meeting, are used. The words are placed in apposition, meaning that they are grammatically almost parallel, but the tabernacle resided within the tent. It being set up first, and then the tent being raised over it.

Further, it is the “tent of meeting,” not the “tent of the congregation” which is used by the KJV. The tent of meeting is where the Lord would meet with His designated representative, not the congregation.

Though the many parts of the sanctuary had been made by the people, and though they had been approved by Moses as meeting the specifications given by the Lord, it was not just completed and caused to be raised.

Rather, the Lord has determined the appointed times and seasons for all redemptive workings. This included the erection of this marvelous edifice which had been so painstakingly fashioned in order to picture the Person and the work of Christ to come.

By having it raised on the first day of the first month, the entire ordination process for it would be complete in time for the celebration of the first Passover which would be held on the fourteenth of the same month.

As this is the approximate time of the Spring equinox, the rising sun would be directly to the east, and thus it would be to the backs of those who would be worshipping towards the Most Holy Place where the Ark was to be located.

Further, as the first day of the month is the day of the New Moon, there would be no moon visible in the sky at that time. In both cases, it is a direct challenge to any notion of sun or moon worship. The Creator, not the creation, was to be worshipped by the people Israel. The precedence was being set in this selected timing.

Another reason for selecting the New Year was to set up the hearts of the people for a new beginning. The year past had shown them failing many times in their devotion to the Lord, culminating in the tragic instance of the golden calf. Now, with the new year, there would be a new beginning, and a chance to serve the Lord all the better in the year to come.... hopefully.

³You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony,

The very purpose of building the sanctuary was for a place where the ark could reside. It is, in essence, the soul of the entire sanctuary. It is the spot where the

presence of the Lord would reside, and where the high priest, once a year, would come to petition the Lord for mercy for the sins committed by the people.

And the ark itself was only a receptacle for the tablets of the Testimony. Without the tablets, the ark was just a wooden box, splendidly ornamented with gold. And so it is with us, we can be the most splendid example of humanity – being a hulking weight lifter, or the most beautiful movie star – but without adherence to the word of God, we are just another person which happens to be more ornamented than those around us.

In Christ alone is there an embodiment of the word of God, and thus He is the very soul of the Lord's temple. For those who are in Christ, we are there with Him, in the Most Holy place, having satisfied the law, not through our own efforts, but through the work of Jesus. The importance of what this ark pictures cannot be understated. It needs to be repeated like a children's story – again and again until it is ingrained in our very being.

This placing of the Ark in the Tabernacle is parallel to John's words which *begin* his gospel –

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1

³ (con't) **and partition off the ark with the veil.**

The Hebrew says, *v'sakota al ha'aron eth ha'paroketh* – “And cover against the ark the veil.” The ark is not covered *with* the veil, but it is a covering none-the-less. The word *sakak* was used when the Lord said that He would place Moses in the cleft of the rock and cover him with His hand.

The veil would stand between the Holy Place where the priests ministered daily, and the Most Holy Place where the Lord resided. It was to signify the unapproachable nature of the Lord. There was a division, or a fracture, between Him and man, even between Him and the priests ordained to minister before Him.

The priests were kept from profaning His presence, and they were protected from being destroyed by Him by the placement of this veil. And as a reminder, on this veil were woven cherubim, as if guardians of the Presence. It is a picture of the cherubim which guard the way back to Eden.

This veil will remain for almost 1500 years, until the time of Christ's crucifixion where it will be torn asunder, allowing all who will come, to simply come. Any may enter the Most Holy Place and that land of delight once again by a mere act of faith. In Christ, the fracture is healed and the divide is removed. The guardian angels rest their flaming swords, and peace with God is restored. The veil, as we have seen, represents Christ's physical body. This corresponds to John 1:14 –

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

⁴You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it;

The “Table of Showbread” was minutely described in Exodus 25. It is the first piece of furniture to be brought into the Holy Place. As you certainly remember, it pictures Christ, our Bread of life. This is as He Himself proclaimed in John 6:35 –

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”

Thus, this table pictures the Lord coming, in a limited way, into the Holy Place to commune with His people. As John Lange describes this –

“By this symbolic communion with the priests He discloses to the people the hope of fellowship with Him, the fellowship of His Spirit, of His blessings.”

The “things that are to be set in order on it” have not yet been described, only the implements, but not what they held. This shows us that some of the book of Leviticus was probably already being compiled prior to the raising up of the tabernacle. Here is what is to be set in order which is described in Leviticus 24 –

“And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. ⁶You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. ⁷And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. ⁸Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. ⁹And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute.” Leviticus 24:5-9

⁴ (con’t) **and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps.**

Only after the table was brought in was the menorah to be brought in. If the table signified a feast, then the lights are lighted in order for that feast to be held. It is of note that Jesus first proclaimed Himself the Bread of life in John 6, and then proclaimed this in John 8:12 –

“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

Thus, His proclamations match the order of the furniture which have been brought into this Holy Place. The instructions here are to light its lamps, but this was done specifically at a prescribed time of the day each day, a time known as “between the evenings,” and thus about 3 pm.

⁵ **You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony,**

The term “before the ark of the Testimony” means outside the veil in the Holy Place, and directly in front of where the Ark sat behind the veil. The table was to the south; the menorah was to the north, but with its lamps illuminating the south.

As the presence of the Lord symbolically comes to fellowship with the priests through the veil in the placement of the Table of Showbread, so likewise, the

prayers symbolically go through the veil and into the Most Holy Place by the wafting of the incense which is offered on this altar.

Despite there being a fracture, or divide, between the two, communion was possible through these two points. As the bread can be equated with the word of God which nourishes, and as the incense can be equated with the prayers of the people, the Lord fellowshiped with His people through the word and they with Him through prayer.

How much more now can we truly fellowship with the Lord when we have the full word of God available to us, and we have the Holy Spirit who receives our prayers and sends them directly through our Mediator to God the Father!

We have full and unhindered access to the very Throne of Grace, and we have the full revelation of God available at this time in the completed word. Truly, this dispensation we live in is the most blessed of times yet for those who are eager to fellowship intimately with God.

⁵ (con't) **and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle.**

The screen, or *masak*, is that which separates the Holy Place from the outside courtyard. This screen is what is at the *pethakh*, or “doorway,” for access into the tabernacle. And once again, in order, we have Jesus’ claim that He is the Door, in John 10:7 –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.”

The order of His proclamations follows in a remarkable way with the order of these items now being set up.

⁶ **Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.**

The altar is next mentioned, and it is said to be “before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting” despite it having the laver between it and the actual tent.

This placement then answers to that of the altar of incense and the ark. Just as those two are being connected together, so are the brazen altar and the door.

Why would this be unless there was more symbolism which is calling out to be seen? What is it about the altar and the door which is so intricately connected? Again, we just need to go to the book of John and see which I AM statement of Jesus is next. In John 10:7 and again in John 10:9, He said that He is the Door. Immediately after this in John 10:11, He says –

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

The altar is where the sacrificial lamb was slaughtered for the sins of the people. And so Christ who gave His life is detailed directly after the door in the setting up of the sanctuary, and directly after the door in the book of John. Only by dying for the sins of the people can Christ be the Door by which we again have access to the Father.

There is a continued precision in the word which spans thousands of years, and the writing of these men who were inspired by the Spirit of God to write and record these things.

⁷ And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it.

Oddly, the NKJV changes the terms here from what should be “tent of meeting” to “tabernacle of meeting.” The KJV sticks with “tent” but says “of the congregation.” Both are incorrect. It is *ohel moed*, or “tent of meeting.”

It is before this, “tent of meeting” that the laver is next to be set up. However, the laver is closer to the tent than the altar, and it begs the question, “Why wasn’t this then detailed first?” We have partially answered this. The altar answers to the Door. One cannot enter the Door until the sins are paid for by the death of the sacrifice.

However, one who is dead cannot enter anything. If we simply died on the altar with Christ and nothing more happened, we would have a hard time moving. But

something wonderful happens to those who die in Christ. They are raised to new life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The laver, in a sense, is a foreshadowing of our baptism in Christ. When we are baptized, we are making a picture of what Christ has done for us. This is why the one baptizing should make two proclamations during the baptism. 1) Buried with Christ in His death – this is when the person is dunked under, and 2) Raised to newness of life by the power of the Holy Spirit – this is when the person is brought back up out of the water.

And this is what makes our continued journey possible. We don't merely die with Christ, we are raised with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places. We gain access through the Door and continue heading west to the Land of Delight. And this is what the next I AM statement of Jesus proclaims. In John 11:25 –

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”

One cannot wash and be sanctified if they are not resurrected. The laver is the seal that the resurrection has come about, and new life is granted. We are justified in Christ's death; we are sanctified through the resurrection and the sealing of the Spirit. Paul tells us this in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 –

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth...”

It is of note that the Hebrew of this verse specifically says *v'natata sham mayim*, or “and you shall put into it water.” They could have filled this laver first, but the Lord specifically calls for it to be placed *and then filled*. The reason is that one must first receive Christ, dying to sin before then being granted the Spirit. The order of the placement of each item is detailed and it is beautiful.

⁸You shall set up the court all around,

The tabernacle and tent weren't just exposed to the pagan world around them. They were instead enclosed by a court which kept the Holy Places separate from

the world, and which also kept out any who would come near with empty hands. But, unlike Eden which was also closed off from the world, with no seeming possibility to reenter, we see that there is, in fact, a means of access...

⁸ (con't) **and hang up the screen at the court gate.**

There was a *masak*, or covering, here as well. This is the same word that was just used in verse 5 for the screen at the doorway, but this time it leaves off the term *pethakh*, or door. Instead, it uses the term *sha'ar*, or "gate." A *different word* is used to describe essentially the same thing. Why would this be? The answer is that once again, the terminology is given to show us the next I AM proclamation of Christ. In John 14:6 comes that next statement –

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

There was one means of access into the sanctuary for the outside world – one and only one. Likewise, Jesus claims to be that exclusive access which this screen only pictures. He is the way back to restoration with God which was lost at the very dawn of man's time on earth.

The world hates the concept of a single path to God, but Moses gave us a foreshadowing of it in Genesis 3, he continues to give us a taste of it in the details of the tabernacle, and Jesus boldly proclaimed that *He alone* is able to make these pictures and symbols come to life through His life, His work, and His being. We ignore these marvelous clues at our own great peril.

*I Am the Lord who is here for you
I Am with you always, so have no fear*

*Be strengthened through My word, this you shall do
And through this word, to you I will come near*

*Trust in Me and know that I Am with you always
In your walk don't be terrified or afraid
Instead, cling to this word throughout all of your days
And never let your heart from Me be swayed*

*Seek Me diligently and by you I shall be found
Look to Me and let Me be your delight
I Am here with you, as if by sight and by sound
I Am with you all the day, and throughout each long night*

II. The Rite of Consecration (verse 9-16)

⁹“And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy.

That everything associated with the tabernacle was to be anointed with oil is a clear reference to the presence of the Spirit. Without the life of the Spirit, nothing effectual for the redemptive process is possible. But when the Spirit is present, the anointing is both from the Spirit and for the Spirit.

If you missed the sermon on the holy anointing oil, it would be worth your time to go back and watch that. In it, you will gain an immensely detailed understanding of the work of Christ which is seen in every single detail. Just as the entire edifice was anointed, so the Spirit of Christ is behind every single aspect of the building of His church. Nothing occurs apart from Him, and all of it is for Him. As Paul says in Romans –

“For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:36

¹⁰ You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. The altar shall be most holy.

Only after mentioning the tabernacle and all that is in it is that which is outside then anointed. However, in this verse it says that the altar shall be “most holy,” whereas the previous verse said that the tabernacle and all of it was said to be “holy.” The scholars at Cambridge seem to find a contradiction in this by stating –

“It is remarkable that, while in Exodus 30:29 ...the Tent of Meeting with all the vessels belonging to it, are, by anointing, made ‘most holy’ ..., here the altar only is ‘most holy,’ and the Tent of Meeting and all its contents are only ‘holy.’”
Cambridge

As is typical with them, they try to introduce doubt into the minds of their readers as to the consistency, and thus the reliability, of the word. However, the difference in terminology does not signify any higher or lesser degree of holiness.

Instead, the terms are used as a caution for the priests and the people. The people could come no nearer to the Lord than the altar of burnt offering. It is termed “most holy” here as a warning that no layman could touch it, lest they become devoted to the Lord.

The “holy” of the other implements implies “most holy,” because only the priests could come near them. The holiness of the altar had to be precisely stated as “most holy” so that the people would not err and die.

¹¹ And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it.

Nothing is said of the laver and its base being holy or most holy, and yet, it is consecrated through anointing. This may seem odd, but the laver is after the altar

where the common people could not pass. This implies that anyone who was at the laver was already acceptable to touch the altar, and thus they were holy.

However, the laver is for washing of defilement, something which is *not holy*. And so the laver itself must be most holy in order to wash away the defilement in order for the priests to be acceptable to go on, meaning into the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

Everything about the laver speaks of a sanctification process which is needed for the already accepted priest of God to continue in his duties. It is the place where cleansing occurs as he goes about his business; it is the word of God – the Bible.

We come to it with stains and impurities, and we leave it cleansed and purified, and yet it never picks up our defilement. It is a constant and endless stream of water available to purify the soul of the believer.

Understanding this, are you using it as such? When you pick up the stains of life each day, do you come to it and wash yourself clean once again? You cannot move forward without it, and so come to it often and cleanse yourself with the healing water of the word.

¹² “Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water.

Again, it is the tent, not the tabernacle. Make a note if your Bible says otherwise. The Bible is a book of beauty and precision, and so consistency in translation is always something to be desired.

It is at the door of the tent of meeting that Aaron and his sons were to be brought. This is speaking of where the laver stood, and it is from this laver that they would be fully washed, signifying their acceptability, once and for all, to be priests.

It is symbolic of the full washing that occurs the moment a believer comes to Christ. He is cleansed and he is purified from all unrighteousness. After this, the priests will only wash their hands and feet, signifying their on-going purification which was needed to keep them acceptable to perform their duties. The same is true for us, which is what is pictured in these ancient rites and rituals.

¹³ You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

Aaron, though a fallen man, was a type of Christ as our High Priest. He was to be set apart and consecrated in order to serve as a priest. Likewise, as we saw in the details for the consecration of Aaron in Exodus 29, Christ Jesus was set apart for His duties as our true High Priest. That is referred to in the gospels, but it is most detailed and explained for us in the book of Hebrews.

For almost 1500 years, the priestly line of Aaron was invested with these holy garments which pointed to and pictured the coming Messiah. What is both exciting and saddening, is that there is a person alive today who has been selected as the next high priest of Israel. He will be washed, anointed, and consecrated for his duties, but there will be no true life in his investiture or in his actions.

Instead, Israel missed the boat and is heading down a misguided path of works under the law once again. The good of this is that eventually that path will lead them to their true Messiah. But it will be a path filled with pain and suffering before they get there.

¹⁴ And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics.

The sons of Aaron are emblematic of the sons of God, through the work of Christ. It is we who they only picture. Their white tunics symbolize the pure white righteousness that we possess because of Him. These sons though, for the dispensation of the law, were those who ministered before the Lord in their daily duties.

¹⁵ You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests;

The timing of the ordination of Aaron and his sons is often speculated to be later than that of the sanctuary. This is because it is detailed in Leviticus 8. However, this needs to be argued against for several reasons. The first is that though the command is given and only later enacted, the same is true with the sanctuary itself.

The Lord has given the command to erect it, and it will be erected after the command at the time specified. There is no reason to assume that just because the *details* of the priest's ordination are written later, that they are actually conducted any later than that of the tabernacle itself. Secondly, in the raising up of the tabernacle, in verse 30-32 of this chapter, it says –

“He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing; ³¹ and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet *with water* from it. ³² Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the LORD had commanded Moses.”

Therefore, the details are already out of any chronological order, even as the erection of the details are being given. And thirdly, if the tabernacle and all of the associated furniture was considered holy through the consecration process, but Aaron and his sons were not, then they would not be able to serve as priests, or they themselves would incur guilt and die.

Rather, the recording of all of these details is done in specific categories rather than chronologically. The categorical details are kept together for a logical reading of each step of the process.

^{15 (con't)} for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.”

The priesthood of Aaron was anointed at this time, and it passed down to each subsequent generation after him. Any new anointing of later High Priests is

glaringly left unstated, especially at the time of the transfer of the garments from Aaron to his son at Aaron's death. However, from Leviticus 21:10 it does appear that each next high priest did have anointing oil poured over his head. From this, the priesthood was passed down as "an everlasting priesthood."

Unfortunately, these words, everlasting priesthood, lead to one of the frequent questions I receive concerning the Law of Moses and its duration. How can we not be required to observe the law if it was for an everlasting priesthood throughout the generations? The question is faulty, because it doesn't read the *intent* of the passage. The translation into English, though not incorrect, is vague. Further, it does not take in the whole counsel of Scripture.

An everlasting priesthood does not mean an eternal priesthood. The word *olam* simply means "to the vanishing point." Whatever point in the eternal counsels of God that Christ would come and annul the first covenant, the priesthood would likewise be annulled. This is stated by the author of Hebrews –

"Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹² For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³ For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar." Hebrews 7:11-13

The priesthood ended because it had reached its vanishing point. We serve God under a New Covenant. If you are still stuck under the Old, you err in your walk and you are not pleasing to God. Finally in this verse, it cannot go without note that this ordination process of Aaron and his sons corresponds directly to Jesus' final I AM proclamation. In John 15, He said the following –

"I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be

done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” John 15:5-8

Only when one is in Christ can they be productive in Christ, but not all who are in Him are productive, nor does His word abide in them. The priests of Israel were ordained to be priests to God, just as we are called to be. They were to be about the Lord’s business and to be effective stewards of His. If His word failed to abide in them, there would be consequences.

As a confirmation of this, we read the following account of Aaron’s two oldest sons. They failed to let the word abide in their lives, and the fire consumed them, just as Jesus’ words say about what will happen to us –

“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. ³ And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD spoke, saying:
‘By those who come near Me
I must be regarded as holy;
And before all the people
I must be glorified.’
So Aaron held his peace.” Leviticus 10:1-3

The seven “I AM’s” of Jesus are reflected in the process of raising the tabernacle and in its consecration, and of that for Aaron and his sons. This cannot be by chance, but was by the guiding of the Holy Spirit each step of the way.

Let us now consider why the Ark and the Veil have no I AM statement attached to them. First, the Ark, which bears the word, pictures that which always existed – the Word of God. This is why it is introduced first as a statement of fact in John 1:1.

Next the Veil, which is explicitly said to be the body of Christ, was prepared by God for Christ to dwell in. That is why John 1:14 follows after the statement of John 1:1. Only then are the Seven I AM’s stated.

However, there is still one glaring omission concerning the furniture. There is no I AM statement for the Altar of Incense which is placed in front of the Veil between the Table of Showbread and the Menorah. Why would this be?

The reason is the same as the order in which it was instructed to be made. The Ark, the Table, and the Lampstand were all detailed in Exodus 25. However, the Altar of Incense wasn't detailed until Exodus 30.

The placement of the Altar had to be noted in order here as the furniture was set up, but the purpose for it did not take effect until all of Christ's work was finished. Only after the last I AM statement by Jesus in John 15 comes Jesus' High Priestly Prayer of John 17.

The prayer of His for us, and our continued prayers today, took effect when Christ's work was complete. Only when one is in Christ can their prayers be acceptable to God. As we noted earlier, the placement of this altar answers to the placement of the ark and veil, just as the placement of the Altar of Burnt offering answers to the door of the tent of meeting, bypassing the laver.

The precision in the layout, as is then matched by what occurs in the book of John, is simply astonishing. And so it is for us. Each step is logical and orderly as we move from understanding the work of Jesus to applying it to our lives. When we do, we are able to come boldly to the Throne of Grace where our prayers and petitions are heard once again.

Like the Ark and the Veil, no I AM statement is necessary for this altar. The work was fulfilled, and the nature of the Person is understood through what He has done. He is our Mediator, and through Him, our prayers, signified by the incense, is passed through Him to God.

Ark of the Testimony (containing the Word of God) / John 1:1

Veil (The Body of Christ) / John 1:14

Seven I AM's

Table of Showbread – I AM the Bread of Life / John 6:35

Menorah – I AM the Light of the Word / John 8:12

Screen Door to Tent – I AM the Door / John 10:7

Altar – I AM the Good Shepherd / John 10:11

Laver – I AM the Resurrection and the Life - John 11:25

Screen to Courtyard – I AM the Way the Truth and the Life / John 14:6

The Anointing of Priests – I AM the True Vine / John 15:5-8

Altar of Incense / Jesus' High Priestly Prayer of John 17

¹⁶ Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

This verse is rather similar to final words of the previous chapter –

“According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work. ⁴³ Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.” Exodus 39:42, 43

The difference is that Moses was the one to approve the work of the people, and so he looked it over and approved it and blessed the people. In this verse, Moses is himself being obedient to the word and the word itself is commending him for his actions. And so from construction to completion, the work is noted as having been accomplished according to all that the Lord had commanded.

As I said at the beginning of the sermon, and during it as well, the way in which these several points have followed the seven “I AM’s” of Jesus is more than remarkable. The divine fingerprint is to be found all the way throughout Scripture; each page validating that more than human wisdom was involved in the process.

The many places it was compiled, the many personalities involved in it, and the length of time in which these things took to be recorded is a validation all its own that we are holding in our hands the very word of God.

But adding on to that is the fact that many of these patterns, such as the one today, have been left unseen for the 2000 years that this book has been studied by faithful scholars. How is it that such patterns can suddenly come forth, and yet people deny that there is a deep wisdom behind the word?

Let us not fall into such skepticism, but rather, let us behold the beauty of this word, treasure its secrets in our hearts, and continue to look for more remarkable patterns which are waiting still for curious eyes to gaze upon and bring to light, to the glory of God who has placed them there.

And as we have seen numerous times today, these patterns reveal Christ. God is trying to wake us up to our need for Christ. And so, once again today, I would like to explain quickly, and with care, how you too can share in God’s marvelous offer of peace which is granted through Him...

Closing Verse: “Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’” John 8:58

Next Week: Exodus 40:17-38 *I tried to find a word to rhyme, so I didst...* (The Lord in Their Midst) (105th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

I AM

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:
These are the words He was then relaying
On the first day of the first month, do not forget
The tabernacle of the tent of meeting, up you shall set
You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, please understand
And partition off the ark with the veil, per my command

You shall bring in the table
And arrange the things that are to be set in order on it
And you shall bring in the lampstand
And light its lamps, to this you shall commit
You shall also set the altar of gold
For the incense before the ark of the Testimony
And put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle
Follow this order as given by Me
Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering
Before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting

And you shall set the laver between
The tabernacle of meeting and the altar

And put water in it
No portion of this detail shall be allowed to falter
You shall set up the court all around, as I now state
And hang up the screen at the court gate
And you shall take the anointing oil
And anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it
And you shall hallow it and all its utensils
And it shall be holy, as I to you submit

You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering
And all its utensils, and the altar consecrate
The altar shall be most holy
This condition of it I now to you relate
And you shall anoint the laver and its base
And consecrate it, there in its place
Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door
Of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water
On them the water you shall pour
You shall put the holy garments on Aaron
And anoint him and consecrate him too
That he may minister to Me as priest
These things to him you are to do

And you shall bring his sons
And clothe them with tunics, so shall it be
You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father
That they may as priests minister to Me
For their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood Throughout their
generations, as is to be understood
Thus Moses did; each and everything as he was bid
According to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did
Heavenly Father, how precious is your word
And how marvelous it is to read it and find Jesus
Each page that we turn, it reveals our great Lord
Who has done such wonderful things for us

O God, our hearts are directed to You
And so be with us in all that we do
Let us never stray from the path which is true
And each day through Your word, please – our souls renew
And in this we will give You our highest praise
As we wait on our Lord's return – that most marvelous of days

Hallelujah and Amen...