
The Making of the Tabernacle

Exodus 35:30-36:38

Introduction What do we do with a long text about making a tent?

Why would this even matter to weary saints weighed down with sin, sorrow and suffering?

Seeing a large construction project:

The hole for the foundations of a skyscraper...

The intricate lattice work of steel beneath its skin...

Seeing the blueprints for our construction project:

Starting with a simple sketch of a floor plan...

To the complicated drawings from which the building is actually built...

Standing watching the work being done...

Here we are at the construction of the Tabernacle...

Seen its blueprints narrated...

Heard the exhortation to call the people to give and serve...

The Craftsmen for the Work (35:30 - 36:7)

Moses begins calling, authorizing and provisioning of the craftsmen who will be building the tabernacle.

Their Skill

(35:30-36:1)

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. "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."

The people who are to do the work are set aside for the work. God chose who these craftsmen. He called them by name. They would lead all the rest of the gifted and skilled craftsmen. Were they the very best? Could they do everything?

Probably not. But they were anointed with skill by God to know how to make what was instructed by God and to manage the complexity of the project.

The craftsmen leading the work had the skill to do the work. Their skills were both natural human ability and special enablement by Holy Spirit. This is generally the way God works. He gives people natural abilities and then gives His Holy Spirit to further enable them. Sometimes, that gift is sudden and unexpected through the Spirit – but not normally.

Jesus Christ has been identified by God and endowed with skill to build up His body, His tabernacle, His dwelling, the church. In His incarnation as He began the work of the Kingdom, he received the Holy Spirit without measure. It was through the power of the Holy Spirit that He lived a holy life and carried out His miracles, mighty works and preaching. After His death and resurrection, He gave that same gift of the Holy Spirit to His apostles on the day of Pentecost. And now, He supplies and equips His people for their work in skillful ministry by the gifts of the Spirit He gives to each and to all.

Their Supply

(v.2-3a)

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.

The craftsmen were provisioned for the work. They were entrusted with everything that the people brought as contributions. What is the use of skilled craftsmen who have nothing to work with? So, what was brought was put in their care and under their stewardship. They had to inventory, organize and distribute what was given. So they were supplied with what they needed for their work.

God has chosen to provide to Christ each living stone, each ransomed soul, so that the temple will be full and complete. Think of this: God the Father has fully planned the massive building project of the church. Down through the ages, from every tribe, tongue and people, living stones are being cut out from sinful humanity. They are redeemed, sanctified and placed into the holy Temple that is growing to become the dwelling place of God. Jesus is the chief cornerstone and the architect and the master builder. Every living stone needed for the church will be supplied. No one, not one, will be lacking or lost.

Their Sufficiency

(v.3b-7)

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.

The work for the tabernacle was provided day by day. In a steady stream the people brought their contributions. Can you imagine? Lorry after lorry full of what people brought; well, no, donkey, wagons, backpacks full of cloth, thread, acacia wood, gold, bronze – all that was needed.

The provision soon proved to be much more than was needed. The people's generosity overflowed in superabundant provision. What an amazing thing. The piles of goods grow and grow. Day by day, the contributions are being received, counted, categorized and checked against the build list. Finally, the day came when they realized that they had more than enough.

The construction team asked Moses to command the people to stop bringing contributions. They had enough and so much more! So Moses comes to the people and tells them to stop giving! This is amazing. From a *golden calf worshipping people* to a *giving too much we can't handle it all people*. This is the mercies of God gracing people so that they give with super-abundance. Wouldn't it be a marvelous thing if we could some day come to the congregation and say, "You know, you guys have been so generous we need no more money the rest of this ministry year." Or we could say, "We have more than enough cash to build our new facility!" But we are not there it; not even close.

But God in Christ has provided all that is needed for His own tabernacle, His own temple, the church to be built up, living stone by living stone.

The Construction of the Tabernacle (36:8-38)

The craftsmen now begin to go to the work of the construction of the tabernacle.

In Its Coverings (v.8-19)

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.

Moses records how the craftsmen did exactly according to the plan, the blueprint. What we heard narrated in the blueprint chapters is now carried out by the skilled craftsmen. This is very important. What God instructed had to be built exactly according to the plan God had given. It was a matter of obedience to God. It was also a matter of following the pattern God had given. What they built in the physical world was a representation of what God was doing and would do in the spiritual realm. The pattern of what they built I am picking up on and seeing in light of Christ and the church. If they don't build according to the plan, we would be unable to accurately make the connections. Those connections would get lost

in the places where the patterns were not followed. But the Spirit that gave them the skill to build also guarded them and enabled them to do exactly what God commanded.

The skilled craftsmen made each of the layers of the fabric that covered the tabernacle. Moses organizes from inner to outer. The inner curtain is made first. It is woven, embroidered, its loops and rings attached. Then the whole is assembled as panels clipped together by the loops and rings. The two outer layers, one serving primarily as the tent of the tabernacle and outer as a protective cover over it all are also woven, cut and assembled as planned.

They were fabricated, embroidered and joined as God had instructed. What they did were moment by moment acts of obedience. I want to emphasize this again. I am certain that some of what they did just required freedom to design and to fabricate. But at the end of the day, they had to produce exactly what God instructed them. It required obedience. Our own work of ministry is first obedience then freedom in wisdom. We err when we reverse that important order. Clearcreek Chapel's ministry is ordered first on obedience then freedom in wisdom. We will obey God regardless of the cost. And it costs us. Inside that obedience, we will with wisdom choose and implement the ministries we believe are best. In all this we must know the difference between the two, between what we must or ought to do and what we can or will do.

In Its Framing (v.20-34)

²⁰ Then he made the upright frames for the tabernacle of acacia wood. ²¹ Ten cubits was the length of a frame, and a cubit and a half the breadth of each frame. ²² Each frame had two tenons for fitting together. He did this for all the frames of the tabernacle. ²³ The frames for the tabernacle he made thus: twenty frames for the south side. ²⁴ And he made forty bases of silver under the twenty frames, two bases under one frame for its two tenons, and two bases under the next frame for its two tenons. ²⁵ For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty frames ²⁶ and their forty bases of silver, two bases under one frame and two bases under the next frame. ²⁷ For the rear of the tabernacle westward he made six frames. ²⁸ He made two frames for corners of the tabernacle in the rear. ²⁹ And they were separate beneath but joined at the top, at the first ring. He made two of them this way for the two corners. ³⁰ There were eight frames with their bases of silver: sixteen bases, under every frame two bases.

³¹ He made bars of acacia wood, five for the frames of the one side of the tabernacle, ³² and five bars for the frames of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the frames of the tabernacle at the rear westward. ³³ And he made the middle bar to run from end to end half-way up the frames. ³⁴ And he overlaid the frames with gold, and made their rings of gold for holders for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold.

The framework that upheld the tabernacle was carefully measured, cut and assembled. It was covered in gold and polished to a bright sheen. Here the carpentry skills and metal working skills were put to use. And they were to put use on a grand scale.

In the simple words, "he made" is embedded great skill, ingenuity and handiwork. Unless you have built anything on a large scale, it is hard to appreciate the careful, diligent labor behind these words.

The framing was placed in bases setting a extension of the frame down into a hole in the base cut to receive it. The frames are held together first by one long pole that ran whole length of the wall and then by shorter ones. These frames were elegant in their simplicity and effectiveness. They could easily be taken down, stacked on carts and carried about.

In Its Interior (v.35-38)

³⁵ He made the veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen; with cherubim skillfully worked into it he made it. ³⁶ And for it he made four pillars of acacia and overlaid them with gold. Their hooks were of gold, and he cast for them four bases of silver. ³⁷ He also made a screen for the entrance of the tent, of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, embroidered with needlework, ³⁸ and its five pillars with their hooks. He overlaid their capitals, and their fillets were of gold, but their five bases were of bronze.

Finally the craftsmen fabricate the veil that was to hang between the inner and outer rooms. This large, thick curtain blocked the people from seeing or entering the place where God would dwell. It was a barrier to entering. Even the priests could not enter here. Once a year, only the High Priest could enter the inner room where the Ark of the Covenant rested.

They also build the pillars designed to hold up the screen serving as the doorway into the tabernacle. These pillars added a sense of height ad majesty while holding up the screen in the entry and the veil between the rooms.

These two veils, screens, gates and barriers are both pointing to Christ who is the only way into the presence of God. He is the one and only gate through the fence around the courtyard. He is the one and only entry into the tabernacle. His flesh is the veil that was both the barrier and the opening to the very inner place where God dwells. No one comes to the Father but by Christ. At His death on the cross, the veil in the Temple was torn. It both showed the emptiness of the inner room – there was nothing there on that day - and it showed that the cross opened the way into the heavens.

The Connections in the Word

A - The Garden on Earth (Genesis 3:8)

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

The first dwelling of God with man was the garden. Yet we know about it in the sudden sadness of God seeking man who is fearing and fleeing.

B - The Tabernacle in the Wilderness (Current texts)

Our study in Exodus has shown us God preparing a place for His glory to dwell as the nation was on the move in the wilderness and as they conquered the land.

C - The Temple in the Land (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ² And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. ³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever."

The glory of the Lord came upon the Temple Solomon built. His glorious presence dwelt there until final fatal days just before the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon. Then the glory departed. The Second Temple built by Ezra and Nehemiah and expanded by Herod never had the glory of God come down upon it.

C - The Lord Jesus in the Incarnation (John 1:14)

⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The glory of God dwelled in Christ. He then walked the Second Temple courts as the God-man. In the incarnation, God dwelt with man. God tabernacled with us in Christ.

B - The Church on this Earth (1 Peter 2:4-6; Colossians 1:24-29)

⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." [1 Peter 2:4-6, ESV]

²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church, ²⁵ of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, ²⁶ the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in

you, the hope of glory. ²⁸ Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. [Colossians 1:24-29]

The church is now the tabernacle, the temple of God. Sometimes these texts are associated with individual indwelling. But these texts are talking corporately – God indwells the church, His people. We are living stones being built up into a holy temple to the Lord. We are the tabernacle of God whose Holy Spirit dwells within our souls, we who have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

A - The City in the New Earth (Revelation 21:1-4)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Here is the glorious last day when God will come and tabernacle with man. In the New Heavens and the New Earth, Jesus Christ, the eternally incarnate will sit on the throne and God will dwell in and among His people. When He has brought to fulfillment all that the garden, the tabernacle, the Temple was the shadows of, then God's plan in redemptive history is brought to glorious culmination.

Conclusion

Sometimes the Bible calls us to examination:

Do we really believe that all the Scriptures are inspired by God and are profitable to us? Or do we profit only from those texts that require a minimum of study, reflection and application? In other words, do we really just want the Bible to be easy?

Are we poised to recognize those whose skill in serving God is Spirit-enabled and leadership recognized? Are we ready to humble even our own gifts and skills under those God has appointed to lead?

Are our hearts organized and oriented for immediate and detailed obedience? We tend to think of this in personal, individual terms which is important. But in our context this morning are we ready to do what God calls us to do, to obey Him as a congregation, a people together?

Do you ponder much who you are in Christ? Do you think about and reflect on great truths like this so that you are shaped by God's Word and the truth in your heart? What does it mean for us individually and corporately that we are the tabernacle, the temple of God?

Sometimes the Bible calls us to exultation:

May we marvel at the vast and intricate wisdom of God that ordained a tent in the wilderness to be a shadow of a magnificent future reality we still can only dimly comprehend.

May we savor God in His multifaceted enablement of His people by the Holy Spirit. He has not left us to do the work of the kingdom in our own strength and skill. He has given us His Spirit to impart to us what we need for our place and purpose in the body.

May we glory in Christ who is the true tabernacle, the great dwelling place and our mighty Redeemer and Ruler.

Come weary saints and find rest. Take heart in this world that in the world to come there will be no sin, no sadness, no sorrow, no suffering. Take heart that God will dwell with us and wipe away all tears.