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A STUDY OF THE WHOLE BIBLE

THE BOOK OF EXODUS

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TABERNACLE (35:1-40:38)

Introduction

The book of Exodus concludes with the construction of the tabernacle. In response to God's detailed instructions outlined in chapters 25-31, this final section records the people obediently building the tabernacle according to God's specifications. After the tabernacle is built, the section ends with God descending upon it through his glory cloud as He comes to dwell in the midst of the people. Whereas Exodus began with Israel enslaved in the midst of Egypt, it ends with God enthroned in the midst of Israel.

The following table summarizes the fulfillment of the tabernacle instructions:

	Instructions	Fulfillment
Tabernacle proper	26:1-37	36:8-38
Ark	25:10-22	37:1-9
Table	25:23-30	37:10-16
Lampstand	25:31-40	37:17-24
Altar of Incense	30:1-10	37:25-28
Anointing Oil and Incense	30:22-38	37:29
Altar of Burnt Offering	27:1-8	38:1-7
Bronze Basin	30:17-21	38:8
Court	27:9-19	38:9-20
Priestly Garments	28:1-43	39:1-31

Gospel Glimpses

THE MERCY SEAT. One of the central features of the tabernacle is the mercy seat (Exodus 35:12; 37:6-9; 39:35; 40:20). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place. On this day he would take the blood of a sin offering and sprinkle it on the mercy seat to make atonement for the sins of the whole nation (Leviticus 16:15). This great act at the mercy seat prefigures the saving work of Jesus on the cross. The New Testament not only describes Jesus as a high priest who enters the Most Holy Place and sprinkles His own blood (Hebrews 9:11-14), but it may also describe Him as the mercy seat itself. Paul says that redemption comes through Jesus, "whom God put forward as a propitiation" (Rom. 3:25). The word "propitiation" here translates the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word for "mercy seat," which may be what Paul had in mind. That is, while atonement under the old covenant was made at the mercy seat, atonement under the new covenant is made through Jesus.

GOD WITH US. A precious truth of the gospel is that not only does God save us by His grace, but He also comes to live with us. This truth is evident in the story of the exodus, as God saves His people from Egypt (Exodus 1-18) and then comes to live with them in the tabernacle (chs. 35-40). This connection between salvation and divine presence is summarized earlier in Exodus 29:46: “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.” These two gospel elements—salvation and presence—are also reflected in the names given to Christ at his birth. According to Matthew’s gospel, when Christ is born, He is called Jesus, “for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21), and also Immanuel, “which means, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

HEART-FELT GENEROSITY. The Israelites are portrayed in these chapters as exceedingly generous in their giving toward the construction of the tabernacle. Moses calls for all those who have a “generous heart” (Exodus 35:5) to contribute toward the work, and the description of the people giving repeatedly focuses on the “heart” of those participating (35:21, 22, 26, 29). In the end, the people give so much that Moses tells them to stop because the craftsmen have more material than they need (36:3-7)! Such heartfelt generosity is extolled throughout the Old Testament in the law (Deuteronomy 15:10-11; 24:19-22), the historical books (I Chronicles 29:6-9), and the poetic books (Psalm 37:21, 26; 112:5; Proverbs 11:25; 22:9), as well as in the New Testament (Matthew 19:21; Acts 10:1-2; Romans 12:8; I Timothy 6:17-18). Perhaps best representing this theme is Paul’s call for the Corinthian believers to give freely toward a relief fund for the Jerusalem church. He says, “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (II Corinthians 9:7).

MOST HOLY PLACE. At the center of the tabernacle, behind the innermost veil, is the Most Holy Place (Exodus 40:3). This inner sanctuary houses the ark of the covenant, which represents God’s kingly presence on earth (I Samuel 4:4; Psalm 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). When Solomon later constructs the temple, the Most Holy Place becomes established more permanently in Israel’s midst (I Kings 8:6), thereby providing a longstanding place for God to reside with his people. However, after centuries of Israel living in unrepented sin, God departs the Most Holy Place in judgment (Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:22-23). When Jesus died on the cross, the veil to the Most Holy Place was torn in two (Matthew 27:51), showing that the barrier between God’s presence and His people had been removed. Finally, in Revelation, John pictures the New Jerusalem as cubic in shape (Revelation 21:16), which recalls the cubic shape of the Most Holy Place (I Kings 6:20). This reveals that the eternal home of believers will be a worldwide Most Holy Place—God’s kingly presence will be everywhere.

Theological Soundings

SPIRITUAL GIFTS. God provides his people with various skills and abilities to enable them to serve him and others. These are known as “spiritual gifts” (I Corinthians 12:1). This is evident in this section as God calls Bezalel and Oholiab to build the tabernacle, fills them with his Spirit, and gives them the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out the task

(35:30-35; 36:1-2; 38:22-23). From other Scripture we see that God gives each of his people at least one spiritual gift (Ephesians 4:7-8; I Peter 4:10), that people are often gifted differently from each other (Romans 12:4-8; I Corinthians 12:4-11, 28; Ephesians 4:11-12), that all of these different gifts are important (I Corinthians 12:12-27), and that all spiritual gifts should be used to build up the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:11-12; I Peter 4:10).

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE. One of the precious truths of the gospel is that we are saved by grace through faith, which is “not a result of works” (Ephesians 2:8-9). However, it is also true that through this gracious salvation we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10). That is, although our obedience to God’s word does not save us, it is evidence that we have been saved. Illustrating this, at the conclusion of the tabernacle construction the text repeatedly emphasizes that the people had responded obediently to God’s word through Moses (39:32, 42-43). This obedient response was evidence that the people believed Moses (19:9), and therefore that they believed God (19:7-8). Having been graciously saved through the exodus, their faith was then demonstrated by their works (James 2:18).

Glossary of Terms

ANOINT: Scripture, to pour oil (usually olive oil) on someone or something to set the person or thing apart for a special purpose.

Please answer the following questions:

Exodus 35

1. What was not to be lighted on the Sabbath? (v. 3)
2. Who was to make the things the Lord had commanded? (v. 10)
3. Who brought offerings to the Lord? (v. 21)
4. What kind of gold jewelry was brought? (v. 22)
5. What kind of offering was the gold? (v. 22)
6. What spun things did the women bring? (vv. 25-26)
7. Who brought the gems? (v. 27)
8. From what tribes did the two top craftsmen come? (vv. 30-34)

Chapters 36

1. When did the people bring offerings for the construction of the tabernacle? (v. 3)
2. What was the skilled craftsman's complaint? (vv. 4-5)
3. What was Moses' order? (v. 6)
4. How many of the ten curtains of the tabernacle were coupled together to form a side? (v. 10)
5. What kind of hair was used for the curtains for the tent over the tabernacle? (v. 14)
6. How many curtains were made of goat's hair? (v. 14)
7. Give the length and breadth of one of the eleven curtains made from goat's hair that made a tent for the tabernacle? (vv. 14-15)
8. What kind of skins made a covering over the Red rams skins and tent of goat's hair over the tabernacle? (v. 19)
9. Give the length and breadth of each board of shittim wood for the tabernacle. (vv. 20-21)
10. How many boards were on the North and South sides of the tabernacle? (vv. 23-26)

11. How many boards were on the West of the tabernacle? (v. 27)

Chapter 37

1. Who made the ark of shittim wood? (v. 1)

2. Can you give the dimensions of the ark? (v. 1)

3. Bezaleel overlaid the ark with gold inside and out. What kind of crown did he make on it? (v. 2)

4. How many rings of gold did Bezaleel put on the ark? (v. 3)

5. What was placed in the rings on the ark so it could be carried? (vv. 4-5)

6. Can you give the length and breadth of the gold mercy seat? (v. 6)

7. How many cherubim's of gold beaten from one piece were made for the mercy seat? (v. 7)

8. The two cherubim's on each end of the mercy seat faced each other. What was spread out on high and covered the mercy seat? (v. 9)

9. The table was overlaid with gold and with a gold crown around about. How wide was the border around the table? (vv. 11-12)
10. How many gold rings were put on the table? (v. 13)
11. Where were the staves of shittim wood for the table placed? (vv. 14-15)
12. What metal was used in making the dishes, spoons, bowls and covers to be used on the table of the tabernacle? (v. 16)
13. What metal was used in making the candlestick, its shaft, branch, bowls, knops and flowers? (v. 17)
14. How many branches were on each side of the shaft of the candlestick? (v. 18)
15. The bowls on the candlestick were made like what? (v. 19)
16. How many lamps were on the candlestick? (v. 23)
17. How much pure gold was used in making the candlestick and its dishes? (v. 24)
18. Can you give the length, breadth, and height of the incense altar of shittim wood? (v. 25)

19. Besides over laying the altar of incense with gold, and a crown of gold, what else was on it? (vv. 25-29)
20. According to the work of the apothecary the holy anointing oil was made. What was the pure incense made of? (v. 29)

Chapter 38

1. Can you give the length, breadth and height of the altar of burnt offering? (v. 1)
2. What metal was used to over lay the altar of burnt offering? (v. 2)
3. What was on the four corners of the altar of burnt offering? (v. 2)
4. What kind of metal was used to make the pots, shovels, basins, flesh hooks, fire pans to be used with the altar of burnt offering? (v. 3)
5. What kind of grate was made for the altar of burnt offering? (v. 4)
6. The altar had four rings of brass to be placed for the staves. What purpose did this serve? (v. 7)

7. What kind of metal was used to make the laver and its foot? (v. 8)
8. How long was the South side of the court of the tabernacle? (v. 9)
9. How many pillars were on the South side of the court of the tabernacle? (v. 10)
10. How long was the North side of the court of the tabernacle? (v. 11)
11. How many pillars were on the North side of the court of the tabernacle? (v. 11)
12. How long were the hangings for the West side of the court of the tabernacle? (v. 12)
13. How many pillars did the West side of the court of the tabernacle have? (v. 12)
14. How many cubits of hangings were on each side of the gate in the East end of the court of the tabernacle? (v. 14)
15. What was the length of the hanging for the gate in the East end of the court of the tabernacle? (v. 18)
16. The height in the breadth of the hanging for the gate in the East end of the court of the tabernacle was how many cubits? (v. 18)

17. Who were an engraver, a cunning workman, and an embroiderer in blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen? (v. 23)
18. What was the total amount of gold used for the work on the sanctuary? (v. 24)
19. How much silver was used? (v. 25)
20. How many men over 20 years old had been counted? (v. 26)
21. How much silver was in each base? (v. 27)
22. What was the 1,775 shekels of silver used for? (v. 28)
23. How much bronze was used? (v. 29)
24. What was made of the bronze? (vv. 30-31)

Chapter 39

1. How did they mix the gold in with the blue, purple and scarlet yarn for the ephod? (v. 3)

2. What two things besides the ephod were made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet and fine linen? (v. 8)
3. The onyx stones were enclosed in ouches of gold and put on the shoulders of the ephod. What was the graven on the onyx stones? (vv. 6-7)
4. Can you name the three stones in the first row of stones on the breastplate? (v. 10)
5. Can you name the three stones in the second row of stones on the breastplate? (v. 11)
6. Can you name the three stones in the third row of stones on the breastplate? (v. 12)
7. Can you name the three stones in the fourth row of stones on the breastplate? (v. 13)
8. Whose names were engraved on the twelve stones on the breastplate? (v. 14)
9. What color was the robe of the ephod? (v. 22)
10. Pomegranates made of twined linen were made upon the hems of the robe. What colors were they? (v. 24)
11. What was placed between the pomegranates on the hem of the robe? (v. 25)

12. The children of Israel made for Aaron and his sons, coats, a mitre, bonnets; breeches and a girdle. What kind of material was used in making these articles? (vv. 27-30)
13. Can you give the four words engraved on the plate of the holy crown of pure gold which was fastened upon the mitre? (vv. 30-31)
14. Who inspected the work of the children of Israel when the tabernacle and all its furnishings were completed? (vv. 33-43)
15. What did Moses do when he saw that the children of Israel had done all the work on the tabernacle and its furnishings as the Lord had commanded? (v. 43)

Chapter 40

1. When was the tabernacle to be set up? (v. 2)
2. What order was it set up in, according to verses two through eight? (vv. 2-8)
3. What was to be done when all was set up? (v. 9)
4. Aaron and who else was washed at the door of the tabernacle? (v. 12)

5. The washing, clothing, anointing and sanctifying of Aaron and his sons was an everlasting what through out their generations? (vv. 12-16)
6. What did Moses put above the ark that held the testimony when the tabernacle was erected? (v. 20)
7. When Moses brought the ark into the tabernacle, what was set up and covered the ark of the testimony? (v. 21)
8. When the tabernacle was set up on which side of the tabernacle, with out the veil was the table placed? (v. 22)
9. What was set on the table in the holy place? (v. 23)
10. On which side of the tabernacle in the holy place was the candlestick placed? (v. 24)
11. What was placed before the veil that separated the holy place and the most holy place? (vv. 26-27)
12. Where was the altar of burnt offerings placed? (v. 29)
13. What was put in the laver and for what purpose? (v. 30)

14. Who washed in the laver the day the tabernacle was set up? (Exodus 40:31)
15. When Moses finished the work of setting up the tabernacle, what covered the tent of the congregation? (vv. 33-34)
16. When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle the glory of the Lord filled what? (v. 35)
17. When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle what did the children of Israel do? (v. 36)
18. If the cloud over the tabernacle was not taken up what did the children of Israel do? (v. 37)
19. The cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day. What was on the tabernacle by night through out all the journeys of the children of Israel? (v. 38)
20. What was done to Aaron and his sons before they were dressed? (v. 12)
21. How long was Aaron's priesthood to last? (v. 15)
22. What happened when everything was set up? (v. 34)
23. How did the people know when it was time to move? (v. 36)

24. What was over the tabernacle by day and by night? (v. 38)

25. What was this in sight of? (v. 38)