



E X O D U S

GOD DWELLS IN OUR MIDST

Before Life Group

Read Exodus 25

God had met His people on Mount Sinai. He did not join them through metaphor or representation, but the presence of God descended from heaven on Mount Sinai. This divine invasion had spurned and annoyed the broken world that ceased being righteous long ago. As God's presence came near, the very earth groaned in the expectation of perfection that would soon be coming. The mountain smoked. There was thunder and lightning. The righteous God had come to an unrighteous world for the salvation and blessing of His people.

The Israelites were forever changed. They had front row seats to the miracles and display of the wonders of God. By His outstretched hand and His mighty arm, God had saved His people, guided them through the desert, and entered into a covenant with them. Every step was an act of grace toward His chosen ones. God was in the business of connecting with those He came to save. Thus, even His presence on Mount Sinai was not enough. God wanted to not only be known by His people, but to know them fully and live with them.

So, God commanded Moses to take up an offering for those who were willing to contribute. With this offering they were to build a special building, a tabernacle that God could inhabit. The people were to give their finest of gold, jewelry, and other valuable items to craft the tabernacle. "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you." ([Exodus 25:8-9, NIV](#)).

Every detail was spelled out meticulously by God to Moses. The Ark of the Covenant would house the covenant that God had made with His people. Furthermore, its design would be highly ornate and filled with the imagery of the story of God through all mankind. Surrounding the Ark would be two large Cherubim—mighty angels of God. Even the table would be designed from the decrees of God with the finest of wood and gold for the plates and accouterments. The lampstand similarly would be made with fine wood and golden components.

God is a Holy God. Similarly, His dwelling would be Holy. In the middle of the unrighteous world would be the dwelling place of God. The Israelites would serve as the first ambassadors of God to the world. When the people saw the Israelites, they would see the representations of God. With the directions to build the tabernacle, God was making His purpose abundantly clear. God was going to dwell in the midst of His people. And the furnishings of His tabernacle on earth would be symbolic of the throne room of heaven.

The Requirements of Righteousness

For many, these types of instructional passages of the Old Testament are often skipped, for they are often misunderstood. At first glance, the requirements laid down in Exodus 25 can appear to be overwhelming. The

details that God describes are highly specific and incredibly ornate. There are requirements for the dimensions to the type of building materials that must be used. Furthermore, compared to the opening parts of book the Exodus, these sections are not as exciting and thrilling as narrative portions. Some people either skip these chapters in their biblical reading or gloss over them quickly.

Yet, to do so would be a mistake. First of all, it was God who was commanding these details for the people. At the time, this was the nation of Israel, the people who believed in Him. In this timeframe in Exodus, the Israelites were the only people who believed in Him. To deemphasize the word of God ignores the crucial message that God is trying to communicate to His people—the details are important. The tabernacle is the display of the glory of God. This glory is fully comprehensive and encompasses the grand scale and the minute detail. Every aspect is important as it reveals the righteousness of God and the requirements for holiness. Perfection was the standard that must be achieved. God, being a Holy and righteous God, could not live among unrighteousness lest the place where he stood be consumed by His holiness.

The righteousness of God still continues to this day and remains unchallenged. With the tabernacle God sought to live amidst His people in a representation of the Holiness of God. He lived as one of them without giving up His Holy nature. With Jesus Christ, the idea of tabernacle was furthered. Jesus, being fully God and coming to us as fully man, was God in the flesh. He was holy, yet simultaneously walking among His people. Jesus came into an unrighteous, unholy world that stood against Him. It would have been easier and just to enact punishment for sins. Yet, this is not what God desires. The requirements of righteousness would first be met by God and then given to mankind.

Furthermore, God's requirement of holiness came by the hands of ordinary materials. The people possessed everything they needed to build the tabernacle and its corresponding pieces. Through the offering that Moses took they were either in possession of the pieces they needed or were able to procure them. While they may have been ordinary materials, it was God who made them holy. The ordinary became Holy by the hand of God. The same is true for us. Our pursuit of righteousness and holiness can only be attained through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The tabernacle served as an oasis of righteousness where the people could approach God and obtain their own righteousness. The requirements that seemed overwhelming and unobtainable would be eliminated through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, His resurrection from death and His ascension into heaven.

A Home For God

God desired to be with His people, so the requirements for the Ark of the Covenant would be the most specified in the chapter. The work and craftsmanship would be difficult to achieve. Yet, the purpose for all of this would be abundantly clear. "There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites." [Exodus 25:22, NIV](#). God desired to have a place where He would be able to regularly meet with Moses and the Israelites.

Looking back on every act that God has done from creation until now, everything can be God finding a way to reunite His people to Himself. After the fall, the consequences of our actions led to our separation from God. After all, unrighteousness cannot be in the presence of righteousness. One negates the presence of the other, and the power of God will always win when anything seeks to challenge it for existence. Yet, God wasn't content to allow people to die in their sin, but provided an avenue for their righteousness. Hence the requirements given to the Israelites. This is what it would take for God to live with them.



The offering that God asked Moses to collect was not a compulsory offering. "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give." ([Exodus 25:2, NIV](#)). Those whose heart felt moved to give were to give what they were able. This was not a tithe but an offering above and beyond the norm. This was for those who desired the relationship that God did. You cannot force or compel love. Love, much like a covenant, involves two parties agreeing to be with one another. The covenant that God was establishing was an act of love between God and man. The offering was out of mutual love for God. The tabernacle was out of love for the people of God.

With God, the tabernacle resided in the middle of the people and was a constant reminder of who they were and where their faith was. With Jesus, the tabernacle became personal. God ate with His people. There was laughter, connection, and touch. There was friendship and comradery and there was willingness to endure pain for the sake of His people. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, God resides inside of the deepest part of us—our soul. Our transformation occurs from the inside out. Our hearts are changed and renewed and the righteousness of God is imputed to us and dwells in us.

Discussion Questions

Read [Exodus 25](#)

1. There is a false dichotomy between the “sacred” and the “secular” that persists in Christian thought. What did God do with the regular items of every day (gold, jewelry and other valuables)? How did God use these for His purposes?
2. Where in scripture, both Old and New Testament, do you see the idea that God is looking to form a lasting relationship with His people?
3. How does God’s desire to tabernacle in the midst of His people reveal His nature? What does this say about God? What does this say about God’s feelings towards us?
4. What role does pursuing holiness in our personal lives play in our relationship with God?
5. What comfort do you receive from knowing that God wants to be connected with you? How does understanding this concept of the Gospel change how we operate our daily lives?
6. What does a relationship with God look like? How do we approach Him? What do we give up in the process? What do we gain?
7. Where does the source of our righteousness and holiness come from? How can we rely on God to sanctify us and make us holy?

About the Author.

Pastor Daniel Burton lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. In May 2015, Daniel graduated from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary with his Master of Divinity. It was here that he began to explore his passion for Theology and deeper exploration of the word of God. Daniel believes that, at its core, Theology should be fun. Check out more of his work at <http://thegospeloutpost.com>

