

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Exodus 25:8-40 “Lessons from the Tabernacle”

Intro. Do you like to tour houses? Cheryl certainly does. Actually, I like to tour houses as well. I enjoyed touring the White House on at least 2 occasions. Once was during Christmas, and the White House was decorated so nicely. I have enjoyed tours of historical houses.

If you tour someone’s house, you can learn some things about them. You will see some pictures of their family, and learn some things about their family. You may see evidences of interests that they have. If you go to Doug & Ann Smith’s house you will see some evidence that they are Virginia Tech fans!

This morning, I want to take you on a tour of God’s house. At first, He dwelt among His people in a tent. The Israelites lived in tents, and so God chose to dwell in a tent as well. As we tour God’s dwelling place, we will learn some things about God. I hope we will also learn some things about ourselves, and God’s plan to reconcile us to Himself.

As we move in chapter 25, we begin a **new section** of the book of Exodus. Most of the rest of the book deals with the **tabernacle** and the **priesthood**. The tabernacle was to be the **center of Israel’s life** because it was the place where man could approach God, and worship Him. Today we are going to **focus on the furnishings** of the tabernacle, rather than the tabernacle itself. As God describes the furnishings of the tabernacle, he does **not begin** from the **perspective of man**, approaching from the outside. He **begins from inside** the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was, and moves out from there.

So let’s begin our tour of the tabernacle and learn the lessons God has for us. The first main truth I want to call your attention to is this:

I. THE TABERNACLE REVEALS GOD TO US

One of the most important lessons of the tabernacle is to determine what it teaches us about God. I want to focus on **3 truths about God** revealed through the tabernacle. First:

A. God Is Holy – The word translated “holy” is based on the concept of **separation**. He is separate from all that is sinful & wrong. In my last message I talked about how the tabernacle reinforces the idea of the holiness of God. **Only priests** could enter the holy place of the tabernacle, and **only the High Priest** could enter the Holy of Holies, and then only once/year. All others had to keep their distance from the dwelling place of God. The closest they could get to God was the courtyard of the tabernacle.

Leviticus 11:45 says, “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.” We should separate ourselves from what is sinful and ungodly.

B. God Rules in Righteousness – This truth is **pictured inside the Holy of Holies**. There the **Ark** of the Covenant was placed. Inside the Ark were the **two stone tablets** containing the 10 Commandments,¹ written by the hand of God. God expected His redeemed people to obey

¹ According to Hebrews 9:4, within the ark were also a pot of manna (Ex. 16:32-34), and Aaron’s rod that budded (Num.16-17).

these righteous commands. Placed **on top** of the Ark was the **Mercy Seat**, made of **pure gold**, which represents both deity & royalty. In **vv.18-19** we read, “And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end...” Then **v.20** says, “And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat.” Keep in mind that the tabernacle was constructed according to the pattern of heaven. **Hebrews 8:5** says that the earthly tabernacle served as a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things.” This is also **implied in v.9** of our text (cf. Heb. 9:23-24). The Book of Revelation mentions a brazen altar (6:9-11), an altar of incense (8:3-5), a throne (4:2), elders/Priests (v.4-5), lamps (v. 5), a “sea” (v.6), and cherubim (vv.6-7), all of which are seen in the main furnishings of the earthly tabernacle. So the building of the tabernacle is more than simply a matter of building a worship site in the desert. It is a **piece of heaven on earth**. Therefore, I believe that Cherubim of the mercy seat represent angels that surround the throne of God in heaven. They are heavenly beings who live in God’s presence (much like the seraphs of Isa. 6:1-7). **Psalm 99:1** says, “The LORD reigns; Let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim...” (cf. Psa. 80:1; 2 Kings 19:15). So what in heaven does the Mercy Seat represent? For one thing, it **pictures the throne of God in heaven**. This is confirmed in **v.22**, where we are specifically told that **God would rule Israel from that throne**. There we read, “And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will **give you in commandment** to the children of Israel” (cf. 29:42; 30:6, 36). Likewise, **Numbers 7:89** says, “Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the **voice of One speaking** to him **from above the mercy seat** that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.” Clearly, God spoke His commands from the throne of the mercy seat.

God immediately **emphasized His ruling authority** in **v.9**, “According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.” Likewise, **v.40** says, “And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.” (Cf. also 26:30; 27:8; Numbers 8:4; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5). Moses was **not to construct the tabernacle** and its **furnishings** according to his **own ideas**. **Nor** was he to **follow the ways of the nations** and imitate their ways of worship. Instead, he was to be careful to **follow God’s pattern exactly**.

Even so, we should **acknowledge God’s ruling authority** over our lives, and seek to **follow His plan** of salvation, for building character in our lives, for building up our families, and for building our church. Let us be **careful not to deviate from God’s plan**. He is God, and He has the right to rule our lives. Furthermore, since God is righteous, He expects us to live righteous lives.

When I was about **17 years old**, I **surrendered** to the **Lordship** of **Jesus Christ**. I had gone my own way in many ways, but I came to accept God’s authority over my life. That led to yielding to God’s call to preach. I believe I am far better off yielding my life to the Lord, and you will be better off as well.

All of this also **points to Jesus**. He was **born a King**. He **lived** a King. He **died** a King, and He **rose** from the dead a King. He is **coming again** to earth as King of kings, and He shall rule over this earth.

C. God Is Light – I believe this truth is **pictured** in the **golden lampstand** of the tabernacle. According to **v.31**, it also was **made a pure gold**, a fitting representation of deity. It was beaten & molded from a talent of gold. A talent was about 75 lbs. As we see in **v.37**, it had a **total of 7 lamps**, each **decorated** at the ends with almond flowers, buds, and blossoms. We know from the previous verses it had **3 on each side**, and one in the center. 7 is **God's number of perfection**. The **oil** of the lampstand represents the **Holy Spirit** (cf. Zech. 14:1-4). So we have several aspects of the lampstand that indicates that it represents the nature or work of God. Of course, the main purpose of the lampstand was to **give light for the holy place**, especially at night (27:20-21).

The light manifests **several aspects of the nature of God**.

1. It reminds us of the glory of God. When Jesus manifested His **glory** in **Matthew 17:2**, “His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.” **1 Timothy 6:16** says that God dwells “in unapproachable light.”

2. Light also **enlightens** the way. Thus, it is **symbolic of truth and revelation**. According to Simeon in **Luke 2:32**, Jesus came as “A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles....” **John 1:9** says that Jesus was “the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” **John the Baptist** was a voice of truth, and so **Jesus said of Him in John 5:35**, “He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.” Jesus said in **John 8:12**, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness....” (Cf. also Romans 2:19; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Peter 1:19).

3. Light is **also symbolic of purity and righteousness**. Paul said in **2 Corinthians 6:14**, “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” **1 John 1:5** says, “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”

We are to be like God. The Scripture says that we are **to be “sons of light”** (John 12:36; 1 Thessalonians 5:5). Thus, we should let people see the light of God in us. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:14 & 16**, “You are the light of the world.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” We should reflect the glory of God. People should be able to see the praiseworthy attributes of God, such as His goodness, love, joy, and strength. We must also **share the light of the truth** of the Gospel with others. Are you walking as sons of light in purity? Are you sharing God's truth with others? Do people see the glory of God in you?

One of our new members, Sandra Gardner, shared her testimony with me. Before she was saved she came to know a Christian lady. God was clearly manifest in her life. So after getting to know her, she said, “I want what you've got.” And she soon trusted Christ as Savior.

And so the tabernacle teaches us some truths about God. He is holy, He rules in righteousness, and He is light. Now let's see what else we learn from God's design of the tabernacle:

II. THE TABLENACLE REMINDS US OF OUR SIN

It does this in at least 2 ways:

A. Our Sin Bars Us from His Presence – There were **two veils** in the tabernacle. **Only** the **priests** could pass the **first veil** into the Holy Place. The **second veil** separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. As I stated earlier, **only** the **High Priest** could pass through that

second veil, and then only once/year on the Day of Atonement. All others were barred from entering God's presence, or getting very close to His abiding presence.

Even the priests & Levites were kept some distance from God, and the furnishings of the temple. The **Levites** were charged with **moving** the tabernacle & its furnishings. But notice that they could **not carry** the furnishings **with their hands**, making direct contact with them. They had to **carry** the furnishings **with poles (vv.13-15, 27-28)**. Anyone who drew near to **touch** the ark would **die**.

That's what happened later to **Uzzah** (2 Sam. 6:3-7; 1 Chron. 13:9-10). Do you remember that story? David transported the Ark, but he didn't follow God's plan. Instead of carrying the ark on poles, they carried it on an ox cart. At some point the oxen stumbled and Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark, and as soon as he touched it, he died.

B. The Ten Commandments Reminds Us of our Sin – God commanded that the Ten Commandments be **placed inside the Ark** as an abiding **memorial** of His standards of righteousness. As we contemplate those commandments, they **remind** us of the fact that we have **sinned** against a holy and righteous God. We have all broken at least some of the commandments, especially in our hearts. We, therefore, stand condemned of violating those commandments, until we receive forgiveness.

So **on the one hand**, the tabernacle **reveals God** to us. He is holy, righteous, and pure as light. In Him is no darkness at all. **On the other hand**, the tabernacle **reminds** us that we are **sinner, separate** from God. One thing is clear, sinful man cannot approach a holy God on his own. But I have some good news:

III. THE TABERNACLE POINTS TO OUR REDEMPTION

God has been working to bridge the gap between God and man. You see, there is one truth about God that I did not mention earlier, and that is, **God is merciful**. This is **pictured** in the **mercy seat** on top of the ark. Because God is merciful, notice what the tabernacle **teaches us about God's plan and procedure of redemption**.

A. God Will Come & Dwell with Man to Save Us – In **v.8** God says, "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." Likewise, **Ex. 29:45** says, "I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God." It was **not until** He had **redeemed** a people unto Himself that God **dwelt among them** on the earth. He only visited the Patriarchs. Having the Lord dwelling in the camp was a **great privilege** for the nation of Israel.

This was **fulfilled in Jesus Christ**. **John 1:14** says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." The word translated "dwelt" (*skenoo*) literally means He "tabernacled" among us. Its **noun form** was the very word **used in the LXX** to refer to the **tabernacle** of the Old Testament. Instead of God coming to dwell in a tent, He came & dwelt in human flesh. In the **tabernacle**, God's Shekinah **glory was present** (29:43; 40:34-35; cf. 1 Kings 8:10-11). So notice that John goes on to say, "and we **beheld His glory**, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." So here we see the marvelous truth that **God became man**. That is what we celebrate at **Christmas**.

The **two natures** of our **Savior** may be **pictured** inside the **tabernacle** as well. Notice in **v.11** we read that it was to be **overlaid** with pure **gold**. The prominence of gold in the tabernacle

clearly **represents deity**. In **v.10** we see that the ark was to be made of **acacia wood**.² And the acacia wood **represents the humanity** of the coming Savior. Acacia wood came from a desert tree that has very long, sharp thorns. It produces **Gum Arabic**, which was used in medicinal preparations, & today is found in Coca Cola, gum, & many foods. The gum is obtained by piercing the tree at nightfall, and it oozes out. It was a product of the earth, but it is **not subject to decay**, much like the **redwood** of California. In fact, in the **LXX**, it was translated “**incorruptible wood**.” In the same way, our Lord had a body made of earth elements and conceived in the womb of a virgin. The gold speaks of His deity but the gold is not produced by the earth; it was created direct by God. Jesus was fully human. The **only difference** was He did **not have a sin nature**. Right before His birth, the angel said in **Luke 1:35**, “that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” Thus, He perfectly **fulfilled** the demands of the **law** (1 Jn. 3:5). Just as the law was within the Ark, even so the Law of God was in Christ’s heart, and He perfectly obeyed and fulfilled it (**Ps. 40:6-8**; Heb. 10:5-9). **Thus**, He was the **God-man**. Jesus said in **John 14:9**, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father...”

Even **though** Jesus has **ascended** to heaven, His presence has **not left His people**, for He has sent His Spirit to abide with us. **1 Cor. 3:16** says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). The church both collectively and individually realizes an even **greater intimacy** between God and his people than was **first** experienced at the building of the **tabernacle**.

The **ultimate realization** of **Ex. 25:8** will take place in the **future** after Jesus comes again. In **Revelation 21:3** we read, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.” Then **v.22** of that chapter says, “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” At the end of our age and the dawn of the new, God himself will live with His people.

Since God **dwells within** us, **how** can we **carelessly sin** when we remember that **God** Himself **is present** with us? (Cf. 1 Cor. 6:18-20). God is not just “out there” somewhere, but He lives within every believer.

B. God Will Provide Atonement for Our Sin – This is pictured in the **Mercy Seat**. In **v.17** we read, “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold...” The “mercy seat” more literally translated “place of atonement [or propitiation],” the place where sin is covered. Once a year, on the **Day of Atonement**, the high priest was permitted to enter the holy of holies, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on the mercy seat (Lev. 16). The **blood of the sacrifice told of judgment already visited** upon the **innocent substitute**; the **blood sprinkled** on the Mercy Seat **announced** that **God had accepted** the victim offered to Him. Divine **mercy** could **not be exercised at the expense of justice**.

This **all points to Jesus Christ**, who **died** once for all for the sins of the world (Heb. 9:11-10:14). Paul said of Jesus in **Romans 3:25**, “whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood...” (Cf. 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). It is the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus which **pacifies the offended justice of God**. Justice has received **full payment** by the sacrificial blood of Christ. **Calvary not only manifested the love, grace, and mercy** of God, but **also His holiness, righteousness, and justice**. Because of His blood shed for us, the throne of God is for us a throne of grace. And **only He could die in our place** was because **He never sinned**, as we have already discussed. He did not die for His sins, but for our sins. So we, who **once** were **far off** from Him, have been **made**

² The Table of Showbread was also constructed in the same manner (vv.23-24).

nigh by the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 2: 13). The awful distance which once separated is now gone.

Have you placed your faith in Jesus. Are you trusting in His death on the cross for your sins?

C. God Will Restore Fellowship with Man – I believe this is **pictured** in the **Table of Showbread**.³ In **vv.29-30** we read, “You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring. You shall make them of pure gold. And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.” Later we are told that the table of showbread had **twelve loaves** of bread on it, one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. They were arranged in two rows of six (Lev. 24:6). “Showbread” means “**Bread of the Presence**.” It is the bread that is placed before God, who is in the Most Holy Place, over the ark. We know from Lev. 24:5-9 that **each Sabbath**, the old loaves were removed and **eaten by the priests in the holy place** (cf. Mt. 12:4), and the **new loaves** were put **in their place**. Furthermore, the reference in v.29 to dishes, pans, pitchers, and bowls makes it clear that both food & drink were consumed as part of this weekly meal. This is the **second time** within the span of two chapters (cf. 24:11) that we have seen Israel’s leaders **partaking in a meal in God’s presence**. Perhaps the **bread of the Presence** along with the **drink offering implied in v.29** are elements in another **covenant meal** between God and Israel’s leaders. The bread and the wine, situated as they are just outside the Most Holy Place, are a continual **reminder of the covenant** that the holy God has made with His people. (Cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17).

A lovely picture of that blessedness of which the “table” speaks is found in **2 Sam. 9**. There we find David asking “Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” (v.1). A beautiful illustration is this of the wondrous grace of God, showing kindness to those who belong to the house of His enemies, and that for the sake of His Beloved One. There was one, even **Mephibosheth**, lame on his feet; him David “sent and fetched” unto himself. And then to show that he was fully reconciled to this descendant of his arch-enemy, David said, “Mephibosheth shall eat bread always at my table” (v. 10); showing that he had been brought into the place of most intimate fellowship.

Conclusion: The tabernacle pictures for us some marvelous truths about God. He is holy. He rules & judges in righteousness. He is light, glorious, truthful, and pure. Yet man is sinful. We have been made enemies by our sin and rebellion. However, the tabernacle teaches us that God is merciful & gracious. He was willing in the person of Jesus Christ to come and dwell in human flesh. Jesus went to the cross and shed His blood to atone for our sin. And if you trust in Him, He will reconcile you to Himself and you will have peace with God knowing that your sins are forgiven. Furthermore, you who were once enemies, will be brought near, and you will have fellowship with God.

³ The Table of Showbread may also point to the provision of God. When the bread was placed on the table, it was always accompanied by incense, which was probably burned in one of the special utensils (v.29). The use of incense suggests that the bread was actually a “meal offering” to the Lord (Lev. 2:1-11) in thanksgiving to Him for “daily bread.” Our Heavenly Father promises to provide for our needs, and we should thank Him for His provision. Of course the most important provision of God was salvation through Jesus Christ, and the bread points to Him as well. Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life.” Like the Showbread, He was ground in the mill of suffering. He was subjected to the fires of God’s wrath on the cross. Furthermore, according to Lev. 24:5, the Showbread was perforated. This bread spoke of Christ who was to be pierced! Now He is the source and sustainer of life for the believer.

Folks, we have the opportunity to participate in God's plan of redemption. Have you accepted His plan, or are you trying to find acceptance with God your own way? Christ is the answer to the sin problem. Trust in Him today!

Sources: Peter Enns, *The NIV Application Commentary: Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000); Stephen Felker, [*Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible*](#) (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2007; J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1981); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972); Warren Wiersbe, *Be Delivered: Exodus* (Colorado Spring: Chariot Victor Books Publishing, 1998). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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