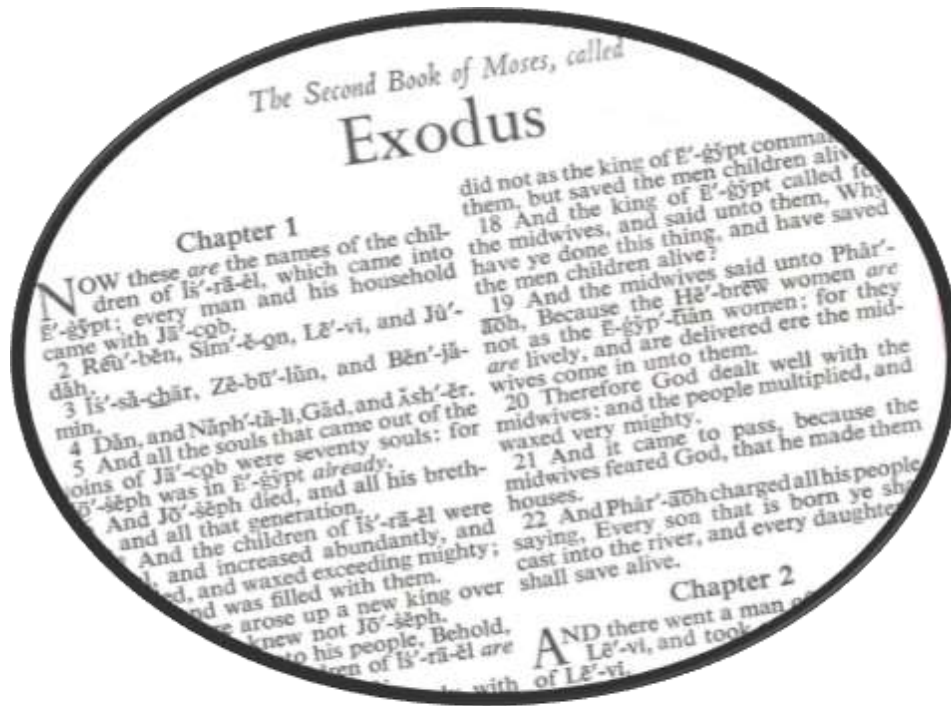


EXODUS – WEEK 27

DISCOVERING WHAT'S IMPORTANT



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Exodus 39:22–40:38 –Discovering What’s Important

The Tabernacle is finally finished and is consecrated by anointing. The Israelites gave of their treasure to build the temple and now they’re committing long-term to maintaining and transporting it.

They recognize its importance.

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T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

Thank you.

Exodus 39:22–40:38 – Discovering What’s Important
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1 Exodus 39:22-31 (ESV)

He also made the robe of the ephod woven all of blue, and the opening of the robe in it was like the opening in a garment, with a binding around the opening, so that it might not tear. On the hem of the robe they made pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. They also made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates all around the hem of the robe, between the pomegranates—a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate around the hem of the robe for ministering, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

They also made the coats, woven of fine linen, for Aaron and his sons, and the turban of fine linen, and the caps of fine linen, and the linen undergarments of fine twined linen, and the sash of fine twined linen and of blue and purple and scarlet yarns, embroidered with needlework, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it an inscription, like the engraving of a signet, “Holy to the LORD.” And they tied to it a cord of blue to fasten it on the turban above, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

The priest’s crown is unlike a king’s crown. It’s an engraved gold plate tied to a turban. The crown isn’t designed to impress people. In fact, it’s just the opposite. “*Holy to the LORD*” denotes servitude.

The key is the word “holy,” which is difficult to define briefly. Holy doesn’t so much mean “good” or “righteous” as it means “separate” or “set apart.” When referring to God or Angels, the closest synonym might be “other.” The holiness of things in the heavenly realm refers to their not being of this world. They are completely “other.”

But when something of this world is called holy, it means that it is set apart, dedicated, consecrated. Since it cannot be fully “other” the way things in the heavenly realm are, it’s pulled in that direction as much as possible by setting it apart for heavenly purposes. That’s what the crown says.

Don’t miss the dreadful cost of this. Setting something apart to the LORD means abandoning its value to this world. The worldly value of the Sabbath is lost; you get nothing “done.” When a sacrifice is given wholly to the LORD, it is burnt to a crisp. When a child is given to the LORD, that’s all the child will be.

And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.” – 1 Samuel 1:11 (ESV)

Christians should take this as a cold, in your face, challenge. Christ died to make us holy, but we hesitate to fully embrace what that means. Sure, most of us are called locally – to minister to our neighbors – but if you claim to be willing to do anything, you should be ready to do anything. Count the cost.

Don’t pray for God to tell you what your assignment is; ask Him to make you ready.

2 Exodus 39:32-42 (ESV)

Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished, and the people of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its utensils, its hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; the covering of tanned rams' skins and goatskins, and the veil of the screen; the ark of the testimony with its poles and the mercy seat; the table with all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; the lampstand of pure gold and its lamps with the lamps set and all its utensils, and the oil for the light; the golden altar, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance of the tent; the bronze altar, and its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils; the basin and its stand; the hangings of the court, its pillars, and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court, its cords, and its pegs; and all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; the finely worked garments for ministering in the Holy Place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons for their service as priests. According to all that the LORD had commanded Moses, so the people of Israel had done all the work. And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, so had they done it. Then Moses blessed them.

We tend to think of these Israelites as transparently sinful people who did dumb things like worship a golden calf. In fact, they put us to shame. Notice how quickly this all got done.

This Moses did; according to all that the LORD commanded him, so he did. In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. – Exodus 40:16-17 (ESV)

They made the whole thing in a matter of months! Moses had to be impressed. *And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, so had they done it.* They didn’t just do it fast; they did it to an incredibly high standard. *Then Moses blessed them.*

These people met the modern definition of homeless; they lived in tents. They had tools so primitive we wouldn’t even recognize them as tools, yet they still made this incredible work of art. Most importantly, they were given great treasure as they left Egypt and then gave it up to construct the tabernacle.

It’s like a homeless person winning the lottery and then giving it all to the church.

You might expect the takeaway to be that we should all seek this level of generosity.

But that’s not it. There’s a deeper lesson. The Israelites seized the opportunity to be a part of something significant. The real takeaway is that vision moves people. We all long to make a difference. People typically hit a “mid-life crisis” when they realize that they’ll never be president, or rich, or famous. Give them a chance to make a difference and they’ll drop everything to sign up.

But Solomon had it all: fame, wealth, power and saw that they meant nothing. Then he wrote Ecclesiastes.

In the end, only the things of God matter. Everything else is meaningless.

3 Exodus 40:1-15 (ESV)

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “On the first day of the first month you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. And you shall bring in the table and arrange it, and you shall bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. And you shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen for the gate of the court.

“Then you shall take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it, and consecrate it and all its furniture, so that it may become holy. You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar may become most holy. You shall also anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and shall wash them with water and put on Aaron the holy garments. And you shall anoint him and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest. You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.”

It’s all about the anointing. Until it’s anointed, this is all just a big tent and some furnishings. The Hebrew word translated here as “consecrate” literally means “set apart.”

And thou shalt take the Shemen [oil] HaMishchah [anointing], and anoint the Mishkan [tabernacle], and all that is therein, and shalt set it apart as kodesh [holy], and all the utensils thereof; and it shall be kodesh [holy]. – Exodus 40:9 (Orthodox Jewish Bible)

There’s nothing magical about the oil; it’s the act of anointing for the purpose of setting something apart that sets it apart. The temple, its furnishings and the priests are thus set apart for the LORD.

And this is permanent. Once consecrated, always consecrated. This applies especially to Aaron’s sons. *And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.* Their offspring are also, automatically, set apart. See how this fits with the idea of separation?

It’s like they’ve become citizens of another nation, so their children are born citizens too.

Jesus said, *“My kingdom is not of this world.”* – John 18:36a (ESV).

Peter said, *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,”* – 1 Peter 2:9a (ESV).

Confessing Christ as Lord means becoming holy, separated to God. We’re citizens of another world.

But we live in this one. We’re here as ambassadors of a better place – ambassadors sent to change things.

But how? It’s almost as if we speak a different language. Don’t ever think this is easy.

4 Exodus 40:16-33 (ESV)

This Moses did; according to all that the LORD commanded him, so he did. In the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars. And he spread the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent over it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark. And he brought the ark into the tabernacle and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil, and arranged the bread on it before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table on the south side of the tabernacle, and set up the lamps before the LORD, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He put the golden altar in the tent of meeting before the veil, and burned fragrant incense on it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He put in place the screen for the door of the tabernacle. And he set the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the LORD had commanded Moses. He set the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it for washing, with which Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet. When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, as the LORD commanded Moses. And he erected the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work.

Notice that actually erecting the Tabernacle was Moses’s personal task, *as the LORD had commanded Moses*. Others, specially gifted by God, constructed the parts, but Moses had to do the final assembly.

Of course, Moses couldn’t possibly do this single-handedly; that’s not what, “*Moses erected the tabernacle.*” means. He had plenty of helpers. Moses was the builder, and everyone else was a go-fer.

But most importantly, they were learning how to set it up from his directions. They have a long way to go and they’re going to do this many times.

Even with help, the tabernacle takes a whole day to take down and at least as long to set up again. This is a staggering effort. After all the sacrifices Israelites made to build the tabernacle, now they have an ongoing commitment, one that takes regular effort – and slows them down.

The reduced mobility is problem. It’s a significant military disadvantage.

We do lots of things for the Lord, but how many of them are long term commitments? It’s easier to do something once than to take on a commitment that reduces our mobility or flexibility.

But the commitments are the things with big impact. Every church has many tasks that need to be covered by the members. If no one steps up to cover a task permanently, then someone has to schedule a rotation.

Pray about your commitments. Is the Lord calling you to step into longer-term shoes?

5 Exodus 40:34-38 (ESV)

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

There’s a puzzle here. *Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.* Moses talked with God many times. Now he’s locked out. Why?

The passage says that it’s, “*because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*” But what does that mean? Exodus 33:18-20 gives us a clue.

Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” (ESV)

Another clue is the dictionary definition of tabernacle.

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tabernacle>

Scroll down the page to the definition of tabernacle as an intransitive verb. The root of this word is “dwell.” Now that the tabernacle is built and consecrated, the LORD dwells there – more explicitly than he did at Moses’s tent when that was the meeting place. Now His glory fills the tabernacle. No one can look on Him and live – not even Moses.

That’s important. Otherwise, this idolatrous bunch might worship Moses the way we worship sports stars and movie stars (or worse, if that’s possible). Moses is the head of state, but God is the boss.

He even controls when they break camp.

We should pray for our nation’s leaders regularly. That’s a recurring theme here. This time let’s specifically pray for their humility – something they seem dreadfully short of. Recent events have given them plenty of grounds for humility, but instead we see politics as usual (or worse, if that’s possible).

This is a bold prayer. Humility in politics would be a big surprise. Don’t take this prayer request lightly.

Humility often comes in bunches. Our government feels ripe for a reckoning.

No DEEP tomorrow. Next week – Ephesians.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Are you sure of where God is leading you?
2. Ever heard of a bucket-list item that was meaningful?
3. How do you connect with someone who almost sounds like they’re from another planet?
A: Just listen
4. When is a long-term commitment a bad idea?
5. What’s wrong with our country?

Items for prayer: