

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

Dr. George O. Wood

Our text is Exodus 24:15–31:17. In the New Testament, our Lord stated that “To him who has, shall more will be given” (Matthew 25:29). This is a learning principle that as you progress in an area of learning you become capable of learning more difficult things. The Spirit brings to us a challenge to look at a passage of Scripture that somewhat may be like the early chapters of Numbers or genealogies in Scripture. We read this stuff about the tabernacle, the furnishings of the tabernacle, the dress of the high priest, and fly through chapters very quickly in Exodus. But this morning, we’ll attempt to see what this word has to say to us. Indeed, in these chapters we find God giving to Moses more concerns upon His heart about the tabernacle’s construction, its furnishing, and its priesthood than any other single subject in the Book of Exodus.

It’s been a striking thing to me to realize that often I come to a worship service to see what I can get out of it and hopefully hear something which is relevant to my life, forgetting that sometimes God wants me to focus on concerns which He has. And if I will first of all concentrate on the things which are important to Him, some of the things which are pressing me may fall better into line. So this is a subject very keenly upon God’s heart, dominating a greater amount of time than even the description given to the plagues and the Exodus itself.

I. The tabernacle is referred to in the Old Testament and the Book of Exodus by five different names.

It might be well to look at that for a moment. It is called “the sanctuary” in 25:8, meaning a sacred place. It is called “a tabernacle” which simply means to settle down, to abide or to dwell.

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

And it is used of Jesus Christ who in John 1:14 is described as having tabernacled among us. The tabernacle serves as a tremendous prophecy of Christ.

The tabernacle is also called “the tent” in Exodus 26:36. That’s what it was. There was a tabernacle in the courtyard, which was surrounded by a fence curtain. It is called “the Tent of Meeting” in Exodus 29:42.

It is also called “the tabernacle [or tent] of the Testimony” in 38:21. It is called that because the center of the tabernacle is the ark of the covenant, which rests in the Holy of Holies. It is containing the Law of God, the commandments. The whole structure therefore is a testimony to what God spoke to Israel and particularly to Moses at Sinai in giving the law.

II. What are the purposes of the tabernacle?

A. We see right off that it was intended to convey the thought for being a dwelling place for God. Not as Solomon later declares in dedicating the temple which was after the tabernacle. Solomon clearly says in 1 Kings 8:27, “Heaven of heavens cannot contain thee,” so there’s no notion here on the part of the Bible of calling this a dwelling place of God, that this was simply the place where God lived and He was no where else, for God is omnipresent. But it meant that God is here in a very unique way. We’ll look at this today as we examine the features regarding the ark of the covenant.

As we look at the fact that the tabernacle was meant to be a dwelling place for God, we find that God takes up His dwelling place in the center of His people. Thus if you were to take an aerial photograph of the camp of Israel as it encamped by stages in the wilderness you would find the three tribes encamped to the north, three to the west, three to the south, three to the east. In the center of the total encampment of Israel was located the tabernacle. When the camp took up its place to move, one tribe moved out then immediately those who bore the trappings of the

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

tabernacle, which was a portable worship center, picked it up and moved it. A few more tribes went out. Then the very sacred objects of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, the things which were in the Holy of Holies were then moved. But the tabernacle symbolized the fact that God was in the presence of His people or when His people moved God was at the forefront of their movement.

What a beautiful thing to realize that in our lives that God desires to occupy the center place.

And also since we happen to be a very migratory people in America, how good it is to recognize also that when we move God is to be at the very center, the heart, the lead of our movement.

It is also as a dwelling place for God, the tabernacle, not only in the center of God's people but it is a place from which God will speak to His people in mercy. It is from Sinai that God speaks the Law. But when we turn to Leviticus 1:1, we find that all of the code regarding sacrifices which involves our being able to have grace and forgiveness before God, all of that code is spoken from the Tent of Meeting where Moses goes in to the Holy of Holies and God speaks to him in the Holy Place. So it is a place designed as a dwelling place for God, from which He would speak in mercy and in which He would dwell in the center of His people. God speaks to us yet in mercy.

B. The second purpose for the tabernacle was it was of course a meeting place for the people.

Another purpose is that by erecting it God made a move to prevent idolatry in the encampment of Israel, for the presence of God, His unique glory, was manifested as such to provide a warning against the construction of any graven images.

C. The tabernacle also serves as a prophecy of Christ. As the writer of Hebrews indicates, it serves also as a pattern for heavenly worship. We gain a knowledge of what it is to really worship God by seriously looking at the arrangement and fixtures in the tabernacle. We must be careful lest we overly spiritualize the tabernacle. Some have done this and tried to find meaning

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

in every single thread. I'm not sure this is fair. On the other hand, we must look at the tabernacle with something more than archaeological interest. There is spiritual truth and meaning conveyed by looking at it.

III. In Exodus 24:14–25:9 we find God initiating the tabernacle.

Moses goes up to the mountain to meet with God. According to 24:12 the purpose of this meeting with God is to receive the tablets of stone. God is concerned, however, what Moses is going to do with those tablets of stone, which are the commandments when he receives them. Thus God is going to indicate to Moses that a whole portable worship center must be built in order to house the tablets of stone which he will give. Thus while Moses goes up to receive the tablets of law, when he gets to the top of the mountain you find that God does not want to talk to him about the Law which he'd already given.

But God wants to talk to him about the repository of where that Law is going to be. God wanted His law, which was carved on tablets of stone, to be put in a box covered with gold and a lid placed upon the box. The Law was to be kept away never to be seen by the eye of mortal man. God's purpose here is simply an ark of the covenant and the Law was to be written upon the heart. It was to be received in faith. One could simply take the word of God that the Law was in the ark of the covenant. The principles which the Law reveals is part of the eternal Law of God which He has placed within the conscience, a point that Paul makes in the Book of Romans. The Law is written on the heart of man.

Moses goes up to meet with God and God won't even see him for the first six days. He is kept waiting. There is an awesomeness about coming into the presence of God. God's presence will not be entered into with hasty flight. Moses is kept cooling his heels in order that when the

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

moment comes when God calls him, he might appreciate even more the splendor of God's appearance.

One facet that we are always in danger of losing in worship, by the way, is that in an age when a great stress is placed on informality we might lose that awesomeness of coming into the presence of God. It is good to be informal. It is also good to recognize that the one whom we serve is more than a pal, more than a buddy, more than a friend. The God of all the heaven and earth is awesome and full of might and splendor.

When the Lord begins speaking to Moses as he's up on the mountain, the first thing out of the Lord's mouth came to me by way of surprise. For the Lord, in verses 1–8, talks to Moses about taking an offering. This is the last thing I would expect God to be talking about at Sinai. There were important things upon God's heart to share with His people. But first off, an offering.

The offering was necessary because some of the people would come with construction materials for the tabernacle. Even as God has intended through the ages, the gifts of His people provide the furnishings for the benefit of the kingdom of God. The offering was to have some characteristics that were to be taken from people with willing hearts. No coercion. The people who gave were to give their very best. Thus, if you look at the list of things in verses 3–7 you'll find very expensive materials, the best of the day that is reflected there. Certainly, although He was asking for the best, it was an offering within the capability of the people to give.

In verse 9, Moses is strictly told that when this offering is gathered he is to follow the pattern which is shown him on the mount. Nine times in both the Old and the New Testament the Lord stresses to Moses that fact that he must follow the pattern. Worship would not originate with man. Man would not tell God how to do it. God would reveal to us His purposes. The tabernacle

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

was not designed for its architectural impressiveness. But it was designed to convey spiritual truth.

IV. We come to the furniture of the tabernacle, which is first described in 25:10–40.

A. The first piece of furniture is the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat—two things which go together. If you were designing a home would you start out by designing the home around a piece of furniture? Would you take your favorite chair or whatever and design the whole house around that? I doubt if you would. You would construct the house and then you'd bring the furniture and fit it inside. But the most valuable piece, the most valuable thing in the whole tabernacle was this ark of the covenant and the mercy seat. Pound for pound, ounce for ounce everything about it was the best. God starts out designing the whole facility around the ark of the covenant.

The ark of the covenant was about forty-five inches long, twenty-seven inches wide and twenty-seven inches high. Into it were going to be placed the two tablets of the law. Later were placed the pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded. The ark itself was made of acacia wood, which was strong desert wood not subject to rot and insects. It was overlaid with gold within and without. Four rings were located at the base of the ark and through them were inserted poles so that this ark could be carried when the Children of Israel moved their encampment. The poles were likewise made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. The poles were never to be removed. The mercy seat which was upon it was solid gold. It was about the same dimensions as a lid for the top of the ark of the covenant. And swooping up from this solid gold lid and made of solid gold itself were two cherubim, angelic beings in the presence of God whose wings fanned toward one another and barely tipped one another. This was to be called the mercy seat. In later passages of Scripture it is called the throne upon which God dwells. The cherubim are seen as providing

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

the footstool of God's throne. God's presence is such that it's never visible. His presence is invisible. But the cherubim represent the resting place of God, the throne of God. Martin Luther called this the throne of grace. The significance of it is this: Once a year the high priest came into where the mercy seat was. Underneath the lid of mercy were the tablets of the law. Over was the mercy seat. Blood was sprinkled upon the wings of the cherubim, upon the mercy seat, so that the broken Law might be atoned for by the means of blood. The Law which was in the ark of the covenant demanded God's truth, it demanded God's law. But the mercy seat which was over it spoke of the fact that God would give grace and forgiveness to His people who had broken the law. Therefore at the very center of Israel's experience was the fact that God most clearly manifested both His love and truth and His grace. Truth and mercy are met together.

When we are under the powerful action of God's truth we take our place at the ark of the covenant as a sinner; but God can, when we place ourselves there, exercise the grace made available in Christ. Here is therefore the first article of furniture important in Israel's history.

B. A second article of furniture is the table of shewbread, which is in the Holy Place. It's also made of wood overlaid with pure gold. Upon it was placed two rows of bread, twelve loaves in all, six loaves to a row, also instruments which were used in drink offerings. It represented the fact that Israel was always in the presence of God. The loaves symbolize that Israel had solidarity before God. God always recognized its presence. Bread which is both the gift of God in the form of seed and the work of man in the form of the farmer and the baker is likewise represented in God's presence continually.

C. Next in the Holy Place is the lampstand, another expensive item made out of solid gold. A single shaft with four different candles. We call it candles. Actually Israel didn't have candles. They had cups on the end of the lampstand, which were filled with expensive oil and a floating

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

wick. The lamps were to be kept burning at all times. These were regarded by God as an eternal flame.

We're familiar in our time with eternal flames like the Olympic flame and the flame which burns at JFK's graveside. The presence, however, of the lighted lampstand in the Holy Place manifested the fact that continually there is to be a worship of Israel before God, a lighting of His place. The burning lamp represented the fact that while Israel might sleep, God never slept. Therefore the lamp was to be kept burning all the night long.

The practical purpose of the lampstand was to light the Holy Place so that when the priest went in to change the bread or to change the incense or once a year when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies he might see. The purpose of Christ as the lampstand in the world is that Christ comes into the world that we all might see. It is more than a light when Christ comes simply shining in a Holy Place. It is Christ who lights the world.

V. There are more articles which are placed in the tabernacle and the courtyard of the tabernacle, but here Moses in Exodus in instructions from God drops from momentary consideration the articles of furniture and begins to describe the construction materials of the tabernacle itself in chapter 26.

A. There are four coverings in all for the tabernacle. The supports, by the way which measured about 15 feet by about 45 feet in all, were made out of wood and overlaid with gold so that the whole thing which was some 15 feet high and 15 feet wide and 45 feet long was made out of portable frames joined together, attached together with bars which themselves were made out of wood and overlaid with pure gold. These provided the supports. Over the supports were laid the coverings which formed the roof and a covering which formed the side as well. Four coverings in all.

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

The first covering was the fine linen, beautifully made as can be seen from the description of the beginning of chapter 26; fine twisted linen, blue and purple and scarlet with cherubim skillfully worked in. Here we find that of the four curtains that were laid over the tabernacle, the most beautiful one was the first one and it was laid over the boards. So the boards were actually not solid boards but were made evidently out of frames. If a priest were on the inside of the tabernacle as he looked through the frames, the gold frames, he saw the beautiful linen, which was here and overlaid and formed the interior of the landscape of the tabernacle.

Following that there were curtains of goat hair in verses 7–13, no doubt given to provide protection from wind and storm weather. The beautiful curtains, which formed the inside of the tabernacle, were clasped together with gold. But when the second layer of skins were placed over the tabernacle they were clasped together with clasps of bronze. This is descriptive of the whole nature of the tabernacle. Whatever could be seen from the inside of the tabernacle had to be gold. If it were not to be seen or if it were from the outside then it could be bronze. Gold was never seen on the outside.

The third and fourth coverings were skin coverings, 26:14. Ram and goatskins provided the third and fourth covering. From an esthetic point of view the tabernacle itself therefore was not very beautiful. But from the inside, if you had the advantage of being on the inside, it was gorgeous. How like the tabernacle is Jesus, of whom the prophet Isaiah says in 53:2, “He had no form or comeliness that we should look at Him. And no beauty that we should desire Him.” The ones that appreciated the beauty of the tabernacle were those that went inside. And the ones who appreciate the beauty of Christ are those who likewise go inside.

B. Verses 15–30 describe the wooden frames and sockets which we’ve already looked at some.

C. Verses 31–37 describe the two veils of the tabernacle which were there to control access. The

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

materials of the veils were to be the same as the inside curtain of the tabernacle. There was an outer veil, which separated the Holy Place from the courtyard. It was entered at the beginning and the end of each day. There was an inner veil, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, the Holy of Holies itself being a perfect cube of fifteen feet in dimension. This inner veil was entered only once a year by the high priest. When Christ died, the veil of the temple, which is a follow through of the veil of the tabernacle, this veil in the temple was torn in two, symbolizing the fact that when Christ comes, access to the Holy Place is no longer limited on a once a year basis to a particular person but it is available to us all. Thus Hebrews says that Christ entered once for all into the most Holy Place taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. We have this hope as an of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

VI. The court of the tabernacle is described in 27:1–19.

A. If you were coming into the gateway of the courtyard, which was a space of about thirty feet wide in entry, the first thing that would catch your eye would be the raised square altar of burnt offering. It is always the first thing you see when you enter into an experience with God. That is to say, if you're to go any further into God you must first of all approach the place of sacrifice. The altar was not a pretty thing to see once it had been used. One as he entered the tabernacle saw animals, rams and bulls and sheep which were being offered as sacrifices upon the altar of burnt offering. It was a place of death. It was a place of substitution. It was a place which continually said that the penalty of sin is death and that death must be given itself as an antidote to sin. The altar always kept the Israelite from having a light view of sin. He could never say of this sin, "It doesn't matter, it's not important," Because this sin the necessitated the death of the

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

innocent and the altar of burnt offering always keeps us recognizing that sin costs Christ something. When we come to Christ we see, in the Gospel of John for example, we see John crying out right away, “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” It cost Christ something for our sin.

On each of the corners of the altar were protrusions which arose. Hooks which are called horns. When a person had committed a crime which he had done without premeditation, if he could make it to the place where the altar of burnt offering was and grab hold of the horns of the altar he would be judged to be safe. There could be no judgment or vengeance taken upon him, because he had reached the place of mercy.

Interestingly enough, however, if he had been guilty of premeditated murder, even if he reached the horns of the altar there was no provision for forgiveness. The Old Testament in its sacrificial system did not have forgiveness for first-degree premeditated sin. There was no forgiveness. David recognizes that in Psalm 51 where he’s been guilty of adultery and murder and he says, “God, if You required sacrifices I would give it, but You don’t.” How greater is the benefit of Christ’s death than the benefits that were afforded under the old covenant. Horns of the altar were about the altar on each of the corners.

B. The gateway of the tabernacle itself measured some one-hundred fifty feet by seventy-five feet in dimensions. The height of the curtains which surrounded the courtyard of the tabernacle were seven and a half feet or about half of the smaller building, the tabernacle itself, meaning that any place in the encampment you could look and while you may not be able to see what is going on, on the lower area of the courtyard you could always catch a glimpse of the top of the tabernacle which was to remind Israel that God dwelled in its midst and they could see His dwelling place.

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

VII. In 27:20–21 we find God giving instructions for maintaining the oil in the lampstand in the Holy Place.

It was to be a specific kind of oil—pure, beaten olive oil that the flame might be very pure and not give off much smoke. It was the priest's responsibility to leave enough oil so that it would be kept burning until the break of day. We simply transfer that to ourselves. As an influence and light of the world keep me burning till the break of day. Only the best oil could be put into the lamp. If you tried to put gunk into your lamp you are not going to put forth a very good light. There must not only be the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture there must be those who are ordained to administer the affairs of the tabernacle.

VIII. The priesthood served to maintain the tabernacle, to inspect the unclean, to teach the law, to act as a court of appeals in difficult cases, and to always represent the people to God and God to the people.

In Exodus 28:1, we see that the priesthood consists of Aaron and his four sons, two of whom will later die for offering wrongly before the Lord. In verses 2–5, we see described the garments of the high priest. These are important because they relate to the kind of aspects of Christ's life that we see in the Gospels. The garments were to be made for glory and for beauty. They were to be made by persons with ability. They were made out of the same materials as the veils and the inner lining of the tabernacle itself.

A. For the high priest, the first article he's described as wearing is the ephod, verses 6–14. This was a garment in two pieces from his shoulders to about his waist in front and back. It was made of fine linen, worked with gold and purple and blue and scarlet. The front and the back pieces were joined together at the shoulders by gold clasps or shoulder bands and attached to the shoulder bands were onyx stones. So the onyx stone were inscribed, six names for six tribes of

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

Israel and on the other stone were inscribed six names. The high priest was to bear the names of Israel on his shoulders symbolically representing that the whole nation rested upon him and his mediatorial office. All of the people were upon him and it was his responsibility to offer offerings on their behalf.

How striking it is that when Jesus Christ comes, the government is described as being upon His shoulders, Isaiah 9:6. Our support is Jesus Christ, upon whose shoulders our names are written.

B. The second item of material for the high priest is called the breastplate. This is kind of a misleading term because it is not a plate. It is made of cloth, not metal. It was square, folded over, creating a pouch. It was of the same kind of material as the ephod which I just described. There were four gold rings on the edges attaching it to the garment. It was simply for the chest area. On it were four rows of stones. Different stones, four rows, twelve stones in all. Upon each beautiful stone was the name of a different tribe of Israel. This symbolized the fact that the names of the tribes of Israel, the people of Israel itself, were upon the high priest's heart. Not only were they upon his shoulders but they were upon his heart. Not only did he support them but he cared for them as well. This is a beautiful description of what Christ does for us. He supports us but He cares for us as well. Our names are written on His heart.

Inside of the breastplate, in the pouch, were placed the Urim and the Thummim. This is really kind of a fascinating study all in itself as to what these were. There are a lot of guesses among biblical scholars as to how they worked. Evidently they were two flat objects, possibly stones. One side may have been glossy, the other side flat. It is suggested that "Urim" from one particular root can mean "to curse" and Thummim can mean "to be perfect." Whatever was inside the high priest's pouch was capable of giving yes or no answers for direction for the people of God. Thus if Israel had an important decision to make, like taking a city, that the

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

leaders would come to the high priest and ask him, “Should we go up?” He would reach into his breastplate and pull out the Urim and the Thummim and it’s been suggested, although it cannot be proven, that if both sides came out Thummim then the answer was “Yes, go up. The Lord will be with you.”

A lot of decisions in life God may leave us the option of choice. The striking thing, though, about the Urim and the Thummim regardless of how it worked, is the fact that in the high priest was deposited the direction for the nation. That when the nation came to seek God’s guidance they were to come to the priests even as the guidance of the Lord is available for us. We are to come to Him in time of need for direction.

C. A third item of apparel was the robe of the ephod. This stretched from the shoulders down to the knees. It’s described in verses 31–35 of chapter 28. It was made all of blue. It was woven of one piece without a seam. This robe which was seamless manifested the wholeness or the integrity of the office of the high priest. It symbolized the visible righteousness of the high priest. How striking it is that when Christ was crucified the soldiers gambling for His tunic find that His tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom.

On the border of the robe of ephod were the golden bells and the pomegranates which were designed to tinkle so that once a year when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies a rope was attached to his leg and the people knew that everything was safe as long as there were noises coming from his garment. But if a total sound of stillness dominated for a period of time then the high priest had not really atoned for his sin and God had smitten him in the Holy of Holies. The person who himself is pure is the person who is allowed to go into the Holy of Holies. The high priest could never go into the Holy of Holies except he had atoned for his own sin first. How

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

eloquent, therefore, is the Hebrews description of Jesus who had no need to atone for His own sin on our behalf?

D. Another item of apparel for the high priest is the turban of linen, evidently wound around his head. The most striking thing about the turban was a plate of pure gold, which was pressed upon his forehead, which had written upon it “holiness unto God.” It symbolized what the nation should stand like before God, completely whole. And it symbolized also something of the worship toward God.

There are three items of apparel that we’ve looked at in which we are directly involved in the high priest ministry, the names upon his shoulder, the names upon his heart, and the plate upon his head as described in 28:38, “It will be on Aaron’s forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. It will be on Aaron’s forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the LORD” (NIV). In other words, this placement upon the high priest symbolized that the people were always to be accepted before a holy God. Thus, in 28:12,29,38 we find that the high priest bore the people of Israel and their interests upon his shoulder, upon his heart, and upon his brow. Each time the people of God are described they are represented as beautiful gems or pure gold. What a tremendous psychological perception that is of your value in the sight of God, that when you’re represented by Jesus to the Father, He bears you before the Father’s presence on His shoulder and His heart and on His brow as something that is worthwhile, as a beautiful gem, as pure gold.

Don’t think low of yourself. Don’t think that you’re worthless. Christ loved you so much He invested His life on your behalf.

This phrase “holiness to the Lord” is interesting as we trace it through Scripture. It was on the high priest’s forehead in Exodus. Zechariah prophesies that the day would come in the future

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

when everything would be so holy that the words “holiness to the Lord” could be inscribed on the bells of the horses, so as their feet go marching through the streets even the horses’ hooves would be holy, something that would be unthinkable in the context of Exodus where there was such holiness in terms of the Holy Place. In Revelation, however, we see that His name shall be upon our foreheads, Revelation 22:4 indicating that we will have a permanent holiness before the presence of God.

IX. The consecration of the priests is described in Exodus 29:1–46.

A. God gives to Moses the instructions for preparing for the sacrifices. The high priest, when he’s preparing for office, goes through certain stages. First of all, he must be washed. God is not going to put all these beautiful clothes on a dirty priest. Then he was to be clothed, verses 5–6, then he was to be anointed.

How suggestive of the work of Christ, who, when He begins His public ministry, is washed in the Jordan. Although He had no need for forgiveness of sins, He enters into the river and goes through the washing. He is then clothed for His messianic office and the Spirit of God comes upon Him, because the Spirit is what the oil represents, the anointing of the Spirit of God. Jesus says very clearly in Luke 4:18, “The Spirit has anointed me to preach the good news.” When did the Spirit anoint Him? When the Spirit came upon Him at His baptism. The anointing which the high priest received was one of liberal measure. Psalm 133:2 is describing the anointing of the high priest. It is suggestive of the fact that Christ in His anointing was liberally endowed by the Spirit of God so there was a fullness to all of His ministry. The task of a high priest did not begin until He had been anointed. And the task of Jesus in His miracles and His teaching did not begin either until He had been anointed by the Spirit of God.

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

B. Aaron's sons are clothed, verses 8–9, and then the priests needed to make offerings once they were clothed and anointed. There were three offerings required, verses 10–14. An offering for sin, their own sins was first. Christ had no need for this offering. There was the whole burnt offering in verses 15–18, which symbolized a total consecration of life toward God: "Everything I have God is Yours, I belong to You." Then there was a peace offering, verses 19–34, which manifested the fact that we are thankful to God for what He has done for us. We may set down and eat with one another and God is the host of the banquet. From the sacrifice of the peace offering blood was taken. It was applied to the right ear, the right thumb, and the right great toe of the high priest.

Why this strange ritual? Because it represented the fact that the high priest was responsible to hear from God, to do for God, and to walk with God. Might well we keep those same things in our own life—to hear from God, to walk with God, and to do for God.

In verses 35–37 we find that the consecration of the priests lasted for seven days. For seven days they went through the same ritual of offerings every day. Then in verses 38–46 the priesthood was given the perpetual responsibility for offering the whole burnt offering for the people, an offering of consecration and acceptance before the Lord at the beginning and the end of each day in Israel's history.

X. In 30:1–38 we have some final tabernacle instructions which are given.

There is an altar of incense, verses 1–10, which is now described. It will fit into the Holy Place. It symbolized prayer and communion with God. Its continual burning suggests continual prayer in the presence of God. Verses 11–16 provides for the maintenance of the sanctuary in terms of the support of the people. Verses 17–21 gives a description of the laver, which was between the altar of sacrifice and the entrance into the Holy Place. It was a place at which the priest must

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

wash himself before he entered the Holy Place. In the New Testament this laver represents the Word of God, which washes us from sin.

There is the anointing oil in verses 22–33. The components of it are to be regarded very carefully and the oil was to be poured upon everything related to the tabernacle, whether thing or person.

It set apart everything as holy. In verse 32, the anointing oil was not to be put upon ordinary men. How different this is from the New Testament age where we see Joel prophesying that in the last days God would pour forth His Spirit upon all people, upon sons and daughters, handmaidens and the like.

Then there's direction for the components in the incense, verses 34–38. In so simple as God giving direction for the incense, God is assuming His prerogative to give directions for every single detail of worship. Nothing is left for man to do except to obey what God has told him to do. Nothing in worship was to be man's creation.

XI. In Exodus 31 we see the craftsmen being appointed to make this whole structure in verses 1–11.

There were two persons, Bezalel and Oholiab. The qualifications are really striking for them, verse 3: "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts" (NIV). Well might we remember the fact that God chooses workmen to places of responsibility in His kingdom who are both filled with the Spirit and filled with ability.

Sometimes we divorce ability from being filled with the Spirit. God sees the combination as going hand in hand—full of ability and full of the Spirit of God.

Verses 12–17 give directions for the Sabbath. Here the instructions are no doubt given in terms of construction on the tabernacle. Even so holy a thing as the tabernacle was not to be worked on during the Sabbath time.

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

XII. Keeping all in mind, let's think for a moment of the place God has instructed for a worship center in the wilderness.

Let's say we are coming out of the camp to a place of worship. We'd approach a linen barrier, which separates us from the inner courts where the people of God are the priests of God. We come from the outside world. We come as non-Christians. We face a doorway, a gateway. It is a wide gateway. Wide enough that there is room for us to fit as well as wide enough for others to fit along with us. We come into the entrance.

Suppose as we come to the entrance that we are met by our tour leader of the worship center.

Suppose He is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who's dressed in the garments of the high priest. As we look at Him in His beautiful array, we find that He has our name upon His shoulder and upon His heart. And that He also has responsibility for our sins embossed upon the plate around His forehead. He has our concerns upon the brow of His head. He meets us. Then He does a very strange thing to us. We meet and follow after Him. Instead of going into the tabernacle we find ourselves staring at a square structure slightly raised off the ground, an altar of burnt offering. A place where sin is dealt with. A place where sacrifice is made. A place where animals are killed since blood is regarded as atonement for sin, for our sin. Since blood is regarded as necessary for peace with God—in order that God can cover over our sins. Then the high priest, who's taking us through His tabernacle, does a strange thing, something no Old Testament high priest would have done. His robes are taken off, His beautiful robes, and He himself lays down upon the altar of burnt offering and is sacrificed on our behalf. It is in the awesomeness of seeing that occur that we are struck with the fact that worship with God is no simple mumbling of words. It is simply not a recitation of a creed. It is something which immediately staggers us. It blows all fuses. It is something we never would expect. It involves severity the like of which we'd never

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

known. It involves judgment. It involves death. It involves something which is sacred and innocent being slain right before our eyes and for our sake. We see that and we bear witness to it. The New Testament message is, Christ who is our sacrifice rose again from the dead. From that altar of burnt offering three days later He will rise, the risen Son of God. He will again put on His robes and He will continue with us through the tabernacle. He will take us to the laver, the place of washing which suggests baptism. That place of cleansing. Then He will take us into the Holy Place, which I like to see representative of His church. Following our being born again through His sacrifice for us we are brought into a place where there are three articles of furniture—shewbread, incense, and lampstand. The shewbread—the bread of presence—represents the solidarity of God’s people before the Lord. The fact that they have offered the fruit of their labor before God. The fact that God’s people are continually ever in His presence. And the lampstand shows the influence of the people of God as they offer their activities represented in the bread to God. Then the incense represents what the people of God are doing in the Holy Place, praying unto God.

From there we go through the veil. We behold the ark of the covenant, overlaid with pure gold, in which is the Law and also on which is the mercy seat with the seraphim and the throne of God. We understand by coming into His very Holy Place that we now pass through the experience of time. We have come all the way from the world into the courtyard where we have been born again, come into the Holy Place—the church of God—and ultimately press through to that most holy of holy places where directly we ourselves will stand in the presence of God.

When we come into the presence of God, we’ll find two things of equal strength in His presence. We’ll find His Law or His justice. And we’ll find His grace. Both are equally strong—His Law and His grace. But He has chosen to let His grace rest on top of His law.

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

So if we would allow the blood of Christ, which He brings into the Holy Place, His own blood to serve as eternal redemption for our sins, we are forgiven and we are acquitted. And we are accepted fully into the presence of God. It is then when we are in the Holy of Holies that we understand what has been going on and why it is that when the Lord began talking about the furniture He started talking about the ark of the covenant first. It's simple. God comes from the place where the ark of the covenant is and walks the paces of life in the person of Jesus Christ out to the gateway and out to the altar of burnt offering. He could come out to the altar of burnt offering, but we could have never gone to the Holy Place. Never in a thousand million years could we go into the Holy Place except God come out and meet us at the entrance, at the altar of burnt offering. God comes from the Holy Place and He walks this life to meet us at the entry, the altar of burnt offering. There He meets us and He greets us. We begin seeing this through the Gospel of John as we walk along with John through the tabernacle. We see Him finding Jesus at the altar of burnt offering. John the Baptist cries out, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1). We see Him at the laver "You must be born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3). We see Him as the bread of life. We see Jesus as the light of the world, John 9. We see Him praying for us in John 17 where He is our intercessor. And finally, we see Him going through the curtain and resurrected on our behalf into the Holy Place of God. He came out to meet us that we might go to where He is. That's the kind of Savior we have, who wants to bring us into His holy courts where we may be refreshed. Where our sins might be finally and fully dealt with and where we could be forever in His presence.

The tabernacle, therefore, is prophecy to suggest what has personally happened in our own life. It is a representation of things which are real and of heaven itself.

Closing Prayer

DOING IT HIS WAY

Exodus 24:15–31:17

We may enter, Lord, into Your presence without fear because the blood of Jesus Christ has brought us in a living way to You. All the way, from the altar of burnt offering to the Holy of Holies, we see that Your pathway is marked by footprints of love, your pathway of giving for us. So we walk with You in Your courts. We praise You in Your courts. We thank You that You have appointed these things as representatives for us through which we may behold Your glory and may stand assured that we have a friend in the Holy Place; You are an awesome God. We praise You that we are accepted. Lord, I pray for any here today that may not feel accepted, or may not have ever given themselves to You and accepted You as the substitute for them. May they meet You, may they open their lives to greet You so that from the world they may go all the way in to Your sacred presence. We ask this in Your name. Amen.