

GIVE THE VERY BEST

Exodus 35:1–40:38

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Today is our last Sunday in the Book of Exodus. We will be looking through Exodus 35–40. We might note by way of review what might be called the hinge passage in the Book of Exodus where there is a turning point in the book, Exodus 19:3–5 where the Lord is speaking to Moses after the Children of Israel had come to Sinai. He tells him in verse 4, “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” That verse describes in summary form what has happened in the first 18 chapters of the book—God’s great deliverance for His people. Then verse 5-6 anticipate all that will follow in Exodus—chapters 19–40: “Now therefore if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my own possession among all peoples. For all the earth is mine and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Thus in chapters 19–40 we find God speaking to free people, designing to compliment the outer freedom which they had experienced in their release from bondage in Egypt with an inward freedom, a freedom which brought a response to God in obedience as is reflected in the giving of the Law and a freedom in worship to the Lord which dominates some ten chapters of this section where the Lord gives instructions for the construction of a portable worship center which we know as the tabernacle.

We found in Exodus 34 that God in His graciousness had given heed to Moses’ intercession for the people. Therefore he had regiven the Law which Moses had broken in anger at the idolatry of Israel at the foot of Sinai. God had regiven the Law, the covenant. And not only that, He had

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conceded to Moses' intercession that He not withdraw His presence from His people. The assurance therefore had been given that God would go up with His people.

I. As we open Exodus 35 we find the Lord finishing the work which He has in the Book of Exodus for the Children of Israel. He begins in verses 1–3 by simply ratifying the covenant, by giving further instructions concerning the keeping of the Sabbath.

“These are the things the LORD has commanded you to do: For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work in it must be put to death. Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day”(NIV).

As we have gone through the Book of Exodus we have noted how many times the word “Sabbath” is employed. And particularly teaching on the keeping of the Sabbath. It is first introduced in 16:22–30 where the Lord instructs Israel at the giving of the manna that they are not to gather the manna on the Sabbath Day. Rather, a double portion of food would be provided on the day prior to the Sabbath. The Sabbath is again noted in 20:8–11 where it is the fourth commandment. The Sabbath is applied to all animals and persons in 23:12. It is given again when the tabernacle instruction is completed in 31:12–17. In 34:21 the Sabbath is stated again and this time it's applied to restating for the farmer both in seed time and in harvest—two times of the year when he might be most tempted to break the Sabbath. Here again, as work on the tabernacle is to commence in 35:1–3, there is repetition of teaching on the Sabbath.

Why is there so much attention to this in the Book of Exodus? Why is God so concerned about giving the Sabbath to Israel? I think there's some important reasons that apply to Israel and apply to God's response to our own lives.

A. First of all, the Lord in giving the Sabbath is concerned with the promotion of human well-being. He's concerned that His people have a day off. That there be one day of vacation in every

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seven. And that that apply not only to men who are financially of means but to the person of lowest economic status in the society. It applies as well to working animals. God is concerned that His people be a rested people. Therefore when we look at any giving of the Law of God it is not given in order to torture us. God does not have some evil intent in mind when He tells His people to do something. He has in mind our welfare. Just as when I tell my child not to cross the street, I do not have in mind something mean, but protection.

B. The second purpose God had in mind in giving the Sabbath was that it provided a restraint against an unchecked spirit of acquisition—a spirit in abundance today—that need to work and acquire seven days a week, without ever taking moments off with family, with God, with oneself, driven by the pursuit of success and material things. The Lord in giving this Law is guarding against that kind of spirit in His people.

C. The third thing which the Lord is doing in the giving of the Sabbath is promoting family life. For here, one day out of every seven the family must be together; in their homes, in their tents the family was to gather and in those times of rest there was an opportunity to talk to one another, an opportunity for teaching to occur, an opportunity for exchange. While the particular family might have lived differently in biblical times than now today in terms of some habits and customs, nevertheless this being together was a kind of guarantee that here would be a perpetualness of family life—the solidarity, the continuity.

D. But most of all the Sabbath provided from God's point of view the promotion of loyalty to Him. It meant that at least one out of every seven days His people must stop and really think of Him. Think of His work in creation, how on the seventh day He rested. Think of His work in redemption, how He had safely bought them out of Egypt, and worship Him with those attitudes and actions of heart and lip which would give praise to His name.

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When we come to the New Testament, we see the Sabbath observance has changed because Christ rose on the first day of the week. We nevertheless find an enduring principle which says in Romans that whether we keep one day or another we are to keep it in honor of the Lord. It's well to keep in mind that this principle of the Sabbath from the Old Testament can have some important applications for our life today if we will see that setting aside of time in loyalty and devotion to God promotes family life. That setting aside of time keeps us from an unchecked spirit of acquisition, and provides for physical, emotional, and spiritual rest.

II. Instructions on the Sabbath completed, the Lord then speaks to Moses of the building of the tabernacle.

We see several divisions to this as we begin in verse 4 of chapter 35. In verses 4–19 we see the Lord indicating to Moses what was needed in the building of the tabernacle. Verses 4–9 describe the materials that are needed. And 10–19 describes the people that are needed to do the work. If you look at the list of materials you'll see that every possible thing that was needed for this portable worship center, all the raw materials, are there in the list. They are to be taken from anyone who has a generous heart. This was not to be an imposed offering. Some offering where you'd be checked on what you gave or whether or not everyone gave. When all the material goods are gathered then it will be necessary that there be persons who will give of their time to put these materials and to transform them into the worship center that God has in mind for Israel to have. Verse 10 says, "All who are skilled among you [and we see later this included women] are to come and make everything the LORD has commanded" (NIV). What the Lord is asking for is both materials and persons with ability. Whether it's the building of the tabernacle in the Old Testament or the ongoing of the purpose in the world today there are still two things that are needed as offerings from the people of God if God's work is going to go forward. The materials

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and the people who will take the materials and do the work for God. Sometimes it is true that we not only give materials but we give of ourselves. There is no enterprise of witness or missionary expansion or the kingdom of God that somehow doesn't run on both of these tracks—the giving of what we have and the giving of our very talent as well.

Note what an important stress is placed on ability in those who are called to do the work of God as well.

III. There is a response of the people with the materials and people that are needed, 35:20–36:7.

A. First of all they respond with the materials which Moses has asked for in verses 20–29. Notice the spirit in which the materials are brought. “Everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD...men and women alike” (35:21–22, NIV). And then it goes on to describe the things they had brought.

The spirit in which they were given reflects there was no arm-twisting brought upon the Children of Israel to give. There was no effort needed to move the people of Israel to give. No earnest appeals. No impressive emotional arguments given. No. The people's heart was simply stirred to give. I want to use that as an example of how our giving ought always to be toward the Lord. It is too often a sad commentary upon our giving that we may respond simply to someone who puts us under the fear of condemnation. Like, “If you don't give, then bad things are going to happen to you.” Or who puts us in the spirit of giving with the idea that if you give, more will be given to you. So give selfishly so you can have something in return. Or who somehow tries to get us to respond to giving with an emotional kind of a story that will get us involved.

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Rather than those kinds of appeals it is simply because the people in Israel had a willing and generous heart. The Spirit of God moved in them and prompted them to give. Therefore much is given.

There is a variety of things that are given. We see in verse 22 that some gave gold. This was leftover from the spoils which they took out of Egypt. Some gave fabrics and skins, verse 23. Some gave silver or bronze, verse 24. Some gave wood, verse 24. Some who didn't evidently have materials to give, simply gave their ability. We read of women who are moved with ability that spun the goat's hair and so forth, verse 26.

We find in verses 27–28 that the leaders of the people came. The leaders of the various tribes gave precious stones, spices, oil and incense. They gave those things which were the most expensive—emotional items—the stones on the breastplate of the high priest. No one would later be able to come and say, “I gave that stone.” Rather the stone was a representative gift from a tribe, representing the fact that it had come from all the people.

In verse 29 we read a general summary that all whose heart moved them gave what they could.

This is mindful of what Mary did when she poured the anointing oil upon Jesus. The text of the Gospel said she gave what she could. Here in Exodus we see that theme being very beautifully stated of the gifts of the Children of Israel for the tabernacle. Each person's gift was needed.

Each in its own place was necessary. The jewels of the high priest's breastplate were no more or no less essential than the wood that made a peg for a curtain. All who gave, no matter what they gave, had equal consecration because all made one whole. All gifts were equally precious if all were given with the same spirit.

The gifts were given and they were taken and made into something else so that a person could not say of his gift when he looked at the completed tabernacle, “There is what I gave. There's a

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plaque with my name on it!” No. What he gave was melted down and put into something else.

As I look through the whole giving structure for the tabernacle, I find that when the whole thing is done and complete there was not anything in it that could be recognized as the single gift of a person. So it ought also be with giving ourselves and our fellowship as Christians, that we give so that it might become part of a larger whole. It somehow seems terribly inappropriate in the body of Christ for persons to give something and then by virtue of their giving insist that their name be attached to what they give so that it is recognized as their gift.

Not so in the tabernacle and not so should it be in the world of Christ. Giving, we see in the Book of Exodus, is a proof of devotion to God. It should be willing. It should be proportionate. And it should be lost in the whole of what God is doing.

B. There is not only the giving of materials going on in the construction of this worship center but there was the giving in terms of labor, chapter 35:30–36:1. We see in verses 30–32 Moses speaking to Israel saying, “See, the LORD has chosen Bezalel son of Uri...[then he goes on to identify where he comes from] and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze” (NIV), and He’s also called Oholiab. These were two persons whom God had called to oversee the labor. Charismatic constructioners. Here we find persons skilled in building and the qualification for them, the preeminent qualification, is that they are endowed by the Spirit, charismatic constructorers. Filled with the Spirit and filled with ability—what an unbeatable combination. How inseparable are these two in doing the work of God! We err if we say it only takes the filling of the Spirit to do the work of God. There is the combination of ability and the filling of the Spirit. They go hand in hand.

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Bezalel was intensely educated and equipped for the task which God was calling him to do. That natural endowment was augmented by the supernatural endowment of the Spirit of God. Both went hand in hand, beautifully intertwined.

When we look at the history of the Church we have always seen that persons who were at critical junctures in the history of the church who God had raised up to cause the body of Christ to take new directions were persons like Bezalel who were filled with the Spirit of God and filled with ability. Saul of Tarsus, for example, would have made it in Judaism just on the sheer power of his intellect and raw nerve and ability. But filled with the Spirit of God he became something else. It was a combination in his life of ability and Spirit-filled enabling.

Martin Luther, who set at another critical juncture in the history of the Church, was a person of incredible ability, who single-handedly translated from the Greek and the Hebrew the Old and the New Testaments, who wrote the hymns, whose writings and sermons moved persons because of their depth of content, but whose life also was marked by the enabling power of the Spirit of God.

The whole formation of the modern missionary movement again rode on the shoulders of those who were filled with the Spirit and filled with ability. Whatever service the Lord has called us to, it is the combination of our natural ability and that endowment of the Spirit, which makes the work glow and conform to the idea that the Lord has for it.

C. As the constructioners got under way in verses 2–7, we see the people gave in excess of the need; those working on construction of the tabernacle couldn't get on with their work because they kept having to account for the offering. They came to Moses and said, “‘The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done.’ Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: ‘No man or woman is to make

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anything else as an offering for the sanctuary.’ And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work” (36:5–7, NIV).

That’s an incredible statement! First of all it reflects the honesty of the people who were working on the construction of the tabernacle, all the gold and silver that was pouring in. Evidently none of them was diverting it for their own personal use. There was an honesty in accounting and an honesty also in saying to the people, we have enough. The dedication of the givers in giving is such a tremendous example in that they had to be restrained from giving more.

Paul picks up on this theme in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 where he is receiving an offering there from the Gentile churches for the poor saints who are in Jerusalem. He comments, “God loves a cheerful giver.” This literally means “hilarious.” It speaks of a kind of spirit in which we also should bring our gifts. Hilariously. This reflects the spirit in which the Lord wants us to give. Not out of duty, drudgery or because the pastor said we have a need. But because we really love to see the work of God prosper. If in the Old Testament they gave so much to simply build a portable worship center I think what tremendously more great motivation we have in the New Testament age for giving because our giving makes possible the spread of the gospel to other persons.

IV. In 36:8–39:31 we see Moses giving the description of the actual progress of the work.

Item by item. The inner coverings, the outer coverings, the boards and the sockets, the bars, the veils and curtains, the ark and so forth. These are individually made. I think about those persons who are called to do menial tasks. I’m sure that the guy who worked on the silver sockets into which the posts of the tabernacle were fitted somehow maybe wasn’t thought of as highly as Bezalel who was working on the gold mercy seat made out of solid gold which fitted on the ark

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of the covenant. And who had the task to design the cherubim whose wings overarched and nearly touched one another.

Yet the person who spent those hidden hours simply working on one silver socket had a great responsibility. And it was an important responsibility for if that one silver socket wasn't made then there's going to be something out of place. In fact there were far more silver sockets to be made than there was of course the mercy seat and the ark of the covenant. Just like in the body of Christ there are far more jobs to do, which are really never seen or rewarded by the whole of the Christian body. But if people quit doing them the whole enterprise collapses.

There are far more tasks in this local church than the tasks you most often see—me standing up here teaching from the Word of God. I have the visible role. But if it were not for the fact that persons within this body are at work doing many kinds of tasks, this whole enterprise of a church would collapse completely. It's God's will that there be many workmen in this building. Some have not as visible a position as others.

In verses 21–31 of chapter 38 we see Moses pausing long enough in the summary of the things which are made to give an accounting for what has been going on. He accounts for the administration of the construction project and then gives a strict accounting of the materials. This impresses me because it suggests that even in the Old Testament those who received funds were responsible for what was received and needed to give an accounting for what was given. So that everything which was given was evidently laid out and logged and records kept on the giving so that when it was all said and done it could all be counted up and weighed together. Those who are entrusted in the body of Christ with its financial affairs also have responsibility to that same body to be able to stand up at the end of a period of giving and say, "This is how much was given and this is what it was gone for." Watch for any ministry which arises, which does not

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account for its funds. It is not operating by principles which God himself has designed it to operate on.

The weight of what is collected is really fantastic, kind of hidden in biblical equations like talents and shekels. When everything was gathered, 2066.88 pounds of gold were given for the tabernacle. Silver, 7604.8 pounds. All told we have a portable worship center which in our currency excluding all of the fabrics which were employed in the tabernacle, just the metals, weighed 7.5 tons and cost in our currency over 5 million dollars. An expensive worship center by any comparison.

All of this was designed to be speedily taken down, and carried on wagons. The Book of Numbers talks to us about how the thing was moved, and set up hastily again.

They had received from the people their very best. And a very incredible structure is built unique. The ancient world its religions had permanent temples, the ruins of which we can see today. But Israel, unlike the other people, had a portable center of worship simply because of the fact they at that time were not a settled people. The whole expression of the tabernacle was to indicate that God was in their midst and that God would go before them wherever they moved. And God would be in their midst whenever they stayed.

From the summary of what was given we come in Exodus 39 to a description then of the attire of the priests and all the making of those materials.

V. In 39:32 through the end of chapter 40 we see the finished work.

In 39:42–43 we see everything summarized again. And perhaps one of the reasons for the great attentions to detail in the Book of Exodus is the fact that the people themselves, once the tabernacle was built, would not see much of the inside of it at all. It as being spelled out to them clearly so they could know what was there. In verses 1–33 of chapter 40 we see the tabernacle

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being erected. All the materials are assembled and its quickly put up. “Set up the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the first month” (verse 1, NIV). Thus the tabernacle is put up some two weeks short of one year after Israel had had the Passover in Egypt. When we overview Exodus for a moment we find that if we want to look at how that one year passed for Israel from the time they had the Passover until the time the tabernacle was constructed we find that it took them, according to Exodus 19:1, some three months to come from the crossing of the Red Sea to Sinai. At Sinai Moses was some eighty days on the mountain where twice he received the covenant of the Law—another three months. For the construction of the tabernacle it took about six months of their time.

When the tabernacle was completed, 40:34, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud rested upon 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 go onward. But if the cloud was not taken up then they did not go onward until the day it was taken up. Throughout all their journey a cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.

Thus the real motivation for the building of the tabernacle there is seen that it might be the dwelling place of God, recognizing, of course, that God’s dwelling place is the heavens of the heavens. His presence cannot be simply confined to a structure. But nevertheless in a very real sense his presence became especially revealed in that portable worship center of Israel and His glory filled the place. It meant that God’s presence was smack dab centered in the midst of His people. They could only move when He went out ahead. His presence there was a confirmation of the successful intervention of Moses when the Lord had told Moses that He would not go up

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with the people. Now His glory filling the tabernacle forms a fitting end to the Book of Exodus.

God, indeed, in spite of all His people's failures will be in the dead center of their lives.

VI. I want to overview Exodus for a moment to pick up on a couple of themes and draw them to a devotional implication for our own lives.

A key text in the book of Exodus is 3:1–12. The setting for it is Moses in the wilderness. He has been there forty years as a herder, a nomad. One day in the burning bush God reveals His presence to him. And He begins talking to him. Saying to Moses that He the Lord has seen the slavery of His people and that He is going to use Moses to bring them out. Moses (verse 11), when he hears what God is up to, protests: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" and God responds to him, "I will be with you. And this shall be a sign for you that I have sent you. When you have brought forth the people out of Egypt you shall serve God upon this mountain." That seemed to be no big thing to Moses. Not anything at all. Moses wasn't satisfied with that response of God. In the early days of Exodus we looked at how Moses was dissatisfied with that answer. He said, No, God, I must have more evidence. So the Lord graciously allowed him more. But the basic evidence was this: It was a sign in time to say, "Moses the sign that I am with you is that one day you will worship me on this mountain." And of course the completion of the tabernacle shows that promise to Moses had become fulfilled. I'd like to submit to you that the promise which the Lord made to Moses "You will worship Me one day on this mountain," is a similar kind of thing which Jesus says to us in the Gospel of John where he declares to us in chapter 14 "I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again and will take you to Myself that where I am you may be also." The Lord simply says to us, "If you follow me this will be the sign—one day you will be with Me." When you first receive that promise it seems so far off. Who can believe that it will happen. Who could believe that this man

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Moses, this murderer, this exile from Egypt, would indeed go back into that place and with his brother see the mighty manifestation of the power of God leading the people out and through the journeys in the wilderness finally to that place where indeed the promise would be kept: “You will worship me on this mountain.”

The impact of Scripture teaches us this: Every word of God will be fulfilled, and when God speaks His word to us it is the word that He is destined to keep. There are times we’d say, “I’d like more evidence than that. I’m not satisfied with just that sign of Your presence.” On occasion the Lord graciously gives us more evidences. But the basic sign remains: “I will be with you and you will be where I am.”

Many months pass from Exodus 3:12 until the end of Exodus 40 when Israel is worshipping the Lord on that mountain. Many months when it seemed like the desire of God to bring Israel to its place of worship hung by a thread. Would Israel worship God on that mountain? As we began Exodus the whole purposes of God hang on such frail thread. The safety of a baby in a basket. Who could believe that out of that frail beginning God would accomplish what He has done as seen in this book. His purpose again hung on a frail thread when through the rash act of a revolutionary a murder is committed and the very person God intended to use as the redeemer has to flee Egypt. His purposes gain hung on a thread. When the reluctant exile wants to refuse the call which God is making to him, again God’s purpose of bringing His people to the mountain seems like it would not come to pass under the tremendous power and resistance of Pharaoh, the man whose name literally meant “Big House.” His power and resistance seemed nothing compared to the weakness of the Children of Israel. Again it seemed as if God’s word would not come to pass. There is coupled in the power and resistance of Pharaoh the beaten spirit of a slave people who, when Moses’ earlier demands are refused in Pharaoh’s court, the people

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come to Moses and bitterly complain against him that he has interjected himself as a leader of them and only made matters worse.

Again the purpose did not seem as if it were coming to pass. For Israel, after their Passover, is led initially several days' journey outside of the city. They come to a place called the Red Sea. There again they are hemmed in. God miraculously brings them to the sea. But on the other side they are again strung up in the wilderness facing trials—the trial of bitter water at Marah. The trial of no food, necessitating manna. The trial of no water at all at Meribah. In all these places it seemed that God's purposes for them had no prospect of coming to pass.

When it comes to the rebellion of the golden calf, it seems like all hope is abandoned for this relationship to ever worship God at the mountain.

If we summarized all these instances where it seems like God's purposes for Israel hung by a frail thread, we can identify three things which stood in Israel's way: Evil, hardship, and failure. Evil stood in the way of their fulfilling God's purposes for their life, the evil in the person of Pharaoh. For us that purpose Jesus has for us, that He will take us to be with himself, the Pharaoh-like representative is none other than Satan himself. Evil stands in our way. There are times when it seems like the purposes of God for our lives hang by a frail thread as the power of Satan seems so much faster than the power of God.

There are hardships that stand in our way as well. Hardships in the presence of physical adversities and tests. In the midst of the deepest, we feel like how can we ever believe the word that God has spoken to us, "I will bring you through," will actually come to pass. There are moments when we face severe failure in our own lives. Failure to see God as greater than the evil one; failure to see God as the one who will provide us with the resources to surmount the test. But in spite of evil, in spite of hardships, and in spite of our own failure, God keeps His word.

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The great message in the Book of Exodus is that God operates sovereignty out of love for us as His people. When this worship center is completed and God's presence is dwelling there I think we may look at it and say that it is only in the wilderness that we have the opportunity to really do something for God. In Canaan, it is God who will be doing everything for the Children of Israel. Only in the wilderness do they have the chance to make this portable worship center. If we use Canaan as a figure of heaven, we may say that only in this life do we have opportunity to do anything for God. Throughout the endless ages when we are with Him it is not any more our opportunity to do anything for Him. We will simply have lavished upon ourselves the great grace of God unto the ages of time. All the stronger motivations, therefore, for generosity and the giving of our means and our lives to the Lord now since before us He has so much set.

You recall Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a colt. A miracle itself that He could ride on an animal that had never previously been ridden. He comes into the city. What does He do? He goes immediately into the temple. The temple is actually evolved from the tabernacle. First there was the portable worship center. Then as Israel became settled in the land the need for a settled place of worship also arose. The tabernacle became the temple, Solomon's temple. There was another temple following Solomon, and then there was the temple which Herod built. All successors of that tabernacle.

Jesus heads for the worship center of Israel, and as He comes into the temple area He simply looks around. He looked at the money changers, all the traffic in the court of the Gentiles, how His house was being used as a worship center. That He took into His gaze. But I'm wondering if He didn't look deeper into the background and history of how that place had come to be and how empty it then was. For Jesus knew as He looked at that magnificent temple of Herod, inside the temple there was no ark of the covenant for it had disappeared. The lampstand was also gone,

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lost to the bounty of war. The bread of presence, the altar of incense all the original was gone. The temple was simply an empty shell of a religion that had become corrupted through man's disobedience and the shell simply encased the deadness. As Jesus could have looked around in that temple I wonder if His mind didn't go back. He was there in eternity past. He was there when this tabernacle was constructed.

I wonder if He didn't look back in time and remember the dedication and fire of spirit that motivated the persons who originally built that first worship center. I wonder if He didn't go back and think of those dedicated persons who gave of their time and material to build in purity of faith a worship center to God. Then, as Jesus compared how that place of worship had first come into being with what had happened now, how the place was run by persons who were simply interested in the material, who were denying the very God, there was a tremendous sadness in Jesus' heart as He recognized the death of a revival movement. The death of a religious faith. As Jesus looked at that tabernacle He knew He was going to replace it and in that coming week that whole temple was to cease to be. He was going to replace it with another temple. The temple would be His body. For the Scriptures says to us "You are His temple." Jesus, as He looked around, saw that new temple emerging from the old, a temple of people. The parts of the old temple would be incorporated in spiritual dimensions into the new temple. As we see Jesus looking at the temple we find that His gaze as He entered the place would have first fallen on the altar of burnt offering. He had replaced that because He Himself would be the offering for sin. As entrance into His body we would find that we come to the altar of burnt offering. He had replaced the laver, which in the Old Testament had been made by the mirrors of the women, not glass mirrors but bronze mirrors, which reflected images. He had replaced that laver, wiped it out physically and substituted for it baptism.

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He walked on through the temple, and as He came to the Holy Place He would see the bread of presence which symbolically stood to represent the activity of the people of God before God. He would wipe out the physical thing in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1, KJV), our activity as Christians continually represented in His presence. He saw the lampstand. He would replace it with His Church which is the light of the world. He would come to the altar of incense just before the curtain which separated the two and He would take it out physically and let it be represented by the prayers which are going on in His body, the Church. He would rip the veil in two and allow us to come right inside and in place of the ark of the covenant, which contained the Law and the mercy seat, He would have the Law and the gospel. In the very center we would see Jesus as holding His gospel over the Law. The Law, which says, “You’ve sinned, you’ve defiled God,” Jesus could place the mercy seat or the lid on the Law, his gospel which says there is good news for those who have failed. There’s good news for those who have sinned. God’s grace and his Law are equal in strength but He has chosen to let His grace overlie His Law so that He will look at us in grace.

I wonder, as Jesus turned on that Palm Sunday when He left the temple, if there wasn’t within His experience both sadness and gladness. What was designed had so been mutilated by man’s hands and man’s disobedience that it must be replaced. But gladness also as He saw us coming into being. The new temple of God. In us would come the praises toward God and the perfection of those things, which the Old Testament had anticipated.

Closing Prayer

I think Lord, of Isaiah who declared of you “He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” So this week represents to us Lord that time when You indeed did have travail of soul.

GIVE THE VERY BEST

Exodus 35:1–40:38

When You went through all for us. When you look at us therefore today Lord, when You see us, do you see us and the travail of Your soul is satisfied? You do. Somehow You look at us as the reason that made it all worthwhile. We are the people whom You wanted. We are the temple You wanted to build. A temple beautiful before God. We are the temple You wanted to inhabit. In Your life when You went into the temple You looked around and You not only saw the bad and what had gone wrong, but You saw what You were going to put in its place. When You went to the cross You not only saw those who jeered and mocked and crucified You but You saw also those of us who would by faith believe in You. We're grateful that You have seen us. Lord, we feel also something of the kindred spirit of the disciples who, when after Your resurrection met with You and You opened to them the things in the Law concerning Yourself. We want to thank You for using the Spirit to inspire this record which we have which has so helped us see You and ourselves. That has helped us understand something afresh of the gospel that indeed nothing can separate us from the love of God. Evil, hardship, human failure. You care for us, you love us freely. We want our lives to be a portable worship center for You. We want you to dwell in us. We thank You that You are not a stationary God, one who has to remain in a building or a place while we leave. But You are in us, and wherever we go, there You are out ahead and wherever we are there, You are in the midst. We want to see in our lives the fact that in the holy room within us there is a light, bread, and prayer. Let not Your look at us as Your temple be a look of anger. Or a look as if we have missed Your purpose. But let Your look be a look—well done! Rescue us from our failure. Forgive us of our sins. Be Thou present to us in all our activities through Jesus our Lord. Amen.