

Intro: I'd like to invite you to open your copy of God's indestructible Word, and turn to Exodus 33.

One of the greatest lessons I have learned as a church planter over the past (almost four years) is the absolute necessity and incredible power of prayer. It is in prayer that we lean on the resources of God. It is in prayer that we depend on the strength he provides. We seek God's will for our lives and our church in prayer. This is why I love the prayers of the Bible, especially bold, faith-filled prayers.

We come to one of those prayers in the larger narrative found at the end of Exodus. Since my college days, this has always been one of my favorite prayers. The Book of Exodus records God's redemption of his people out of slavery in Egypt, the giving of the law to Moses so that God's people would know how to live as they entered the promised land, and their journey with God through the desert wilderness. As we saw last week, they were many ups and downs on the journey. God brought them out of Egypt with signs and wonders. They responded with initial gratitude, which quickly turned to grumbling. But God graciously provided manna and water in spite of their grumbling. We find more ups and downs as the book closes.

In Exodus 32, when Moses is coming down from his meeting with God on mountain, he discovers that the people have made a golden calf, mixing their worship of God with a worthless idol. Moses is angry. God is angry. And the journey to the wilderness is in serious jeopardy because God says at the beginning of Exodus 33, "You take these stiff-necked people to the Promised Land, I'm done. You're on your own." That's where we pick up in verse 12.

Moses said to the Lord, "See, you say to me, 'Bring up this people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

And he said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

And he said to him, "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here."

Do you see the boldness of Moses? Do you sense the desperation in his desire for God to be present with his people? I believe this one prayer, properly applied to our lives, has the power to bring radical transformation. "God, unless you are with me in this endeavor, I'm not moving!" If you are not with us in this church, if you are not with me at my work, in my studies, in this marriage, walking through moments of trial and suffering, then we are not moving.

But here's the great news. . . God delights to dwell with his people.

The Point: God delights to dwell with his people that they might worship him.

This morning we are going to consider . . .

"The True & Greater Presence" Exodus 25-40

We are going to see how God committed his presence to the people through the construction of the tabernacle beginning in chapter 25. More than ¼ of the Book of Exodus deals with the Tabernacle, which points us to the significance of its place in the life and worship of God's people.

I. The Tabernacle provided a dwelling place for God among his people (Exodus 25:1-8; 29:42-46).

I want to help you understand these chapters in the context of Exodus. These are details we often rush through or skip over in our Bible reading, something a good Jew would have never done, so I want to explain the significance of these final chapters by looking at a couple of key passages. *Read 25:1-8*

What do we learn from these verses? Here are some important facts.

- **The tabernacle mediated God's presence to his people.**
 - Verse 8 is the key verse: "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst."
 - Where God would meet with his people.
 - The tabernacle was a tent.
 - It was portable.
 - Just as his people were on a journey, so God would journey with his people.
 - Just as the people dwelt in tents, God made his home as a tent among the people.
 - This was God's home among the people.
 - In ancient times, this was not unheard of for a people to set up their camp in a similar format. A perimeter consisting of the tribes gathered around a focal point. Now, among these ancient peoples, who was placed in the center, as the focal point? The King. The King was placed in the middle
 - Dwell.. Covenant promise. Abraham. I will be with you. I will be with you.
 - Question: Now, you may be asking, isn't God omnipresent, every where present. Yes. These were the words of Solomon in his prayer of dedication for the temple. "**But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!**" (1 Kings 8:27)
- **The tabernacle was built with precious materials.**
 - These materials were provided by the people. It cost them something. There was an investment on their end.
 - These contributions were to be generous (35:4-5ff). Many of them were very costly. Look at this list... Gold, silver, bronze, onyx stones..
 - These contributions were to be from the heart. Verse 2 says these contributions should come from "every man whose heart moves him." What an informative statement concerning what our worship should look like before God. God is peering past all of the periphery and externals to our hearts (35:20-22).
 - App: There is no true worship where our lives are not invested.
 - The costly stones reflected the excellencies and worth of God.
 - And it is also important to note in Exodus 31 tells us the Spirit of God filled the craftsmen and artists who would build the materials for the tabernacle.
- **The tabernacle was designed to communicate God's holiness.**
 - The Israelites were to take great care in building the tabernacle down to the very details God revealed to Moses.
 - Verse 9: "Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it."
 - Everything about the tabernacle: the costly stones, the specific design) was meant to communicate the holiness of God.
 - Anywhere God manifested his presence was a revelation of his holiness.
 - When God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, he told him to remove his sandals.
 - When God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai, he appeared in a cloud of smoke and fire...
 - When God revealed his glory to Moses in Exodus 33, it was only a taste of his glory lest Moses be consumed, for no one can see the face of God (dwell in the presence of God) and live.
 - This same principle applied to the construction of the tabernacle. . . .There was three main sections
 - Outer Court: 2 things. 1) The laver: a large bowl used for ceremonial cleansing. 2) The altar of sacrifice. These are made of wood and bronze, not the precious materials found inside. The closer you moved into the interior, the more precious the material signifying the worth and purity of God.
 - Holy Place:
 - Only the priests could come into the holy place. A wall of curtains separated the outer court from the Holy Place. 1) The Golden Lampstand: 2) The Altar of Incense: This

symbolized the prayers of the people rising to God. 3) The Table of Showbread: This represented God's provision for his people.

- Holy of Holies (or the Most Holy Place):
 - The holy of holies was not a large space. It a little larger than the average size of a Boston living room (15 x 15, with a 15 foot ceiling). It was a perfect cube. And only one piece of furniture was located inside: the ark of the Covenant symbolic of God's presence among his people. It held the stone tablets with the 10 Commandments; Aaron's rod that budded in the wilderness; and the Jar of Manna.
 - The High Priest goes in one day a year: Yom Kippur . . . Only after elaborate procedures of cleansing. He takes the blood of sacrifice and sprinkles it on the lid of the ark. The ark represents the judgment throne of God, yet the seat of this throne is called the Mercy Seat!
 - The ark always went before the people.
- Why is such great care taken in building the tabernacle? Why was the tabernacle designed in this way?
- **The tabernacle was the hub of worship.**
 - This is where a sinful people would express their devotion before a holy God. This is where the priests would offer sacrifices and offerings on behalf of the people.
 - Exodus 29:42-46 highlights God's purposes in having his people build the Tabernacle. *Read 29:42-46*
 - The place where "I will meet with you." (42, 43)
 - The place where God "speaks to" his people (42)
 - The place "sanctified by his glory." (43)
 - The place where God "will dwell" (45)
 - The place where God "will be their God" (45)
 - All of this to give them a personal knowledge of God... Let's not underestimate this. We know God! Be amazed. This is why the longer I live I am simply not impressed with name-dropping. I know them. I met them. My aunt's grandma's cousin got a DM from them last week. Who really cares?

Don't miss how this is connected to what we just discussed concerning the design of the tabernacle pointing to the holiness of God. When we come to worship, we are coming to worship a holy God.

We should be amazed that God would choose to dwell with man. But it gets better, this temporal structure gives way to a permanent structure as Solomon built the temple after settling in the Promised Land. But it gets much better than that! The temporal presence of God among his people becomes his permanent presence through the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's true and better presence with his people!

- **John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."**
 - "... and pitched his tent among us . . . and tabernacled among us."
 - God dwelling with man.
 - Immanuel: God with us.
 - The humility. The immanence. The grace to come to us. All other gods say "come to me. Work..."
 - The Incarnation screams God is near.
 - The Incarnation screams God cares.

T: Now, how does God dwell with his people today? By the Spirit of Christ. That brings us to our second truth this morning.

II. God dwells in his people today by the Spirit of Christ (Ephesians 2:18-22)

- One of the primary images for the people of God in the New Testament, the church, is "the temple of the Holy Spirit."
- **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive,**

because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17)

- When someone comes to Christ. . . (Conversations with S. after CG. Ready to follow Christ!)
- The Spirit is the empowering presence of God in us! He gives life, adopts us, seals us. He sanctifies, comforts, and encourages us. The Spirit guides us, gifts us, and reminds us of all truth. The Spirit goes with us, because the Spirit is in us! If you are in Christ, then Christ is in you!
- Before God dwelt among his people. Now he dwells in us!
- God is closer than your fingertips. He is closer than your next heartbeat. You can't wrap your mind around that. Don't worry. You don't have to in order to believe it and be transformed by it!

- The church is the new temple, being built together into the dwelling place for God, and from this image we learn [many important truths]. I want to give you two.
- Just as God's people gathered at the tabernacle and the temple to worship God, so **we who are filled with God's Spirit are to be a worshiping people.** We gather to worship, and we from our gatherings to worship until we get together again.
- We are people who now, offer, not the sacrifices of goats and bulls but the fruit of lips that confess the name of Christ. We worship not by simply singing songs or praise, and hearing the Word, and prayer, but we worship by giving our entire lives to God.
- **“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)**
- Jesus is Lord over everything in our lives. [What he says goes.]
- Ephesians 4:30 – “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” We should be grieved when we grieve the Holy Spirit of God.
- 1 Thess 5:19 – “Do not quench the Spirit.”

- We should be a worshiping people, and **we should be a relational people.** The Spirit brings us into a relationship with God and builds us into a holy temple. With Christ as the cornerstone, we are being built together. This is what Ephesians 2 tells us. . .
- **“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”**
 - The Spirit brings the people of God together into one beautiful building.
 - Pic: What happens when you remove a stone or a stone is not healthy and functioning properly.
1) It takes away from the beauty of the church. 2) It takes away from the strength of the church. 3) It is potentially destructive to the church.
 - The Spirit is what draws us together and provides our identity. One of my favorite things about the church is how it draws people from different backgrounds, different nationalities....
 - Consequently, the Spirit gives us fellowship. You have Christ. I have Christ. What else really matters? Seriously.

Conclusion:

God has promised his presence... Revelation 21. No temple because the presence of God dwells there forever. So be encouraged!

During trial. He is with us. (Is 43:1-5)

When lonely. He is with us (2 Tim 4)

For the Mission. He is with us. (Matt 28:18-20) Great Commission! This week in CGs...

Are we relying on his presence? Do we find comfort in his presence? Do we find power in his presence?