

February 1

Exodus 35- 40:38

Today will be my last installment on Exodus. Even though you will have two more chapters to read in Exodus tomorrow, I am combining February 1st and 2nd of your readings because of some repetition in the material. As for tomorrow's topic? It's a surprise!

In what you have read so far, God was giving Moses detailed instructions on the dimensions and construction of the Tabernacle and every item in it. Chapters 35-39 are an equally detailed account of how Bezalel and Oholiab oversaw the construction of the Tabernacle and every item in it. In the earlier chapters, God was saying 'this is how you should do it.' In these chapters we are told 'that is how it was done.'

There is one little insertion that I will tell you about in chapter 38. You will remember that earlier this week we read about the redemption tax of one-half shekel (or one beka) that was to be received from every adult male at the time of a census. The money collected was to be used to support the ministry that occurred in the Tabernacle. The record of the first census is contained in chapter 38. There were 603,550 men over the age of 20 who were counted and the silver and bronze collected was used to produce the bases and hooks for the posts of the tabernacle and for the bronze altar and utensils. All the other materials needed for the construction of the Tabernacle were freely given by the people, who brought so much material that Moses finally had to call off the offering and tell them not to bring any more materials. They had more than enough! (Wouldn't it be great sometime to have an offering like that?!)

The ending of your reading tomorrow is at the conclusion of Moses' 40-day encounter with God on Sinai. Exodus 40:34-38 talked about the glory of God, which settled on the Tabernacle in such a tangible way that Moses could not even enter it. Here's what I want for us to notice:

God's presence and God's glory were very tangible, observable things. When Moses came back down off the mountain with the new tablets containing the Ten Commandments, he didn't know it, but his face so reflected the presence and the glory of God that Aaron and the people were afraid to come near him. Perhaps their fear was in part reflective of the rebellion against God they had so recently engaged in and which brought His judgment down upon them.

LA- the following paragraph is his opinion but I thought he made some good points so I kept it in...plus the material was shorter today.

At the risk of spiritualizing just a bit, I think that this is significant. To the extent that we have really been with God, and to the extent that His presence and power are really present with us and in our church communities, there cannot help but be an awareness of that among those who are watching us. I have on rare occasions been in the presence of individuals whose experience of God was so fresh and so real that

their faces literally shone - you could see it. The same kind of reaction that the children of Israel had toward Moses is found in the New Testament in the fifth chapter of Acts, where we are told that the presence and reality of God was so evident among the early apostolic community, that though the people held that first church in very high regard, they were also afraid to join them. Attracted, but also afraid, because the power and holiness of God was so clearly evident in the lives of the people. I long for the day when the people in our communities will be able to actually 'see' and sense the glory and power of God in the midst of the church!! Somehow I believe that when that happens, a lot of the programs and organizations that we rely so much upon to get God's work done will become both unnecessary and redundant. Things will happen then much more naturally and spontaneously because everyone will know that God is with us.

The very last paragraph of the Book of Exodus leaves us with the Tabernacle in place, and the cloud, assuring the people of the presence of the Lord resting over it. When the cloud lifted and began to move, then Israel would break camp and move with it. When the cloud stopped, they stopped - a cloud by day and pillar of fire by night to assure them of the presence of the Lord to guide them in the way and on the path that they should go.

Now they had the right order - they followed God - wherever He went, they went. When the cloud moved, they moved. When it stopped they stopped. Sometimes we get it backwards. Because He has promised His presence to us, just as to the Israelites, we get too comfortable, and instead of making sure that we stay with Him, we expect that He will stay with us. Instead of following wherever He may lead, we expect that we can go wherever we choose and the cloud will follow us! There was a very interesting book of prayers written by a liberal clergyman back in the late 1960's. Its title was Are You Running With Me, Jesus? You see, that man, like some of us, got it backwards. The Israelites would never have asked that question. The real question is, "Am I running Lord with you?"

In closing of our time today, I wanted to leave you with a summary of Exodus.

One main character - Moses.

One main theme - redemption.

Four main divisions:

Chapters 1-12 showed us Israel in bondage with highlights of Moses at the Burning Bush and the Passover.

Chapters 13-18 we read about the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and moving to Sinai.

Chapters 19-24 we learned about the Book of the Covenant and The Ten Commandments. Within the Ten Commandment we saw how they were divided into two parts: our relationship with God and our fellowship with other men.

Chapters 25-40 - gave instructions for worship and the Tabernacle. It highlighted, or should I say "lowlighted" the incident of the building of the golden calf and Israel's apostasy.

There you have it! Do you think you would be able to now explain a summary of Exodus if you were asked? I know that our tour through this exciting book is going to prove to be a very great blessing to you - not only because it will fix in your minds the significant events and concepts that we have studied, but also because it will provide you with a rich background that will able you to better understand the unfolding of God's plan of redemption in the New Testament. There are so many references and allusions to the Book of Exodus that I know you will be amazed at how often you come back to the things we have learned in this book.

Go ahead and finish reading Exodus 39 and 40 for February's 2nd readings, but like I said earlier I will introducing a new topic tomorrow....so tune in, you don't want to miss it!