



Leaves From the Tree

Studies from God's Word

In 2005, Pastor Tim Bourgeois began a daily bible reading to encourage Tree of Life Christian Church and the larger body of Christ to read the entire Bible cover to cover.

The following series of articles are transcripts of Pastor Tim's original emails.

Please use these articles for meditation, personal devotion, Bible study, or your own daily Bible reading.



EXODUS 34 - 40

Exodus 34

34:1-3 - "Now the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered. So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain."

After their interaction at the tent of meeting, the Lord calls Moses to meet Him again on Mount Sinai as before. Moses is to cut out and bring with him two blank stone tablets similar to the tablets the he broke when he descended the mountain before. The stones are to be blank because the Lord is going to once again write the Ten Words representing all of His Law on them like He did before. The Lord is going to write these words on the stones Himself to be a permanent testimony in stone that the Law is His and not the invention of Moses. In every generation since then, men have been inclined to believe that the laws were invented by Moses or even taken from the laws of the cultures around them. The Lord knew the natural inclination of men to dismiss Him as a divine Lawgiver, and this simple act of again writing the Law Himself proves the heavenly origin of the Law.

This meeting with the Lord will include receiving the rewritten tablets and a rehearsal by the Lord of the beginning of the rest of His ordinances and statutes (Exodus 34:17-26). The Lord will essentially repeat to Moses much of what He had previously declared in chapters 20-22. The repetition is significant and should be understood as a covenant renewal. The entire circumstance of how Moses was called up to the mountain is intentionally similar to his first time there to receive the Law. Moses leaves for the summit early in the morning, the animals must not trespass the mountain, any other people must not trespass, and Moses will spend another 40 days in the Lord's presence receiving this second proclamation of the Law. The Law was broken before it could even be delivered and the breaking of the two tablets effectively symbolized the complete failure of the people to receive the Law as they should, let alone faithfully keep it. Now, the Lord is in a sense rewinding and renewing the covenant document between them.

34:5-8 - "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship."

In the last chapter we saw how Moses had, in a burst of spiritual boldness, asked the Lord for the greatest possible thing. He had cried out for the Lord to show him His glory. The confirmation that there is no greater prayer we can pray than that is the focus of the concerns of the Lord Jesus when He prayed for Himself and His disciples just before going to the cross. "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24). Jesus ends His prayer with a request that His disciples would be granted to see His glory. The Lord is now going to answer the prayer of Moses and show him His glory. Remember that Moses cannot see the full glory of God and survive, so Yahweh will shield Moses in the cleft of a rock and cover him with His hand, then he will pass by and allow Moses to see His afterglow. This passage is the fulfillment of what God had promised Moses. Yahweh descends in the pillar of cloud and stands with Moses on Sinai. He then passes by Moses. As He passes by, the Lord begins to proclaim His name to Moses. He does more than just say "Yahweh", He declares a message to Moses. The message is a declaration of some of the attributes of God's nature and character. We saw in yesterday's study that the glory of God is more than just bright light that our eyes can perceive. The glory of God is the external expression of His divine essence.

We should notice that the Lord is not shy to declare His own perfections. Among human beings, when a person does something like what the Lord did here we rightly label them as conceited and arrogant. If I said things like this about myself you would say that I am full of myself, and you would not mean that in a complimentary way. The reason it is always wrong and prideful for a person to speak of themselves in that way is that it is just not true. Even the best human beings are flawed and imperfect. On the other hand the Lord is flawless and perfect. For Him to proclaim His own goodness to us is doing us the greatest favor of directing our attention to the prototype that we were all originally modeled from. We can only become more like Him as we should by seeing Him as He actually is in all His perfections.

The specific attributes or qualities that God declares here are not all that He is, but these understanding these qualities of God will establish the right foundation

for a life long relationship with Him. What is Yahweh really like? Don't listen to people who read the Old Testament and come away slandering the "God of the Old Testament" as mean, spiteful, arbitrary, etc. Instead listen to what the Lord reveals to us about Himself. This is what He is like in truth. Yahweh is "...compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin..." Yet, He is also the One Who "...will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations." In a summary, Yahweh is the perfect parent to His children. He loves them, cares for them, is patient, merciful, and gracious to them, but He is also firm and will allow no blatant disregard toward Him or the rules of His house. As Moses receives this revelation of God's glory and the declaration of His name, he responds in the most appropriate way by quickly bowing down in His presence and worshipping Him.

34:9-10 - "He said, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession." Then God said, "Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you."

The Lord's declaration of His compassion, graciousness, and patience strengthens Moses to immediately intercede once more on behalf of wayward Israel. Moses asks God to forgive not just "their" sins, but "our iniquity and our sin." Even though Moses was on the mountain and did not participate in the rebellion of the golden calf, he fully identifies with the failure of the people he leads and leans heavily here on the mercy of Yahweh. Moses will not be disappointed in the depth of the Lord's gracious compassion for Israel. They don't deserve it, but the Lord's grace has nothing to do with human deserving and everything to do with divine generosity. The Lord does forgive, and more than that He is going to once again fully embrace Israel as His special possession among all the nations of the world. The pattern of the intercession of Moses and the compassionate answer of Yahweh is one which displays the great mercy and grace of God toward us as an imperfect people.

We all sin in our relationship with the Lord and fail to maintain our faithfulness to Him as we should. When we sin and repent, the Lord is always faithful to forgive us and restore us to relationship with Him (I John 1:9). What the Lord does here though is more than just forgiveness, as great as that is. If the Lord only forgave us when we sinned, we would always be sliding backwards into a worse spiritual condition because of the effect of the sin before the moment of our forgiveness. The forgiveness of the Lord wipes our record clean as if we had not sinned, but it does not carry us forward into a new place. The focus of forgiveness is toward

the past. We must be forgiven and our past transgressions resolved, but we also need the Lord to lead us forward to a new and greater place after being forgiven. This meeting between the Lord and Moses is all about the commitment of the Lord to carry Israel forward even after their great failure. The Lord renews the covenant with Moses and with Israel and in doing so, the Lord is promising to not leave them where they sinned, but to take them on into the Promised Land and the fulfillment of His purpose.

As the Lord is going to carry His people forward from the failure at Sinai, and eventually into the possession of the Promised Land, they are not going to see a diminished expression of God's power on their behalf. The Lord gives them Moses a promise for Israel that is way out of proportion as a blessing to how they have behaved. He promises, "Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD..." What is particularly encouraging about this promise for me is in considering what they had already witnessed of God's miracles. They had seen the ten plagues, the Red Sea split, The Red Sea drown Pharaoh's army, the manna, the water from the rock, the visible glory cloud, and the awesome presence of the Lord on Sinai. Even considering all this, the Lord says that the best is yet to come! The miracles ahead of them in the plan of God are greater than the miracles behind them. This is the way of the Lord in His graciousness. The Lord has not already used up all His power in our lives. As much of His power as He has shown us, the greater works of God on our behalf are still ahead.

34:28-35 - "So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. It came about when Moses was coming down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moses' hand as he was coming down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because of his speaking with Him. So when Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers in the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them. Afterward all the sons of Israel came near, and he commanded them to do everything that the LORD had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out; and whenever he came out and spoke to the sons of Israel what he had been commanded, the sons of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone. So Moses would replace the veil over his face until he went in to speak with Him."

For the forty days of this time on the mountain with the Lord, he did not eat or even drink water. This is physically impossible to survive for that long without

water to drink. Moses would have died of dehydration long before the end of the forty days, or if he had somehow managed to survive, his internal organs would have been damaged beyond repair. Yet, Moses does not suffer and returns down the mountain in a better condition than when he ascended. The only explanation is that he was sustained by the glory of God. The Lord maintained the health of his body without any physical provision. This was only the first of the greater miracles that the Lord would do in the days to come. It is also a preview of the heavenly existence we will all forever enjoy following the Second Coming of Christ and the great resurrection of our bodies. We will be transformed and given renewed bodies that suffer no needs such as hunger or thirst. Moses was not resurrected here, but in the direct presence of God's glory which is the sustaining power of the resurrection bodies we will have, he was given a foretaste of our future.

When Moses spent that forty days in the glorious presence of God, he was changed by the experience. He did not return the same man. He was not at first aware of any change in himself, but discovered the change through the reactions of the people that met him in camp. They were at first frightened by what they saw when Moses returned. The skin of his face was shining. We are not given any exact measurement of how bright it was, but it was bright enough to frighten the people who saw him. What the people saw was the reflected radiance of God's glory that had in a sense soaked into the skin of the face of Moses. The afterglow of God's glory that Moses was allowed to see on the mountain had penetrated him and was now shining out from his face. Moses then covered his face with a veil for his interactions with the people. When he met God in the tent of meeting he would remove the veil and soak up more glory. The reflected glory of God did not immediately fade from his face as soon as he left the Lord's presence, but it would eventually fade unless he returned to the direct presence of the Lord. We know that the glory faded over time because of the description of Paul of this circumstance.

"But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was," (II Corinthians 3:7). The reason this was a fading glory was that it represented the glory of the Old Covenant and the Law. Both the Law and the covenant were given by God, and were therefore glorious, but neither was intended by the Lord to be the permanent form of His relationship with His people. Both were preludes to the New Covenant and the coming of Christ into the world. The glory of the first was fading, but the glory of Christ is unfading and eternal. The glory of the New Covenant is continually renewed in us and unfading. This has direct application for how the Lord changes us in our Christian life. Moses looked at God's afterglow and was so changed that he glowed with the same glory. We spiritually look at an even greater expression of God's glory when we look directly at Christ. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory..." (II Corinthians 3:18).

Questions from Exodus 33:

Question: Why does the Bible sometimes refer to Mt Sinai as Mt Horeb.

Answer: The mountain was known in ancient times by both names. The region was inhabited by more than one tribal group. Most likely the names originated from different tribal names, but was commonly understood by all the people in the region which mountain was in view. This would be similar to the mountain today in Alaska known as both Mount McKinley and Denali.

Question: Chapter 33:11 - God used to speak to Moses face to face. Is this a literal translation? Is Moses speaking to God face to face seeing Him?

Answer: Yes, the translation is literal or accurate, but it does not mean that Moses literally saw God's face. In the same chapter God warned Moses that no one could see His face and live (Exodus 33:20). What the Lord meant when He said that He had a face to face relationship with Moses was that they had a close intimate relationship. It is a way of describing that they communicated directly to each other. God communicated to all of Israel, but only indirectly through Moses. He did not have a face to face relationship with them. We still have a similar figure of speech today when we ask someone to "say it to our face" rather than "talking behind our back." We do not mean that they are actually talking directly behind us or that we want them to speak to our face rather than us, but that we want a direct communication with them. This was that kind of figure of speech to the Hebrews then.

Exodus 35

35:1, 4 - *"Then Moses assembled all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and said to them, "These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do: ... Moses spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded, saying, for six days work may be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy day, a sabbath of complete rest to the LORD; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death."*

The crisis of the golden calf rebellion is now over. The intercession of Moses on behalf of Israel was answered by the Lord with a declaration of His intention to establish a covenant between Himself and Israel. Rather than send Israel on ahead toward the Promised Land without His presence in their midst, the Lord now confirms His intention to go forward with Israel by directing them back to His original purpose. The original purpose of the Lord was for Israel to construct a sanctuary for the Lord to dwell in their midst (Exodus 25:1-9). Their sin with the

golden calf threatened all of that, but now the Lord brings them right back to where they left off before their sin. This establishes a pattern of the Lord's mercy and restoration grace that He continues to follow in our lives today. When we sin or rebel against the Lord we veer from the path that the Lord had marked out for us to follow. When the Lord forgives us, He no longer holds it against us that we veered from His path, but we are still standing off of His path however far our sin took us from His plan. The Lord is gracious to redirect our lives after our rebellion by bringing us back on course with Him. We should expect, that when the Lord is bringing us back on course, that like Israel this will mean returning to where we left off when we were last walking in obedience to the Lord.

The Lord does this here in chapter 35 and through the next several chapters as He repeats commands and instructions He has previously given to Moses. The repetition is critical and necessary for Israel. They cannot presume that they are still to build the tabernacle just because they were told to do so before. The Lord rehearses His instructions to build the tabernacle to confirm that their rebellion delayed the fulfillment of their assignment to build, but did not change their assignment. This is an awesome display of God's grace that He would still build through them His holy place in spite of their great failure. As you read through these next chapters and read instructions a second time that we have previously studied in the preceding chapters, just remember that ever time the Lord repeats Himself in these chapters it is a powerful declaration of His gracious restoration of Israel to His original purpose.

The Lord begins His restoration instructions for Israel by repeating His command for them to honor Him in the keeping of the sabbath day. This rehearsal of the sabbath commands is the starting point for the command to begin the work to build the tabernacle. The placement of this sabbath section is not incidental, but intentional by the Lord, and it subtly speaks to a symbolic order in the work we are called to accomplish in our own service for the Lord. The sabbath is the law requiring the people of God to rest. Before Israel began the work of building the tabernacle, they were first to rest. The principle that applies is that the people of God work from rest. Remember, the tabernacle is a symbol of a new creation work of God. All of the work accomplished in the new creation flows from our rest in the Lord. The rest of the sabbath is a symbol of the spiritual rest we enjoy because of the work of salvation being finished by Christ upon the cross. Putting these elements together, we have an image showing that the New Covenant, new creation work of building the church follows and flows from the cross.

35:5, 21-22, 29 - "Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the LORD'S contribution: gold, silver, and bronze, ... Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the LORD'S contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments. Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so did every man who presented an offering of gold to the LORD... The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved them to bring material for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD."

These verses woven together from different sections of this chapter repeat the same theme regarding the contribution for building the tabernacles three times. The theme is that the contribution was a freewill offering to the Lord and was taken from those whose hearts were willing, whose hearts moved them and whose spirit's moved them. The Lord wanted Israel to be absolutely clear that there was to be no compulsion to give to this project except as their own heart compelled them to give. The Lord wanted no external compulsion applied to them by Moses or any other leader of Israel. This implies that the Lord only wanted contributions that came from the heart. This tells us that the Lord values the attitude and motivation of gifts to Him more than the actual gift. The Lord has no need for the gift itself, but He does desire a certain attitude in His people's hearts when they give to Him. If that attitude is not in their heart, it would be better for them to keep their gift rather than dishonor the Lord by giving to Him reluctantly or grudgingly. The issue really boils down to one of value. If we do not value the Lord and His work enough to contribute to it with a stirred spirit and willing heart, then it would be better to keep for ourselves what we were so reluctant to part with, and the Lord will stir the hearts of others to meet the need for His work to be accomplished.

When churches take offerings for the Lord, it is critical that the leadership keeps this understanding of what matters most to the Lord in the forefront. While it is not unimportant how much we give to the Lord, the real concern should be how, or in what attitude and perspective we give to the Lord. Sadly, too many offering messages focus on how much is needed to meet a certain budget, rather than on encouraging the perspective and attitude that truly honors the Lord in our giving. In part, this pattern exists out of fear among church leaders that if the amount needed is not emphasized, that the giving will fall short of the need. I cannot speak for any other church, but in our congregation we have followed what we believe to be the Biblical pattern for church giving for our nearly twenty years now, and the Lord has always been faithful to meet our needs. We do receive offerings, but have always done so with gift boxes rather than "passing the plate." We study together the purpose of the Lord in our giving, and the value we gain,

rather than lose, when we honor the Lord in our giving. Without ever focusing attention on budget needs, the Lord has faithfully stirred the hearts of His people to give so that we have had enough to pay our own obligations, and with enough left over to share by giving to other works in God's kingdom.

The other principle that is highlighted by this reminder of the call of the Lord for His people to contribute is that our commitment to the work of God is cemented by our contributions to that work. "...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21). We could say it this way; our heart tends to follow our treasure. When we contribute that which we treasure to the work of the Lord, our hearts are anchored to that work in a healthy way. It functions as a spiritual investment. It is not an investment like the investments of this world where the entire goal is to make more money. Instead, as we invest in the work of God as He stirs our hearts, we find our hearts more, not less connected to that work. It is the wisdom of the Lord to involve the hearts of His people in this practical way with His work.

35:30-35 - "Then Moses said to the sons of Israel, "See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge and in all craftsmanship; to make designs for working in gold and in silver and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings and in the carving of wood, so as to perform in every inventive work. He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to perform every work of an engraver and of a designer and of an embroiderer, in blue and in purple and in scarlet material, and in fine linen, and of a weaver, as performers of every work and makers of designs."

Moses now delivers the Lord's message that He has called especially skilled men to oversee and perform the work of constructing the tabernacle. Bezalel was filled with the Spirit of God and equipped to be the master builder working directly under the supervision of Moses. Moses was shown the pattern of the tabernacle and all its furnishings and he would be responsible to direct Bezalel to carry out all the work in exact detail. Bezalel did not do all of the work himself since the project was more than any one person could accomplish. He was given his own assistant with special skills whose name was Oholiab. The two of them were given grace by God to perform the most important parts of the construction and especially those parts requiring special skill. Their skills specialized in different but complementary areas. For instance Bezalel was a master working with gold, silver, bronze, gems and wood, while Oholiab specialized in working with the various fabrics used for the tent of meeting and the priesthood garments.

This principle remains a key to fruitful Christian ministry today. Each of us is given our own areas of service by the Lord (our assignment) and is given the grace necessary to accomplish the work He gives us (our spiritual gifts). None of

us can accomplish God's work in isolation from the other members of the body of Christ. What I do well by the grace of God, you cannot. What you do well by the grace of God I cannot. It is in the combination of us all playing the individual parts God has given to us that His work is accomplished and He is most glorified. Paul compares it to the way our physical bodies are designed by God (I Corinthians 12:11-21). We have a wide variety of different body parts. All of the parts of the body are important and each plays its role in the healthy function of the whole body. It is necessary that we have both eyes and ears. If we were all eyes we would see very well, but hear nothing. The eye and the ear work together for the good of the body, each contributing the service it was designed to provide for the whole.

There is one other important element in the work of Bezalel and Oholiab that we should develop. "He also has put in his heart to teach, both he and Oholiab..." The Lord put it in the hearts of Bezalel and Oholiab to teach. The teaching the Lord moved them to do was in addition to doing their own work on the tabernacle. Both of them did their own part of the construction work, and also carved out time to teach others. The focus of this teaching was not doctrine, or Bible study. This teaching was to pass on to others a measure of the understanding and skill the Lord had given them for the work. Bible study is critical for the health of every church, but there is this category of teaching that is also important and often gets overlooked in church life. The things the Lord has taught us in our own assignments we should pass on to others, especially those who are called to do work similar to our own.

Questions from Exodus 34:

Question: 34:9 - "...I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst..." - has Moses intercession caused God to "change His mind" and now be willing to go along in their midst (Ex 33:3)?

Answer: Yes, the intercession of Moses was accepted by the Lord, and the Lord relented or changed His mind and went forward in the midst of Israel as Moses had prayed. The Lord's answer in 34:10 to this prayer by Moses is the beginning of the confirmation of His answer. The Lord told Moses that He was going to make a covenant with Israel. This is a significant promise of commitment by the Lord toward Israel. There was already a covenant with Abraham, but the Lord could have wiped out Israel and still fulfilled His covenant promise to Abraham by starting over with Moses. Now, the Lord commits, not just to Abraham, but to all Israel.

Exodus 36

36:1-2 - "Now Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skillful person in whom the LORD has put skill and understanding to know how to perform all the work in the construction of the sanctuary, shall perform in accordance with all that the LORD has commanded. Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab and every skillful person in whom the LORD had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to the work to perform it."

With this section the actual construction of the tabernacle began. The work was overseen by Moses, but performed and supervised by Bezalel and Oholiab with help from other skilled workers. No part of the tabernacle was made by anyone without skill or who had not been called by the Lord to the work. There are two important principles regarding our spiritual service in God's kingdom we can draw from this. The first principle is that only those who are called by God into His service actually serve. Bezalel and Oholiab did not choose their roles for themselves. This was not a career decision on their part. They did not volunteer in the sense that they decided when, where, and how much to do in the Lord's service. Both of them, just like Moses at the burning bush were drafted into the Lord's service by the Lord. The Lord did not consult with either of them first to determine if they were agreeable to what He had planned for them. He just selected them, appointed them, and put them to work. The Lord does not overstep any boundary of righteousness in doing so with anyone He chooses. He has every right to choose and call anyone He wants into His service. There are two reasons which establish His rights over our lives. First, it is by His creation we exist at all. Because He made us He has the right to use us as He sees fit. Second, it is by His salvation that our lives have any purpose at all. Because he saved us in Christ, we owe our entire life to Him and any service He calls us to perform for Him is not sufficient for us to express the gratitude we owe Him.

The Lord Jesus emphasizes this principle of His sovereign choice in the lives of those He calls to serve Him. "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain..." (John 15:16). It is common to refer to our choosing of the Lord as the starting point of our salvation experience, but the Lord Jesus intentionally made the exact opposite emphasis. He wanted His disciples (and us) to understand that their relationship with Him did not begin with their choosing Him, but Him choosing them. Even the way Jesus first called them to follow Him makes this point. Whether they were mending nets, or raising taxes, Jesus found them and called them to follow Him. Their only choice was in response to His choice of them. The correct emphasis is significant. It sets the tone, right from the beginning of our relationship with the Lord in establishing who is really in charge, us or Him.

Paul was called the same way on the road to Damascus. He was an opponent of Jesus and had no intention of believing in Him, let alone serving Him. Yet, when

the Lord decided, He interrupted Paul's life and drafted him into kingdom service. Like Bezalel, Paul was not free to determine his own job assignment once he was drafted. Because our nation today no longer has a military draft, and sustains our armed forces by volunteer enlistment, it is has been necessary to even allow volunteers to choose their own preferred assignments while they serve in order to attract as many as possible. The Lord does not entice anyone into His service with pledges of enjoyable assignments. He lays His sovereign hand upon us, makes us His own, then tells us what duties He has chosen for us.

The second principle of kingdom service that we can infer from this passage is the way the Lord pre-develops skills in His servants before calling them to serve. In this case, Bezalel, Oholiab and "every skillful person in whom the LORD had put skill" had developed skills useful to the Lord's purpose before the work of the tabernacle ever began. There is no indication that the Lord chose people with absolutely no skill, and then miraculously endowed them overnight with special skills for the tabernacle construction. He did fill Bezalel with His Spirit for the work, but the Spirit's presence we could say enhanced the skills he already possessed, rather than created new skills he did not possess. The importance of this point is for us to consider the sovereignty of God in our own life development even before our salvation.

There are certain abilities and skills which we individually have learned or developed. How are those skills and abilities to be used to serve the Lord in His kingdom? This does not mean that we serve by natural ability alone. We, like Bezalel, need to be filled with the Spirit of God and for Him to enhance with His power and grace any skill we may possess as we apply it to fulfill our own assignments from Him. As an example from my life, I applied myself in a greater than average way to develop my reading skills from a young age. I had probably read more books by the age of 20 than the average person does in their lifetime. I did not know the Lord at that time, and in my perspective, I simply enjoyed reading a lot. However, looking back with a spiritual perspective, I believe that the development of reading skills was influenced by the Lord to equip me for the work He had in mind to assign to me once I was saved. Those same skills are now applied on a daily basis in reading His Scriptures, and the many theological reference works that I use as tools for my kingdom assignment.

36:3-7 - "They received from Moses all the contributions which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work in the construction of the sanctuary. And they still continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. And all the skillful men who were performing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work which he was performing, and they said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the LORD commanded us to perform." So Moses issued a command, and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp, saying, "Let no man or woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary." Thus the people were restrained from bringing any more. For the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work, to perform it."

When Moses first received the instructions from the Lord for the construction of the tabernacle, he was told to raise a contribution from the people (Exodus 26:2). The Lord had already prepared the people for this contribution by supplying them with all they would need for the offering by treasures they plundered from the Egyptians. Now that the construction was ready to begin, the first step was for that contribution to be taken. Moses was to take the offering and then pass it on to Bezalel and Oholiab for the work. When the contribution was raised there was a surprising result. The people brought all that was needed for the total construction project and more. They brought a significant amount the first day, but they continued to bring additional offerings every morning as the work began.

Israel was far from perfect in their spiritual condition, as we have seen before. They tended toward doubt rather than faith. They quickly complained when things did not develop as they anticipated or preferred. They all too quickly turned their hearts from the Lord to the golden calf when Moses delayed coming down from the mountain. Yet, with all their flaws and issues, they had their shining moments. This moment was their best moment since leaving Egypt. This offering tested their hearts to see how they would respond to the Lord's call to give, and whether they would value their own house above the house of the Lord. They failed many other tests in the wilderness, but this is one test they passed and in which they excelled.

The people responded with such generosity that Moses was compelled to send out a message throughout the camp of Israel. He had to proclaim for everyone to stop bringing their contributions because they had already given more than enough. How many church offerings today would match this more than enough response from Israel? What an awesome expression of God at work in the hearts of His people that the leader had to tell them to stop giving, rather than the all too familiar begging for more that so many church leaders practice today.

Exodus 37

37:1-5 - "Now Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood; its length was two and a half cubits, and its width one and a half cubits, and its height one and a half cubits; and he overlaid it with pure gold inside and out, and made a gold molding for it all around. He cast four rings of gold for it on its four feet; even two rings on one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. He made poles of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold. He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry it."

The work of the construction of the tabernacle had begun. The first furnishing of the tabernacle to be made was the ark of the covenant. It is the innermost piece of furniture in God's house and reflects the pattern that the Lord follows in His work. God is a God of order and design. The order of construction of His house is no less significant than the order of arrangement of the same furniture. We saw in a previous study that each piece of furniture was placed in a specific order in the tabernacle to reflect a progression in the work of redemption and sanctification of His people. The construction order has a similar importance. The principles of how God works in our lives that are reflected by this order have to do with where the ark was placed and what it represented.

The ark was placed in the innermost room. It represented the throne of God in heaven. The entire tabernacle as a whole symbolizes the new creation work of God. As that relates to us as individual believers, the connection has to do with our new birth in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). When God begins His recreation work of salvation in the life of a believer, He does not begin with changing the outside, but the inside. The Lord goes to the core of who we are and removes our old heart and replaces it with a new heart. Salvation is so much more than "turning over a new leaf" in the sense of some changes in outward behavior. Eventually, all the behaviors of a believer are changed, not by natural behavior modification, but as an outflow of a transformed heart. That changed heart leads to a transformed mind which then leads to a changed life including behavior. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2). The word translated "transformed" in this verse is the Greek word from which we get our word metamorphosis. It describes an internal change that produces an external change. It is the term we apply to the change a caterpillar undergoes to change to a butterfly. A butterfly is more than a caterpillar with wings glued on. The caterpillar enters the cocoon as one thing and emerges as another. The transformation begins inside the caterpillar and is eventually expressed in a complete change of form and behavior.

The ark representing the throne also corresponds to the first lesson of our discipleship to the Lord when we are born again. The first lesson that a new believer must learn is that God is now enthroned in their heart, and not

themselves any longer. All of us have lived from our first breath under the illusion that we are in charge of our own lives. The natural man's entire life is a continuing effort to strengthen their control over their own life. As the famous atheist poem, Invictus proclaims, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul." It is that arrogant root of pride that the Lord first moves to sever when He moves into our heart and establishes His throne.

37:17-24 - "Then he made the lampstand of pure gold. He made the lampstand of hammered work, its base and its shaft; its cups, its bulbs and its flowers were of one piece with it. There were six branches going out of its sides; three branches of the lampstand from the one side of it and three branches of the lampstand from the other side of it; three cups shaped like almond blossoms, a bulb and a flower in one branch, and three cups shaped like almond blossoms, a bulb and a flower in the other branch--so for the six branches going out of the lampstand. In the lampstand there were four cups shaped like almond blossoms, its bulbs and its flowers; and a bulb was under the first pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the second pair of branches coming out of it, and a bulb under the third pair of branches coming out of it, for the six branches coming out of the lampstand. Their bulbs and their branches were of one piece with it; the whole of it was a single hammered work of pure gold. He made its seven lamps with its snuffers and its trays of pure gold. He made it and all its utensils from a talent of pure gold."

All of the furnishings of the tabernacle functioned on two levels at the same time. One level was practical as each furnishing served different practical purposes in the services of the tabernacle. The second level was that each piece of furniture served a deeper, symbolic purpose. We have covered the symbolic connections of each of the other furnishings in previous studies except for the lampstand. The Hebrew word translated lampstand is menorah. Most are familiar with the general shape and appearance of menorahs. The one difference between traditional menorahs and the tabernacle menorah is that the traditional versions have nine branches while the tabernacle menorah had seven. Like all of the other furnishings the menorah / lampstand pointed to some aspect of the person or work of Christ. The obvious connection is found in the words of Jesus when He proclaimed, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." (John 8:12). Since the menorah was the only light source in the tabernacle it effectively made the point that the only spiritual light in a fallen and darkened world is God's Son.

The main purpose of the lampstand as a light also has a connection to the church as well as the Lord. There is a key New Testament correlation to the tabernacle lampstand that is drawn for us. We do not have to guess or speculate about this connection since the Lord makes it for us in a vision that He gave to the apostle John in the book of Revelation. "Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in

the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash... As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches." (Revelation 1:12-13, 20). This is the first vision that John received in the book of Revelation. He saw the Lord Jesus revealed to him in His heavenly glory. The Lord was standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands. Then the Lord Jesus spoke to John and gave him an explanation of what he had seen. The seven golden lampstands were shown to John to represent the seven churches that are addressed in Revelation chapters two and three. There were seven churches addressed and John saw seven lampstands. Each church is represented by a lampstand. In the continuation of the Lord's purpose the church serves in each place it is established by the Lord as a light to the world representing the truth of the gospel in that place.

The details of the lampstand's construction develop one more symbolic message regarding the lampstand. The details are summarized in these terms; base, shaft, branches, cups, bulbs, flowers, almond. All of these terms give direction for constructing its shape but also point to different elements of one symbol the lampstand represents. These terms are all corresponding to botanical terms and specifically a tree. The lampstand when finished was meant to evoke the image of a tree. The base points to the roots of the tree, the shaft to the trunk of the tree, and the branches to the branches of the tree. The cups, bulbs and flowers indicating the three stages every fruit bearing tree passes through that we identify as the bud, blossom, fruit stages. Because of the other Garden of Eden elements in the tabernacle we are safe to identify the lampstand as a symbol of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. In this connection, the lampstand points first to Christ and by extension also to the church. Christ is the tree of life in the sense that He is the only source of eternal life. The church bears the fruit of the gospel by proclaiming Christ alone as the source of eternal life.

Interestingly, the lampstand was a particular kind of fruit tree by God's design. He chose for it to represent the almond tree. Why the almond tree from all the fruit trees that He created? The almond tree bore a special distinction among all fruit trees of the Middle East, and does even today. It is known as the first fruits tree. This is because the almond was the first fruit that fully developed and was ready to eat among all kinds of fruit trees each spring. The Lord chose for the lampstand to be a firstfruits symbol for a reason. This New Testament description of the resurrection of Christ makes the connection for us. "But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead." (1 Corinthians 15:20-21). Christ was the first human being in all of history (in fact, He is still the only person so far) to be raised from the dead, never to die again. A few people in the Bible were raised from the dead, only to die again later. Christ rose from the dead and lives forever. He was not raised to His former natural life condition, but with a resurrection body that will live forever. The almond was

therefore a symbol of the resurrection. The tree imagery also connects with the crucifixion of Christ because the cross was called a tree (Galatians 3:13). These two connections of the cross and the resurrection are the foundation of the gospel of eternal life. Christ is a tree of life for us because of His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. The church is a fruit bearing tree of life as it represents Christ by pointing people to the cross and the resurrection.

Questions from Exodus 36:

Question: The Scripture reads "he made" over and over through out the verses regarding the making of all the items. Making it sound like only one person was doing all the work. Is this a poor interpretation of the orig. word used? Does "he made" really mean "they made" or, is "he" in reference to the Lord being the true maker?

Answer: No, the translation accurately reflects the original Hebrew here. The emphasis that Bezalel made the things listed should be understood on two levels at the same time. First, he actually did personally make many of the things in the tabernacle, especially the intricate gold work like the lampstand for instance. This was because he was very skilled and had been filled with the Spirit of God for that purpose. The second level is that even the work actually done by Oholiab and the other skilled workers could properly be described as being made by Bezalel. Since he was the direct supervisor and responsible for all their work, anything they made carried his seal of approval so to speak. We use a similar description still today when we refer to something being made by a well known person who produces fine products as a business. If a car is "made by Ferrari" we do not mean that the car was personally made by Enzo Ferrari, but that he established the design, and has personally supervised its production. The work bears his name because it meets his high standards.

Exodus 38

38:8 - "Moreover, he made the laver of bronze with its base of bronze, from the mirrors of the serving women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting."

This verse is a brief repeat of the earlier description of the laver with one new detail added. The detail is in the source of the bronze that was contributed for the construction of the laver. This bronze was not taken from the general contribution of bronze that was used for other items in the tabernacle such as rings, sockets, and pegs. The bronze used to make the laver was taken from a collection of mirrors contributed by women who later served at the doorway of the tabernacle. This is the first mention of these women in all the tabernacle descriptions and we do not have much additional information to add to our understanding of their role.

They apparently served each day at the doorway leading into the courtyard surrounding the tent. They may have helped keep the area clean with all of the animals that passed through the doorway as they were brought for sacrifice. Another possibility is that they were there to aid the women who approached the tabernacle to offer sacrifices. There are two additional mentions of women serving at the perimeter of the tabernacle / temple later in Scripture that show this role continued all the way through the Old Testament and even until the time of Christ (I Samuel 2:22, Luke 2:37).

There was a practical reason why this particular bronze was used to construct the laver, but it also communicates a spiritual meaning as we should expect. The practical reason had to do with the quality of the bronze used in mirrors. Women in ancient times appreciated the ability to see their own image in a mirror just as they do today. The difference is that there were no glass based mirrors in those days. Mirrors were made from metal that was shaped into oval discs with a handle on the bottom for holding. The metal was polished until it was able to reflect the image of the person looking into the mirror. These mirrors were not as capable of reflecting the degree of detail that the mirrors today reflect, but they were still prized. Most likely these were Egyptian mirrors that were taken when Israel plundered Egypt, since mirrors were not commonly owned by slaves. The quality of bronze varied since it was a mixed metal. The bronze from these mirrors was used to construct the laver because only highest quality bronze was chosen for mirrors due to the standard required for the reflection. In other words, the highest quality bronze was saved for the laver.

There are a couple of spiritual elements highlighted by this detail. First, the Egyptian mirrors were commonly decorated on the handle of the mirror with depictions of various gods of Egypt. The donation of the mirrors resulted in them being melted down for the laver. As a result, the daily small reminder of the old life in Egypt each time the mirror was used was forever lost and reformed into a daily expression of the cleansing required when entering God's house. Second, the relatively small personal sacrifice each of these women made of not being able to check the state of their own beauty was combined to make an essential furnishing of God's house. The greater beauty of their sacrifice and commitment to the worship of God pictures the emphasis shifting from their own beauty to the beauty of the Lord Whom they worshipped.

38:21 - "This is the number of the things for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, as they were numbered according to the command of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest."

This is the only time in Exodus that the name "the tabernacle of the testimony" is used. In a previous chapter we saw the ark called the ark of the testimony. The testimony was the two stone tablets upon which God wrote His Ten Words (Ten Commandments). Now that the tablets of the testimony had been carried down

the mountain by Moses, they were to be placed inside the box of the ark once Bezalel finished making it. Then the ark would be placed in the innermost room of the tabernacle. The presence of the tablets permanently within the tabernacle identified their purpose with the house of the Lord. The testimony translates a Hebrew word that also means a witness. It describes a legal function. The concept is in a trial, before a verdict is reached, witnesses are called to give their testimony of the facts in dispute and establish the truth of the situation.

Once the tablets were placed within the tabernacle, then the entire structure functions as the tabernacle of the testimony. The testimony in view here is God's own testimony because the tablets were written by Him, not by any human hand. The Ten Words are the witness of the truth that God gave to the world in the Old Covenant. Remember, the tabernacle / temple as a whole represents the church, which is identified as the temple of God in the New Covenant (Ephesians 2:20-22). The Lord caused the tablets of His testimony to live in the core of the tabernacle. In the same way today, the Lord has planted His Word in His New Covenant temple of the church. The church is God's witness and testimony in each generation because the church alone possesses and proclaims the special deposit of the truth, which is the Scriptures, God's Word. "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you." (II Timothy 1:13-14).

38:24-31 - "All the gold that was used for the work, in all the work of the sanctuary, even the gold of the wave offering, was 29 talents and 730 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. The silver of those of the congregation who were numbered was 100 talents and 1,775 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary; a beka a head (that is, half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary), for each one who passed over to those who were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for 603,550 men. The hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary and the sockets of the veil; one hundred sockets for the hundred talents, a talent for a socket. Of the 1,775 shekels, he made hooks for the pillars and overlaid their tops and made bands for them. The bronze of the wave offering was 70 talents and 2,400 shekels. With it he made the sockets to the doorway of the tent of meeting, and the bronze altar and its bronze grating, and all the utensils of the altar, and the sockets of the court all around and the sockets of the gate of the court, and all the pegs of the tabernacle and all the pegs of the court all around."

This is an inventory taken of all the precious metals contributed for the construction of the tabernacle. There were three kinds of metal that were collected; gold, silver, and bronze. There was a considerable amount of each metal contributed. The 29 talents of gold equaled about 2,220 pounds of gold which at today's prices would be valued between 22-25 million dollars. That would just be the value of the raw metal, not including the much higher value in

its final form in the artistic shaping and hammerings that Bezalel produced. Beyond the practical elements these three categories of metals and how they were used in different sections of the tabernacle display a symbolic message. The gold was used for items in the interior of the tabernacle only. Silver and then bronze were used for furnishings and tent construction further out from the center of the tabernacle. The closer to the interior of the tabernacle the more valuable or glorious the metal used. The further out from the interior, the progressively less valuable and glorious metals were used.

The picture portrayed even in this detail of the construction was that the closer to God one drew, the surroundings became progressively more beautiful and glorious. The message is 1) God is Himself ultimately beautiful and glorious and His house reflects His glory, and 2) Beauty and glory are relative experiences from our perspective. The closer we are to God, the more of His glory we will see and experience. The further we are from Him the less glory we will perceive.

Questions from Exodus 37:

Question: When they made the ark and the lamp stand He instructed them to overlay a pure gold in it. What is the connection of pure gold to the things God instructed to make? What is the symbol for that in our days?

Answer: Gold was the most valuable metal used in the construction of the tabernacle. It was also the most brilliant of the three metals used in the project; gold, silver and bronze. It most perfectly represented the beauty and glory of the Lord. Pure gold in particular represented the absolute holiness and purity of God. Today, there is only one symbol (that is really not a symbol, but the fulfillment toward which all of the Old Testament symbols pointed) that perfectly represents what the pure gold of the tabernacle was meant to portray. Christ is all of the beauty and glory of God in human form. Christ is the pure gold today.

Exodus 39

39:2-3 - "He made the ephod of gold, and of blue and purple and scarlet material, and fine twisted linen. Then they hammered out gold sheets and cut them into threads to be woven in with the blue and the purple and the scarlet material, and the fine linen, the work of a skillful workman."

This section repeats the instructions for the special garment that the high priest was to wear while ministering in the tabernacle. Once the garment was completed, Aaron would be consecrated and then clothed in it. Whenever Aaron wore this garment he was representing as a spiritual type the heavenly ministry which the Lord Jesus now fulfills. One of the practical additions to the ephod was that it was to have interwoven in the gold, blue, and scarlet materials special gold

thread. The thread was actually gold after Bezalel hammered out thin sheets of gold and then cut them into threads. It was possible to hammer gold to thousandths of an inch thick. These fine gold threads woven into the fabric would cause the entire garment to shine and reflect the light in a glorious way. This was a fittingly glorious garment for the one who represented the heavenly high priest of the New Covenant. "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." (Hebrews 4:14).

When the apostle John was granted a vision of the Lord Jesus in His ascended, heavenly glory, what he saw he described for us in the book of Revelation. "and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength." (Revelation 1:13-16). It was not physically possible to perfectly reflect the heavenly glory of our high priest, Jesus, with garments made even by men filled with the Holy Spirit, but the garment that was made came as close as possible.

30:19-21 - "They made two gold rings and placed them on the two ends of the breastpiece, on its inner edge which was next to the ephod. Furthermore, they made two gold rings and placed them on the bottom of the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, on the front of it, close to the place where it joined, above the woven band of the ephod. They bound the breastpiece by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a blue cord, so that it would be on the woven band of the ephod, and that the breastpiece would not come loose from the ephod, just as the LORD had commanded Moses."

The breastpiece of the high priest was to be secured to the ephod with four gold rings at each corner of the breastpiece so that it "would not come loose from the ephod." In the breastpiece were set the twelve precious stones. Each stone represented one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The breastpiece was worn over the heart of the high priest. The relationship of the twelve stones to the heart of the high priest is that he would continually bear the names of the tribes of Israel upon his heart as he ministered in the presence of the Lord. In this passage, the rings that attached and held the breastpiece secure hold their own symbolic significance. It was these rings that kept the names of Israel secured to the heart of the high priest.

The rings indicate our security in our relationship to our great high priest. He represents us in the presence of His heavenly Father. Jesus bears our names, not just as tribes, but as individuals upon His heart at all times. We will never slip away from His heart. Nothing can or will ever separate us from His love and

commitment to us. Just like a golden wedding ring symbolizes the love and commitment between two people, these rings show us in symbol that quality and purity of His love and commitment to us. Never be afraid that the Lord has somehow forgotten you or let His commitment to you slip. Those who belong to Him are always in His heart and on His heart.

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." (John 6:37-39).

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." (John 10:27-29).

39:30-31 - "They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and inscribed it like the engravings of a signet, "Holy to the LORD." They fastened a blue cord to it, to fasten it on the turban above, just as the LORD had commanded Moses."

This plate of pure gold was the final piece of the high priest's garments. It was placed over the fabric turban he wore on his head. The plate was identified as "the holy crown." It was engraved with the inscription "Holy to the Lord." The inscription was a simple message that the high priest wore upon his head every day as he served in God's house. He was marked as holy unto the Lord. It meant that he was set apart from the world and all the spiritual defilements of the world and that he was dedicated exclusively and completely to the service of God. This holy crown that Aaron wore represents Christ in three aspects. The first aspect is that it symbolized the sinlessness of Christ. He alone among all men was spiritually qualified to serve as the holy high priest because He alone among all that have ever lived never sinned. "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15). The second aspect that the holy crown represented in the high priestly ministry of Christ is that He is separate from a corrupted world. "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;" (Hebrews 7:26). The third aspect of Christ's high priesthood reflected by the holy crown is that His priesthood takes place at the throne of God in heaven and not in the earthly tabernacle. "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." (Hebrews 9:11-12).

39:32-33, 42-43 - "Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was completed; and the sons of Israel did according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses; so they did. They brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its furnishings: ... So the sons of Israel did all the work according to all that the LORD had commanded Moses. And Moses examined all the work and behold, they had done it; just as the LORD had commanded, this they had done. So Moses blessed them."

At this point all of the construction of the various parts of the tabernacle was complete. The people had contributed all that was required to make every part. Bezalel, Oholiab and the other skilled workmen had each done their assigned parts in making everything just as they had been instructed. All of them then brought everything that had been made to Moses for his inspection. Only Moses was qualified to inspect their work because only Moses had been shown the pattern of the tabernacle and its furnishings by the Lord on Sinai. After his careful examination, Moses declared the work well done, and blessed the people for having completed their obedience to the Lord. There are two parallels to this scene that point both backward and forward in time and reflect the way the Lord works among His people according to His plan and purpose.

Looking far back in time, the examination by Moses is intentionally reminiscent of this description from the end of the original creation week. "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts." (Genesis 1:31-2:1). When God finished His work of creation on the sixth day, He stopped and carefully examined all of His own handiwork and pronounced a blessing upon the entire creation. This pattern was carried forward with Moses representing the Lord as he examined the work of the tabernacle. This is one more of the many symbolic connections of the tabernacle as a picture of the new creation.

Looking forward in time, in the New Testament, Paul describes the final day of judgment as a time for all believers to be examined by the Lord. "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work." (I Corinthians 3:10-13). Each of us has been called by the Lord to contribute our own skilled (gifted) work to the construction of His house, the church. On that day, we will have our own contribution examined closely by the Lord to determine whether our work has been pleasing to Him and according to the divine pattern of what He wanted the church to be. What will matter most when He examines our work is not the amount of our work, but the quality of it.

Exodus 40

40:1-3 - "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall place the ark of the testimony there, and you shall screen the ark with the veil."

The tabernacle construction was now complete. All that remained was for the tent to be set up and the furnishings to be placed where they belonged. As mentioned previously, once the outer coverings of the tent were erected, the first piece of furniture to be brought in was the ark of the testimony. The ark was first because it was the most important furnishing of all. Since it represented as a symbol the throne of God in heaven, it was appropriate to establish it first. The Work of God always begins with Him at His throne. It was from His throne that God originally created all things and by setting the ark in the tabernacle first, the imagery of the new creation work of God in the tabernacle is displayed in its erection just as it was in its construction.

The Lord arranged for the work of the tabernacle to be completed coinciding with a specific day on Israel's new calendar. He ordained for it to be set up on the first day of the first month of the calendar year. This calendar was not the old way of marking time, but the new calendar that the Lord gave to Israel exactly one year ago. "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you." (Exodus 12:2). When the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt, He marked the beginning of their new life with a new way of recording their history. Now, on the first anniversary of the new calendar the tabernacle would be set up. This is yet another way to show the theme of the new creation in the tabernacle. When God made all things in the beginning, He did so in a week of six days of work and one day of rest. That week established the first calendar for the world. The new work of creation defined the way time was marked and history recorded. In other words, God's work of creation gives meaning to our understanding of time and history. In the same way, the new tabernacle redefines history, and so it was fitting that it was set up on the first day of the first month signifying a new beginning for the people of God as God's tabernacle is finished.

40:12-13 - "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the tent of meeting and wash them with water. You shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister as a priest to Me."

As the tabernacle was completed, the next step was the consecration of the priests who would enter the tent and serve the Lord within his house. Aaron and his sons were brought to the doorway of the tent. There, at the doorway, they

were to be washed with water before they were allowed to enter the tent. This final ritual of washing before the beginning of their service as priests serves as a Old Testament image of New Testament baptism. The location of the washing points directly to the place water baptism has in the life of every believer in the New Covenant. For the Christian, water baptism is intended as a pattern to be followed in a chronological order immediately following salvation and preceding our service to the Lord that follows. Jesus Himself chose to submit to water baptism by John as His first step before beginning His public ministry (Matthew 3:13-15). Baptism is the only requirement ever connected to our salvation experience after faith in the gospel (Matthew 28:19). Baptism is the first step of obedience Peter instructs the new believers on the day of Pentecost to follow (Acts 2:38). In each case, we should see that water baptism functions as a "doorway" ritual in the New Covenant. It symbolizes the entrance into our new life in Christ. Water baptism does not create the new life we receive in Christ, but it does portray it in a picture of the cleansing of our lives to prepare us for our new life. Baptism is a doorway ritual in the sense that it describes in a practical act of washing the start of a new life.

Following the washing with water, Aaron and his sons entered the tent and began to serve. In the same way, once we have believed the gospel and been baptized in the New Covenant we enter into our own service to the Lord. From the point of our salvation and then baptism, our lives are to be characterized as no longer belonging to ourselves, but to Him. We belong to the Lord Who saved us, and set us apart from our old lives through this washing. Our lives were in a sense always about service, even before our salvation, but before we served only ourselves, while now we serve only Him. Baptism then is a kind of induction ceremony. In it we are declaring that we have been once and for all inducted into His service.

40:34-35 - "He erected the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the veil for the gateway of the court. Thus Moses finished the work. Then 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 had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

Bezalel and his skilled co-workers did the actual construction work, but it was reserved for Moses, representing the Lord, to finish the work. "Thus Moses finished the work." There is a key New Testament parallel to this in the final words of Jesus on the cross. "Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." (John 19:30). The work of Jesus on the cross is the finish of the plan and work of salvation. When Moses finished the work of the tabernacle, the next development was probably unexpected for all of Israel watching, but was the fulfillment of what God had announced from the beginning of the project. The Lord had said to Moses in their first meeting on Sinai, "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that

I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8). God's purpose for the tabernacle was to provide a dwelling place for Himself, so that He could dwell in the midst of His people. Up until this point He had been with them in a relationship of relatively close proximity, but He was always somewhat separate from them. The cloud covering His glorious presence was always just ahead of the camp of Israel in the journey so far, and had settled on top of Sinai while the people camped at the foot of the mountain.

Now that the tabernacle was finished according to the exact specifications of the Lord in every detail, the cloud moved from the summit of Sinai down the mountain and settled directly upon the tabernacle covering it. The cloud did not remain near the tabernacle, but actually entered the tent and filled the tent. As the cloud filled the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord also filled the tabernacle. This was not a meteorological phenomenon of unusual weather, this was the presence of the Lord entering His own custom house once the house was finished and ready to move in. When the Lord moved in to His house, it was not just to visit, but to stay. This was now the dwelling of God; His home. We could use a familiar description and call the tabernacle His home away from home. This is because the Lord's home remained in heaven, but He was also showing that He now, for the first time had an acceptable home in the earth also.

This pattern of the finished house of God followed by the Lord moving into His house is repeated for us two more times in key events later in history. We should link these three events together in order to understand the progression of the Lord's purpose through history. The tabernacle will continue to serve as the Lord's house for approximately 500 years after this day. Then, in the days of King David, the Lord will give to David a new plan for the construction of a new and more permanent home for Himself in Jerusalem. That new home will be the temple of Solomon. The Lord gave the plan for the temple to David, but instructed Solomon to build it. This passage describes what happened the day Solomon finished all the work on the temple. "then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God." (II Chronicles 5:13-14). We can see that the Lord responded to the completion of the temple the same way He responded to the completion of the tabernacle. The cloud of the Lord filled the temple and His glory filled it. That was also the end of the usefulness of the tabernacle. When God moved into the temple, He also moved out of the tabernacle. The temple was His new permanent home and replaced the tent, which was then destroyed. As God's purpose moved forward from one dwelling place to another, He removed the old dwelling so that His people would not be confused over which was His dwelling place.

The third, and final dwelling place of God in history, is revealed in the New Testament. "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them

tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4). On Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled each the brand new church of God with His presence there were special signs that He gave. Everyone who was filled with the Spirit had a visible tongue of fire upon their heads. This was meant to be a small visible reminder of the pillar of smoke by day and fire by night that represented the Lord's presence in the wilderness and which filled the tabernacle when it was complete. The new dwelling of God on the day of Pentecost was the church of believers in Christ. He moved into the church on that day. The church became His new and permanent home replacing both the temple and tabernacle. We who belong to Him by the salvation that is only in Christ are the New Testament dwelling place of God. "having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:20-22).