

“That I Might Dwell Among Them”

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[0:00] Take a seat. And please turn in your Bible, which should be one in front of you, to Exodus chapter 25. It's on page 65 of the Blue Church Bible.

! We're just going to be reading from 25 verses 1 to 9, and then flipping over to chapter 29 from verse 38. I think we've got five chapters of Exodus this morning, so you'll be glad to know we're not reading every word, but hopefully you'll go home, and this week we'll read some of it.

So Exodus 25 from verse 1 on page 65. The Lord said to Moses, Speak to the people of Israel, that they may take for me a contribution.

From every man whose heart moved him, you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them, gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twisted linen, goat's hair, tanned ram skins, goat skins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil, and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece.

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and all of its furniture, so you shall make it.

[1:36] Then chapter 29 from verse 38. Now this is what you shall offer on the altar, two lambs a year old, day by day regularly.

One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. And with the first lamb, a tenth measure of fine flour, mingled with a quarter of a hin of beaten oil, and a quarter of a hin of wine for a drink offering.

The other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord.

It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.

There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory. I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar.

[2:36] Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them.

I am the Lord their God. Amen. That is God's word to us, and it will help to keep those pages open, and let us pray for God's help as we look at his word.

Father, we thank you that your word endures forever, and we pray especially this morning, as we come to pages that are unfamiliar and detailed, that you would lift our eyes to see more of you, your character, of your son Jesus, and of your wonderful purposes in our salvation in him.

This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I wonder, get you thinking, what would it take to lay a mountain flat on its side?

How much money? How much time? How many diggers? Maybe that seems impossible, but how about this? What do you think it would take to press the reset button on the whole of planet Earth?

[3:58] Just take us back to before, kind of everything went wrong, whenever you think that might be. How much time? How much money? How many meetings?

Now we're in the realm of pure fantasy, you think. But here's one harder still. What do you think it would take for the God of the universe to make his home with us here on Earth?

Indeed, what would it take for the holy, pure, and perfect God of heaven to make his home with unholy, impure, indeed sinful people like me and ye here on Earth?

If you can believe it this morning, we're going to get the answer to all those questions in the next big section of this book of Exodus, because the Lord here is setting out a plan to do all of them in these

instructions for this special tent or tabernacle.

Now, like so much of Exodus and the Bible, it can all feel a bit overwhelming, the level of detail here. I guess in the week I was thinking, some of you are starting new jobs or new courses, and maybe it feels a bit like reading about the tabernacle.

[5:16] People are talking to you about plans and projects that you just don't know anything about, or you're getting tasks that you don't even know where to begin with. Reading about the tabernacle, it's a bit like that.

It's disorientating. However, we need to lift our eyes and see the big picture this morning. We're going really quickly.

I don't think I've ever preached on five chapters of the Bible at once before, but the alternative with the tabernacle is that we go slowly, and it's a death by a thousand tent pegs, and no one wants that. So today is about zooming out from the details to grasp something of the big picture. Why the pattern? Why the details? Why the tent at all?

Thankfully, Exodus gives us a few runs at the tabernacle, almost the whole rest of the book. Fifteen chapters is mainly tabernacle, which actually tells us how important it is for us to grasp something of this.

[6:21] For context, that's the same number of chapters as the whole narrative of God rescuing his people out of Egypt, the Prince of Egypt bit that we all know and love, in the first fifteen chapters.

So while we're not going to take as long as that to walk through it, it is just as important for the point of this book. We certainly don't have to get all the point today.

The thing to begin getting today, though, is this, that the Lord sums up in those words we just read from chapter 29. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God, and they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell with them. That I might dwell with them. Let's see then the pattern, the pattern. Over a period of forty days and nights on Mount Sinai, God showed Moses the pattern for the tabernacle.

I last used a sewing machine about half my life ago in school. I've never picked it up again. I don't know that much about clothes and design, but I take it that if you were to make something using a sewing machine, you would start with a pattern, a sort of template that you might pin onto a bit of fabric and cut around it so that the fabric is the right shape, the right size, so that when you sew it together on the machine, it looks as it's meant to.

[8:00] Well, as with clothes, so with the tabernacle. But Moses wasn't left to thumb through the pages of Tents Quarterly or do a search on his stone tablet to find a pattern for God's tent.

Now, have a look. Chapter 25, verse 9, the Lord tells Moses, let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell in their midst exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and all its furniture, so you shall make it.

You get that word again in 25, verse 40, see that you make them after the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain. Again, 27, verse 8, as it's been shown you on the mountain, so it shall be made.

You get the picture. Moses is not in a kind of creative collaboration with God, you know, each of them throwing in ideas. This is God's preset pattern.

The architect's drawings have been signed off, as it were. Moses just needs to take this pattern and use it and make it exactly as he has been shown.

[9:11] So it is a pattern set in heaven for a tent to be made on earth. A heavenly design for an earthly home.

And what better design for God's dwelling place on earth than his dwelling place in heaven? That's the thing with a pattern, isn't it?

With a pattern, it's not the original. The point of a pattern is that it can be replicated. If God is showing Moses a pattern of his home, then something like it must exist already.

And Hebrews, which we read from at length earlier, helps us join those dots up. In chapter 8, it says, now the point in what we're saying is this, we have such a high priest, one who's seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.

For when Moses was about to build the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, see that you make everything according to you, the pattern that was shown you on the mountain. So there is a true tent, as it were, in heaven, which is the pattern that has been copied onto the earthly tent.

[10 : 36] The Christ has entered not into holy places made with hands, which are the copies of the true things, says Hebrews, but into heaven itself, the true thing.

now to enter into the presence of God on our behalf. So what are we meant to see in the tabernacle? It is a pattern of heaven itself.

It is the courts of heaven, God's true eternal home, mapped onto courts of fabric and curtains and altars on earth, where he would make his home among them.

Why the angels stitched into the walls of the holy place? Why the gold, the most valuable and durable metal that they had available to them on every surface?

Why the throne room, curtained off from everyone with the ark inside where the Lord will meet with you and speak with you? This tent is a little heaven on earth, like a model train set where everything is scaled down to size.

[11 : 46] So the tabernacle is, if you like, a model heaven where the Lord would live with his people. There's the king's kitchen, if you like, in the outer court where the sacrifices, the blood and entrails were prepared and burned on the altar.

There's the king's dining room inside the tent, the table laid with bread, the candles lit, the incense burning.

And there, of course, is God's throne room in the holy of holies, shielded from view where God sits enthroned upon the cherubim. Now, if this is stretching, we've actually already seen something of this in Exodus already.

If you were here last time, remember in chapter 24, verse 9, when Moses and the priests and elders, they went up the mountain and they saw the God of Israel and there, under his feet, as it were, was a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

Heaven come down to earth. And it was the same pattern, remember, the outer court at the foot of the mountain, the holy place on the mountain, the holy of holies at the top of the mountain.

[13 : 02] I asked at the start, what would it take to lay a mountain flat on its side? Well, here it is. For the Lord to lay Mount Sinai flat on its side, all he needed to do was copy the same heavenly pattern again, this time not only, not onto a mountain, but onto the ground.

Sinai is a vertical tabernacle, or the tabernacle a horizontal Sinai, but both are copies of the heavenly pattern of God's true and eternal home in heaven.

Now, to blow your mind even more, those are not the only copies, but more on that next week. I say all of this because it's so easy, isn't it, to get bogged down in the technique for making an almond tree-shaped lampstand out of a single piece of hammered gold?

All the dimensions and measurements of these kind of goat skin sheets that are knitted together to make the tabernacle tent, all the details. Now, the precision is important, but only because of what the whole thing is there to represent, a little heaven on earth with all its beauty, glory, radiance, like a little embassy embassy in another country.

You need to stand in that embassy is to stand in that country, both legally and also experientially. I've never had the privilege of standing in an embassy building before, but I take it that wherever I was in the world, if I stepped into a British embassy, I would not only legally and technically be in Britain, but I would also feel like I was at home.

[14 : 55] The furniture, the flags, the accents, the ways of doing things, the tea bags, whatever, a little Britain in another place.

So to step into the courts of the tabernacle was in a sense to step into God's heavenly home. The furniture, the curtains, the utensils, the words and the worship, the finery, the glory, the beauty, both legally and technically, but even in their experience, coming into God's tent was to come truly and really into God's dwelling place.

And brothers and sisters, that is how we should read these chapters of Exodus, not as a dry rule book of piddling details, but as the pattern and plan for God's glorious embassy on earth.

So that's your homework this week, is to read these chapters in full and try not to get bogged down, but keep that big picture in mind and you might even enjoy it.

No doubt we'll still feel in over our heads, but seeing the big picture helps us see what's going on in these chapters. This tent is built on a pattern that God showed Moses on the mountain to be a copy of his true home in heaven.

[16 : 24] But what do we do with that? What were they to do with that information? Having seen the pattern, God calls us now to step in with his people.

This is our second point, step in with his people. chapter 28 signals a shift from God forming the tabernacle to God filling the tabernacle.

So far we've had instructions about the structure and layout of the tent, but 28 verse 1 begins, then bring Aaron your brother and his sons with him from among the people of Israel to serve me as priests.

So now God puts people in his place to serve him in a special way. Now these guys, Aaron and his sons, were specially set apart for that priestly work.

All the instructions that come next are to do with them getting ready to go in and serve in the tabernacle, the special clothes and oil, sacrifices, tools for the job, even an ordination.

[17:28] But if we're going to understand any of that, we can't skip over these four all-important words in verse 1 from among the people.

From among the people. So yes, they're set apart, but fundamentally the priests are part of the people. And so they are set apart to represent the people, stand for the people as they come and go from God's presence.

That's underscored by some of what they have to wear. Just have a look, 28 verse 9, you shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone in order of their birth.

As a jeweler engraves signets, so you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. You shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree, and you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his two shoulders for remembrance.

And so as Aaron the priest stood in the holy place before God, he was bringing with him in effect everyone who stood outside. Their names were graven, as it were, on his hands.

[19:00] Indeed, chapter 28 verse 29, their names were written on his heart. Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breast place of judgment on his heart when he goes into the holy place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the Lord.

And so we know that while Aaron the priest stood in the holy place, no tongue could bid his people to depart. Often we read about the regulations for Old Testament worship, and we get the feeling like God is making it really difficult for people to come to him.

So perhaps he didn't really want his people too close. You know, he could put up with a few, but all of them, no. Well, true, it was harder to come and worship God then, but it could not be further from the truth that God did not want his people drawing near.

why were the priests allowed into the holy place, the very courts of heaven, to eat and drink with God if not because they represented all his people coming into the holy place.

There they were in and through their priests. Now that's still a barrier we might say, but 28 verse 30, notice part of what Aaron is doing in the tent is to bear the judgment of the people of Israel on his heart before the Lord regularly.

[20:29] So there he is in their place, bearing their judgment as well as bringing their praise before God. The breastplate is there to protect God's people in a sense.

Aaron is the human shield between God and his holiness and his people in their sin. And so the priests are there so that all the people could go into God's tent in and through them in spite of their uncleanness and impurity and not be consumed.

So the priests were not like bouncers, kind of stopping God's people coming in. Think of them more like firefighters stepping into the consuming fire so that all the people might then enter in.

on our holiday we had some lovely mornings on the beach. I saw something shocking however. Some people, if you can believe it, were taking their phones with them into the sea.

Not just paddling around in the waves but right in under the water on their paddle boards and lilos and diving and splashing around. How could they have been so reckless, we think?

[21:43] Don't they know their phone will be destroyed in the sea? The phones however were not destroyed because they were sealed inside a special water tight plastic wallet that went around the people's necks.

The phone could go in the sea therefore as much as it wanted as long as it was sealed inside the protective casing and it would not be harmed at all.

So with God's people stepping into his presence they were all in a sense sealed inside the protective container of the priest their names engraven on his body so they could go into the holy

place as much as they liked as long as they went through their sacrifices sealed inside their priests and as if God knew that we would need convinced that he really does want them want us drawing near the names of his people weren't just written once on the priest but twice once on onyx stones and again even more precious stones 28 verse 17 topaz emerald sapphire diamond amethyst jasper there will be 12 stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel again step back isn't it amazing that for all of the the richness the cost the finery of the priest's work wear that the most precious and valuable thing the priest put on to go to work had the names of God's people inscribed upon it that is how much we are loved wanted precious to God in his presence that our names the names of his people were inscribed on these precious stones on the priest's body and brothers and sisters how much more has he shown us in Christ how precious we are to him loved wanted our reading from Hebrews described Jesus as the true and better priest who offered a true and better sacrifice and brought it into the true and better holy place so that in him and through his sacrifice on the cross we can now come into God's presence with no fear of his holiness his anger against our sin because we come in Jesus Christ who has satisfied God's anger against us through his death once for all so truly if our trust is in him our names are graven on his hands and our names are written upon his heart so that we know that while he stands in heaven our great high priest no tongue can bid us to depart from

God's presence friends if you've never truly come to God maybe you've kept yourself at a distance thinking that you couldn't come he wouldn't want you you're not ready know that you can come today through Jesus Christ the curtains of the tent were costly but Jesus body was costlier he was torn open like a curtain says Hebrews on the cross so that impure unworthy people like me and you could come in through him into God's holy presence the Bible says God showed his love for us supremely in this that while we were still sinners he gave up Christ for the ungodly it would be one thing it says if he had given up his one and only son for people who were mostly fine or even religious and church goers the Bible says he gave himself up for people who had no interest no intention ever coming to him perhaps that's you today so that we would be saved from our sins and truly love and worship him know him enjoy him and enter into his presence then of course he was raised from the dead ascended into heaven and he now bears the names of all who trust in him before the father he speaks our names before his throne so that we are never out of the thoughts and warmest affections!

[26 : 23] of God in heaven but always and forever treasured loved accepted forgiven whoever we are this morning if you're not following the Lord Jesus if you've been on the road with him many years we can confidently enter the holy places with all God's people today by the blood of Jesus as we rest our faith in him and draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith you cannot come without him like coming to God without that plastic wrapping your phone in the sea will be utterly destroyed and ruined we cannot come into God's presence without being encased in Jesus Christ and so if you have not as yet come to him been sealed in him rested your faith in him you can do that today and enter

God's presence and not be consumed step in with his people come in says God come in through my great high priest Jesus Christ which leads us into our final point this morning finally let's praise God for his purpose which is even better than that we would dwell with him because it is that he would dwell with us topping and tailing these instructions God states his clear purpose behind wanting a tent like this built for him have a look again 29 verse 45 I will dwell among the people of Israel and be their God and they shall know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them as Christians we often remind ourselves of what it is we have been saved from and that is really important

Exodus has shown us dramatically what God saved his people from in Egypt the tyranny of the serpent king Pharaoh the darkness and heaviness of their oppression and the power of this world the hardness of their own hearts towards him and his rule and so we are absolutely right to praise God for saving us from the tyranny of the devil the darkness of the world the sin and the hardness of our own heart but often that is where our praise and even our prayers and our practice ends before we have thought much about what God has saved us for incidentally that's why we've chosen not to break up our long series in Exodus into two normally we wouldn't sit in the same book for the best part of a year but the whole point of Exodus requires us to hold it all together God's rescue of us is not only from but for we've been learning over the summer that he saved us for relationship with him that we know him what he's like and therefore live in his way in the world he

saved us for a new identity to be his treasured possession in the earth a kingdom of priests a holy nation he saved us from slavery but not full stop instead he has saved us from soul crushing slavery to the serpent king of this world but for life giving service to him as our creator and redeemer so now he tells us most wonderfully that he has saved us not only from living in the house of slavery but for him himself to come and make his home with us that is the big reason he says I saved you out of the land of

Egypt so that you might know me and that I might dwell among you we've thought on and off in our series in Exodus about the firstborn son kidnapped trafficked across the world held in awful slavery and the father who has never forgotten never given up vowed to save his son who would stop at nothing to set him free what is it that drives that dad's single minded purpose surely not only that his son would be safe and free from slavery but that their relationship would be restored and reunited that his son would know him that he is trustworthy that he loves him that he has sought him and found him and freed him that he is mighty to save and so that they might dwell together again live as a family under the same roof brothers and sisters like that father

God has saved us for himself yes of course that we would be safe eternally and free from sin but those things so that we would know him as our loving father in heaven trust him as our savior and provider that we would be his people and he would be our God and he might make his home among us and that is just what he has done supremely in the Lord Jesus Christ speaking of his coming John writes in his gospel the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth the night before he went to the cross Jesus says if anyone loves me he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him in Christ and by the

[32 : 38] Holy Spirit God has come to dwell with us his people and that is a totally life changing truth you might not feel that as you read about the instructions to do with the tabernacle and yet we are never alone if we are part of God's people he promises he is with us to the very end of the age he is in us by the Holy Spirit and so as we go from here every step we take through this world he is dwelling among us and that is worth us isn't it praising him for he who is eternal seeks fellowship with dust he who is holy seeks friendship with sinners he who has saved us has come among us to live with us forever not for anything in us or anything that we have done but for everything in him and so that we might receive the blessing of knowing his grace goodness power majesty holiness love personally live as his family and dwell with him now and forever praise be to

God let's praise him as we pray and then as we sing together father we do praise ye the God of all eternity that you in your greatness and in your holiness have not kept yourself far from us or cast us off but in Jesus you've drawn us near we thank you that in him we are seated before your throne thank you for the access that we have to you through our faith in Christ we thank you that he bears us before you that he speaks and prays for us before your throne and so we can always come like children to a heavenly father before you we thank you all the more father that you have come to dwell with us thank you that you the triune God have made your home among your church your people we pray Lord that that truth would lift our hearts show us our true identity our purpose in this world as we praise you for what you have done and for what you are doing and what you are going to do in our Lord and Savior

Jesus so we praise you in his name amen may may