

From The Golden Calf To The Tabernacle

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- [0 : 0 0] Thank you very much. Well, we are now going to do verse by verse study through four chapters of Exodus. No, we're not really. Much comments would allow us to just trust God that this is his word and it's good for us.
- And then say some comments now so that when we hear some more, we hear it with a fresh understanding of why it's so detailed. And so if you want to have your Bible open at these chapters, please do so.
- Chapters 35 to 38. But I'm going to be making some general observations about these. So let me pray.
- Lord, we thank you so much for your word. Your word endures. Your word is life. Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.
- And we thank you that while the earth will pass away, your word will remain forever. And so please would you teach us your word. May your Holy Spirit illuminate your word to each heart here.
- [1 : 2 9] And may you be your teacher. In Jesus' name, for his glory. Amen. Well, I'm glad that we've been able to see all these visuals as we hear the words of Exodus 35 and 36 and following.
- It's not often that we would go through four chapters of Scripture on one Sunday. But not just four chapters. A meticulous record of details about the tabernacle and all its parts.
- It's not often we do this. And you might be fascinated by all these things. Or you might be completely uninterested. But if you've ever only been used to reading your Bible in short readings, then this will seem strange and excessive.
- But for instance, a medical student will be used to reading a lot of detailed textbooks about anatomy. A lawyer will be used to reading laws with a fine tooth comb.
- A person building IKEA furniture will carefully read over the instructions, unless they're a man, in which they just throw it aside, go for it, and have to backtrack halfway through.
- [2 : 3 7] Now, King David said in Psalm 119, he said, Oh, how I love your law. It is my meditation all the day.
- Does that sound strange to you? Oh, how I love your law. It's my meditation all the day. You might think King David needs to get a few extra books. But when was the last time any of us said to someone, Oh, how I love the Bible.
- It is my meditation all the day. You see, King David goes on in Psalm 119 to say, Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies. How good is that?
- I have more understanding than all my teachers. I understand more than the aged. And I hold back my feet from every evil.
- Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. How good is God's word? Paul says in 2 Timothy 3, All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

[3 : 50] All scripture is God-breathed and profitable, even these meticulous details. He said just before he wrote that, The sacred writings are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

And Jesus himself in John 5 said, The scriptures bear witness about me. So how much motivation, how much more motivation do we need to read our Bibles, to meditate day and night?

If the scriptures be the very word of God, why is it not in our hands more than our phones? Why is it on our shelves like every other book?

And why do we tend to only take a little sip instead of drinking deeply every morning and night? And so it might seem strange, it might seem even taxing, to go through four chapters today and listen to copious amounts of tabernacle details.

But even this is greater than anything I've got to say. From it we can learn so much about God and his ways, ourselves and the world.

[4 : 58] And we've already heard chapters 35 and 36, and I'm going to make some comments now, and then after that we'll listen to 37 and 38. A lot of these details are repetition from what we've already heard, that has been written in chapters 25 to 31.

Why all this repetition? Well, back then God was giving Moses the instruction, whereas in this block, it is a record of Moses giving the instruction to the people, and it is a record of the construction actually happening.

But in between the instructions given to Moses, and Moses giving the instruction to the people, and the tabernacle actually being constructed, in between these two moments, when Moses was up the mountain, the people were down at the bottom, breaking the covenant, worshipping a golden calf that they had made against God's will.

How can such a people at this point be involved in constructing the tabernacle? Because now, after the golden calf, it seems like the people, the future high priest, and even all the gold and materials, have all in some way been spoiled because of sin.

How could God dwell with them if all the people and the materials are no longer fit to be anywhere near God? Well, I genuinely think these chapters, and all these meticulous details, are really good news.

[6 : 26] Because what we see is nothing short of God's grace, and God's spirit at work, to redeem and make something amazing, out of something terrible. Isn't that good news?

How is it that any of us, can do what God commanded, except by his grace and by his spirit? Now, in the flow of Exodus, you could easily chop out chapters 32 to 34.

You could have Moses getting the instructions, and then the people building the tabernacle. It would just flow fine. You would seem to not lose anything if you took these chapters in the middle out.

But what would we miss? Well, firstly, it would not represent how things went historically. But more importantly, it would not represent the truth about humanity.

And that terrible moment in the middle gives us a truth about humanity. You see, it's not just Israel who are prone to wander and sin. It's humanity. Humanity's turned from God.

[7 : 27] And we've been making an idol for ourselves out of the things that God has given us. And so, if the tabernacle instructions were a picture of how things ought to be, but the golden calf is a picture of how things really are on the ground for humanity, then how do we get to chapter 35 and following?

How can it all be redeemed so that we can be as we ought to be and actually dwell with God? How do we get there when the instructions show us how things ought to be and the golden calf shows how things truly are with humanity?

How do we get there? Well, a big part of how we get there is Moses, who is the mediator. And he's a picture of Christ. And then the people repent in chapter 33.

The people mourned and they removed their jewelry and their ornaments and they recognized their guilt. They were sorry and they repented. And does that sound familiar if you've read the story of the church?

How in Acts 2, Peter told them of their sinful actions which led to the death of the Messiah. And the people were cut to the heart and they asked, brothers, what shall we do?

[8 : 40] And Peter says, well, repent. Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so for Israel and Exodus, repentance and singular loyalty to Yahweh is the only way they can move forward with God.

Yet that only came by God's grace. And it was the same in Acts chapter 2. The repentance and loyalty to Jesus shown in baptism and his name was the only way forward.

It was the only way to forgiveness, the only way to life. And it must start with repentance. God's grace is the only thing that can enable us to repent.

But should we repent, we cannot by our own efforts be who God called us to be. We need his grace so that we can turn away from our sin and be forgiven. But we need his spirit if we are to be who he has called us to be.

We can't just try harder to be better. We need to trust God's word and walk in his ways by the help of his spirit. We can't repent and then just try harder to be God's people.

[9 : 52] We need to rely on him and his spirit. And so, in Exodus, the people sinned. Moses goes to make atonement and mediates for them.

The people then repent. God is merciful and gracious forgiving them. And then Moses tells them all that the Lord commanded and God gives them his spirit to do all that he commanded.

Does that not sound like the gospel? It's a picture of the gospel. When they first came to Mount Sinai back in chapter 19, the people were proud and arrogant, stiff-necked and perhaps feeling entitled.

When God made a covenant with them from chapter 19 to 24, they said multiple times, all the words that the Lord has commanded, we will do and we will be obedient.

Yet they were not. They didn't do it. They failed miserably. They went against God's command and they made an idol to worship. Yet compare that, compare that moment with chapter 35 onwards after they have been humbled and repent.

[11 : 03] What a difference that makes. And so, chapter 35, verse 10, God commands the people and all that they should do. Chapter 36, verse 1, God puts skill and intelligence into people to know how to do all that the Lord had commanded.

And in chapter 38, verse 22, under Bezalel's leadership, they did all that the Lord commanded. They did it. God's grace and God's spirit at work in the people.

It's only by the grace of God and the power of his spirit that a people could become so generous and so skillful and gifted and so obedient and united, so eager to do all that the Lord has commanded.

And this is a picture of when a people are affected by God's grace and moved by God's spirit. That's what it looks like. It's such a high point in the book of Exodus.

It's one of the very few high points where the people actually do what the Lord commands. It's a glorious picture of living in unity and joyful obedience. And so to illustrate this, two of the big things that we see happening in this giant section of scripture is that the people are giving of their material supplies and the people are giving of their time and energy and service.

[12 : 29] They give their wealth and their work to God. after all, their wealth comes from God and their very being was made to join in God's work.

And so, look at verse five of chapter 35. Think about the wealth that the people had. They previously used it for a golden calf.

And it says, take from among you a contribution to the Lord. Whoever is of a generous heart, let him bring the Lord's contribution, gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and so on.

You have this free will giving of materials. They're not forced under compulsion. Whoever is moved in their heart of a generous heart. Remember, all the golden materials are what the Lord provided the Israelites by the hands of the Egyptians.

Yet they used it for their own sinful desires. But because God is gracious and merciful, they repented and they stripped all their ornaments off and their generous giving is moved by the grace of God in forgiving them.

[13 : 37] You see, sin takes what God has given us and uses it for selfish means. But when people experience the grace and mercy of God, it leads to a thankful and generous heart that loves to glorify God with all that he has given us.

So after repenting and experiencing the grace of God, their hearts are moved to give all these materials. Let me give you an example. 29 talents of gold and 730 shekels.

How much gold is that? Well, a talent of gold was about 75 pounds, I think. Gold is measured in troy ounces. And so the gold that they brought and had to be told to stop bringing was the equivalent of 32,000 troy ounces of gold.

Now the price of gold today, I checked it, is 2,693 per troy ounce times 32,000.

The value of the gold that the people freely brought for the tabernacle in today's price would be around 86 million pounds worth of gold. Talk about a generous heart.

[14 : 51] 86 million. The price of silver that they brought was around 3 million worth of silver. 12,000 worth of bronze, not to mention the skins and wood and fine-colored linen, the skillful labor costs.

It's probably a 100 million pound tabernacle all from a generous heart that wants to give and serve God because he is gracious and he has redeemed them.

All of this was given from the heart. In chapter 36, they keep bringing it. They keep bringing it and they have to be told to stop. Moses has to command them to stop bringing the gold and silver and materials.

It's more than enough. And so their change in life because of God's grace is shown in what they do with their wealth. It's also shown in what they do with their hands.

35 verse 10, let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded, the tabernacle and so on. And so you have this free will service because sin leads us to serve ourselves and worship idols, but we were made to serve God and worship God.

[16 : 11] You see, these people, these Israelites, they were not rescued from slavery in Egypt so that they could just do their own thing. Their freedom wasn't meant for their own indulgence and neither is ours.

Freedom doesn't mean indulgence in sinful desires. Their freedom was bought so that they could know God and serve him. Remember the refrain in Egypt was let my people go so that they may serve me, that they may worship me in the wilderness.

He cares about how we do that, that we do it in the right way. That's why there's such meticulous detail. We can't pick and choose how we worship and serve God.

We need to do it the way that is good and right and honourable and glorifying. Now think about this, this detailed record. That's one of the reasons it's so detailed is it's a record.

Moses had the instruction but it's recorded in this book that Moses gave that instruction faithfully to the people and the people outworked that instruction to the letter faithfully.

[17 : 19] I wonder if there was a record of your life and my life, a very detailed record of your life, would it say that he or she did all that the Lord commanded to the letter?

Is that what your record would say? Mine wouldn't say that. I want it to say that. More than anything, I want to do what the Lord commanded me to do. And so think about this moment in Exodus where the people, it's recorded that they actually do all that the Lord commanded and more.

Don't you want that? You see, Egypt, when they were in Egypt, Egypt is a picture of humanity's slavery to sin. Sin which treats us harshly and forces us to build the kingdom of darkness under a cruel dictator.

For humanity, that began back in Genesis 3 when humans believed a lie that God wasn't good and that his word couldn't be trusted. That lie has and will always lead humans into a deeper slavery to darkness and evil.

You can see that in our world today. That lie will always lead into darkness and evil. Yet in Genesis 1, the constant refrain is that what God does is good because God is good.

[18 : 40] You see back in Genesis 1 and 2 that we were made on purpose, with purpose, by a good God, to have life in abundance, to walk with God, to bear his image, and to serve under his sovereign reign to join God in his work of creation.

That's what we were made for. What wealth and what work are we holding back for ourselves? are we not eager to do all that the Lord has commanded?

These things teach us the gospel, that we are sinners and we don't deserve to have God dwell with us, yet one has found favour with God, one who did do all that the Lord commanded, one who did not sin, one who makes an atonement and mediates for us, the very Son of God, Jesus Christ, and because of him we are not consumed and we are not forsaken, for the sake of our sins, but God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and he offers forgiveness through his Son if we would but repent and believe, and if we do he will not only forgive, but he will redeem, he will give us his spirit so that we actually can be those who God called us to be, he will put his spirit in us so that we can do all that he has commanded and he will dwell with us.

Do you not want that? Those two things are two things I really want. I want to do all that the Lord has commanded and I'm constantly frustrated at myself when I fail, when I sin, I do what I do not want to do and I want to please God because I know it's good and right and glorious and honourable.

I know it's the way of life. I know it's what it means to be a part of his family to live like the son of God and become more like Christ. And the second thing more than anything I want to be with him where he is.

[20 : 46] Don't you want to have God dwell with you and dwell with him where he is? This is a picture of how amazing and glorious that can be. The difference between Israel and these chapters compared with before is astounding and it is only possible by the grace of God and the power of his spirit.

Yet it's not just the difference in them it's the fact that God has made them into a people that he wants to dwell with. You might feel like you've messed up.

You might feel like despite believing in Jesus you don't deserve to dwell with him. You might feel at many points in your life that you're not worthy.

And the good news is you're not worthy. But he is good. And he is making us into a people that he will dwell with.

That's good news. If we have repented and given our hearts to Jesus and that's where it starts with our heart. You can serve religion for decades.

[21 : 58] You can be faithful going to church but if your heart is not his then he is not yours. If we have repented and given our hearts to Jesus with his spirit the same difference will be noticeable in our lives.

It will be evidence in what we do with our wealth and with our work that our heart is his. It should be evident where our heart is. Does it look like we just want to build a life here and now like we are comfortable in Egypt?

Remember at one point the Israelites looked back and they missed the vegetables and cucumbers in Egypt despite being slaves. So does it look does our lives and what we do with our wealth and our work where our heart is does it look like we're just interested in building a life here and now in this world?

Or as it says in Hebrews 11.10 are we living like we are looking forward to the city whose designer and builder is God? When we dwell with our Lord Jesus for he is our tabernacle.

He is where heaven and earth meet. He is God with us and he has done all that the Lord has commanded. He has done it. How good is that?

[23 : 18] If he has your heart you will have his spirit and if his spirit is within you you will happily live for his kingdom and for his glory and he will do everything that we need him to do that we might dwell with him and be with him where he is.

This is good news so we're going to we're going to hear the rest of the chapters 37 and 38 and I hope with that we can think about these things and think about how amazing a picture it is for a people to do all that the Lord has commanded and how that is all looking forward to dwelling with God.

Heavenly Father we thank you for your word. We thank you for how your word is true, how it is a light in a dark world, how it is truth in a world of confusion and lies.

Please help us to understand your word as we listen now to your word. Lord by your spirit would you illuminate it to us and would we rejoice and be glad and seek to do all that you've commanded but more than anything see Jesus our Lord and Savior who is the faithful one who has done it.

We give you thanks in Jesus name. Amen.