

# Exodus 26-27

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 August 2016

Preacher: Bing Nieh

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Moses has been subsumed into the cloud on a mountain where he will be for 40 days and 40 nights. It is up in this cloud that he is both hearing from the Lord and he's being shown an architectural blueprint.

This blueprint would not be for any ordinary building or a common structure. It would be unrivaled in this sense. It was a pattern of a heavenly sanctuary.

It was not being modeled after an earthly temple. It was not a creative design to be dreamt up by Moses. It was not to be a progressive attempt to demonstrate architectural creativity.

It was, according to the Bible, a copy or a shadow of heavenly things. This is reinforced by our text this morning. Both the tabernacle, more literally translated dwelling place or living place, and the bronze altar are to be built according to the plan as it was shown on the mountain.

26:30. Again in 27 verse 8. As it has been shown to you on a mountain, on the mountain, so it shall be made. For the young and even older in this room, allow me to use this example.

[ 1 : 1 8 ] You've received a giant box of Legos. On the box, you see the final product. Perhaps it's the fire truck you've always wanted.

Others, it's the Millennium Falcon. There it is. The final product on the box. You undo the box, and in conjunction with the thousands of pieces, you're given a booklet with instructions that you are to copy.

Step by step. Page by page. You are to pattern your building and your construction in the same way as it is being shown to you.

If you want to get creative, you won't get the Millennium Falcon. You are to follow it step by step according to the plan for it as being shown.

Moses is not given creative freedom. The Bible does not say, take some wood, take some fine material, take some precious metal, and then build something nice for me. It does not say that.

[ 2 : 2 3 ] Moses is instructed and commanded not to create, but to copy and to imitate. It is vital that we, as we continue in this portion of Exodus, we come to terms with what is taking place.

Doug Stewart, a commentator on Exodus, writes this, The tabernacle is not merely an interpretation of a concept. It was a precise build-out of a revealed design.

Yahweh, therefore, in effect, is building his own house among the Israelites, though he did it through the workmanship of Israelite craftsmen. It was his design they followed precisely.

God is, therefore, both designer and decorator. This is reinforced by the fact that as we were reading, we noticed it's divine speech.

How do you know, young people, that someone is speaking? How do you know? In English, it's marked off by quotations. You'll see it all over our chapter.

[ 3 : 2 3 ] It's marked out with quotations, reaffirmed by the phrase, You shall make. At least 40 times in these two chapters. In the English standard version, you will find the phrase, You shall make or you shall take.

These are divine instructions given to Moses and the people. There is no latitude to alter the design. With that said, it leads us to what we are to come to terms with this morning.

God's house must be built God's way. Because in so doing, God would be present. God's presence always comes on God's terms.

Hold on to that. God's presence always comes on God's terms. Our passage this morning builds upon the foundational verse explored last week, 25 verse 8.

God says to Moses, 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 of all its furniture you shall make it.

[ 4 : 37 ] God would be with his people as they obeyed his word in constructing this tabernacle. He would be present with them. He currently resided in the mountain, but graciously now will descend into a man-made structure designed by God.

Last week we saw that the lawyer was doing his decorating from the inside out, so he started with the revelation of his furniture, namely the Ark of the Covenant, and then the table for the bread, and then the golden lampstand.

And this morning's instructions elaborate on the tabernacle, which were to house last week's furniture or instruments. A bronze altar and a courtyard around the tabernacle's perimeter will be touched on as well.

As the tabernacle unfolds, you will discover that all this furniture has a purpose. It is to facilitate a divine protocol. It is there to create a means of approach.

Let me explain. People of worldly significance usually have a protocol to approach. If you were given an invitation to meet our current president at his current estate, you will be...

[ 5 : 49 ] I'm confident there is a protocol. There may be guidelines on attire and dress for a particular occasion. What I can... I can assure you that when you drive up to the White House, or escort up to the White House, there are protocols you must follow.

There is a fence that you must proceed through the gate. You cannot scale the fence, climb the fence, dig under the fence. You can try. But you will not meet the president without following the proper protocol.

They would cross-reference your ID. I'm sure a background check has already been done. There is a metal detector that you have to proceed through. There may be a receptionist desk that you have to stop by.

There may be an assistant that escorts you. There may be a key card through a key pass that gets you into the right room. There is protocol. And there is furniture. The gate, the metal detector, the locks, the cameras, are there all to enforce protocol.

The furniture is designed specifically to meet this protocol. To screen you in such a way that your approach ensures the safety of the one you're approaching.

[ 7 : 07 ] There is a protocol. The Bible reinforces this. You may be familiar with the book of Esther. The Persian king, under pressure from this wicked official, had just signed documentation to eradicate all the Jews, the exiled Jews in the land of Persia.

Esther, though a Jew, she's a queen. She's encouraged by Mordecai, her cousin, to approach the king and intercede on behalf of her people.

The Bible records her response as this. Will all the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law to be put to death except the one to whom the king holds out, the golden scepter, so that he may live.

But as for me, Esther, I have not been called to come to the king these 30 days. There's protocol. Esther recognized that. I cannot approach the king.

I will die. These are examples of protocol. One simply does not approach on their own terms. One does not simply stagger or stumble into a throne room.

[ 8 : 24 ] There are orders and procedures that must be followed. Therefore, you will approach on the terms given, never on your own terms.

If there is a protocol to approach earthly powers, then we should not be surprised that when we come to the Bible and begin to read these specific protocols and furniture and settings, we should not be surprised when the Bible records this is how you are to approach the God of heaven.

All this furniture is instrumentation to guide one into God's presence. These are procedures which must be followed when approaching God.

But we are people who must approach on the terms given, not on our personal terms. It must have been a sight to behold.

It was surrounded by a seven and a half foot linen wall with a singular entrance facing the east. Depending on the thickness of the linen would determine if you are able to peer through it to see the outline of the tabernacle itself.

[ 9 : 31 ] It was unlikely to be a quiet place due to the nature of what took place there. For you follow the biblical narrative and you begin to see the activity that took place, you can conclude that it engaged every human sense.

Not only your five physical senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell, it would also be designed to engage the heart and the soul. The courtyard was large but not massive. It was calculated to be a little over 11,000 square feet. The only way I could calculate that is based on sport dimensions, and I know that may not be applicable to many of us, but it's about a quarter of a football field.

It's about three full-size basketball courts laid side to side. That was the size of the courtyard that was to house the tabernacle. There was a gate, a curtain of sorts on the eastern wall.

The eastern wall was 75 feet long. The gate was centered about 22 feet wide. The curtain that ran across this gate was marvelous.

[10:35] It was an embroidered work of blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, according to 2716. It matched, actually, the screen curtain to the tabernacle itself, according to 2636.

And if you were to enter, the first object you would encounter is a bronze altar, a box seven and a half feet square, four feet off the ground.

It was coated in bronze. It was graded in bronze. All the utensils, all the supplemental materials were all bronze, shovels, basins, firepans, forks. Not to demean it in any way, but it would have been a spectacular grill.

For which, if you read on, actually, that's what it was used for. Bulls, rams, and goats would be placed upon this altar following the implementation of the sacrificial system.

If you proceeded past the altar, you would come across a bronze basin with a bronze stand, which you will see in a few weeks. And past the basin, there it would stand, 15 feet high, 15 feet wide, 45 feet deep.

[11:47] A tarp draped over it, consisting of likely goat's hair. Nothing flashy, nothing fancy. Sewn together of 11 pieces of goat hair and skin.

It would have been playing on the outside, but we already have hinted at. It's what's in the inside that really matters. If you were to peel back the entrance of the tent and stood at the threshold of the tabernacle or the holy place, all your senses would be immediately engaged.

You would have touched the screen entrance. You would have immediately felt the texture of material used, unparalleled in quality, unmatched by ordinary human ability.

It was soft, red, blue, purple linen. As you walk in, you would have probably overwhelmed by some of the warmth, not only from the fact that you're standing in a tent in the desert, but also on your left, there's a lamp stand, illuminating the entire space and contributing to its heat.

And your mouth likely lingers what you had consumed on the altar, taking in a portion of what was sacrificed on your behalf. Your mouth is now slowly salivating because the scent that is filling your nostrils is of fresh bread.

[13:17] And there on your right, you see a gold table glistening with precisely 12 loaves of bread situated on top of it. A fragrant aroma fills the room.

An incense of sweet spices is there standing before you on a golden altar. Your eyes likely would be scanning the whole room, being illuminated by this lamp stand.

There may be a light haze provided by the incense rising from the altar. And draped overhead is this fine linen, purple, blue, crimson. Woven into it are cherubim or angels.

And before you would be a veil, a wall that would be the same material, stitched into this curtain would be these cherubim. So from top to bottom, left to right, you are completely surrounded by this gorgeous material and embedded in this linen are cherubim, angels.

If you were to pause and take it in, how all your senses are being stimulated and engaged, you couldn't help but find yourself in some heavenly scene, a mere human surrounded by the angelic host.

[14:29] You were in the presence of God. Were you not told about the ark behind the veil, you probably wouldn't even know it was there. You would not even detect its presence, touch, taste, smell, and sight.

There is one sense that is yet to be triggered, namely that of sound. True, you might hear the hustle and bustle of bleeding sheep in the background and the crowds that gathered in the courtyard, but it's the sound that would be the most arresting feature if you were to set foot in this place.

This would be the one sense that if it were engaged would relinquish any doubt that you were in the presence of God. You've seen things that reflect his beauty. You smell the aroma.

You're likely bearing oil or new bread to replace the bread and the oil already there. You've definitely partaken in a sacrificial meal. The one sense that you're awaiting is sound, something audible.

It is here that you would hear his voice. We know very well that it would be a death sentence to behold him with your eyes, but it is here that you would hear the voice of the living God.

[15:51] It is this feature of the tabernacle that will distinguish the God of Israel from all other nations. Anyone can refashion the tabernacle.

Anyone can replicate the temple if you have the resources. It's possible. But the one thing you cannot bring that cannot be replicated is the divine voice.

Is this not the taunt of the prophets? When they taunt people and how they craft idols out of gold and silver and costly stones. Isaiah 46, you can chase it down.

It writes, If you cry to it, it will not answer because it cannot save. Psalm 115, 2, verse 7.

Why should the nations say, Where is our God? The reply is, Our God is in the heavens. He does all that He pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of their hands.

[16:51] They have mouths, but do not speak. Eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear. Noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel. Feet, but do not walk. And they do not make a sound in their throat.

What profit is an idol when its maker has shaped it? A metal image. For its maker trusts in his own creation when he makes speechless idols.

Among the many distinctions that would, between God and the idols crafted by humanity in the surrounding nations, would be this. Only Israel's God speaks. We know that God was not visible in the Holy of Holies.

He dwelt between the cherubim. No passage of scripture will tell you that he was seen there. So how do we know he was there? Well, Numbers 7, 89 gives us a clue.

Actually, not even a clue. Overtly tells us how we know he's there. And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord, he heard the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the testimony.

[17:59] From between the two cherubim, it spoke to him. This will distinguish God from all the other pagan gods of the surrounding nations.

Yes, the God of Israel delivers, saves, redeems. He does a whole host of other things. But implicit in our very text this morning is this undeniable and essential fact.

The instructions you shall make that are recorded over 40 times is divine speech. The God of Israel talks.

The God of Israel speaks. The evidence that God was in the tabernacle was from the very fact that it was the precise location where he spoke.

Where God's voice is heard is where God's presence is manifest. Where God's voice is heard is where God's presence is manifest. The challenge is that this voice could only be heard by one individual at the time.

[18:58] For there was only one who was qualified to enter into the presence of the one seated between the cherubim. Only one was allowed. One object in the tabernacle made it very clear. The entrance into the tabernacle allowed those of priestly descent to maintain, upkeep, the holy place.

They could change the oil. They could change the bread. They could keep the lamp lit. But they knew that what sat behind the altar of incense was this veil that no one could cross.

The veil. 26 verse 31. A veil of blue and purple, scarlet yarns, and fine twine linen.

It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. The veil was embroidered with cherubim, or angels. Incidentally, the same angel that was placed at the east entrance of the Garden of Eden, guarding access to the tree of life.

A student of the Bible could connect the dots and interpret the meaning of the curtain with the cherubim on it. The meaning is plain. What lies behind is inaccessible to you. You can't go past this.

[20:15] So we're left with this tension. God is building himself an earthly home so that he is near and close to his people.

But the veil makes it very clear that he isn't entirely approachable. The veil is the final barrier, the partition, the piece of protocol that stood between man and his maker.

Humanity had limited access. The approach had restrictions. It's that giant sign you see in particular places you shouldn't be.

Restricted area. All people were prevented from entering this far. Access was only granted to one, namely a mediator.

Even now, when God assured that he would be in their presence, the people could only experience a mediated presence, a partial presence. It would be an act of faith for the people of Israel.

[ 21 : 12 ] They would not be able to see God, so in faith, they would have to take him at his word as provided by the mediator. Since sight was withheld, faith was required. And this was the worship that experience of God's delivered people.

They would give themselves to this despite deterrence along the way. Their worship was never flawless, as you'll read throughout the Old Testament. Their devotion was mixed.

But in their history, they sought to preserve this sacred space. And you see this because once Israel's monarchy is established, one of their priorities is to build a center of worship namely a temple.

Why? Because instead of being nomads and wandering around, they settled in Jerusalem and centralized their worship to one particular place because they understood this.

if they were not in the right place, their deduction was God was not with them. If they didn't have that tabernacle with them, as you read throughout the Old Testament, their greatest sorrow is God is not with us.

[ 22 : 20 ] If the temple is not standing, their greatest thought of despair is, I cannot worship because God is not here.

You continue reading your Bibles and you see the loss of the ark derailed their identity. The destruction of their temple decimated their natural religion. In exile, Psalm 137 says, how can I possibly worship or sing when I'm in a foreign land?

Because for the people of God, for Israel at the time, they could not fathom without this particular space, this tabernacle, temple, whatever it would be, if they didn't have it in their possession, God would not be present.

If such a conclusion is drawn, it's understandable why the entire nation's religious system would focus on a geographical space. It's theologically founded in the Old Testament and established with the understanding that if we are not in the right place, God will not meet with us.

It's an idea that even persubmates today. Therefore, it would take something of astronomical proportions to change that. Recall that the tabernacle was not a human idea.

[ 23 : 35 ] It was a divine idea. Therefore, it would require divine action to supersede it. Only God Himself can change the protocol. Only God Himself can prescribe the means by which one is to approach.

It would require God altering His protocol. It would require God Himself to redefine the means of approach. And you know where I'm headed. You know your Bibles. We know that something superseded the temple.

And something has transformed our understanding of the tabernacle. And we have this privilege being at this stage of history, don't we? Being students of the Bible, you have read in John 1.1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Word tabernacled with us.

[ 24 : 34 ] God became flesh and lived with humanity. He made His dwelling place among men. The God who sat between the cherubim now walked among His people. He became Emmanuel, God with us.

But He is not only God with us, it goes farther. He is God for us. The Bible asserts that God made Him, namely Jesus who knew no sin, be sin for us, so that we may become the righteousness of God.

Jesus not only came to be with us, Jesus came to die for us. Access is no longer limited or restricted. That which brought death in the tabernacle.

If you were to peer behind that veil, it would bring death. Now, if you were to peer behind that veil, it brings life. As we have seen in the book of Hebrews, we are exhorted to draw near, not tentatively, not hesitantly, not cautiously, with great boldness and confidence, knowing that there, at that throne, is a throne of grace that does not prescribe a death sentence, but a life sentence.

It was the most overt change to the protocol you can have. You find it in three of the four Gospels, suspended between heaven and earth. God fastened Himself to a cross.

[ 25 : 53 ] Destroy this temple, Jesus said. Demolish this very building where you believe God is, and God is present, and I will rebuild it.

The protocol, demolish it. I have a new one. A new protocol. And so it happened. The Son of God gave up His life. And the Bible makes it so clear that from top to bottom, as if God Himself reached down and took a sheet of paper and severed it in half, that fine linen, red, blue, purple, stitched with angelic hosts, that piece of separation was torn in two.

What was once limited access is now unrestricted access to all. God tore up His Son so that He may bind you up.

God severed His Son so that He may speak directly to you. God mangled His Son so that He may meet with you. This is now God's presence under God's new terms.

So the invitation comes to you this morning. Do you hear His voice? Do you hear His plea to come? Do you hear His summons to draw near?

[ 27 : 13 ] He speaks. He speaks today. Long ago. At many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, He speaks through His Son. You don't need to come up here. You don't need to go to a special city.

You don't need to ascend the steps of a palace. You don't need to scale the heights of a mountain. Where you're at is where He will meet you. For where His word is, He is present.

Today when you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. The day of salvation is today. His voice is heard when His word is declared. Is this not what Kristen seeks to do?

Knowing that entrusted to her is the very gospel of life. Words spoken to her. Because she knows when she touches down in Istanbul, what she has is the presence of God in the word of God for the transformation of all people.

[ 28 : 22 ] Is that not what resides behind me? This map? These red dots? And these post-its? These post-its are us as a congregation. This is where God resides in His people.

And are not these red dots where you desire the gospel to grow and go and flourish and multiply? Because as you bear God's word, you carry His presence.

that's what's happening in the tabernacle. When God speaks, He's present. When God's voice is heard when His word is truly preached.

God's voice is heard when His word is truly preached. Just a brief prayer as we close together. Father, we we come to You and we look at these architectural blueprints and we know that it's a protocol.

[ 29 : 41 ] We are to come in Your prescribed way. And as we have looked forward in Your Bible to see the way is made very clear.

The veil has been severed. Your body has been fastened to a cross. And it has been lifted out of a grave. And in that You give an invitation not just to one, not just to a few, but to all, that Your invitation is universal.

Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden. And Lord, my prayer this morning is that we would come.

That I would be a fool to think that every person in this room has entrusted their life to You. It would be a naive thought. And so my prayer is that You would meet them in their seat and You would seize their heart and You would transform their life.

That even in these moments, in the distance, we would hear the celebrations of myriads of thousands of angels in the distance because You have saved Your own.

[ 31 : 03 ] and Father, we pray as a congregation we would people who bring the Word of God because as we bring the Word, we bring the presence.

And where You are, You seek to transform, renew, restore, redeem. And Lord, make us such a congregation. We ask these things for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.