

PM Exodus 40:1-38 Cloud and Fire

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[0 : 00] The people of Israel had done all the work. And Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded.

! So had they done it. Then Moses blessed them. Chapter 40. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month, you shall erect the tabernacle of the tent of meeting.

And you shall put in it the ark of the testimony, and you shall screen the ark with the veil. And you shall bring in the table and arrange it.

And you shall bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. And you shall put the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and set up the screen for the door of the tabernacle.

You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and place the basin between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water in it.

[1 : 09] And you shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen for the gate of the court. Then you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is in it, and consecrate it, and all its furniture, so that it may become holy.

You shall also anoint the altar of burnt offering, and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar, so that the altar may become most holy.

You shall also anoint the basin and its stand, and consecrate it. Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall wash them with water, and put on Aaron the holy garments.

And you shall anoint him, and consecrate him, that he may serve me as priest. You shall bring his sons also, and put coats on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests.

And their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations. This Moses did, according to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did.

[2 : 43] In the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected. Moses erected the tabernacle. He laid its bases, and set up its frames, and put in its poles, and raised up its pillars, and he spread the tent over the tabernacle, and put the covering of the tent over it, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Moses, he took the testimony, and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark, and set the mercy seat above, on the ark.

And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as the Lord had commanded Moses. He put the table in the tent of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil, and arranged the bread on it, before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

He put the lampstand in the tent of meeting, opposite the table, on the south side of the tabernacle, and set up the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

He put the golden altar, in the tent of meeting, before the veil, and burned fragrant incense on it, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

[4 : 09] He put in place the screen, for the door of the tabernacle, and he set the altar of burnt offering, at the entrance of the tabernacle, of the tent of meeting, and offered on it, the burnt offering, and the grain offering, as the Lord had commanded Moses.

He set the basin between the tent of meeting, and the altar, and put water in it for washing, with which Moses, and Aaron, and his sons, washed their hands, and their feet.

When they went into the tent of meeting, and when they approached the altar, they washed, as the Lord commanded Moses. And he erected the court, around the tabernacle, and the altar, and set up the screen, of the gate of the court, so Moses finished the work.

Then, the cloud covered, the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord, filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able, to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord, filled the tabernacle.

[5 : 26] Throughout, all their journeys, whenever the cloud, was taken up, from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel, would set out. But if the cloud, was not taken up, then they did not, set out, till the day, that it was taken up.

For the cloud, of the Lord, was on the tabernacle, by day, and fire, was in it, by night, in the sight of, all the house of Israel, throughout, all their journeys.

What, an amazing passage, of scripture. May God bless, the reading of that, to us. You may recall, a few weeks ago, we looked at the, conclusions, of the books of Jonah, and then, the Acts of the Apostles, or, the Acts of Jesus, part two, as it might be renamed.

And my hope, was to look, at some more, endings of Bible books, as God willing, we continue to meet, together, from time to time.

So, this evening, let's, turn our attention, and worship, to the end, of the book of Exodus. There's a wee bit, of the autobiographical, about the book of Exodus, written down, by Moses, it is thought, the humblest man, to grace, this earth, numbers 12, verse 3, the humblest, apart, of course, from the Lord, Jesus himself.

[7 : 06] I've always, smiled, when I've read, that verse, in Numbers 12, because it seemed, to me, not very humble, at all, to be describing, yourself, as the most humble, person, in the world.

But, that little, part of course, is in parenthesis, like, one, of the Apostle John's, many asides, in his gospel.

And, in this case, it may well be, that, ancient scribes, added a little addendum. Nevertheless, what, a wonderful comment, what a wonderful, spirit-filled comment, on Moses.

Moses, it is a remarkable, observation, about, someone, who has been, God's conduit, for, the performance, of such, amazing miracles, as, calling down, the plagues, in Egypt, of parting, the Red Sea, of bringing, water from the rock, of meeting, with God, receiving, his commands, for his people.

But, maybe, that, is the reason, for Moses' humility. It was his, closeness, to God. For, the closer, a saint, gets, to his, or her, heavenly father, in walking, with him, the more, they realize, their own, nothingness.

[8 : 51] the more, they realize, the magnitude, of the debt, that they owe. And, their own, personal value, decreases, in their own eyes.

What was this not, what happened, to John the Baptist, when he said, he, Jesus, must increase, but I must decrease. As such, was Moses' humility.

He walked, close to God, sinner, though he, undoubtedly was. Moses, of course, writes in the third person, as he tells the story, of the children of Israel's, liberation from slavery, in Egypt, and their desert wanderings.

But, that would be, a very superficial, summary, of what is recounted, in Exodus. Because, what we actually, encounter, is the next, part, of the unveiling, of the narrative, of almighty God, dealing with, fallen mankind.

Revealing, bit by bit, the great, salvation plan, which, found its, fulfillment, in the, sending, and the giving, of God's, own son, on the cross, of Calvary, as the saviour, of the world.

[10 : 11] And, it is remarkable, how God, in love, chose, a rather, unlovely people, to love him, and serve him.

And, Exodus, shows this, as the next, part of history, his story, world, his story.

And, what, blessing for us, that this is written down, through the working, of God's spirit. This is his word, for us, to teach us, to rebuke us, to correct us, to train us, in righteousness, and to equip us, for every good work.

And, it's interesting, to note, that if we, glance back, to Exodus, chapter 17, verse 14, we find, the first time, that there is, an injunction, to write down, about what is happening.

And then, in chapter 24, verse 4, we have the first, recorded, intimation, that scripture, was put, in a written form. Moses there, recounts of himself, Moses then, wrote down, everything, the Lord, had said.

[11 : 29] Having just, stipulated, in the previous verse, that he had told, the people of Israel, everything, all, the whole lot, of the Lord's words, and laws, that he had heard, in his encounter, with

the Almighty, on the heights, of Mount Sinai.

It's, so important, for us, that we don't, through, frequent reading, downgrade, somehow, the awesomeness, and the terror, of, all of that, that happened, in Exodus, that we don't, downgrade it, into some sort of, story, and just that.

These things, happened. This is, life, in the raw. We might, sense, the awe, of that occasion, that meeting, with God, on Mount Sinai, that meeting, of God, with his, chosen people, by reading, a few verses, from chapter 19, verse 11, of Exodus, where, after he had, consecrated the people, and in response, to God's command, Moses, had got them, in a state, of readiness, for that meeting, with God, because, as it says, on the third day, the Lord, will come down, on Mount Sinai, in the sight, of all the people, and you shall set, limits for the people, all around, saying, take care, not to go up, into the mountain, or touch the edge, of it, whoever touches, the mountain, shall be put to death, no hand, shall touch him, but he shall be stoned, or shot with arrows, whether beast, or man, he shall not live, and when the trumpet, sounds a long blast, they shall come up, to the mountain, so Moses, went, down from the mountain, to the people, and consecrated the people, and they washed, their garments, and he said to the people, be ready for the third day, do not go near a woman, on the morning, of the third day, there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud, on the mountain, and a very loud, trumpet blast, so that all the people, in the camp, trembled, then Moses, brought the people, out of the camp, to meet God, and they took their stand, at the foot, of the mountain, now Mount Sinai, was wrapped, in smoke, because the Lord, had descended, on it in fire, the smoke of it, went up, like the smoke, of a kiln, and the whole mountain, trembled, greatly, and as the sound, of the trumpet, grew louder, and louder,

Moses spoke, and God answered him, in thunder, the Lord, came down, on Mount Sinai, to the top, of the mountain, and the Lord, called Moses, to the top, of the mountain, and Moses, went up, can we, even, begin, to grasp, the frighteningly, amazing, awesomeness, of these events, as two, and a half, million people, people, who in fear, of their lives, had crossed, over the floor, of the Red Sea, with seawater, piled up, on either side, of the channel, through which, they passed, liberated, against all the odds, from Egyptian, tyranny, by, the hand, of God, and they, were sustained, in life, by, miraculous, supplies, of drinking, water, and manna, the food, of angels, and quail, because they, wanted meat, and now, they're confronted, by a mountain, onto which, they must not, encroach, or they will die, and they, have their senses, assailed, by disturbances, of the natural world, with Mount Sinai, covered, with smoke, the mountain, trembling,

God himself, descending, on the mountain, in fire, and an increasing, crescendo, of trumpet, sound, and thunder, their senses, consumed, with awe, and terror, and this is, but a hint, a hint, of the awesomeness, of the God, the almighty God, who brought them up, out of, Egypt, for his own namesake, and for his, own glory, this God, is, a consuming, fire, and yet, this God, has a heart, of compassion, and this God, has a plan, a covenant plan, one that he, in his infinite grace, made with his chosen servants, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, between five, and six hundred, years before, and he's chosen, this people, the children, of Israel, the biological, children, descendants, of Jacob, not because, they're more attractive, or better, than any other people, in the face, of the earth, but because, in his sovereign will, he's so, chose it, and in chapter 19, of Exodus, we have the terms, of the covenant, articulated, a covenant, a plan, where God, takes the initiative, and bears the cost, and where man, must accept the terms, and faithfully, adhere, to those terms, and, what reward, if Israel, keeps their part, of the covenant, brought, to God, himself, as they have, been, on eagles, wings, it says, here they are, promised, that they will be,

[17 : 52] God's, treasured, possession, his, kingdom, of priests, and a holy nation, they're all, priests, every last, one of them, honored, and privileged, with presenting, the truth, about almighty, God, to a sinful, and fallen world, all around them, of being God's, own representatives, and then the covenant, is ratified, as we read in chapter 24, Moses rising, early in the morning, making an altar, sprinkling, half the blood, of young bulls, that had been slain, on the altar, to ratify, God's part, of the covenant, and sprinkling, half of the blood, on the people, to ratify, their part, of the bargain, and burnt offering, and fellowship offerings, are offered, as the people, solemnly promise, after hearing, not just the ten commandments, that were read to them, but the laws, laid down, in chapters 20, through 23, just what Moses, had committed, to parchment, he read it to them, though the Decalogue, of course, remember, was written, by the finger of God, and the people, solemnly promised, everything, the Lord, has said, we will do, everything, so Moses, then responds, to God's call, to come up to him, on the mountain, and he's there, 40 days, and 40 nights, but by the time, he

comes down, the covenant, is in tatters, the rebellious,

Israelites, promises, forgotten, they have, coerced, Aaron, perhaps, without, too much, resistance, on his part, to fashion them, a golden, calf, to worship, and Moses, shatters, the tables, of the law, in his anger, and disappointment, shattering, of the written, ratification, in those days, was a sure, demonstration, that the covenant, had been broken, and by this time, it has just been, slightly over, three months, 90 days, since the, two and a half million, left Egypt, chapters 25, through 40, of Exodus, cover the rest, of the first year, of freedom, from Egypt, though, clearly not, freedom, from sin, and it includes,

Moses, successfully, interceding, for them, in their, deep sin, in worshipping, the idolatrous, golden calf, so that God, does not, immediately, and completely, destroy them, though in the event, only Joshua, and Caleb, of that generation, of two and a half, million, eventually, reached the promised land, because of their sin, and disobedience, and idolatry, but in those chapters, 25, through 40, we've got not only, the instructions, for Jew, and holy worship, of God, but we have, the establishment, of the Aaronic, priesthood, and we've described, the preparation, of the materials, for the tabernacle, and, that tabernacle, was there, to house, the ark, of the covenant, with the tables, of the law, in it, but months, were spent, under the tutelage, of, Bezalel, and Aholiab, those master craftsmen, filled with the spirit, of God, the book of Exodus, tells us, and skilled, to complete, the furnishings, of the tabernacle, the furnishings, to, the divine standard, preparing, the materials, for the desert tabernacle, now there's no, intended, disrespect, here, when I think, about chapter 40, that we've just read, as the description, as it were, of the first, large scale, IKEA project, because the kit, has all been prepared, and here's, where the IKEA analogy, immediately falls down, because each element, has been prepared, to the highest, of standards, immaculate, in fact, the very forefront, of ancient technology, and we've read, this evening, about how it was, all put together, with no extra, unexplained bits, left over, and not just, the tabernacle, is put together, and consecrated, but Aaron, and his sons, are likewise, set apart, and consecrated, but here's, the crucial thing, chapter 40, verse 16,

Moses did everything, just, as the Lord, commanded him, remember chapter 24, verse 3, everything the Lord, has said, we will do, said the people, but they didn't, but 40, verse 16, Moses, did, everything, just, as the Lord, commanded him, he did, and now, it all, comes together, the kit, is assembled, and this, all happened, exactly, a year, after the exodus, from Egypt, on the first day, of the first month, in the second year, Moses erected, the tabernacle, I'm quoting, from chapter 40, he laid its bases, he set up, its frames, he put in its poles, he raised up, its pillars, and he spread, the tent, over the tabernacle, and put the covering, of the tent, over it, as the Lord, had commanded Moses, he took the testimony, put it into the ark, put the poles, on the ark, and set the mercy seat, above on the ark, and he brought the ark, into the tabernacle, set it up, and set up the veil, of the screen, and screened the ark, of the testimony, as the Lord, had commanded Moses, he put the table, in the tent, of meeting, on the north side, and so on, but the watchword, in chapter 40, is obedience, time and again, we read, just as, or as, the Lord, commanded him, eight times, that's stated, and this was, the precondition, to the Sinai covenant, in chapter 19, if you obey me, fully, and keep my covenant, said the Lord, then, then, so the backdrop, here, is obedience, it may have been, a struggle, getting there, but the backdrop, is, obedience, and then, then we have, those, final, five, verses, of the book, of Exodus, and it's, all about, cloud, and fire, and there, are all sorts, of clouds, in nature, and we think, about cirrus clouds, and stratus clouds, and nimbus clouds, and cumulonimbus, and we think, about storm clouds, and thunder clouds, we think, about clouds, of cloud, and clouds, of smoke, think, about clouds, the size, of a man's hand, on the horizon, and we think, about clouds, that fill the heavens, and echo, with thunder, we think, nowadays, even about, computer clouds, eye clouds, even, and we think, about clouds, in the sky, about clouds, in the hills, and hard at sea, but tonight, our passages, cloud, is different, and we've got, all sorts, of fire, we've got, fire, controlled, though not, necessarily, always, always, in a barbecue, or an open hearth, or a wood burner, we've got, fire, in a candle, burning in the night, we've got, fire, in rocket engines, we've got, fire, tamed, and then, we've got, fire, rampaging, wildfire, in Los Angeles, county, or South Korea, we've got, fire, for heat, for cooking, for light, for beacons, for warnings, things, but tonight's, passage, well, there, the fire, is different, and as we read, verses 34, to 38, of chapter 40, a holy, awe, should overtake us, because tonight's,

[27 : 04] cloud, and fire, is not about, cloud, and fire, as such, but these, are the manifestations, of the presence, of almighty God, nothing, less, than that, nothing, less, than tangible, evidence, of the

presence, of God, with his, chosen people, you see, God's instructions, have been followed, to the letter, by Moses, and we've got, this ornate, beautiful, wonderful, tabernacle, filled with all, the furniture, and elements, that God had decreed, and we've got, the ark, and the tablets, and the tent, covering the tabernacle, had it stopped there, we would have had, the most amazing, tent, ever constructed, a desperately, beautiful building, but nothing more, a building, a tent, just, just, a tent, Moses, had overseen, everything, about the construction, and as the proud foreman, he must have had, a smile from ear, to ear, as he viewed, the finished article, but he couldn't, get through the door, God's presence, in the cloud, by day, and the fire, and the cloud, by night, the fire, and the cloud, were the one, and the same, how unspeakably, awesome, that this, settled, on the tent, and God's glory, his, shekinah, his dwelling, the glory, of his being, filled, the tabernacle, and only, when the cloud, rose from the tabernacle, and went, before them, did the camp, of the two and a half million, move on, on the geographically, short enough, but, temporally, long, long journey, to the promised land, we have, many, many things, to learn, from this last, wee section, of the book, of Exodus, first of all, for all his humility, not even Moses, could share, the presence, of the almighty, no human being, could, none was holy enough, none was free, from, excluding, repulsive, sin, except,

Jesus of Nazareth, God's own, beloved son, sinless man, and very God, of very God, in one person, but let's not forget, that, the Lord, Jesus, became, that, same, excluding, repulsive, sin, for us, so, that, in him, we might, become, the righteousness, of God, what grace, you know, we have, a term, nowadays, especially, since, COVID, about someone, invading, our space, getting, inside, our exclusion, zone, such, could not, happen, with the almighty, in the book, of Exodus, no one, could, approach him, but, when we move on, to the mount, of transfiguration, we have, the self, same Moses, as well, as Elijah, and Peter,

James, and John, all up, close, and personal, with the Lord, Jesus, even, as his, glorious, in his, in his, glorious, transfigured, state, and for a short while, some of the, that veiled, glory, shone through, and Moses, could live, with that, but we must, register, that Jesus, himself, God, came, first and foremost, to show, mankind, you and me, how much, God loves us, and to reveal, God, to us, in his, own person, for God, is love, and the love, that Jesus showed, was the love, of the Father, all this, could only happen, by God's grace, and, and our, access, to God, could only, be secured, our, access, to God's, presence, in the, holiest, place, could only, be secured, by the, events, the depths, and the heights, of Calvary, what grace, grace, but it, also, hits us, that we're, observing, such, an outpouring, of God's grace, here, he's, declaring, his presence, to the children, of Israel, his, glorious, presence, and he's, declaring it, to a, rebellious, arrogant, sinful, recidivous, idolatrous, but, chosen, and loved,

Israel, oh, I wonder, if we can, identify, with that, because, of their, sin, and rebellion, and their, subsequent, rejection, of God's, commands, all that, generation, except Joshua, and Caleb, were, condemned, to die, during, wilderness, wandering, for another, 39 years, and yet, and yet, foreknowing, all that, God, God, still, presenced, himself, with them, has it, ever struck us, just the, immeasurability, of, God's, grace, that he, presences, himself, with us, with us, in all, our, undeservedness, do we ever, recognize, his presence, in our, nation, are we, too busy, bemoaning, the sea change, from, our country, being the land, of the book, to being the land, of the secular, to recognize, that despite it all, through his remnant, he still, presences himself, in this land, so, even though, so many, there in Sinai, may not, have believed, some did, and God, still led them, because he had, and has, a greater plan, and he had made, a sovereign choice, so, even though, so many, here in Scotland, may not believe, some do, and God, still leads them, because, he had, and has, a greater plan, here too, and he has, made a sovereign choice, oh, what grace, do we, do we, recognize, here, that the, spirit's, fruit, which should be, manifest, in our lives, of patience, this settling, of the cloud, and fire, this manifest, dwelling, this erection, of the tabernacle, didn't happen overnight, a lot of diligent, work, had to be undertaken, and it was a full year, which had elapsed, between,

[35 : 30] Moses leading the children, of Israel, out of Egypt, and this glorious result, blossoming, in the desert, we have to be patient, by our way of it, in terms of the Lord's work, in our own lives, individually, as well as in a corporate sense, what we want done, and long for, in our lives, and the lives, of others, may take a long time, by our fleeting standards, but our Father, will, have, his way, in, his time, at, his right time, but, but, the cloud, and fire, that settled, at the start, of year two, had still, led, the same rebellious, doubting, and truculent people, from day one, of year one, oh, what

grace, we should notice, as well, that our heavenly Father, and Moses, heavenly Father, does not do things, by halves, our God, is a God, of abundance, the cloud, covered, the tent of meeting, the glory of the Lord, filled the tabernacle, superlative words, characterize, the vocabulary, concerning the almighty, not just abundance, but super abundance, not just, brightness, but effulgence, not just wonderful, but glorious, our Lord's eyes, are not just clear, they are like, blazing fire, his voice, does not just speak, it is like the sound, of rushing waters, his face, is not just bright, it is like the sun, shining, in all its brilliance, truly at present, we see through a glass, darkly, let's note, that the presence of God, was indeed their guide, in that wilderness journey, there were times, when they should stay put, there were times, when they should, move on, obedience, was crucial, their own wisdom, in these things, was non-existent, or at best, deeply flawed, and when over, the ensuing years, they disobeyed, and went their own way, when they opted not, to let the cloud, lead them, it brought nothing, but death, and disaster, and destruction, on them, let's remember, that the, cloud, and fire, which, is present, with us, and guides us, is darkness, to the enemy, of our souls, and those, who serve him, remember, the one occasion, when the cloud, and fire, did not lead, in front of the children, of Israel, but went behind them, and cast, darkness, and confusion, on the enemy, as the Egyptians, pursued them, at the Red Sea, we find that, in Exodus 14, 19, and let's just, note again, the faithfulness, of God, what he says, he will do, he does, he does not, go back, on his promises, the last words, of the book, are, throughout, all, their journeys, so can we take, any of this, to ourselves, of course, we can, but Jesus, changed everything, and so, we view, the ending, of Exodus, in the light, of Calvary, in the light, of the rent veil,

the curtain, torn, from top, to bottom, as our Savior, breathed his last, we view this, in the light, of the gift, of the promised, Holy Spirit, and in view, of John 14, 23, if anyone, loves me, said Jesus, in the upper room, 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, because of Jesus, we have unfettered, access, to the presence, of the triune God, by his spirit, God lives, in our hearts, he has lavished, that grace, on us, in making, his home, there, may we move, when he leads us, may we stay, when he tells us to, may we demonstrate, obedience, obedience, to his commands, to the, wonderful, manifesto, of grace, to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbor, as ourselves, may we know, the glory, of his presence, in our lives, may others, see Christ, in us, as the hope, of glory, may we realize, every day, the super abundance, of God's grace, and may we recognize, and rejoice, in the promise, the unailing, and in unailing promise, of that presence, going on all our journeys, till we come, to our own Jordan, and enter, that promised land, where we will be, like our Savior, when we will see him, as he is, in all, of his, unfathomable, glory, and love, truly, he will never, never, never, no, never, leave us, nor forsake us, for time, or, for eternity, we have, the promise, in Jesus, by God's, spirit, that God, the father, is our, guiding, abiding, presence, throughout, all, our life's, journey, and, that, is, from the end, of the book, of Exodus, let's, pray together, .