

SUMMER 5 - Way Out

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Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 00] This is the last tape in Paul Barker's summer series on Exodus.

Almighty God indeed we do give thanks looking back to the weight of sin carried by your Son our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for us. And we thank you for his great sacrifice made once for all. We thank you that we need now to offer no sacrifice for atonement but rather in response of gratitude and faith our lives as a living sacrifice to you.

Amen. We're going to start at the end of chapter 24 page 62 in the Pew Bibles and we are going to get to the end of chapter 40.

It's a little bit of a gallop but thankfully it's not so hot so we should be able to manage tonight. At the very end last paragraph of chapter 24 Moses went up on the mountain.

[1 : 03] Mount Sinai remember he's already been up there to take the Ten Commandments or hear them and to receive other laws which he's passed on to Israel. And now back up he goes and the cloud covered the mountain.

The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.

Moses entered the cloud and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. So we begin tonight with a picture of the glory of the Lord descended on the mountain of God.

That's what it was called back in chapter 3 you remember. Mount Sinai or in other places called Mount Horeb. There's a sense in which this is God's own mountain. There's even a couple of verses in the Psalms and a couple of other places later on that seem to suggest that God in a sense comes from Mount Sinai or from Sinai area.

So there's a sense in which Israel has come to God. Remember that we saw in chapter 19 last week not only have they been brought out of slavery in Egypt but they've been brought to God.

[2 : 14] So now they're in God's place. The holy ground that Moses first came to in chapter 3 with the burning bush, same place that they are now. A holy space, a holy ground, a God's own dwelling place in a sense.

Now what? If the people are heading off to the land do they wave goodbye to God at Mount Sinai and leave him there?

Is it that God has just sort of brought them to himself, told them a few things and kicked them out and sent them on their way? Bye bye, nice to know you sort of thing. The chapters that follow in a sense deal with that issue.

From now to the end of the book it is how is God going to be with his people and we'll see that all the symbols associated with the presence of God on that Sinai become portable so that God in effect in one sense leaves Sinai himself with his people and leads them on through the wilderness and ultimately to the promised land.

We could entitle what we're doing tonight as God goes camping because that's a sense in which that's what we're on about. God does go camping and he gives Moses the instructions about building his tent.

[3 : 29] It's called a tabernacle but that's in effect what God is giving these instructions to Moses for. So in chapter 25 we begin a long section 25 to the end of 31 so that's seven chapters worth of instructions mainly to do with the building of the tent and all the camping utensils that God wants to have in the tent and how the people are to knock on his door at the tent and all that sort of thing for the future.

Now it's fairly tedious reading and if you've read it recently some of the people at Holy Trinity are reading their Bibles through in a year and will have just read Exodus in recent weeks. It's hard going.

It's easy to get lost in all the minutiae and the detail and it's hard to picture what's being described. You sort of wish that our Bibles all came with nice children's pictures so you could say oh that's what they're talking about.

I'll give you a diagram a bit later on to help explain some of it. But firstly in verses 1 to 9 we get the general instructions if you like the preliminary instructions for all the chapters that follow.

The Lord says to Moses tell the Israelites to take for me an offering from all whose hearts prompt them to give you you shall receive the offering for me. Notice there that it's the people's hearts they're not obligating people to give a certain amount but it's those whose hearts are willing to give and their offering shall be received.

[4 : 54] And the offering you shall receive from them gold, silver, bronze, blue, purple and crimson yarns, fine linen, goat's hair, tanned, rammed skins, fine leather, acacia wood, oil for the lamp, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx, stones and gems to be set in the ephod and for the breast piece.

Now that's quite a sort of select group of things, fairly precious things but remember that when the Israelites left Egypt the Egyptians gave them lots of treasures in effect, jewellery and gold and so on.

So now from what they've received from the Egyptians and maybe even from a couple of battles they've fought earlier on in the wilderness time they're now offering these precious goods back to God for the building of his tent and surrounds.

And have them make me, he says in verse 8, a sanctuary. That is literally a holy place. A place that's set apart, that's what it means, for God to dwell there so that I may dwell among them.

The end of verse 8 says. So this will be the special place of God's dwelling. It doesn't, as we've seen in recent weeks, deny the fact that God is everywhere in the universe but there's a special sense in which he'll dwell in this sanctuary, this holy place, this set apart space in the middle of the Israelites here in the wilderness around Mount Sinai.

[6 : 15] The word for to dwell is the word to tabernacle or to pitch your tent. It's the same word that's then used in Greek in John's Gospel chapter 1 when Jesus comes and tabernacles amongst us.

Picking up the imagery of here is God dwelling in a sense symbolically and with a tent but in the New Testament the whole idea of God dwelling with his people is lifted to a higher level with Jesus tabernacling or pitching his tent among God's people there.

The design of this is to be strictly according to what God says. Verse 9 says, In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle and of all its furniture so you shall make it. He's not saying to Moses, Moses, I want you to dream up the best you can imagine and build it for me. But rather he's saying to Moses, I want you to follow these instructions to the letter. Now when we sit back and realise there are seven chapters of instructions here we realise that that's actually important.

That is, it's important to get the tabernacle right, the approach to it right, the offerings and furniture and the priests and their garments all right because approaching God is a serious matter and cannot be done lightly, can't even be done with a great sense of reverence but on our terms.

[7 : 34] It must be done entirely on God's terms. So if nothing else, when you read all these seven chapters through to the end of 31 and then when you pick it up from 35 to the end when they actually do what they're told to do, remember that the details, the precision, even if we don't understand why does God want it that size and not that size, is somehow God making it very clear that how you approach Him is a very important issue to get right.

Now what follows in the chapters and paragraphs and so on that follow is in a sense moving out from the centre of the tabernacle, tent, out to the outside of it.

So we start with, in effect, God's own holy place, His particular dwelling place and throne and room and then we move out to the next stage and then to the next.

So keep that in mind in the chapters that follow. So we begin at the centre and we work outwards.

I'll give you a diagram a bit later on but we'll cover a few of the things and then before we get too confused I'll put a diagram up and that'll hopefully slot things in in one sense.

But in verses 10 to 22 in chapter 25 we get descriptions about the ark. They don't think of a big boat here. It's not that God's a sailor. The ark is literally a box or a coffer.

[8 : 53] That's literally what the word means and the same with Noah's ark. It's basically a big box and that's what's going on here. It's about, and all the measurements, at least in the NRSV, if you've got other Bibles you may have feet and inches or centimetres or something, but in the NRSV they're all cubits.

Now a cubit is supposed to be the length from the tip of the elbow to the tip of the finger and it's about 18 inches, just under 18 inches in Hebrew measurements.

So when you see cubit think a foot and a half or half a metre and you're roughly right. So this ark is 3 foot 9 long. I don't know, is that about so long?

And 2 foot 3 wide. It's made of acacia wood which is a very hard wood that's long lasting and doesn't get eaten away by insects and so on.

It's found in the Sinai area. It's to be covered with gold and it's carried by two poles. If you can picture those old Victorian carriages where the servants, you know, two at the front, two at the end and the sort of very rich gentleman or lady would get in this little carriage and then they'd lift the person up and carry them off.

[10 : 06] That's sort of what we've got here. Two long poles that carry it and it would be carried by four people presumably or maybe even just two, one at the back, one at the front or two on each end.

And again, there's details about covering all that with gold and so on. Inside the ark, inside the box, so to speak, will be the tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Two stones. Don't think of great big stones. You know, sometimes the drawings and paintings of Moses are coming down the mountain with great big stones. They're found lots of stones of ancient laws and they're usually about this big.

If you go to the British Museum in London, you'll see stones from Abimelech and Cyrus in the Persian time and so on and they're quite small really. Even maybe some of them are smaller.

So we could imagine that Moses just, you know, held small tablets in his hand. After all, the Ten Commandments aren't all that long even if you've got all the Ten Commandments repeated on each of the two tablets.

[11 : 05] And they're to be put in the box and we know from later in the Old Testament the same with a bit of the manna that was found in the wilderness was to be put there as a memorial of God's provision in the wilderness and also Aaron's rod later was placed in the ark as well.

The lid of the ark would be gold and it's called here in verse 17 the mercy seat. Now let me just make a brief comment about this. The word, it's a bit tricky to know the full sense of that word and the reason for that is that the word comes from, a Hebrew word to mean cover.

So it could just be the cover. But the thing is when you atone for sin the word that's used is to cover sin. It doesn't mean that sin still exists and it's just covered over and pretend it's not there.

It's covered over in the sense of atoning and done away with. But you'll know the expression Yom Kippur which is the day of atonement. The Kippur is the word for atonement and it literally just means cover.

and you may know that some Jewish people wear what we might call a skull cap or something a Kippur that is just a cover on their head. So the mercy seat may have the full sense of mercy atonement about it but it may be a little less than that.

[12 : 18] It may just be talking about the cover. Probably the two actually do fit together because later on the blood from atonement sacrifices is sprinkled on there. So probably the sense of mercy and atonement is fair enough here.

On either side of the box so if you can imagine a box gold cover mercy seat and then on either end facing each other probably with wings outspread would be cherubim standing upright facing each other across this forefoot box or arc gold cherubim.

Cherubim are angelic sort of figures and they are what guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve were expelled in Genesis 3.24. So here we have a symbol of God's presence picked up from Genesis 3.

The cherubim are part of the presence of God if you like the environs of God guarding his presence from sinful people. Now we get the same imagery again. The cherubim in the place of God's presence again but we'll see now that they're not totally guarding the entrance into God's presence.

we need to notice in verse 22 there I will meet with you. So this is where this is the particular place where God meets with his people and in particular it says and from above the mercy seat from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant I will deliver to you all my commands to the Israelites.

[13 : 49] the ark is not where God lives but the ark is if you like his throne or even his footstool in a sense. God actually dwells in the space above the ark between the two cherubim invisible of course but that's his dwelling place and that in particular is where God meets his people and notice how he meets his people where there is mercy on the mercy seat.

That idea is picked up in the New Testament in a couple of different places. For example in Romans chapter 3 Paul talking about what Jesus has done bringing righteousness Jesus whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood effective through faith and the idea of a sacrifice of atonement could mean the place of atonement or the mercy seat so it's picking up the language of here in the Old Testament that in a sense Jesus fulfills what this place of mercy is ultimately about.

The same idea comes in Hebrews 9 as well. The next thing is a bit odd in one sense it's the table for the bread of the presence. One of the troubles with some of these laws in the Old Testament is we're not always told why they had to do what they had to do or what the theology behind it was. Same in the book of Leviticus it's really like a rubric to a prayer book telling you how to make a sacrifice but it never tells you the significance of the sacrifice or very little of that. So we always have to be careful reading these instructions.

So the table for the bread of presence is verses 23 to 30 and this is a little table smaller than the ark again it's covered in gold it's carried by poles it's not right in the most holy place it's outside of that on the north side.

[15 : 44] It has on it gold plates and incense dishes flagons and bowls they're all in gold and later on we discover that in verse 30 we're told you shall set the bread of the presence on the table before me always but yet we're not told what the bread of the presence is.

That comes in Leviticus 24 and there we're told that every Sabbath 12 loaves one for each tribe out of choice flour would be made and placed there and then eaten by the Aaronic priest or Aaron and the Aaronic priesthood each week.

The next section is about a lampstand. This is not just any lampstand it's very ornate this is probably virtually the most ornate part of the furniture it's solid gold and it has on it's in effect seven lights I suppose seven candles would be placed there one central one and then on branches or arms three on either side you've probably seen Jewish menorah that's the Jewish term for this sort of lampstand usually with seven occasionally you see a nine headed menorah lamp and this was placed again not in the most holy place but in the next court out the holy place and on the south side I think and this seven headed lamp would be very ornate with petals and leaves and almond blossoms carved or moulded from the gold that it's made of verse 40 at the end of it tells us it must be made according to the pattern for them which is being shown you on the mountain that's a refrain that comes a few times reinforcing the fact that

Moses you're not just to make the nicest one you can think of you've got to make it the way I tell you to make always according to God's instructions it's probably always meant to be lit or certainly if it's a bit ambiguous about this later on there's some more instructions in chapter 27 about it but certainly evening and morning it's to be dressed perhaps new candles put in and the wax cleared away and so on and that's to be done by Aaron or the chief priest or the high priest interestingly in Jewish tradition this is a slight digression but in Jewish tradition this menorah lamp you know the seven headed lamp often came to be associated with the tree of life in the garden of Eden as though the lamp itself looks like a tree it's got blossoms and petals and flowers and it would be an appropriate thing because here at the tabernacle where in a sense God lives comes one of the symbols of God's presence from the garden of Eden and also of course it's a symbol that Jesus then picks up and develops further when he said for example

I'm the light of the world and it's also one that's taken up in the book of Revelation where the church is the lampstand as well well into chapter 26 linen curtains we won't worry too much about the curtains in chapter 26 but they're beautiful they're ornate and probably they're seen from the inside that is the way this is structured you get a sense in which there's a wooden frame for the holy place and on the inside of it hang these ornate curtains but on the outside of it are what follows in the next paragraph verses 7 to 14 are goat's hair curtains and they're they're two cubits longer so what it

seems to imply is that from the outside it looks like a normal tent often tents would be made of goat's hair it would be fairly good for keeping out rain and weather and would breathe a bit in the air and so on and these outer goat's hair type curtains would protect these ornate more beautiful ones on the inside so when you came into the holy place it looked very beautiful from the outside perhaps fairly unattractive or fairly plain

[19:36] I guess so that's verses 1 to 6 the linen curtains and then the goat's hair curtains and skin coverings presumably for the roof pit as well in verses 15 to 30 of chapter 26 you get the wooden frames and the sockets if you've ever put up one of those sort of continental tents I remember when we first had one as a family the first night we went camping on this great long camping expedition we were living in England we went across to Belgium and it took three hours to put up this tent with me shouting instructions from the car in the pouring rain while mum and dad tried to put it up in the rain and you've got all these poles and they've all got to connect into the right bit of pole and if you get them wrong you'll end up with a tent that's lopsided so in a sense the frames that follow are a little bit like that a sort of you know Meccano set or something like that where frames of a building in a sense are just a frame no thick walls because the walls will be the curtains that we've already had got to get it all right otherwise it'll all fall down and so on and again in verse 30 at the end of those instructions we get then you shall erect the tabernacle according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain so yet again we get that refrain it's got to be done

God's way verse 31 to the end of chapter 26 verse 37 are the inner and outer veil now in a sense the curtains have done perhaps three walls out of four and now we get the instructions firstly for the inner veil in verses 31 onwards and this is an ornate veil curtain type thing embroidered with cherubim on it so that this is the entrance into the very holy place where the ark is and again you see cherubim are sort of guarding the way like in the garden of Eden where the presence of God was and the function of this veil was to separate the holy place from the most holy place and we might put up the diagram here in case we're beginning to get lost maybe Bill you could just oh I need the spring we've got east here this is the most holy place or sometimes called the holy of holies that little rectangle in the middle is the ark imagine it with cherubim on top gold covered and then this bit here would be the veil that we've just talked about the curtain if you like and we've already talked about the full linen and goat curtains they probably go around the whole bit of this so the entrance into this bit is here and the entrance into this bit is here and the entrance into the court is out here so always the entrance of the tabernacle and temple faces to the east like the garden of Eden again in fact and we've talked about the table of the bread that sits it there's the golden lampstand opposite of on the other side of the holy place so the bit we're up to is the veil that goes along that wall there and that's protecting the people who are in the holy place from seeing in or going in to the most holy place later on in the old testament there are very strict instructions about who can go in there and when and basically it's just the high priest one day a year on the day of atonement and only with the blood of the atonement sacrifice and tradition has it that so fearful were the high priests of going in there that they'd have a rope tied to their leg so that if something happened to them in the presence of God himself the other priests could drag him out without themselves having to go in behind that curtain and it's this veil this inner veil which is the one that was torn when Jesus died on the cross according to Matthew's gospel from top to bottom from God's end the temple one of course would have been taller than this but the same pattern what we see here in the tabernacle becomes more solid and perhaps a bit grander in the temple that was built perhaps five 450 years later in the time of Solomon so that's the inner veil and then there's the outer veil and the last few verses there also talk about the arrangement so verse 34 says you shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant in the most holy place you shall set the table outside the curtain and the lampstand on the south side opposite the table which presumably is on the north side and you shall put the table on the north side so that's where we've got to so far chapter 27 hope you're keeping up okay the altar next the altar is in the main court and we're talking here about this square on the left of the diagram the altar of burnt offering there's another little altar up there but that's the altar of incense which we come to much later on but the altar here is in the main court it would be there's some vagueness about this because it's largely built of wood which doesn't actually make for an altar that's going to have lots of fire on it but it's overlaid on the top with bronze some people think that this wooden frame would then be filled in with soil other people think it doesn't quite fit with

Exodus 20 where the instructions are to build an altar of unhewn stones so there's some difficulty quite working out how all these things fit together but it seems here this is an altar that is a wooden frame with a bronze cover on it a grating underneath somehow and on the corner of the altar each corner at the top are horns now probably what this is is a little bit like say an inverted ice cream cone maybe a bit bigger but sort of instead of just a perfectly cubic box on the corners would rise up a pointy bit like a horn of an animal in a sense and these were probably for tying down some of the sacrifices on the altar although most of them I think would have been dead by the time they got to this point but also later on it becomes a place of refuge I think it's Adonijah who flees to the altar horns when his life is threatened when Solomon becomes king if I remember right or just before David dies his father and holds on to the horns of the altar this I think it's just before David dies as though that's a place of refuge where he wouldn't be killed which I think he was a bit after that I guess the other thing to comment here we're not reading too many of the verses about this altar partly because we're perhaps more familiar with altars and sacrifices but what it does remind us is that before you get anywhere near the holy place or the most holy place you go past the place where animals are sacrificed so the means of coming into that most holy place is very clearly through blood sacrifice and it reminds us just how serious it is to approach God as sinners and how significant how high a price in a sense sin demands by way of sacrifice for atonement we don't get any instructions here about what sacrifices to make that all comes in the opening chapters of Leviticus the next section verses 9 to 19 are the court and this is the outer court so not the rectangle on the right but the bigger courtyard around all of that and the hangings that go around it in a sense like a screening around the side it's not roofed over but it's screened all the way around the side this court is a hundred cubits long so it's about a hundred and fifty feet I think yes it's got a measurement on the diagram a hundred cubits and it's fifty cubits wide that's the north to south line and the height of this screen was about five cubits so that's a bit over human height the tabernacle itself or the holy place most holy place would have been taller again so that from the outside you could see in a sense a screened off courtyard but you could see the top of the holy place rising up above the outer screen the hangings that are described in these verses go only on the north the south and the west that is on the diagram top bottom and right hand side the east side would have fifteen cubits of hangings from the corners coming in and that would leave twenty in the middle for another sort of screen which was the entrance into the court so it wasn't an open gateway that you could just walk in you couldn't see in but nonetheless there was a screen before you could get in into that courtyard verses twenty and twenty one the end of the chapter talk about the oil for the lamp possibly it's implying that it's always burning the olive the oil must be olive oil pure and provided by the

Israelites now then in chapter twenty eight and twenty nine we move a bit from all the furniture and the arrangements here we might turn it off now Bill thanks because I think that's about it for now on that but we now come to what the priests would wear and again even though maybe some of this is very foreign to us the detail shows the importance of a right approach to God the priests being spoken about here are Aaron in particular the high priest and his descendants who would become who were priests and would become perhaps high priest after his death and so on their role is to look after this tabernacle and the altars and incense and so on they have other roles as well they had to teach the law to people we read that in Deuteronomy 10 for example they had to determine things about who was clean and unclean you read about that in Leviticus they had a role in warfare in Deuteronomy and other places as well so they had a fairly wide ranging role the priests but here we're concentrated with their role and what their dresses in particular in this holy place their garments at least the top garments were made of the same material as all the hangings so again it's ornate and special the best cloth and thread that you can get because in a sense only the best will do for

[29 : 51] God the makers of the garments were told in verse 3 shall be people who have ability whom I have endowed with skill God says that is wise people in fact the word is related to we might think well gosh does it matter but here again it's highlighting just how important this is the approach to God by the priests now they wore what's called an ephod and the ephod was like a sleeveless vest two pieces of material it seems one that hung on the front and a matching one that hung on the back tied across the shoulder maybe tied I think around the waist as well and in it on the shoulders one on each I think would be two stones precious stones and on them would be on each six names of the tribes of Israel six on each on top of that or tied to it was the breast piece or breastplate and it seems it's folded in half it's really at the front not that's where it hangs rather than at the back

although it might be tied around the person it may be folded in half in a sense of providing a pouch for the stones that are mentioned it's a little bit unclear exactly here you don't get full sort of making instructions again you've got the names of the tribes that are mentioned in verse 21 and this time twelve precious stones twelve different precious stones one for each tribe now these twelve stones occur in another place in the second last chapter of the Bible and as far as

I'm aware I may be wrong probably am but I've never read when I've read Revelation and commentaries on Revelation or commentaries on Exodus have I ever made people make much of the link but I think what the link is is that this is the garment that only the high priest would wear and he would have to wear when he went into the most holy place of God's presence but in the book of Revelation the twelve precious stones are embedded in the foundation of the New Jerusalem around it and I think the significance of that is not just that it's ornate but is that the privilege that the high priest had in the Old Testament to be in God's very presence is in the New Jerusalem a privilege that is extended to all of God's people all the time I think that's its significance so even though this might be foreign to us and we might think somehow exclusive that people can't sort of come and go what I should do is heighten our sense of the privilege of being in God's presence all the time and not least the privilege that will be ours especially in heaven verse 30 in all of this discussion mentions that in the breast piece of judgment you shall put the urim and the thummim and they shall be on

Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord thus Aaron shall bear the judgment of the Israelites on his heart before the Lord continually now there's lots of debate about urim and thummim the most plausible explanation of what it is is that they're probably flat stones and they would function not dissimilar to dice you might think this is a bit of a lottery but but the idea is that at points of decision making and they only occur about seven or eight times later on in the Old Testament the urim and thummim would be thrown and that would determine the course of action presumably if you they would each have something engraved on either side and if they matched then you would do this and if they matched the other way you'd do that or perhaps if they didn't match you kept throwing until they did I suppose it's like heads and tails with two coins as I say the Old Testament doesn't give us the details of what you do with it but it tells us where they're put they're put in the breast piece of the high priest verses 31 to 35 talk about the robe of the ephod that's worn under the ephod the ephod would come to your waist this is like a tunic that would come to your knees it's got at the bottom of it golden bells and pomegranates probably little gold replicas of pomegranates and the idea is that they'd all sort of tinkle as the high priest was doing his business in the middle of the most holy place and holy place so that from the outside you could hear him doing his priestly duties in the central place presumably if they stopped tinkling you knew that he'd fallen over and needed rescuing from the presence of God again when the temple's built in Solomon's day it's also got lots of ornate pomegranates on it being one of the fruit found in Israel and perhaps the only thing that still exists from Solomon's temple today is a beautiful small pomegranate that's in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem very exquisite and quite small when you look at it in the glass case they've got magnifying things so you can see it up closer then comes a rosette it seems to be something that's placed on the turban or headdress that the priest wears so there's some sort of linen headdress turban thing and then a gold rosette or front piece and on that is engraved holy to the Lord now that's verses 36 to 38 notice that in verse 38 as well it shall be on Aaron's forehead and Aaron shall take on himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering that the Israelites consecrate as their sacred donations it shall always be on his forehead in order that they may find favour before the Lord notice there the mediating role of the priest he in one sense is prepared to carry the guilt of the people I think he limited to the guilt associated with the actual offerings and sacrifices when he goes into the place of atonement and sprinkles the atonement blood and so on so there's a sense in which here already we have a sense of God choosing a mediator priest who will somehow bear the sins of his people when they sin a role of course that's fulfilled perfectly by

Jesus then you get comments about the inner tunic which is fairly plain and then some comments about the dress for Aaron's sons to finish off that chapter in chapter 29 the priests are now ordained or consecrated set apart for their duty Aaron is these instructions remember given to Moses in verse 4 Moses is to wash Aaron his brother might be a bit embarrassing but I suppose they are brothers then he's to clothe him in all the garb that we've just heard about in verse 5 in verse 7 he anoints him with oil and then in verses 8 and 9 it talks about his sons being included in all of this as

well and then comes the in a sense the ordination ceremony a bull is offered in verses 10 to 14 for a sin offering Aaron is to lay hands on the bull before it's sacrificed and people debate about what's the significance of that probably there's a sense of transferring of sin in a sense that God you've provided in a sense this animal to be a sacrifice for my sin may my sin be placed on that animal so that my sins are done away with in that sacrifice that's the sort of theology that I think is most likely with these animal sacrifices here and in Leviticus as well that animal is totally consumed and sin offerings usually were burnt offerings usually were some offerings you would destroy part of the animal just burn it up into charcoal and other bits you just cook and then eat but not the sin or burnt offering they were to be totally consumed the next one is a ram and this also is totally consumed another burnt offering for sin in part and the blood of this one is placed or sprinkled on the altar we're told this is verses 15 to 18 we'll just change the side of the tape and then the third animal is the ram for dedication verses 19 all the way through to verse 35 this one the blood of it is sprinkled on

[38 : 05] Aaron and his vestments and his sons as well in verses 20 and 21 along with some of the anointing oil as well and the remainder of its flesh is eaten by Aaron so this is not a sin or atonement type sacrifice but it's a dedication one so the blood being sprinkled on him is a sense of dedicating him for service to God set apart as the high priest same for his sons and this is a ceremony that lasts seven days it may be that you are offered the same sacrifice each of seven days according to verse 35 and then come some other daily offerings to be offered as well in the last verses of the chapter now you can at this point help I think but to think what a lot of animals being killed and there were when the temples dedicated in Solomon's day there were thousands of animals sacrificed and you might think well what a waste all these good animals that must have been so precious in that sort of society and agrarian society especially in a fairly tough climate like Sinai where meat would be so scarce here are they offering rams and bulls that would be worth fortunes in our sort of society if you were able to convert it over you know almost your livelihood in one sense is being offered here as a sacrifice but remember that it's telling us that sin is a real problem you can't get rid of it easily and the fact that sacrifices are offered daily and yearly and regularly makes it even more clear that sin cannot be dealt away with easily it's there it's taken root and at one level these animal sacrifices are a token gesture at another level in the Old Testament people who trusted their sins were forgiven through this animal sacrifice were forgiven it's not because the blood of bulls and goats can take away sin it's because they're trusting God's laws which find their fulfilment in Jesus sacrifice so therefore they're actually forgiven by Jesus death before the event it seems to me the real sacrifice that deals with sin is Jesus death but these are shadows or sketch diagrams or the prototype of what Jesus death is of course all about and that then highlights more of the significance of Jesus death because Jesus died once for all no daily sacrifice no weekly sacrifice despite what some Roman Catholic theology tries to do with the Lord's Supper it's a once for all sacrifice never to be repeated in any way by anyone that just shows us the depth and the breadth and the height of what Jesus death actually accomplishes for us and thank God we don't have to kill animals on a regular basis to try and do something to our sin we haven't got time but let me encourage you to read as a devotion yourself when you get home Hebrews chapters 8 and 9 and 10 because a lot of what's said there about Jesus is picking up some of these things we've seen here already about sacrifices and tabernacle and so on well then comes the altar of incense in chapter 30 verses 1 to 10 this is placed in front of the inner veil incense in some places of scripture is a symbol of prayer it's there in the Psalms and the book of Revelation for example like that then chapter 30 verse 11 is an offering of a half shekel atonement money as though somehow you're going to pay for your sins to be forgiven it's not quite like that but it is telling us that payment dealing with sins is expensive then comes a basin for the ceremonial washing of priests that's chapter 30 verse 18 onwards and then again something about anointing oil to finish off chapter 30 and the incense made from finest spices that people contribute chapter 31 deals with the people who are going to do all this people who are specially endowed with God's spirit and wisdom Bezalel and Aholiab their names and then comes a reiteration of the Sabbath law which seems a little bit out of place doesn't actually quite seem to fit the tabernacle but I think what's being said there is that in a sense that the sacrifices and the reconciled relationship with God that is the result of all this gets back to what God's original creation was aiming at harmony between God and people and creation and the first Sabbath day of the very first week and then at the very end of chapter 31 when God had finished speaking with Moses on

Mount Sinai he gave him two tablets of covenant two tablets of stone written with the finger of God they're the ten commandments so far so good but what's been happening downstairs down the mountain that is

Moses is up top he's been given all these instructions from God but now it's what's happened downstairs that is so odd so surprising so incongruous with the place and the significance of what's been going on here are all the Israelites down the bottom of the mountain in sight of the cloud the fire they've heard the voice of God give ten commandments there's no doubt some thunder and trumpets from time to time or something like that they're within a month of all those events virtually and now they turn to the grossest form of idolatry now this is the passage that Dorothy read for us we're not going to dwell on this too much because for many of us this story is actually well known more so than the chapters we've dealt with so far tonight but they're actually here for not apart from the fact they happened they're actually here for a very important reason and it's sort of that that I'm going to try and draw out tonight for you we get here the worst sin you could imagine at the place of greatest privilege for God's people of the Old Testament it's not just a bad sin anywhere it's a bad sin in the very surrounds or precincts of the holy place in effect where God actually is at this point and the Israelites are impatient and they want Aaron his Moses brother to make gods for us in verse 1 who shall go before us as for this Moses the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt we don't know what's become of him so they've given up on him very quickly and they want gods the gods that they're making is not so much we don't want Yahweh but we want some visible God to identify with Yahweh who brought us out of Egypt the two are associated in a couple of places a bit later on but all of this is a clear infringement of the Ten Commandments and other laws already no idols no graven images etc Aaron is fully culpable even though he tries to excuse it with a fairly pathetic excuse later to Moses when he comes down the mountain he's as guilty as they are so Aaron says take off your jewellery and gold rings etc he forms it into a mould he didn't just throw it into the fire and out comes a calf as if it's magic he formed it he made a calf a little cow out of gold and then in and and just the fact that they throw in all this gold just shows that they're prepared to put all their precious things into an idol now this is something that they're staking a big claim about really and then they rose early the next day I think the thrust of that is they're keen to get on with this god and idols and so on and the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to revel literally to play and the connotation of that word is probably to do with sexual immorality so we've got here sort of hints of a debauched orgy in effect going on at the bottom of Mount

[45 : 53] Sinai now upstairs Moses knows nothing of this but God does because he sees everything and he tells Moses in verses seven onwards what's going on he says to Moses go down at once actually a command that's very strong and yet Moses disobeys it ironically and then notice what God says your people whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt have acted perversely it's as though God is playing table tennis with Moses and hitting the ball is the people and saying they're your people Moses I don't want them they're yours and they've acted perversely I don't want to have anything to do with them they've been quick to turn aside they've made it they've cast for themselves an image of a calf they've worshipped it sacrificed to it and they've said to it about it these are your gods oh Israel so Yahweh said to Moses I've seen this people how stiff-necked they are the idea of being an animal like an ox that's stubborn or a donkey and you put a yoke on it to do the work in the farm and it's stiff-necked it won't go where you want it to go it refuses to budge with the yoke that's the idea of Israel being stiff-necked a term that's used several times in the

Old Testament about it and notice too that God says in verse 10 and now let me alone Moses so that my wrath may burn hot God is angry but it's not a wrath that's just you know somebody with a quick temper firing away I mean this is the worst sin it's rightly provoke God to wrath God's wrath is only ever provoked by sin we ought not to feel that somehow you know in our life God's anger is burning against us because God's sort of capricious like a bad tempered old man his wrath only comes about because of people's sin and that's what's happening here as well and he's intent on destroying them he says to Moses let me alone so that I may consume them I don't think he's calling Moses bluff this isn't a test for Moses to think I wonder what Moses is going to do if I pretend that I'm going to destroy Israel because he says I'll promise to you the end of verse 10 I'll make you a great nation that's a little bit of a bribe we might think is God playing the playing the bluff with Moses here testing him to see where his loyalty and faithfulness and I don't think so I think we've got to understand this is God very seriously ready to destroy Israel for their sin they deserve it after all and yet in the end he doesn't Moses doesn't obey God by going down the mountain and leaving

God alone he implores him that pleads with him in verse 11 and says oh Yahweh why does your wrath burn hot against your people see he's passing the ball back to him there's an own your court God they're your people you brought them out of the land of Egypt so in effect Moses has begun to pray and he's saying God these are your people so don't destroy your people because you've acted to save them then notice the next thing he says in verse 12 he doesn't want God's reputation to be damaged by the Egyptians he says to God if you destroy them the Egyptians will laugh at you they'll think you're a weak God you couldn't bring them to the promised land in effect why should the Egyptians say it was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth God the Egyptians will think you're weak and they'll think that you're evil and notice that's a very important prayer here is Moses praying a prayer that God heeds for God's fallen people and I think there are probably lessons here for how we can pray for Christians who fall and for churches that are weak or falling because sometimes we pray oh God please fill the pews let us be a big church let's lots of people come here and lots of kids and be growing because it'd be great in one sense there's a slight selfishness of motivation in that prayer but Moses is not praying that for any selfish reason he's saying God if your people are weak and failing the world will mock you do you see how God has staked his reputation on his people it's not incredible how we behave in this world affects the way the world views God his reputation is on our shoulders that's quite a responsibility because the same applies for us as it did for ancient Israel here because when the Christian church is weak and divided and pathetic and immoral and heretical the world think God's not worth listening to not worth finding out anything about so we should be praying that the church is strong not because we want to have lots of people in our churches but because God's name will be honoured by the world and that's part of his goal with the promises to Abraham that there'll be blessing to the world through Abraham's descendants Moses also in verse 13 adds another motivation to his prayer remember

Abraham Isaac and Israel Jacob that is your servants how you swore to them by your own self saying I'll multiply your descendants etc God if you destroy Israel you will be breaking your promise if you scrap them and start again with me tempting though that might be for me to be the head of the nation you are actually being unfaithful to your promise God keep your promise notice how Moses is holding God accountable here to be faithful it's another thing about our prayers if it when we pray it is worth knowing what God promises and hold him to those promises God you've promised that you will never leave me or forsake me keep that promise God you've promised this or that but make sure we get out God's promises wrong because so many Christians come unstuck when they think God's promised a but he's promised b and they pray for a and they ignore b so know God's promises and pray for him to keep them because he will and the result of this God in verse 14 changes his mind we might think how can God change his mind we're not told how but he does and he does as a result of prayer sometimes it's so hard to get God's sovereignty and providence integrated with the power in a sense that is entrusted to us to pray to him we cannot in the end perhaps rationalize it totally but God keeps telling us pray and prayer works so even if we don't understand how or why we must pray notice a few things here notice how God's grace triumphs over sin his purposes are not thwarted by sinful

Israel notice how prayer changes God's mind as I've said notice how God is held accountable and is faithful notice how there's no sacrifice here to deal with Israel's sin pure prayer notice too that there's no repentance by Israel they're still gallivanting around the bottom of the mountain notice the significance of Moses as the mediator the one who stands between the people and with God a role that comes to its climax in Jesus perfect human perfect God notice Moses boldness to disobey God's command to go down the mountain and to pray to him and now notice to Moses humility refusing to take the glory of becoming the patriarch of a new nation in verse 10 well what happens in the rest of this story I'm not going in so much detail too but God Moses goes down the mountain he throws down the tablets of the stone the covenant is break and it's like tearing up the marriage contract it's all over you've broken the relationship people people are Moses calls out who's on my side who's on the Lord's side I should say the Levites offer their allegiance to God 3,000 of the Israelites are killed in response to all of that Aaron's gives a pathetic excuse to Moses he's as guilty as the rest Moses goes back to God then and prays he's willing to die in the place of the people in verse 30 of chapter 33 32 the last bit of chapter 32 on the next day

[54 : 05] Moses said to the people you've sinned a great sin but now go up to the Lord perhaps I can make atonement for your sin I don't think that's a that's a sort of pompous or boastful arrogant claim because Moses then goes on he returns to the Lord alas this people sinned a great sin

they've made for themselves gods of gold but now if you will only forgive their sin but if not blot me out of the book that you've written we don't know what the book is I guess ultimately it's the book of life but notice how Moses is prepared to take on the sin of the nation so that the nation can stay alive now it doesn't work in the economy of God Moses is also a sinner but it's a hint at what does work in the economy of God the perfect mediator who takes on the sins not only of God's nation but in a sense the world and does deal atonement to them but Yahweh said to Moses whoever has sinned against me I'll blot out of my book but now go lead the people to the place about which I've spoken to you and notice there in a sense mercy and justice mingle together there will be punishment for sin but the nation won't be destroyed and the promises thwarted thereby that is the nation will continue but those who sinned will be punished for their sin God is just and at the same time he is merciful well later on into chapter 33 and 34 the covenant is renewed the relationship between Israel and God is restored and the ten commandments are rewritten on two tablets of stone and then in chapter 35 we get all the way back to the instructions that we've already dealt with but this time the difference is it's not God telling Moses what to do it's telling us that Israel did what God told them to do so here in juxtaposition we get Israel with gross idolatry followed by detailed obedience through several chapters to the end of the book see they're not it's not as though

Israel never obeys God they do from time to time and chapters 35 onwards are an illustration of that because the detail in these chapters is telling us that Israel did it right the lengths of the poles were right the curtain lengths were right the materials that were used were right they followed the details of what God had given them instructions in chapters 25 to 31 and they did it all but there's a greater significance to going on here because the instructions to build the tabernacle were given before the golden calf incident and we might think well here's an ideal of God and his people meeting together in the holy place but not quite so they commit gross idolatry and yet in God's grace the tabernacle is still built Israel can still meet with God despite their sin there is forgiveness and mercy it's as though in one sense the slate is wiped clean because when we get to the very end of these instructions or the details of what Israel did at the very end of chapter 40 in the last paragraph the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle we've already seen that in one sense but on Mount

Sinai itself in chapter 24 the first words I read tonight and now we see it again you see God is not confined on the top of Sinai his mountain but he's come down to a sinful people and gone camping with them pitched his tent in their midst in the midst of a sinful people nonetheless God still lives and dwells within their midst you see this is showing that God with his people is not totally destroyed by the golden calf sin and the idolatry there is forgiveness there is mercy through prayer as well as sacrifice not only just through sacrifice which is often what we think in the Old Testament it shows us here that there is real atonement in the Old Testament yes it's true that Hebrews the letter to the Hebrews tells us the blood of goat and bulls does not take away sin but those who offered such sacrifices correctly in the Old Testament were forgiven for their sin atonement was theirs not because the goat or the blood of goat and bulls did it but because by trusting God's instructions for atonement they actually found well they actually were unknown to them trusting in the perfect sacrifice of Jesus but the whole structure of this the commands to build sin in the middle then the building which finishes with God's glory filling the place tells us even more about the character of God just yes holy yes to be approached with caution and care yes but a God who is abundantly merciful at the heart of what's been said in the golden calf incident comes a great description of God in chapter 34 verse 6 and 7 the Lord Yahweh that is Yahweh a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin yet by no means clearing the guilty but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children the children's children to the third and fourth generation something I commented on last week God has said I'm not staying here at Sinai I'm with you sinful though you are I'm with you and I'm coming with you and I'm coming with you and I will be with you let's pray oh God we do indeed give you thanks that you are both holy and merciful so often we thank you for your mercy and your forgiveness and yet we see here too your holiness not compromised by your mercy sin not condoned though pardoned and we thank you for all the glimpses we get of your grace mercy holiness love and wrath that come to a final and perfect mix on the cross of Calvary amen I think the question is um related to the prophets later on who um described the sacrifices abominable is why they say that and um you find that in Isaiah 1 and Amos

5 for example um and there uh what's being uh uh rebuked is uh immorality uh all sorts of sins really uh pride wealth greed uh oppressing the poor uh and uh it's saying there that if sacrifices they're not just mechanical actions so if they're not made by people whose lives are seeking to be right with god if there's not a sincerity of repentance attached to the sacrifices then then they're actually empty rituals that are that are worse than nothing they're actually an abomination to god and they should stop them and be done away with so it's an attack on their their moral character associated with the sacrifice not an attack on the sacrifices themselves in fact ironically uh and it's probably true today to an extent uh the more immoral the people got the more religious they became because they thought somehow that more and more religion would deal with more and more immorality um so in amos the people are actually very religious they do all their sacrifices and more but it's their attitude of greed and oppression of the poor and so on that's attacked in amos 5 for example andrew the other andrew um i don't but some do um because uh there is a very strict uh uh distinction uh in that the robes that i wear here um uh strictly speaking robes to do with um i mean they're medieval but they're to do with the office of teaching um some anglican uh higher church would wear what are called vestments and they come from medieval roman catholic practice and still current uh roman catholic practice that regarded the lord's supper as some sort of re-enactment or re-offering of jesus and it was in itself a sacrifice and therefore the roman catholic priests and high anglican priests wear garb that is related to sacrifice and i won't wear it at all but it's more and more common uh sadly the official word is that they don't mean anything uh but when you go to the cathedral and uh you see that it does linda question is about forgiveness we don't go to heaven without jesus death on the cross what about righteous israelites well righteous israelites would not be perfect they would be um trusting god for forgiveness of sins uh expressed by their offering sacrifices at the right time etc as as well as prayers of penitence um and they will be in heaven uh through the same means as us through jesus death uh it's just that their offering of animal sacrifices that are unknown to them they couldn't understand how an animal sacrifice would deal with their sin but they did what god told them they trusted him that this is the means of atonement and it's only when we get to the new testament we realize in a sense that those sacrifices are caught up into jesus sacrifice so that again shows us how great his death was because he died not just for people who lived then and after but also for the sins of those who trusted in him before he came any last questions uh steve question is uh in chapter 25 of exodus it talks about god dwelling in the sanctuary and then in deuteronomy it talks about god making his place to dwell amongst his people and is that in different tribes or just one place um i i think uh most of the expressions in deuteronomy seem to imply one place alone um and and and that may have varied from during history and presumably was tied up with where the arkans tabernacle were so for a time there are gilgal and shiloh and other places before in the end the tabernacle coming becoming subsumed under the temple so it became jerusalem but there are a couple of expressions in deuteronomy 12 and other places where uh the way it's written seems to suggest that it may not be just one place but maybe even one in each tribe the trouble is we don't have evidence for one in each tribe um in history but it could be um having said that the thrust of deuteronomy 12 which is where this expression first gets used i think is to emphasize that israel must worship not anywhere and certainly not where the canaanites worship but only in the place that god chooses so whether it's one or a few the actual emphasis is on god choosing the place last question from paul you had the last one last week that's not fair do i ever feel like berating you for all your golden cards you keep them kept them well hidden when i visited you um you should get the sermon tape from sunday morning last sunday morning well let's pray and uh if uh two or three would like to pray uh in response to what we've learned tonight i'll finish with a prayer and then we'll sing a hymn thank you for the lord jesus christ our great mediator our great high priest but also the sacrificial victim for us on the cross we thank you that we have been sprinkled by his blood not only cleansing us symbolically but purifying our hearts in your sight we thank you that through his blood we have confidence to enter the most holy place there to be at your throne of grace to know that our prayers are answered according to your goodness and mercy that we are acceptable in your sight because of your son and we long for that day in heaven where we will see you face to face no longer hidden or veiled but changing from glory into another degree of glory with unveiled faces we may gaze upon you and upon the lamb who was slain for us we thank you for the assurance that we will be there that day because of your faithfulness to your promises and your faithfulness to the work begun in us through jesus death and resurrection amen