
Day 29 - January 29

Establishment of a Nation (1525 - 1400 BCE)

Instructions for the Tabernacle

Readings: *Exodus 25:1-28:43*

Reflections:

- As we take a look at the instructions regarding the tabernacle, it is interesting to reflect that this was Israel's first building project of their own. Previously they had only worked on Egyptian projects. Now when you make that contrast, you realize how small and insignificant this tabernacle is compared to one of the Egyptian buildings. This is a little tent that is so very humble. It is equivalent with the Messiah being born in a manger, rather than in a palace. God's humility and love is modeled here. He is a God who so wants to be with this people that even if they are tenting it, he will join them in his own little tent.
- In terms of the design, everything is external. All of the basic ideas of relating to God or God relating to us are externalized in this tent with the intention of providing object lessons for his people.
- The key objective of the tabernacle's design is to both visualize relationship as well as to reinforce separation. Although God is with them, he is separate. This is to set up the contrast later of the indwelling of the Spirit where God actually dwells within us. Unfortunately, too many Christians have sought to model their relationship with God after the story of Israel rather than embrace the new vision offered in Christ. They have embraced the law and an externalized relationship with God (holy law, holy building, holy man) and have not realized that this was all put in place to one day be done away with, like a children's picture book that at one stage helps you learn to read but has no real purpose once you have learned to read.
- Israel is to give their best to God which all came from the Egyptians first. God gave them the very gifts they were to return to him. It is like a parent giving his or her child money so the child can buy the parent a birthday present.
- The tabernacle is filled with meaningful yet simple symbolism:

- The Ark of the Covenant: the provision (manna), power (rod) and law (stone tablets) are all covered under the blood of the lamb. Forgiveness and grace makes all these right before God.
- The table: again, a symbol of fellowship with God and his provision.
- Lamp stand: symbolizes light, a symbol that will be used again and again as a picture of God's truth and revelation.
- The altar of incense: another symbol of God's presence. A physical expression of how great it is to be in his presence. It is like God's cologne. In the New Testament, the church and its role in bringing grace and peace into the world results in our lives being this fragrant expression of the presence of God. 2 Corinthians 2:15 says, "We are the aroma of Christ."
- The Urim and Thummin (God's dice): help the people know God's mind. Again, very simple yes/no answers. Now, it is amazing how little this is used as God will prefer prophets. But in any case, this was a symbol of God wanting his people to understand that he wants to speak to them about the issues they face. Now, in Christ, we are to be guided into all truth through the Spirit.
- The laver: was outside the tabernacle and represented cleansing. The external altar for burnt offerings represented forgiveness. Again visuals to reinforce something that ultimately would have to happen internally through Christ.
- What is interesting about the symbolism is how little there is. This is not a complex and overly ornate, elaborate religious system. It is really pretty simple with just a few props. In Christ, it is reduced further to just baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- A couple of websites on the tabernacle:
 - <http://www.bibleplaces.com/tabernacle.htm>
 - <http://www.domini.org/tabern/tabhome.htm>
- The priest's garments are probably the most ornate of all. In this way the importance of the person is highlighted. As a kingdom of priests, God is showing that the lives of his people are more important than the objects that surround them (buildings, etc.). In Christ, we are given robes as a gift of grace. We are robed in white because of being in Christ. (Revelations 7:9-15)
- Those that trust Christ are not separate from God but through Jesus, the veil has been torn, the final sacrifice complete, the Spirit poured out and we now can live as friends of God.