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**Session 10**

***God of Freedom,* Week 6a**

**Exodus 25:1-40**

**20-21 November 2023**

**Preview –** This week (and next) we will be looking at the Tabernacle proper; then we’ll take two weeks of studying the outer court and the items necessary for the upkeep of the Tabernacle; and then the next two weeks will be devoted to the people associated with the Tabernacle—both those who built it and the priests who were to serve there.

**Creating a Home for God –** God begins His conversation with Moses by clearly stating what His purpose is: “Let them make Me a sanctuary” (a holy place) as a dwelling place.” So God says that it is His desire to live among His people, and He wants them to give what is needed to create a home for Him out of gratitude, not compulsion. Centuries later the apostle John said that “the Word became flesh and *dwelt (tabernacled) among us*.”

**God Is Near His People –** We know that God is omnipresent, i.e. in all places everywhere at once in all His completeness. So why does He ask the Israelites to make a home for Him to dwell in? After all, He IS with them all the time anyway, whether they perceive it or not. But now God is saying is saying that He wants to share with them His manifest *(perceivable, evident, apparent to the senses)* presence. He wants them to actually *experience* His presence and not just be cognitively aware of it. Similarly we are told that Jesus Christ existed “from the beginning”, but He was made manifest in the incarnation. So the Tabernacle wasn’t just a building in which God would meet with His people: it was a HOME, and had all the features of a home. Notice also that the Tabernacle and everything in it was designed to be *portable,* showing that God would be with His people wherever they went.

**The Ark and the Mercy Seat –** The ark of the covenant wasn’t just a fancy box with a lid on it and angels on top. It was a *throne*. The mercy seat on top of the ark is called *hilasterion* in the Greek language, which is translated “propitiation”—and who is the Propitiation for our sin? Jesus Christ. So here is one of the first symbols for Christ found in the Tabernacle. Even the arrangement of the articles is significant. The Law is located inside the ark, *underneath* the throne and the mercy seat; as James said, “Mercy triumphs over judgment.” But placing a copy of the 10 Commandments in the ark was also in keeping with the customs of the day. When an earthly lord made a covenant with the people under him, a copy of the covenant was kept in the temple of whoever was the god of the area. So the Lord God kept a copy of His covenant inside the place where He was to be worshiped. Later in the text we will see that two other things were to be kept inside the ark: a jar of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded to show that he was the rightful person for the priesthood. All three of these things point us to Christ: He is the perfect fulfillment of the Law, He is the Bread sent from Heaven, and He is our great high priest!

**The Table for the Bread –** Twelve loaves of bread were to be kept on the table, one for each of the tribes of Israel. This was a visible reminder that God is the Provider of their daily bread; in fact, as Jesus would make very clear, He *IS* the Bread of life. There were also flagons of wine on the table, so the table was set with a meal with elements foreshadowing our communion service. Not only that, but in Matthew’s account of the feeding of the 5000, there were precisely 12 baskets of bread left over, indicating to his Jewish readers that the bread that was once inside the Tabernacle has now become bread for the world. There is an abundance of it, enough for all to come and eat! Yet another connection with the table in the Tabernacle is the account of Joseph in Egypt, when he, as a type of Christ, became the source of bread for all the world of his day.

**The Golden Lampstand –** Unlike the other pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle, the lampstand was made of SOLID gold! It was probably five feet tall and weighed 75 pounds. It had a total of seven branches (three on each side and one in the middle), indicating perfection or completion. It was meant to look like a flowering almond tree, and it was the sole source of light inside the Tabernacle. **The fact that it was shaped like a tree points us back to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.** **The stone tablet with the Law inscribed would be a reminder of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, because it is the Law that lets us know what is good and what is evil. So the dwelling place that God had with man in the Garden is being illustrated in the Tabernacle.

**“Let There Be Light!” –** The lampstand shone its light inside the Holy Place, which would have been very dark. Light is what reveals how things truly are. Without light, in a spiritual sense, we are prone to believe that our sin is not that bad and that God is not that good. But as soon as light shines into our darkness, we become aware of just how bad sin is and just how magnificent grace is. So the lampstand echoes Eden, but it also points us toward a time in the New Jerusalem when light will be mentioned again. Revelation 21:23 says, “And the city has no need for sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and **its lamp is the Lamb**.” God speaks, “Let there be light,” into Eden; He speaks, “Let there be light,” into Bethlehem; He speaks, “Let there be light,” into each of us; and He speaks, “Let there be light in the New Jerusalem.

***Parallels to 1 Peter***

*Again Jen Wilkin mentioned this parallel when she was talking about God making His presence MANIFEST in the Tabernacle, i.e. something we could see or touch. She quoted 1 Peter 1:20-21, which tells us that Christ “was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was* ***made manifest*** *in the last times for the sake of you who…are believers in God.” John would later open his first epistle with these words, “That which was from the beginning, which we have* ***heard****, which we have* ***seen with our eyes****, which we have* ***looked at*** *and our hands have* ***touched****—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”*

*1 John 1:1*